

THE MAJOR ISSUE: AN INTERPRETIVE GRID

- Option 1: The book is to be interpreted literally as a marriage manual.
- Option 2: The book is a historic love story to be interpreted allegorically.
 - As the love between Christ and the church.
 - As the love between Christ and the Christian.
 - As the love between God and Israel.

MY POSITION AND A DEFENSE

- I believe that the book is a historic love story that shows God's love for Israel.
- Defense of this position:
 - Why I don't take a literal interpretation:
 - Until modern times such an interpretation was unheard of.
 - Mankind doesn't need a Biblical revelation for effective sex.
 - Why I don't accept the view that says the book is allegory concerning Christ's love for the church or the Christian:
 - This is not the story of the love of an existing relationship, it is the story of enticement of a love that doesn't exist.
 - It is the *renewed love* of the remnant that is the subject of the book.
 - When the remnant of Israel falls in love with Christ, He will then be fully known as her King.

THE KEY VERSE

- Song of Solomon 8:1 is the key verse to understanding the song.
 - "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; Yea, I should not be despised." (Song of Solomon 8:1, KJV 1900)
- This verse shares the desire that Christ the Messiah has for Israel: to be in a very natural and very open relationship that would never be questioned.
 - The King is going to express His love until His goal is reached and it can be said, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (6:3).

UNDERSTANDING CHAPTER 1

- Chapter 1 gives an overview and the end of the matter, and later the detail will be given.
- Like the prophecy of the Psalms, the *revelation* is given in early chapters, followed by the description of the *remnant*.
- Love-talk in Chapter 1:
 - The loved remnant (the woman) speaks of the qualities of her Beloved King, and she does so openly and proudly.
 - The King (the man) speaks reassuringly of his delight in the woman.

- We notice that the woman in the song will be much more variable in her love, and needy of the King's reassurance.

THE JEWISH INTERPRETATION

- The Jewish Targum (commentary) teaches that there are 10 songs in the Bible:
 - The song of Adam on the Sabbath – Psalm 92
 - The song of Moses at the parting of the sea – Exodus 15
 - The song of Israel – Numbers 21:17
 - The song of Moses at his pending death – Deut. 32
 - The song of Joshua when the sun stood still – Josh 10:12
 - The song of Deborah and Barak on the defeat of Sisera – Judges 5:1
 - The song of Hannah when praying for a son – 1 Sam. 2:1
 - The song of David, celebrating his blessings – 2 Sam. 22:1
 - The song of Solomon – the entire book
 - The song of the future redeemed – Isaiah 30:29
- The Targum also teaches that the history of Israel is embedded in chapter 1:
 - V. 4 – The desire of the righteous to follow the *shekinah* glory
 - V. 5 – The embarrassment over the creation of the golden calf, where the sages said that caused the creators to be covered in soot and ash.
 - V. 6 – The assembly of Israel addresses the assembly of nations, saying that they are darker than the other nations because they followed the pagan practices of the other nations. In this sense, “black” is not a reference to skin color, but to sin.
 - V. 7 – This is the plea of Moses, according to the Jewish sages, and he asks of God how the sinful nation is going to survive in the heat of the noonday sun. He does not want to be “veiled” (not knowing how they will survive).
 - V. 8 – These words of the Lord were the response to Moses, but directed at the nation, instructing her to “feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents,” i.e.: learn from the Law and the Prophets.
 - V. 9 – a reference to the remnant being like the horses of Pharaoh...destined for judgment.
 - V. 10 – the laws and precepts of the Torah are the harness ropes over the cheeks and the yoke around the neck of the maiden, making her an object of beauty rather than destruction.
 - V. 11 – the tablets of stone and the 10 Commandments are the borders and studs.
 - V. 12 – the Law being given, God smells the odor of His people, and is reminded of His love for them, thus sending Moses back to the people.
 - V. 13 – Moses is going back to a people deserving punishment and, figuratively, already on the altar of sacrifice, but God will draw them to Himself and tenderly save them.
 - V. 14 – The Ark of the Covenant (the kippur) is given as an instruction immediately after the golden calf.
 - V. 15 – When the children of Israel are obedient, they are beautiful, as the proper sacrifice on the altar.
 - V. 16 – Israel responds and rejoices in a fruitful relationship.

EXEGETICAL NOTES

- Verse 1 - This is the ninth of 10 songs, according to the Jewish Targum.
- Verse 2 –
 - The woman (the remnant of Israel), is immediately presented as one desirous of the King's love and the expression of that love. She will be seen to lack the confidence in herself. Her love is going to be much more variable than that of the King. Her "self-esteem" is weak and she often finds fault with herself. This is allegory of the love of the remnant for her King.
 - The **kisses of his mouth** should not be seen as erotic, for the mouth is the only thing we have with which to kiss. This is not "kisses on the mouth," in an erotic sense. Her, the maiden desires public display of affection.
- Verse 3 –
 - An **ointment** in Biblical days was used for anointing. It represented the reign of a priest or king. The **virgins love thee** because He was able to anoint them for leadership in the coming Kingdom.
- Verse 4 –
 - **Draw me** –
 - This is the final desire of the remnant. She passionately wants to be loved by her King. (See Hosea 11:4 and Ps. 45:14).
 - The Jewish Targum states that the words **Draw me, we will run after thee** were spoken by the righteous in the days of the Exodus, when they saw the *shekinah* glory in the pillar of fire / cloud.
 - **We will be glad** - Notice the 2nd person plural - In some manner, the beloved remnant comes with an escort of fair maidens.
 - **We will remember...** -
 - An alternate translation:
 - "More than of wine will we tell of your loving, for more than the handsome You do they love."¹
 - In this sense, the maidens say of the King: You are better than the wine and better than all the handsome young men of the Kingdom.
- Verse 5 –
 - **I am black** - This should be compared to the appearance of the King in Song of Solomon 5:10. Here the remnant is ashamed of her looks in comparison to that of the King.
 - The Targum, in taking the view that this chapter covers the history of Israel, states that the children of Israel turned black from heat and soot in making the golden calf, but when they repented, their faces began to shine, and this occurred when they made curtains for the tabernacle that allowed the *shekinah* to once again dwell among the people.
 - **Ye daughters of Jerusalem** –
 - Throughout the song, these are the other women of the King's harem. Since they must be seen as part of the redeemed, yet not the coming remnant, we will consider them to be the Old Testament saints.
 - The phrase daughters of Jerusalem is used seven times in the book, always in a positive manner.

¹ Goulder, Michael D. *The Song of Fourteen Songs*. Vol. 36. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986. Print. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series.

- The phrase is also used eight times outside of this book, in singular or plural forms. It appears that the singular is a reference to the remnant while the plural is a reference to the Old testament saints.
 - The prophets always speak in the singular and always (with the possible exception of Isaiah 37:22) in reference to the future remnant.
 - In Micah 4:8 it says, "The kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (in the singular) and the reference is to the remnant.
 - In Zeph. 3:14 the daughter rejoices because "The Lord hat taken away thy judgments" (v. 15).
 - In Zech. 9:9 the daughter is told to rejoice because, "thy King cometh unto thee."
 - In Luke 23:28, on the way to the cross, Jesus instructs the "daughters of Jerusalem" to "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."
- Verse 6 – The Targum view is this is the address of the Jewish assembly to the nations. They are "black" with sin (not skin color) because **mine own vineyard have I not kept**, but followed the gods of other nations. Since Israel is held to a higher standard, they are "black" while the other nations are not.
- Verse 7 –
 - **Tell me –**
 - The remnant longs to know where the King will be, so that in the heat of the day she can find respite from the sun. She no longer wants to be among **the flocks of thy companions**, but rather in the tent of the King.
 - In the Targum, this is the plea of Moses, at the beginning of his work, as he asks of God how the sinful nation is going to survive in the heat of the noonday sun. He does not want to be "veiled" (not knowing how they will survive).
 - **Why should I be as one who turneth aside –**
 - Another rendering is, "why am I as one veiled, By the ranks of thy companions?" (YLT).
 - In either rendering, the remnant desires to be in the fold rather than **as one that turneth aside** or as one "veiled" (either reference to the blinding of the Jewish people or their mourning).
- Verse 8 –
 - The King does not answer her question, but tells her how to find her answer: **by the footsteps of the flock**.
 - That is, "you'll find the King when you follow Israel's own teaching (the law and the prophets).
 - It is important to recognize that Israel is going to be brought to salvation by the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament), not the Greek Scriptures (the New Testament).
 - Note: an alternate understanding is that this is the "daughters of Jerusalem" (v. 5) who are singing this portion of the song, toward the young lady, as a means of encouragement.