

## 09C8 Week 5 – Song of Songs

### **History of Interpretation**

- Allegory of God's love for Israel
- Allegory of Christ's love for the church (Origen)
- Allegory of the Holy Spirit's love for the soul (Origen, Gregory, John of the Cross)
- Anthology of human sexual love (since 17<sup>th</sup> Cen.)

### **Understanding ANE Love Poetry**

- Use of the terms "brother" and "sister" and "king" are not a reference to family relationships or royalty, but rather they are terms of endearment
- Covers all the senses using imagery of exotic sights, plants, animals, odors, colors, etc
- The beloved is most beautiful, unique
- Liquids – wine, perfume, oil are metaphors of love and sex
- (4:1) "eyes are doves" = eyes are glances, doves are messengers of love
- (4:1) "Hair like a flock of goats.." = a flock of goats coming down a hillside creates a wavy pattern

### **Structure**

- Non-linear anthology of poetry
- Characters include: lover (male), beloved (female), Chorus, Solomon

### **Desire (1:2-4)**

- The woman desires her lover and understands she is not alone

### **Conversation about Love (1:5-2:7)**

#### **Woman (1:5-7)**

- The woman is of common social class, works in the sun
- "veiled woman" should read "one who wanders"
- She longs to be part of the "flock" of this shepherd, one who he cares for and tends

#### **Exchange of Compliments: M-(1:9-11,15, 17, 2:2) / W-(1:12-14, 16, 2:1, 2:3-7)**

- "Mare among horses" → chariot horses are stallions. A mare among them would naturally arouse all of them
- Satchet of myrrh, henna blossoms → exotic perfumes, colors
- (2:4) Famous verse used in songs....completely out of context

#### **Chorus (2:7)**

- Speaks of the power / seductive effect of love....be careful about arousing it!

### **Woman's long speech (2:8-3:11)**

#### **Scene 1 (2:8-17)**

- Imagines or sees her lover coming to her and inviting her to escape for love
- Compares him to stag, gazelle
- Images of winter and spring → tis the season for love, the time is right
- There is a search, she wants her lover to search and find her
- They cannot consummate their love, but remain separated, walled in by circumstance

#### **Scene 2 (3:1-5)**

- The woman is sleepless with desire to the extent that she wanders the city in search of her love

#### **Chorus (3:5)**

#### **Scene 3 (3:6-11)**

- Solomon's procession...and a marriage image (3:11)
- "Carriage" (NIV) is incorrect....better "litter" or couch
- Either a fantasy wedding involving love making in the parents chambers (3:4) or a description of a real event

### **Man's long speech (4:1-5:1)**

#### **Speech 1 (4:1-7)**

- An exotic description of her body

## 09C8 – Esther / Song of Solomon

- Pomegranates, flocks of goats, fawns, myrrh...all depict perfect beauty

### **Speech 2 (4:8-15)**

- An invitation to leave her place of refuge and join him
- The mountains in northern mountains...a favorite image of grandeur and beauty, But also an indication of her unobtainability, remoteness
- She is like a secret / private garden of kings filled with every possible exotic plant & spice...i.e pleasure
- But she is “locked up,” “enclosed,” “sealed” (4:12)

### **Woman (4:16)**

- She hopes for her beauty to compel her lover to come “into the garden”

### **Speech 3 (5:1)**

- He speaks of the joy of tasting from the garden

### **Chorus**

- Depicts love as a banquet to be enjoyed to the fullest

## **Woman’s second speech (5:2-6:3)**

### **Scene 1 (5:2-8)**

- Runs parallel to chapter 3
- She imagines or hears her lover come to the door of her chambers...but then is not there

### **Chorus (5:9)**

- Asks the woman a question, “how is your lover better than others?”

### **Response to Chorus (5:10-16)**

- Description of the favorable features of her lover

### **Chorus (6:1)**

- Where did your lover go? They ask

### **Response to Chorus (6:2-3)**

- My lover has come into my garden!

## **Man’s second speech (6:4-7:9)**

### **Speech 1 (6:4-10)**

- Repeats the poetic descriptions of the woman
- She exceeds all others, she is unique in beauty
- “stars in procession” (NIV) would be better translated “noteworthy in splendor”

### **Unknown (6:11-13)**

- May describe a rendezvous, unclear who is speaking
- “Shulammitte” aka a Solomon-like woman, an exemplary person

### **Speech 2 (7:1-9)**

- Poetic depiction of his lovers body using idealized geographic references of Isreal
- The geographic references conclude with expressions of desire

## **Woman’s reply (7:10-13)**

- She accepts (or is willing and anxious to accept) the invitation to flee to the country side and make love

## **Conversation about love (8:1-14)**

### **Woman (8:1-4, 5b-10, 14)**

- “if only”...indicates her desire that it was possible for them to be lovers
- The refrain “do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires”...the provocative power of love
- (vv 6-7) She longs for the permanence of commitment, she has already committed herself to him
- Love is more powerful than death, fire, flood

### **Chorus (8:5)**

- Asks a question to propel the drama

### **Man (8:11-13)**

- The woman’s body is better than any garden of Solomon’s

### **Close (8:14)**

- The two lovers exit together