Song of Solomon Introduction

## Title

The title in the Hebrew text is "Solomon's Song of Songs," meaning a song by, for, or about Solomon. The phrase "Song of Songs" means the greatest of songs (cf. Dt 10:17, "God of gods and Lord of lords"; 1Ti 6:15, "King of kings").

## Writer

Consistency of language, style, tone, perspective and recurring refrains seems to argue for a single author though some think this song to be the work of several authors.

Verse 1 appears to give authorship to Solomon. Solomon is mentioned seven times (1:1,5; 3:7,9,11; 8:11-12), and several verses speak of the "king" (1:4,12; 7:5).

## Interpretation

This Song is about the love relationship between between the Bridegroom (Christ) and His Bride (the Overcomer).

## Theme and Theology

The feminine voice speaks profoundly of love. She portrays its beauty and delights. She claims its exclusiveness ("My lover is mine and I am his," 2:16) and insists on the necessity of its pure spontaneity ("Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires," 2:7). She also proclaims its overwhelming power -- it rivals that of the fearsome enemy, death; it burns with the intensity of a blazing fire; it is unquenchable even by the ocean depths (8:6-7a). She affirms its preciousness: All that one possesses cannot purchase it, nor (alternatively) should it be exchanged for it (8:7b). She hints, without saying so explicitly, that it is the Lord's gift.

God intends that such love -- grossly distorted and abused by both ancient and modern people -- be a normal part of marital life in his good creation (see Ge 1:26-31; 2:24). Indeed, in the Song the faithful Israelite could ascertain how to live lovingly within the theocratic arrangement. Such marital love is designed by the Creator-King to come to natural expression within his realm.

## Literary Features

No one who reads the Song with care can question the artistry of the poet. The subtle delicacy with which he evokes intense sensuous awareness while avoiding crude titillation is one of the chief marks of his achievement. This he accomplishes largely by indirection, by analogy and by bringing to the foreground the sensuous in the world of nature (or in food, drink, cosmetics and jewelry). To liken a lover's enjoyment of his beloved to a gazelle "browsing among lilies" (2:16), or her breasts to "twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies" (4:5), or the beloved herself to a garden filled with choice fruits inviting the lover to feast (4:12-16) -- these combine exquisite artistry and fine sensitivity.

Whether the Song has the unity of a single dramatic line linking all the subunits into a continuing story is a matter of ongoing debate among interpreters. There do appear to be connected scenes in the love relationship (see Outline).

Virtually all agree that the literary climax of the Song is found in 8:6-7, where the unsurpassed power and value of love -- the love that draws man and woman together -- are finally expressly asserted. Literary relaxation follows the intenseness of that declaration. A final expression of mutual desire between the lovers brings the Song to an end, suggesting that love goes on. This last segment (8:8-14) is in some sense also a return to the beginning, as references to the beloved's brothers, to her vineyard and to Solomon (the king) link 8:8-12 with 1:2-6. In this song of love the voice of the beloved is dominant. It is her experience of love, both as the one who loves and as the one who is loved, that is most clearly expressed. The Song begins with her wish for the lover's kiss and ends with her urgent invitation to him for love's intimacy.

## Outline

### Title (1:1)

### The First Meeting (1:2;2:7)

### The Second Meeting (2:8;3:5)

### The Third Meeting (3:6;5:1)

### The Fourth Meeting (5:2;6:3)

### The Fifth Meeting (6:4;8:4)

### The Literary Climax (8:5-7)

### The Conclusion (8:8-14)

Title (1:1)

In I Kings 4:32, we find a record that Solomon spoke “three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five”. This book begins by saying, “The song of songs”. This means literally, “the most excellent of them all”.

**He then says, “which is Solomon’s” stating simply and clearly that this is a song that Solomon wrote.**

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