

Commentators on the Song of Solomon tend to fall into either of two camps. Some see it as an allegory as the love relationship between God and Israel or between Christ and the Church. Others view it as a love poem illustrating the beauty of marital love. While the allegorical view can be used to illustrate Christ's love for His people, the best view is to take it literally as expressions of love between a man and his wife.

The Song of Solomon can be difficult to interpret since it's often hard to determine who is speaking and scenes sometimes change without warning. We have to assume that descriptions that sound like Solomon and the Shulamite maiden engaging in actions that would be illegitimate before their marriage are merely expressions of the desires that will be fulfilled once they are married.

Song of Solomon 1

1 The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

The book opens with a description of itself as "the song of songs," indicating that this song is the best of all of the 1,005 songs that Solomon wrote (1 Kings 4:32). The focus of this song is his courtship and marriage to a Shulamite maiden.

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. 3 Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

The maiden speaks first, expressing her desire to be kissed by Solomon and how much she loved his smell after he had anointed himself with "ointment" (oil). This oil was used like cologne and made him attractive to women in general.

4 Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

The Shulamite maiden seems to be daydreaming about Solomon, saying that she would follow him anywhere. She dreams of the day when she can accompany him into his bedroom, and in her dreams she already has.

Song of Solomon 2

2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. 3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

The Shulamite maiden declares her love for Solomon to be superior to the love that other women in Jerusalem have for their boyfriends. She also describes her beloved as being more desirable than other men and how she enjoys being in his presence.

4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. 5 Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.

Solomon had a banquet in her honor, where his love for her was like a banner showing that she belonged to him. She is so overcome with love for her beloved and the anticipation of their wedding night that she looks to "flagons" (raisin cakes) and apples to distract her from her passion.

6 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. 7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

The Shulamite imagines being embraced by Solomon, apparently while her friends observe. She commands these "daughters of Jerusalem" to not interrupt her dream because she wants Solomon's embrace to last as long as possible.

Song of Solomon 3

6 Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?

There are many places in the Song of Solomon where it is hard to determine who is speaking and this is one of them. It may be the daughters of Jerusalem who are observing a wedding party coming "out of the wilderness" on their way to Jerusalem. The word "this" in "who is this?" is feminine in Hebrew, so it is likely that this is the Shulamite maiden and Solomon has sent his entourage to bring her to their wedding. She has been given various perfumes and powders to make her smell good and the source of the smoke is incense being burned as they come.

7 Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. 8 They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

Solomon's "bed" is the royal litter that he has sent for the maiden to relax upon as she rides to Jerusalem. She is guarded by 60 of Solomon's best soldiers to ensure her safety during the trip.

9 King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. 10 He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.

The word "chariot" refers to a litter that Solomon has had specially made to carry his bride to the wedding. It was constructed with the best wood available and decorated in silver, gold and purple to represent the grandeur of his royalty. Being "paved with love" is a metaphor to show the love that Solomon is expressing toward his bride by transporting her to the wedding in such an honorable fashion.

11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

The bride's friends and companions are called on to go ahead of the bride's wedding procession so that they can witness Solomon coming out to meet his bride's arrival. He is wearing a crown that was placed on his head by his mother, Bathsheba, because it is "the day of his espousals" (his wedding day), a very happy day for him.

Song of Solomon 4

12 A garden inclosed *is* my sister, *my* spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

The wedding ceremony is now over and as the married couple prepare to consummate their marriage, Solomon begins describing his bride in figurative language, speaking of the fact that she is like an enclosed garden that is locked so that only he has access to her. He seems to be describing her virginity and the exclusivity of their love.

13 Thy plants *are* an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, 14 Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: 15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

Solomon compares her to aromatic fruits and sweet smelling spices to describe her loveliness. The fountain, well and streams describe her ability to give refreshment and life (like fresh water), perhaps referring to her ability to have children.

16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, *that* the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

The bride seems to be now speaking, asking the wind to carry her fragrance to the nose of her husband to entice him to embrace her so that they may consummate their marriage. She is ready to give herself unreservedly, describing herself as “his garden” and “his pleasant fruits.”

Song of Solomon 5

1 I am come into my garden, my sister, *my* spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

“**I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse...I have drunk my wine with my milk**” – The happy couple have consummated their marriage.

“**eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved**” – Commentators believe that this is the voice of God placing his blessing on their union. God created the institution of marriage and He approves of sex within its bounds.

Heb. 13:4 “*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*”

1 Cor. 7:3-4 “*Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.*”

2 I sleep, but my heart waketh: *it is* the voice of my beloved that knocketh, *saying*, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, *and* my locks with the drops of the night.

The scene has apparently switched to a later time and the bride has fallen asleep waiting for her husband to arrive. She hears him knocking at the door and calling her with sweet affectionate names. It is apparently late enough that dew has fallen on him.

3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

She had undressed and washed her feet for bed, so now in her state of still being half-asleep she is not thinking about who is at the door. Her first thought is that she doesn’t want to go to the door undressed nor does she want to get her clean feet dirty.

4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole *of the door*, and my bowels were moved for him. 5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped *with* myrrh, and my fingers *with* sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

Solomon places a surprise for his bride in the “hole of the door” (the way doors were latched/locked in that day). She apparently hears him and it arouses her to finally become fully awake. She goes to the door and when she grasps the lock, her hand becomes wet with Solomon’s surprise. He has covered the lock with myrrh, a sweet smelling perfume.

6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, *and* was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

Solomon leaves when she does not promptly come to the door, perhaps not wanting to wake her. When his bride finally opens the door, she discovers that he has left and she does not know where he has gone. He apparently was out of earshot and could not hear her calling for him.

Song of Solomon 8

6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love *is* strong as death; jealousy *is* cruel as the grave: the coals thereof *are* coals of fire, *which hath* a most vehement flame. 7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

“**Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm**” – Seals showed ownership and Solomon’s bride asks that she be the seal on his heart showing that it belongs to her, just like a seal (arm band) was worn on the forearm to show allegiance to God or a king.

“**for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave**” – Just as death cannot be defeated (humanly speaking), so love cannot be defeated. Love that strong produces jealousy that will be cruel to anyone who dared try to come between her and her beloved.

“**the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame**” – Her love (and jealousy) burns as hot as an intense flame.

“**Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it**” – Her love is so strong and hot that no amount of water can extinguish it.

“**if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned** [*despised; to hold in contempt*]” – Love is so priceless that even if a man gave all that he had to obtain it, the amount would be so inadequate that he would be criticized for trying to buy it.