

# The Song of Solomon

Song of Songs 1:1 – 8:14

## Introduction:

The story that we are about to read is known as the Song of Solomon, but in most manuscripts, it is known as the Song of Songs, a title taken from its first words. It is King Solomon's song, the greatest song ever written, in his opinion.

How do we know his opinion? Solomon's choice of opening words, Song of Songs, is the Hebrew way of saying it is the best of the best. The same Hebrew idiom is used throughout the Bible to indicate other such instances of superior status. Some examples are: King of kings, Lord of lords, God of gods, Battle of battles, War of wars, Holy of holies and Heaven of heavens. Perhaps Solomon used this idiom to indicate that he believed this song was the best poetry of his 1,005 completed works.

When did Solomon write this song? We can only speculate, but the Song says that he had 60 wives and 80 concubines at the time. The record of the kings tell us that before his death he had acquired 700 wives and 300 concubines. Therefore, this song was probably written in the first half of his reign as king. According to 1 Kings 11:42, he reigned 40 years. However, before David died, he made Solomon king, allowing Solomon to co-reign a year or so more. Why was Solomon made king? His brother, Adonijah, the oldest of David's children from his first marriage, assumed that he would be king and threw a banquet to celebrate his ascension to the throne. However, early in their marriage, David had promised Bathsheba that Solomon would be king. When Bathsheba heard of Adonijah's banquet, she and the prophet Nathan conferred with David. During Adonijah's banquet, David ordered Nathan to anoint Solomon as king. When Adonijah heard the news, fear struck him to the bone. Solomon reigned 40 years after David's death. All years in the Bible are lunar, each one consisting of 354 days. The lunar calendar is 11 days shorter than the solar or Gregorian calendar that we use today. Julius Caesar switched the Roman Empire to the solar calendar, but the Jews did not make the change until 358/359 AD. In perspective, 40 Jewish years equals 38 Gregorian years and 9 months.

Solomon was the tenth son of David which leads us to the conclusion that he was the second son of his union with Bathsheba, but this is pure speculation. His older brother, the product of David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, died shortly after his birth. It is difficult to determine Solomon's age or when he became king because the Bible does not reveal his age at his death. However, the Lord did promise him that he would live well into old age.

Solomon sets the stage for this song in his harem chamber. The main character is the Darling, a young woman who has been brought to the palace against her will by the king. She is in love with her Beloved, a young man who had won her heart, but left the city to take care of business. The king makes several attempts to entice the Darling to be his but when she refuses to do so, he enlists the help of his harem called the daughters of Jerusalem. They use peer pressure on the king's behalf but to no avail. The king tries to impress the Darling by organizing a parade to show off his regal possessions and entourage but without success.

Even the Darling's brothers attempt to convince her to turn her affections to the king because they owe him money. She pays their debt and hers so the king will leave her alone. Undeterred by the lure of her surroundings, the Darling remains faithful to her Beloved, even dreaming of chance encounters with him. She imagines slipping out of the city streets where she is mistreated by the night watchmen. She finally determines a way to rid herself of the king, his chamber, the harem and her brothers while she waits patiently for her Beloved whom she believes is coming over the hill to snatch her away.

The song can be performed as a short play on a stage with one room that contains several beds, a window, a door and a short table filled with food. A street scene can be included if desired. The script can pose some difficulty in determining which actor says which line. Solomon used the context of each sentence to reveal the speaker, but not always with names. Sometimes the change of speakers is determined by the change in pronouns. This difficulty is the cause of all the various interpretations taught in the churches. The most popular interpretation is that the king and the Beloved are the same person, yet we will see that when the Beloved speaks to the Darling, the words could not be more wholesome and godly. Conversely, as the king attempts to entice the Darling, his language could not be more rank. Because of the king's language, the rabbis of old forbade the young Jewish boys from reading it until they reached the age of 13.

For ease in reading and character identification, the following Scripture passages include the italicized names of the speaker with the setting for each line or passage to make it a script similar to those used in drama productions today.

## The Song of Songs

### *Title*

Song of Songs 1:1 The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

*Darling:* *(In the harem chamber of the king, he is attempting to lure the Darling to accept his offer of marriage. She is on her bed and the harem girls are in the room with her. In her daydreams the Darling speaks.)*

Song of Songs 1:2a May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!

*King:* *(The king is seated on the bed with the Darling.)*

Song of Songs 1: 2b For your love is better than wine. 3 Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, your name is *like* purified oil; therefore, the maidens love you.

*Darling:* *(The Darling is dreaming of her Beloved who has gone to care for his flocks.)*

Song of Songs 1: 4a Draw me after you *and* let us run *together!* The king has brought me into his chambers.

*Harem:* Song of Songs 1: 4b We will rejoice in you and be glad; we will extol your love more than wine.

*King:* Song of Songs 1: 4c Rightly do they love you.

*Darling:*

*(The Darling answers the king.)*

Song of Songs 1:5 I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. <sup>6</sup> Do not stare at me because I am swarthy, for the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me caretaker of the vineyards, *but* I have not taken care of my own vineyard.

*(The Darling is dreaming of her Beloved out in the pastures.)*

Song of Songs 1:7 Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where do you pasture *your flock*, where do you make *it* lie down at noon? For why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?

*Harem:*

*(The harem is attempting to seduce the Darling into a relationship with the king.)*

Song of Songs 1:8 If you yourself do not know, most beautiful among women, go forth on the trail of the flock and pasture your young goats by the tents of the shepherds.

*King:*

Song of Songs 1:9 To me, my darling, you are like my mare among the chariots of Pharaoh. <sup>10</sup> Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of beads.

*Harem:*

Song of Songs 1:11 We will make for you ornaments of gold with beads of silver.

*Darling:*

*(The Darling realizes that her perfume has captivated the king [SS1:6] but she remembers her beloved and says the following.)*

Song of Songs 1:12 While the king was at his table, my perfume gave forth its fragrance. <sup>13</sup> My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh which lies all night between my breasts. <sup>14</sup> My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi.

*Beloved:*

*(The Darling remembers the words of her Beloved.)*

Song of Songs 1:15 How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are *like* doves.

*Darling:*

*(The Darling responds to her Beloved's words.)*

Song of Songs 1:16 How handsome you are, my beloved, *and* so pleasant! Indeed, our couch is luxuriant! <sup>17</sup> The beams of our houses are cedars, our rafters, cypresses.

*Beloved:*

*(The Darling remembers more of her Beloved's words from their blissful relationship.)*

Song of Songs 2:1 I am the rose of Sharon, The lily of the valleys. <sup>2</sup> Like a lily among the thorns, so is my darling among the maidens.

*Darling:*

*(The Darling recounts her time with her Beloved in the following audible daydream.)*

Song of Songs 2:3 Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. In his shade I took great delight and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

Song of Songs 2:4 He has brought me to *his* banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. <sup>5</sup> Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, because I am lovesick. <sup>6</sup> Let his left hand be under my head and his right hand embrace me.

*(The Darling speaks to the harem.)*

Song of Songs 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.

*(The Darling returns to her daydream of past days with her Beloved.)*

Song of Songs 2:8 Listen! My beloved! Behold, he is coming, climbing on the mountains, leaping on the hills! <sup>9</sup> My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he is standing behind our wall, He is looking through the windows, He is peering through the lattice. <sup>10</sup> My beloved responded and said to me,

*Beloved:*

*(The Beloved speaks in the Darling's daydream.)*

'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along. <sup>11</sup> For behold, the winter is past, the rain is over *and* gone. <sup>12</sup> The flowers have *already* appeared in the land; the time has arrived for pruning *the vines*, and the voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land. <sup>13</sup> The fig tree has ripened its figs, and the vines in blossom have given forth *their* fragrance. Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along!' <sup>14</sup> O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the steep pathway, let me see your form, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your form is lovely.

*Darling:*

Song of Songs 2:15 Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom. <sup>16</sup> My beloved is mine, and I am his; He pastures *his flock* among the lilies. <sup>17</sup> Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of Bether.

*(Caught in the harem chamber of the king, the Darling remembers her dreams of escaping into the street to find her Beloved.)*

Song of Songs 3:1 On my bed night after night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him but did not find him. <sup>2</sup> I must arise now and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I must seek him whom my soul loves.' I sought him but did not find him.

Song of Songs 3:3 The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, *and I said*, 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?' <sup>4</sup> Scarcely had I left them when I found him whom my soul loves; I held on to him and would not let

him go until I had brought him to my mother's house, and into the room of her who conceived me.

*(The Darling speaks to the harem.)*

Song of Songs 3:5 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, that you will not arouse or awaken *my* love until she pleases.

*(The Darling looks out the window to see the king's parade, his attempt to persuade the Darling to accept his offer.)*

Song of Songs 3:6 What is this coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all scented powders of the merchant? <sup>7</sup> Behold, it is the *traveling* couch of Solomon; sixty mighty men around it, of the mighty men of Israel. <sup>8</sup> All of them are wielders of the sword, expert in war; each man has his sword at his side, *guarding* against the terrors of the night. <sup>9</sup> King Solomon has made for himself a sedan chair from the timber of Lebanon. <sup>10</sup> He made its posts of silver, its back of gold *and* its seat of purple fabric, *with* its interior lovingly fitted out by the daughters of Jerusalem.

*(The Darling speaks to the harem.)*

Song of Songs 3:11 Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and gaze on King Solomon with the crown with which his mother has crowned him on the day of his wedding, and on the day of his gladness of heart.

*Beloved:*

*(The Darling remembers more words of her Beloved.)*

Song of Songs 4:1 How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are *like* doves behind your veil; your hair is like a flock of goats that have descended from Mount Gilead. <sup>2</sup> Your teeth are like a flock of *newly* shorn ewes which have come up from *their* washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost her young. <sup>3</sup> Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate behind your veil. <sup>4</sup> Your neck is like the tower of David, built with rows of stones on which are hung a thousand shields, all the round shields of the mighty men. <sup>5</sup> Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle which feed among the lilies. <sup>6</sup> Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. <sup>7</sup> You are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you. <sup>8</sup> *Come* with me from Lebanon, *my* bride, may you come with me from Lebanon. Journey down from the summit of Amana, from the summit of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards. <sup>9</sup> You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, *my* bride; you have made my heart beat faster with a single *glance* of your eyes, with a single strand of your necklace. <sup>10</sup> How beautiful is your love, my sister, *my* bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than all *kinds* of spices! <sup>11</sup> Your lips, *my* bride, drip honey; honey and milk are under your tongue, and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. <sup>12</sup> A garden

locked is my sister, *my* bride, a rock garden locked, a spring sealed up. <sup>13</sup> Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, henna with nard plants, <sup>14</sup> nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest spices. <sup>15</sup> *You are* a garden spring, a well of fresh water, and streams *flowing* from Lebanon.

*Darling:* *(The Darling responds to the memory of her Beloved.)*

Song of Songs 4:16 Awake, O north *wind*, and come, *wind of* the south; make my garden breathe out *fragrance*, let its spices be wafted abroad. May my beloved come into his garden and eat its choice fruits!

*Beloved:* Song of Songs 5:1a I have come into my garden, my sister, *my* bride; I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.

*Harem:* *(The harem replies to what they have heard the Beloved say in her audible daydream.)*

Song of Songs 5:1b Eat, friends; drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers.

*Darling:* *(The Darling remembers another dream.)*

Song of Songs 5:2 I was asleep but my heart was awake. A voice! My beloved was knocking:

*Beloved:* *(The Beloved speaks in the Darling's daydream.)*

'Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my perfect one! For my head is drenched with dew, my locks with the damp of the night.'

*Darling:* *(In her dream, the Darling responds to her Beloved's offer.)*

Song of Songs 5:3 I have taken off my dress, how can I put it on *again*? I have washed my feet, how can I dirty them *again*? <sup>4</sup> My beloved extended his hand through the opening, and my feelings were aroused for him. <sup>5</sup> I arose to open to my beloved; and my hands dripped with myrrh, and my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. <sup>6</sup> I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned away *and* had gone! My heart went out *to him* as he spoke. I searched for him but I did not find him; I called him but he did not answer me. <sup>7</sup> The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, they struck me *and* wounded me; the guardsmen of the walls took away my shawl from me.

*(The Darling speaks to the harem.)*

Song of Songs 5:8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, As to what you will tell him: For I am lovesick.

*Harem:* *(The harem replies to the Darling's words.)*

Song of Songs 5:9 What kind of beloved is your beloved, O most beautiful among women? What kind of beloved is your beloved, that thus you adjure us?

*Darling:*

*(The Darling responds to the harem.)*

Song of Songs 5:10 My beloved is dazzling and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. <sup>11</sup> His head is *like* gold, pure gold; His locks are *like* clusters of dates *and* black as a raven. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, *and* reposed in *their* setting. <sup>13</sup> His cheeks are like a bed of balsam, banks of sweet-scented herbs; his lips are lilies dripping with liquid myrrh. <sup>14</sup> His hands are rods of gold set with beryl; His abdomen is carved ivory Inlaid with sapphires. <sup>15</sup> His legs are pillars of alabaster Set on pedestals of pure gold; His appearance is like Lebanon Choice as the cedars. <sup>16</sup> His mouth is *full of* sweetness. And he is wholly desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

*Harem:*

Song of Songs 6:1 Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?

*Darling:*

Song of Songs 6:2 My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of balsam, to pasture *his flock* in the gardens and gather lilies. <sup>3</sup> I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine, He who pastures *his flock* among the lilies.

*King:*

*(The king has returned to the chamber to entice the Darling.)*

Song of Songs 6:4 You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling, as lovely as Jerusalem, as awesome as an army with banners. <sup>5</sup> Turn your eyes away from me, for they have confused me; your hair is like a flock of goats that have descended from Gilead. <sup>6</sup> Your teeth are like a flock of ewes which have come up from *their* washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost her young. <sup>7</sup> Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate behind your veil. <sup>8</sup> There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and maidens without number; <sup>9a</sup> *but* my dove, my perfect one, is unique: she is her mother's only *daughter*; she is the pure *child* of the one who bore her.

*Harem:*

Song of Songs 6:9b The maidens saw her and called her blessed, the queens and the concubines *also*, and they praised her, *saying*, <sup>10</sup> 'Who is this that grows like the dawn, as beautiful as the full moon, as pure as the sun, as awesome as an army with banners?'

*King:*

Song of Songs 6:11 I went down to the orchard of nut trees to see the blossoms of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded *or* the pomegranates had bloomed. <sup>12</sup> Before I was aware, my soul set me *over* the chariots of my noble people. <sup>13a</sup> Come back, come back, O Shulammite; Come back, come back, that we may gaze at you!

*Darling:*

Song of Songs 6:13b Why should you gaze at the Shulammite, as at the dance of the two companies?

*King:*

*(The king is frustrated with the Darling's refusal. His words become extremely sensual.)*

Song of Songs 7:1 How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! The curves of your hips are like jewels, the work of the hands of an artist. <sup>2</sup> Your navel is *like* a round goblet which never lacks mixed wine; Your belly is like a heap of wheat fenced about with lilies. <sup>3</sup> Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. <sup>4</sup> Your neck is like a tower of ivory, your eyes *like* the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath-rabbim; your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, which faces toward Damascus. <sup>5</sup> Your head crowns you like Carmel, and the flowing locks of your head are like purple threads; *the king* is captivated by *your* tresses. <sup>6</sup> How beautiful and how delightful you are, *my* love, with *all* your charms! <sup>7</sup> Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are *like its* clusters. <sup>8</sup> I said, 'I will climb the palm tree, I will take hold of its fruit stalks.' Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and the fragrance of your breath like apples, <sup>9a</sup> and your mouth like the best wine!

*Darling:*

*(The Darling responds to the king's words, but she is thinking of her Beloved instead.)*

Song of Songs 7: 9b It goes *down* smoothly for my beloved, flowing gently *through* the lips of those who fall asleep. <sup>10</sup> I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me. <sup>11</sup> Come, my beloved, let us go out into the country, let us spend the night in the villages. <sup>12</sup> Let us rise early *and go* to the vineyards; let us see whether the vine has budded *and its* blossoms have opened, *and whether* the pomegranates have bloomed. There I will give you my love. <sup>13</sup> The mandrakes have given forth fragrance; and over our doors are all choice *fruits*, both new and old, which I have saved up for you, my beloved. <sup>8:1</sup> Oh that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my mother's breasts. *If* I found you outdoors, I would kiss you; no one would despise me, either. <sup>2</sup> I would lead you *and* bring you into the house of my mother, who used to instruct me; I would give you spiced wine to drink from the juice of my pomegranates. <sup>3</sup> Let his left hand be under my head and his right hand embrace me.

*(The Darling speaks to the harem.)*

Song of Songs 8:4 I want you to swear, O daughters of Jerusalem, do not arouse or awaken *my* love until she pleases.

*Harem:*

Song of Songs 8:5a Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?

*Beloved:*

*(The Darling remembers the words of her Beloved.)*

Song of Songs 8:5b Beneath the apple tree I awakened you; There your mother was in labor with you, there she was in labor *and* gave you birth. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.



**Brothers:**

*(The Darling's brothers arrive to help entice the Darling to accept the king's advances because they do not have the money to pay Solomon. They had left the Darling in charge of their fields. [SS 1:6])*

Song of Songs 8:8 We have a little sister, and she has no breasts; what shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? <sup>9</sup> If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver; but if she is a door, we will barricade her with planks of cedar.

**Darling:**

*(Offended, the Darling responds to her brothers. Her response assures her brothers that she is perfect in her Beloved's eyes.)*

Song of Songs 8:10 I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace.

*(The Darling has been in the king's harem chamber long enough. She will pay Solomon what she owes him for her stay as well as the rent for her brothers for the field and then wait patiently for her Beloved to snatch her away.)*

Song of Songs 8:11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he entrusted the vineyard to caretakers. Each one was to bring a thousand *shekels* of silver for its fruit. <sup>12</sup> My very own vineyard is at my disposal; the thousand *shekels* are for you, Solomon, and two hundred are for those who take care of its fruit. <sup>13</sup> O you who sit in the gardens, *my* companions are listening for your voice— Let me hear it!

Song of Songs 8:14 Hurry, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.

**Conclusion:**

The Darling never ceased to focus on her love for her Beloved, a true picture of faithfulness. Royalty, wealth, possessions and peer pressure could not detour her steadfast love for her Beloved. Even the troubles brought on by her brothers could not change her mind. She paid the king in full the debt that she and her brothers owed. Her integrity and resolve won her freedom from the king's entrapment. The song ends with her patiently waiting in anticipation of her Beloved's arrival to snatch her away to live in blissful union. This supreme Song of Songs depicts the highest standards for true love – faithfulness.

Many theologians try to make this song an allegory about Israel or the Church but both have failed to be faithful to the Lord throughout history. Yet, individual believers are without excuse and must keep their focus on their faithful love for the Lord.