

- I. Song of Solomon
  - a. Purpose: We will consider the title, authorship, purpose of the book of Song of Solomon.
  - b. Title
    - i. Interchangeable title of Song of Songs or Song of Solomon based upon **Song of Solomon 1:1**.
    - ii. "The title of the book, Song of Songs, is taken from the opening phrase of the book, *šîr haššîrîm*, variously rendered "Song of Solomon," "The Song," or "Best Song."<sup>1</sup>
    - iii. "*Song of Songs*" does not mean "the song consisting of many songs" but in the Hebrew form it has the idea of "the song to end all songs," "the greatest song," since this Hebrew construct has the same kind of idea with "Holy of Holies" "King of Kings" and "Lord of lords."<sup>2</sup>
    - iv. This book is also called "Canticles" based on the title of the book in the Vulgate, *Canticum Canticorum*, lit., 'Song of Songs.'<sup>3</sup>
  - c. Authorship
    - i. Reasons for Solomon Authorship #1: Solomon's name appears seven times in the book: **Song of Solomon 1:1, 1:5, 3:7, 3:9, 3:11, 8:11-12**.<sup>4</sup>
    - ii. Reasons for Solomon Authorship #2: There are reference to 21 varieties of plant life and 15 species of animals in the book which matches with Solomon's massive knowledge of such matters: "*He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish.*" (**1 Kings 4:33**).<sup>5</sup>
    - iii. Reasons for Solomon Authorship #3: Comparing the bridegroom to "a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots" fits with Solomon's reign when horses were introduced from Egypt during Solomon's reign: "*Also Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's merchants procured them from Kue for a price.*" (**1 Kings 10:28**).<sup>6</sup>
    - iv. Reasons for Solomon Authorship #4: According to Mark Rooker: "In harmony with Solomonic authorship is the fact that the book seems to reflect conditions in Israel before the division of the kingdom, such as the place names Jerusalem, Carmel, Sharon, Lebanon, Engedi, Hermon, and Tirzah."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Song of Songs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18646-18947.

<sup>2</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Song of Songs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18947-18948.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Song of Songs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18950-18951.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Song of Songs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18954-18955.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Song of Songs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18955-18956.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Song of Songs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18951-18952.

d. Purpose

- i. How one understand the purpose of the book will be determined by how one interpret the book. See the discussion below about allegorical versus literal interpretation of the book.
- ii. What others have said
  1. According to Richard Mayhue **Song of Solomon** is about “God’s View of Love and Marriage.”<sup>8</sup>
  2. According to Andrew Hill: “The love poetry of the Songs celebrates the male-female relationship established by God at creation and the goodness of human sexual love expressed within the confines of God-ordained marriage.”<sup>9</sup>
  3. According to Mark Rooker: “The book was thus placed in the canon to teach the purity and sanctity of the marriage estate which God had established.”<sup>10</sup>

e. Structure

- i. It not easy to outline the book.
- ii. Mayhue’s outline<sup>11</sup>
  1. Courtship/Leave (1-3)
  2. Consummation/Cleave (4-5)
  3. Celebration/Weave (5-8)
- iii. Love: Lost and Found<sup>12</sup>
  1. Love Is Anticipated (1:2-2:7)
  2. Found, and Lost and Found (2:8-3:5)
  3. Love Is Consummated (3:6-5:1)
  4. Lost and Found (5:2-8:4)
  5. Love Is Affirmed (8:5-14)
- iv. Chiasm<sup>13</sup>
  1. A. Opening words of mutual love and desire (1:2-2:7)
    - a. B. Young man’s invitation to the young woman (2:8-17)
      - i. C. Young woman’s nighttime search (3:1-5)
        1. D. Center: their wedding day (3:6-5:1)
      - ii. C1. Young woman’s nighttime search (5:2-7:11 [Hebrew text it is 5 2-7:10])
    - b. B1. Young woman’s invitation to the young man (7:12-8:4 [HB, 7:11-8:4])
  2. A1. Closing words of mutual love and desire (8:5-14)

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 74.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Hill, “Song of Songs” in *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 467.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Song of Songs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19023-19024.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 73.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Song of Songs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19054-19058.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Song of Songs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19040-19045.

- v. Additional comment:
  - 1. No matter how one outline the book the middle section (3:6-5:1) and climax (8:5-7) is important.
- f. Closer look at Song of Solomon
  - i. Allegorical or literal interpretation?
    - 1. Allegorical interpretation described
      - a. The allegorical school believes the love expressed between the man and the woman is actually expressing God's love for his people.
      - b. "Origen, Jerome, Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin argued that the Song of Songs conveyed the love between Christ and His church."<sup>14</sup>
    - 2. Problems with this approach (4 problems):
      - a. Problem #1: Nothing in the book indicates that it must be an allegory.<sup>15</sup>
      - b. Problem #2: Relations to Proverbs suggesting this is not an allegory
        - i. The prophetic books in the Bible tend to use more symbolism to talk about God and great saving events in Israel's history.<sup>16</sup>
        - ii. **Song of Solomon** is not like the prophetic books since there's no talk of salvation, judgment of sins, etc., that suggests here things are symbolizing or allegorizing God.<sup>17</sup>
        - iii. Instead the book is related **Proverb 5:15-19**: "A"
          - 1. Words translated as "drink," "water," "well," "breasts" and "love" are used in the same way.<sup>18</sup>
          - 2. Also the phrase "gazelles" and "doe" in **Song of Solomon** reminds us of "loving doe" and "graceful dear" of **Proverbs**.<sup>19</sup>
      - c. Problem #3: Relationship with God is not to be understood romantically.
        - i. There's part of the book that seems quite physically romantic.
          - 1. Look at the first verse after the title subscript: "*May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine.*" (**Song of Solomon 1:2**)

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<sup>14</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Song of Songs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18974-18975.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Song of Songs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 18982.

<sup>16</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 29.

<sup>17</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 29.

<sup>18</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 30.

<sup>19</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 30.

2. Recall the previous example of **Song of Solomon 1:13**: “*My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh Which lies all night between my breasts.*”
  3. In the book there is a lot of description of the delight of seeing, touching, tasting, hearing and smelling the male and female body.<sup>20</sup>
    - ii. But this kind of language would be an inappropriate way to portray God’s love for His people, and also for His people loving back God in this matter.<sup>21</sup>
    - iii. To use Greek terminology our love for God is *agape* not *eros*.
- d. Problem #4: Subjective interpretation.
- i. Take for example **Song of Solomon 1:13**: “*My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh Which lies all night between my breasts.*”
  - ii. As Mark Rooker noted: “Both Rashi and Ibn Ezra said this phrase refers to the tabernacling of God over the ark of the cherubim, while Cyril of Alexandria proposed that the verse referred to the two Testaments. Bernard of Clairvaux believed the verse referred to the crucifixion of Christ, which strengthens the believer in sorrow and joy.”<sup>22</sup>
3. In light of the problem of allegorical interpretation it is better to take this interpretation literally.
- ii. Style of the Book
    1. The lines in this book are short and rhythmical that suggest a strong lyrical quality.<sup>23</sup>
    2. There are a lot of similes and metaphors used in **Song of Solomon**.
    3. The book employed more imagery of nature than any other books of the Bible.<sup>24</sup>
  - iii. While some part of the book covers love as an ideal the book also touches on the realism of love as being difficult<sup>25</sup>
    1. There is longing and also dreams of love as seen in **Song of Solomon 3:1 and 5:2**.
    2. Lovesickness is described in **Song of Solomon 5:1-9**.

<sup>20</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 22.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Song of Songs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18982-18984.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Song of Songs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18978-18980.

<sup>23</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 18.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Song of Songs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 19031-19032.

<sup>25</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 26.

3. In her confusion of what is dream and what is real she sleep walks and is hurt by the watchmen in **Song of Solomon 5:7**.
  4. The longing to be with the other person is so strong the woman even wishes that her lover is her brother in **Song of Solomon 8:1-3**.
- iv. The author is aware of those not yet married reading this book
1. Note **Song of Solomon 2:7**: *“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, That you do not arouse or awaken my love Until she pleases.”*
  2. This similar phrase is also repeated in **Song of Solomon 3:5, 8:4**.
  3. Thus there is also a lesson that love between a man and a woman is good, but also to wait and not prematurely jump into things.
- v. The climax: *“Who is this coming up from the wilderness Leaning on her beloved?” “Beneath the apple tree I awakened you; There your mother was in labor with you, There she was in labor and gave you birth. 6 “Put me like a seal over your heart, Like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, Jealousy is as severe as Sheol; Its flashes are flashes of fire, The very flame of the Lord. 7 “Many waters cannot quench love, Nor will rivers overflow it; If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, It would be utterly despised.”*” (**Song of Solomon 8:5-7**)
1. Here both lovers are together.
  2. We see the description of how strong is love, being compared *“as strong as death”* (v.6)
  3. Also love’s *“Jealousy is as severe as Sheol”* (v.6)
  4. Also love is like *“The very flame of the Lord”* (v.6)
    - a. Here in the Hebrew the word for God, Yah, is used in conjunction with “jealousy” and “fire”<sup>26</sup>
    - b. Here we see reference to God and this book might not be as secular as it might first appear.<sup>27</sup>
- g. Place of this book in the Canon
- i. The book is in a sense a poetic commentary of love and also God’s creation of Marriage in **Genesis 1-2**.
    1. There’s a garden motif in **Song of Solomon 4:8-5:1**.<sup>28</sup>
    2. There’s numerous imagery of plant and vineyards in the book as well, echoing the Garden of Eden.
    3. These takes us back to the first man and woman who were married.
    4. Yet of course we live after the fall and the rest of the book is realistic about the difficulty of love, even when two love each other.
  - ii. In illustrating the beauty of marriage it also helps us to anticipate Christ since Marriage is a type of Christ and the Church in the New Testament; see **Ephesians 5**.

<sup>26</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 24.

<sup>27</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 24.

<sup>28</sup> Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 24.