

# OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

## Lesson 43

### Song of Solomon

What would you call the “best” music? If you were stuck listening to one era of radio play, which era would you pick? I have heard that a large number of people consider the music they listened to in High School to be the best music. Whether that is because of a biological development in the brain, or simply some social or environmental processing, I do not know. I have not read any real studies on that, but I have done an informal polling. My limited poll results have amazed me. Over and over I find the hypothesis valid.

Now with a measure of certainty, I can tell you that these people are not all right! After all, anyone objective would affirm the *really* best music was that playing on the radio in the mid to late seventies. (Yes, I graduated High School in 1978, but that is beside the point!) Think about it, we still had the pop of the 60’s (Beatles, etc.). We had the “album oriented rock” (Led Zeppelin, Santana, etc.). We had hard rock (Deep Purple, Rush, etc.). We had soft and pop rock (America, Styx, Dan Fogelberg, etc.). We had R&B greats (Marvin Gaye, the Spinners, etc.). We had the singer-songwriters (Joan Baez, James Taylor, Carole King, etc.). We had the fun of disco, and, most importantly, we had the true peak of lyrical and musical talent in Bob Dylan and early Bruce Springsteen!

Now out of all those songs that might be the “best” of music, can we pick out one song that we might say is the “best of the best”? With that expression, we know we are looking for the single song that is at the very top of the heap. This is the song that surpasses all others. I am uncertain that I could pick one out. After all, there were many really great songs. Consider that as we move into our study of The Song of Solomon.

The Song of Solomon is not the only song in the Bible. We have already seen that a number of Psalms were songs. We have also noted through our Old Testament studies, the song of Moses (Ex. 15), songs of Israel (Num. 21, Dt. 31), the song of Deborah (Judg. 5), and others. Yet the Song of Solomon has a distinctive title in the Bible. It is labeled, “the Song of Songs.” Much like the Hebrew expression “Holy of Holies” indicates the *most* holy place, so the title “Song of Songs” promotes the Song of Solomon as the *ultimate* song.<sup>1</sup> It is labeled as the *best* song there is!

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<sup>1</sup> The title is the actual first two words in the Hebrew text (*shir ha-shirim*). *Shir* is the Hebrew word for “song.” The second word is also *shir*, but with some additions. The “*im*” at the end of the word is a Hebrew plural. The “*ha*” at the beginning is the definite article “the.” Setting the

As we explore this song, we will find it enshrouded in mystery, in poignant meaning, and in beautiful form. Even as we struggle to understand it, we readily see why it carries the label *The Song of Songs*. This is a song like no other!

### “SONG OF SONGS” OR “SONG OF SOLOMON”?

The author of the Song of Songs is not readily discernable from the text itself. While the ESV translates the first verse, “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s”, it is not clear in the Hebrew whether Solomon wrote it, or whether it was written to Solomon, or in honor or memory of Solomon.<sup>2</sup> There are large parts of the Song of Songs that are clearly very old in Israel’s history. For example, in 6:4 we read,

You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners.

Tirzah was a major city, and capital of the Northern area of Israel until the reign of Omri, who built Samaria as the Northern capital (c.876 BC). In addition to such an ancient contrast of Tirzah and Jerusalem, there are a number of other arguments marshaled in support of Solomonic authorship, including references in the Song to Solomon (3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12). In 6:8 there is a reference to “sixty queens and eighty concubines,” which, in light of 1 Kings 11:3’s reference to Solomon having 700 wives and 300 concubines, some scholars take to indicate that the book was composed early in Solomon’s reign. 1 Kings 5:32 speaks of Solomon as knowing 3,000 proverbs and having 1,005 songs. Certainly this gives credibility to the idea that the Song of Songs, at least in part, might include one or more songs of Solomon. 1 Kings 5:33 describes Solomon’s interest in “trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall...also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish.” The Song of Songs abounds in its references to nature, both flora and fauna.

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same word next to itself, and making the second plural, is a Hebrew way of referring to something as the absolute best. This same usage is seen in the “Holy of Holies” (Ex. 26:33), the “king of kings” (Ezek. 26:7, but without the *ha-*), “Lord of lords” and “God of gods” (Dt. 10:17), “heaven of heavens” (1 Kings 8:27), etc. Some scholars dispute this interpretation and instead warrant the title as meaning “the best of Solomon’s songs.” In that regard the entry in the Jewish Encyclopedia argues that “comparisons with ‘king of kings,’ or ‘slave of slaves’ are irrelevant because these are superlative by function: a king who rules over other kings; a slave owned by another slave.” The entry fails to note, however, the usage in “Holy of Holies” which is clearly a superlative of the Most Holy Place rather than simply some superlative by function. Therefore we tend to agree with the scholars who consider this the Song of Songs! *See contra*, “Song of Songs,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 19, at 14.

<sup>2</sup> This is the same Hebrew principle we saw in our study of the Psalms. Many Psalms hold a title

Some other supports for Solomon as author include the many resplendent luxuries written up in the Song. The comfort of living conditions (1:17; 2:19; 3:4), the comfort of clothes (7:2; 1:10; 5:7), the description of city life (7:12; 3:2-3; 5:7) seem to indicate the conditions one expects mainly in the time of Solomon.<sup>3</sup>

In the Song, we also find several vocabulary words that likely came into Hebrew from other languages at a time well after Solomon. In 3:9 the Hebrew word for “carriage” is likely borrowed from Greek.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in 4:13 the Hebrew word for orchard is a borrowed word from Persian, which would date it multiple centuries after Solomon.<sup>5</sup> Of course, these anachronisms of vocabulary do not mean that Solomon did not author most or all of the Song. It could as easily be the remnants of later editing of the book using the more common vocabulary at the time of editing.

We also find in the Song several parallels that are quite ancient. W. F. Albright cited a number of parallels between the Song and the writings uncovered at Ugarit, which pre-date Solomon by over 500 years. Both in content (vocabulary) and style, Albright finds examples of the Song that he believed indicated Canaanite and Northwest Semitic cultural influence from the second millennium BC.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of whether Solomon was the sole author, partial author, or simply the inspiration, the work of the Song was considered Holy Scripture by the Jews as far back as we have records. After the Romans destroyed the temple and conquered the Jews in Jerusalem in 70 AD, a number of Jewish sages and rabbis gathered in *Yavneh* (Jamnia), setting up an academy for rabbinic studies under the guidance of Yohanan ben Zakkai. These rabbis worked to understand the impact of what had happened, what was to come, and how temple Judaism could survive displaced from Jerusalem and the Temple.<sup>7</sup> Among the rabbis debating was Rabbi Akiva,

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<sup>3</sup> See the discussion and references in Pope, Marvin H., *Song of Songs: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (Doubleday 1977), at 22ff.

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew *pryn* ( אפרין ) likely comes from the Greek word for carriage φορεῖον .

<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew *prds* ( פרדס ) likely was borrowed from the Persian word *pardes*.

<sup>6</sup> Albright, W. F., “Archaic Survivals in the Text of Canticles”, *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver* (Oxford 1963).

<sup>7</sup> History is a bit foggy on the details of *Yavneh*. Of the two main roads out of Jerusalem during the Roman war, one led to Masada, by the Dead Sea, and the other to *Yavneh*. One of the top scholars in this area, Jacob Neusner, writes that the zealots went to Masada, holding out for three years before mass suicide in the face of Roman conquest, while the Jews “with a better memory of Isaiah” took the road to *Yavneh*. In *Yavneh*, the Jews set up an academy, began wrestling with life after the second temple, and set themselves on the road to developing a faith and practice for the future. See, Neusner, Jacob, *First-Century Judaism in Crisis*, (Wipf & Stock 2006) at 156ff.

who would have been around 53 years old. Akiva would grow to fame in this discussion as his attitudes were recorded around 200 AD in the *Mishnah*, a written Hebrew account of the oral law.

The discussion centered on which scrolls (in our terms, which Old Testament “books”) “defiled the hands.” In other words, which books were Holy Scripture, so holy that they “rendered the hands [that held them] unclean.” This was a debate over which scrolls were truly Scripture. When one rabbi raised the question about the Song of Songs, Rabbi Akiva said:

God forbid! —No man in Israel ever disputed about the Song of Songs [that he should say] that it does not render the hands unclean [i.e., is not Holy Scripture], for all the ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.<sup>8</sup>

What is it about the Song that drew such a stern rebuke and strong affirmation from the Rabbi that history calls the “Head of all Sages”? Rabbi Akiva is not alone in his praise of the Song. Old Testament scholar Marvin Pope, in the preface to his commentary on the Song, affirmed,

No composition of comparable size *in world literature* has provoked and inspired such a volume and variety of comment and interpretation as the biblical Song of Songs.<sup>9</sup>

While I have no way of checking on Pope’s accuracy, a glance at his commentary alone (743-pages on the eight short chapters—just 117 verses— of the Song) lends credence to his theory. Additionally, Bernard of Clairvaux, one of Europe’s leading scholars and preachers in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, delivered 86 sermons on the Song!<sup>10</sup> For Bernard, this Song was the supreme example of the soul’s relation with God in love. Consider this sample of Bernard’s work:

Of all the movements, sensations and feelings of the soul, love is the only one in which the creature can respond to the Creator and make some sort of similar return however unequal though it be... Clearly, lover and Love, soul and Word, bride and Bridegroom, creature and Creator do not flow with the same volume; one might as well equate a thirsty man with the fountain...It is true that the creature loves less because she is less. But if

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<sup>8</sup> *Mishnah, Sixth Division: Tohoroth, Yadaim*, 3.5. Translation Danby, Hebert, (Oxford 1980), at 782.

<sup>9</sup> Pope at 17.

<sup>10</sup> *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux on the Song of Songs*, (Cistercian Press 2008).

she loves with her whole being, nothing is lacking where everything is given.

Just shortly after the writings of Bernard, the Jewish mystic Rabbi Ezra Ben Solomon of Gerona wrote his commentary on the Song of Songs (c. 1238). Rabbi Ezra's work focused more on the Song as a reflection of the mystic nature of God than of man and God. His work was the forerunner for many Kabbalistic works and symbols, which came later.<sup>11</sup>

Without a doubt, one reason there have been so many works on the Song is the mystique of trying to understand exactly what the Song is, how it should be read, and how it should be understood. An interesting challenge for a typical Bible student is to sit down with the Song, and read it through, trying to note who is speaking, what they are saying, and what it means in its placement in Scripture. This takes on even greater difficulty when one does so without the benefit of any titles, subdivisions, or notes added by commentators.

Consider the inserted text from the English Standard version:

On its own, one might read it as a title, followed by a section where "the bride confesses her love." In this section we read what "She" says followed by statements of "others." That is not the challenge, though. Those titles and sections are the interpretations of the editors of the ESV. Get a version that does not have those interpretive inserts, but merely gives a translation of the Hebrew text. Then try to figure out who is speaking and what they are saying. After just five minutes, it will leave most people struggling to find the key to understanding the Song.

The Song is actually a poetic set of love songs, which may or may not have been spoken by one, two, or more characters. Other cultures contemporary to ancient Israel had love songs and love poems, many of which we still have available for study. Michael V. Fox (not to be confused with actor Michael J. Fox!) has written

**Song of Solomon 1**  
English Standard Version (ESV)

**Song of Solomon 1**

<sup>1</sup>The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

**The Bride Confesses Her Love**

*She*

<sup>2</sup>Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine;

<sup>3</sup>your anointing oils are fragrant;  
your name is oil poured out;  
therefore virgins love you.

<sup>4</sup>Draw me after you; let us run.  
The king has brought me into his chambers.

*Others*

We will exult and rejoice in you;  
we will extol your love more than wine;  
rightly do they love you. *She*

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<sup>11</sup> *Rabbi Ezra Ben Solomon of Gerona, Commentary on the Song of Songs and other Kabbalistic Commentaries*, transl'd by Seth Brody, (Medieval Institute Publications 1999).

a thorough comparison of the Song to ancient Egyptian love songs. His efforts have worked toward increasing our understanding of the ancients' views of life and love.<sup>12</sup> In a manner akin to the Song, the ancient Egyptian love songs compared love to many of the more precious items of the day:

Your love is as desirable...as oil with honey.<sup>13</sup>

If the Song is inspected simply on its own terms, without any editorial insertions, in addition to the difficulty of figuring who is speaking where, there are a number of other unusual features of this book, compared to others in the Bible. The content of the book makes it stand out. This is not a book that clearly teaches theology nor does it have any clear religious themes. It is not a history book. It is not a prophetic book, nor even a book that teaches life principles. It has no discernable plot. It is not a collection of worship Psalms, or a book of lamenting. This book, in its most literal reading, is a proclamation of love between a man and a woman.

The Song of Songs is unique in the Bible, for nowhere else within it can be found such a sustained paean to the warmth of love between man and woman. It is completely occupied with that one theme. No morals are drawn; no prophetic preachments are made.<sup>14</sup>

Over the last two thousand plus years, faced with this unique book and the difficulties of interpretation, scholars have suggested a number of different approaches to appreciate and explain the book. Those approaches are often categorized into two separate groups: those with a "literal" reading and those with an "allegorical" reading. Hand in hand with these two groups of interpretations have come assortments of ideas over the type of literature expressed by the Song.

### *Literal*

Some Jewish scholars considered the literal approach as early as the first century; however, it was certainly the minority view among Christians and Jews, at least until the last two hundred years. This literal view sees the Song as a collection of love songs, a collection of songs used in weddings, or even one long expression of love in verse. In part responding to this view, Rabbi Akiva uttered a curse upon

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<sup>12</sup> Fox, Michael V., *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (U. of Wisc. Press 1985).

<sup>13</sup> *Cairo Love Songs*, Group A:20B(A). See Fox at 31.

<sup>14</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 19, at 15.

anyone who would read or sing the Song of Songs as a mere secular love song.<sup>15</sup> A literal view of the Song as erotic poetry was even rejected as heresy at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 AD.

The cause for concern over a literal interpretation has frequently been both the absence of any direct religious themes, as well as the clearly erotic nature of many poetic verses. The Song does contain verses that are clearly devoted to the physical nature of love as well as a number that are euphemistically phrased, but still discernable after a brief thought. Passages like 1:2, 12-13, 4:1-5 are readily apparent in their statements and references. The metaphors found in 2:5; 2:16; 4:6, 12; 6:2, etc. are not as obvious to 21<sup>st</sup> century readers, but they make sense upon reflection. The N.I.V. Study Bible does an especially good job at pointing out some of these metaphors in appropriately tactful language. As one begins to follow through these metaphors, the literal approach to the Song becomes more readily understood.

### *Allegorical*

The allegorical ideas behind the Song take on a number of different approaches. Some see in the Song a reflection of God's love for his people. This approach often seeks to impart some "mystical message of comfort and hope...from the text."<sup>16</sup> With this approach, the shepherd in the Song is seen as representing God, while the Beloved is God's people. The Song then is no longer an a-religious love expression, but is suddenly a great religious expression of an incredibly intense and personal love from God toward his people. This allegorical view is seen as widespread among the rabbis in the time of the New Testament, and is considered by many as the likely prevailing view among the general populace as well.<sup>17</sup>

Some ancient Jewish rabbis saw an allegorical proclamation of God's history with Israel. The *Targum*, an Aramaic translation/commentary on the Jewish Scriptures that dates in the first millennium AD, speaks of the Song as an allegory of Israel's history from the Exodus, through the time of the Targums, and extending further to the time of the Messiah and a third temple.<sup>18</sup> Some of the more mystical Jewish

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<sup>15</sup> The *Tosefta* (Sanh. 12:10) records Rabbi Akiva as saying; "He who trills his voice in the chanting of the Song of Songs in the banquet-halls and makes it a secular song has no share in the world to come."

<sup>16</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 19, at 16.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> See, Pope at 95ff for a good exploration of the Targum and its five periods of history supposedly set out in the Song.

sages in the Middle Ages saw in the Song an allegory of the union between the active and passive parts of the intellect.

Christian scholars for millennia have seen in the Song the allegorical interpretation of Christ and his love for his bride, the Church. This Christian allegory is further understood and explained by the Ephesians passage where Paul instructed husbands:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies (Eph. 5:25-28).

The Church Father Origen managed to combine the literal and allegorical ideas. He accepted that the original Song was by Solomon as a celebration of Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter. Yet Origen then explained that the higher meaning was one that applied the love verses to Christ and his bride, and ultimately Christ and the individual believer. This was but one of many interpretations provided in allegory. Over the millennia, these interpretations have ranged from the Virgin Mary as the beloved, seen then to support her veneration, to "wisdom" being the beloved, indicating the importance God places on wisdom. Because of this wide range of allegorical interpretations, with no real foundation for setting one over an other, scholars have moved from this approach in the last century or so.

The flexibility and adaptability of the allegorical method, the ingenuity and the imagination with which it could be, and was, applied, the difficulty and impossibility of imposing objective controls, the astounding and bewildering results of almost two millennia of application to the Canticle, have all contributed to its progressive discredit and almost complete desertion.<sup>19</sup>

This has brought about the renewed reading of the Song in a literal sense, as lyrics of physical, emotional, and sexual love.

In the midst of these interpretations, there is also a discussion over the form of the Song. Some see the song as a drama; others as a poem(s), still others (few in number) see the Song as an Israelite cultic conversion of a pagan liturgy. These form discussions have taken center stage as the allegorical approach has subsided. The "form" discussions center on the issue:

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<sup>19</sup> Pope, at 90.



If we are to take the Song as a literal proclamation of love, then how is it structured?

This takes head-on the idea of how the passages fit together and whether they are simply read straight away.

### *Dramatic Form*

Chief among the form ideas in the last two centuries has been that of an early Israelite drama. This theory supposes that the verses consist of speaking roles by different characters in the early Hebrew equivalent of a play. The famous 19<sup>th</sup> century German scholar Franz Delitzsch readily admitted that,

The *Song* is the most obscure book of the Old Testament.<sup>20</sup>

He then proposed that, “The Song is a dramatic pastoral.” As he reconstructed the Song, it had two central characters, the shepherdess named Shulamith and Solomon. He did not consider the piece one for a theatrical performance, but he still divided it into six acts:

1. The lovers hold each other in mutual affection (1:2-2:7).
2. The lovers seek and finally find each other (2:8-3:5).
3. The fetching of the bride followed by the wedding (3:6-5:1).
4. The lovers finding love scorned, but then re-won (5:2-6:9).
5. A description of Shulamith as an attractive yet humble princess (6:10-8:4).
6. The ratification of the love covenant in Shulamith’s home (8:5-14).<sup>21</sup>

Delitzsch then divided each Act into two scenes.

This all seems nice, tidy, and almost a great explanation, but as one reads through the history of scholars writing on this, it suddenly becomes apparent this approach is less than clear. A number of other scholars using the dramatic approach suggest that there are not two characters, but three! The story is no longer the touching love drama of Delitzsch, but suddenly is a love triangle trying to sort out which love reigns supreme! Still others see the main characters of the drama, but add a chorus and even a narrator!

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<sup>20</sup> Delitzsch, Franz, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, (translated by M. G. Easton) (T & T Clark 1885), (republished by Wipf & Stock 2009), at 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, at 9-10.

There is much, much more to be written about the many different views of the Song. Luther rejected the idea of the Song as straight allegory of God and his people, instead opting for the semi-allegorical approach of the Song as describing the peace of Solomon's empire and the appreciation of Solomon for that peace. In light of all these and so many other views, what are we to do with these eight chapters? How shall we conclude such a necessarily brief and restricted study?

## CONCLUSION

There are several points that can be made in reference to the Song, that, while not giving a full and complete resolution to all the questions posed, certainly can aid us in our lives before the Lord. We will deal with these below in the Points for Home. But first we should consider a few ideas, starting with Bob Dylan.

"The Bob", as Dylan is affectionately known in our home, has an incredible knack to take lyrics in song and write them in such a way that they promulgate an idea—they make his point—but do so in a generic way that lets the listener personalize the song and relate it to one's own life. Consider the anti-war anthem "A Hard Rain's a Gonna Fall." Dylan has lines like, "I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it." Or later in that song "I heard one person starve, I heard many people laughin'." Throughout the song, he makes it clear that there are tragedies and dangers. He does it in metaphor and picture. Is the song an allegory? Is it literal? It is both and neither. It is a poetic representation of his ideas that convey a message that most anyone with much thought can personalize.

I suspect the same is likely true of the Song. We have here in Scripture a Song that is the highest song. This is a song that reaches into the heart in allegory and literal truth. It is a song that expresses the heights of love and devotion. It is a song that can be expanded to any time, any era, and any people, in a way that communicates multiple eternal truths of God.

With that in mind, we offer the following Points for Home.

## POINTS FOR HOME

1. *"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine"* (Song of Songs 1:2).

Regardless of how you read the Song, it teaches the simple truth that there is a dignity, and a God-given beauty to true human love. This point from the Song is especially useful in a world of extremes on this issue. The extremes range from those who would have us understand that true physical love is somehow "base" and "lesser" than the heights of intellect. Or those that debase physical love into physical lust concerned only with self-gratification.

Full human love in a marriage relationship gives both dignity and honor to the physical attraction of spouses as well as the emotional attraction. To take away physical love is to remove a special part of God's gift. To take the other extreme similarly moves away from God's divine dignity into base pornography, devoid of the spiritual loving aspect. Both extremes are rejected in the Song. Physical love takes its rightful place as an expression and part of the union of heart and mind. The Song makes it clear; the physical aspects of marriage are God's gifts to his people. Along with the emotional and intellectual, the physical aspect should be holy, pure, and fun!

Once we see this principle in play, we should not be surprised to see it expressed in other situations of God's love. It can easily be seen in God's love of Israel, his love of the church, his love of the individual. The stretch to allegory is simple, because it is molding one story of divine love to another. This is very similar to the way Paul brings together the love and union of a marriage to that of Christ and the church:

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church (Eph. 5:28-32).

2. *"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."* (Song of Sol. 2:4).

In God's love, and in the human expression of God's love, there is great cause for rejoicing. This harkens back to the creation story of Genesis where out of all of creation, there was not a suitable helper for man until God made woman. This binding love between a man and a woman is a cause for rejoicing. We should not be surprised that it was a wedding celebration that brought forth the Lord's first miracle at Cana. Jesus changed water into wine in the celebration spirit of that blessed event. In the book of Revelation we are privy to the heavenly scene where the bride of Christ is clothed in purity and made ready for a wedding feast with the Son of God. These are all images that flow from the understanding that God has created human love as a proper reason to celebrate and rejoice!

3. *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness"* (2 Tim. 3:16).

When Paul wrote these words, as a Rabbi trained by Jerusalem's best, and as a missionary of the gospel, he had lived his life studying the Scriptures. These Scriptures included the Song of Songs. As Rabbi Akiva noted just a few years later, "no man in Israel ever disputed about the Song of Songs!" For Paul, the Song was breathed out by God. Moreover, it was useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. I would suggest his statement is just as true today.

In the Song, we have a tool that teaches love in a full and Godly fashion. We see an affirmation of love as desire, even as love is set to fulfill desire. This is love that flows both ways, where both give and receive. This measure not only teaches us of divine love, but also reproves and corrects us when our love is self-centered. Song of Songs 7:10 is frequently quoted:

I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me (Song of Sol. 7:10)

This is a mutual love, where each lives for the other, rather than one selfishly centered on one's own needs and desires. Passages like this are certainly useful for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness! They lift up marital love as something God ordained and blessed from the outset, in great contrast to what it has sadly become to so many today — a frustrating pursuit of selfish pleasure from disposable partner to disposable partner.

### **WANT MORE?**

Next week we resume our historical study of Israel, this time focusing on the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Read 2 Kings and get ready! Email us your thoughts and questions at [wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com](mailto:wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com).