

Dr. Lloyd Carr, Song of Songs, Session 1 of 4, Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Carr, Song of Songs, Session 1 of 4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. G. Lloyd Carr's first lecture in a four-part series on the Song of Songs examines the book's authorship, dating, and interpretive approaches. **He discusses various scholarly opinions** regarding Solomon's role—as author, dedicatee, or allegorical figure—and the complexities of dating the text. **Carr then explores four major interpretive methods:** allegory, typology, the dramatic approach, and a more straightforward, "natural" reading emphasizing the love between a man and a woman. **He critiques the limitations of allegory and typology**, finds the dramatic interpretation problematic due to the text's structure, and favors a reading that appreciates the Song of Songs as a beautiful love poem.

2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Carr, Song of Songs, Session 1 of 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms and Wisdom → Song of Songs).



**Carr_Song_Session
01.mp3**

3. Briefing Document, Carr, Song of Songs, Session 1 of 4

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts on the Song of Songs:

Briefing Document: Dr. Lloyd Carr's Lecture 1 on the Song of Songs

Overview:

This document summarizes the key points from Dr. G. Lloyd Carr's first lecture on the Song of Songs. Dr. Carr, a seasoned Biblical scholar, introduces the book within the context of Old Testament wisdom literature, explores the authorship question, and presents four major interpretive approaches to the book.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Song of Songs within Wisdom Literature:

- The Old Testament is divided into three main sections: Torah (Law), Historical/Prophetic Books, and Wisdom Literature.
- Wisdom literature (Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes) is based on the Torah, but focuses on practical, everyday life, rather than grand narratives of law or national history. It's concerned with universal human questions: "Why are we here? What's life all about? Where are we going?"
- The Song of Solomon, as part of this genre, examines these questions through the lens of human relationships.
- Dr. Carr describes Wisdom Literature as "probably the closest the Hebrews ever came to what we would call in the Western world, philosophy."

1. The Title and its Significance:

- The title "Song of Songs" is a Hebrew idiom signifying the greatest or best song. "It's the best there is."
- Other titles include "The Song," "Canticles," or "The Greatest Song."
- The text is a song, implying it may have been set to music, or part of an oral tradition. Dr. Carr mentions a recent oratorio adaptation of the Song.

1. Authorship and Dating:

- The Song is attributed to Solomon in the title: "Song of Songs which is Solomon's."

- The question of authorship and dating is significant for understanding its context.
- **Possible Authorship Scenarios:****Solomon as the actual author:** If this is the case, it was written around the mid-900s BC.
- **Attribution to Solomon:** The book was not written by Solomon but attributed to him due to his status as a wise and powerful king from Israel's golden age. "He was sort of the great king, the king of the golden age of Israel, and so the song would be given in his name for a variety of reasons."
- **Dedication to Solomon:** The song may have been written by someone else but dedicated to Solomon, due to his reputation as both a powerful king and a prolific lover. "...Solomon was sort of the Don Juan of the ancient Israelite community."
- **Dating Challenges:** Scholars propose dates ranging from Solomon's time (900s BC) to the post-exilic period (400s-300s BC) due to vocabulary, theology, and other factors. Dead Sea Scrolls fragments place an upper limit on dating as 2nd century BC.
- Dr. Carr's position is that the book likely originated in the period of Solomon, possibly with editing within the next 100 years or so (10th - 7th century BC).

1. References to Solomon within the Text:

- **Chapter 1:5:** The woman's comparison of herself to the dark "curtains of Solomon" is likely a reference to beauty, not a direct connection to the author.
- **Chapter 8:11-12:** The woman contrasts Solomon's extensive vineyards with her own, suggesting independence and autonomy. "Solomon may have his thousand, seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, but she's got her own." It is about her own autonomy and her ownership of her own body.
- **Chapter 3:6-11:** A detailed description of a royal wedding procession featuring a palanquin "of Solomon," could relate to his marriage to an Egyptian princess or serve as a symbol of royal power. Dr. Carr posits this may be a "picture of the glory and the mighty wealth and splendor... of the king". He believes this passage does not directly fit into the structure of the text.
- Dr. Carr concludes that references to Solomon do not definitively prove authorship, dedication, or that Solomon is one of the main protagonists.

1. Interpretation Approaches:

- Dr. Carr outlines four main approaches to interpreting the Song of Songs: Allegory, Typology, Drama, and the Natural (or Literal) approach.
- **Allegory:** "To say one thing but mean something else." The method originates from the ancient Greeks and attempts to discover a hidden or spiritual meaning behind the literal text, often rejecting the historical/literal understanding. "In allegory, you take an idea... and say, oh, it doesn't mean that, it means this."
- Originated with Greek philosophers who reinterpreted Homeric stories to avoid their crude depiction of the gods.
- Jews in Alexandria applied this method to scripture due to perceived problems within the biblical text. A good example is Philo.
- A rabbinic example: Myrrh between the breasts is not a lover, but God's presence on the Ark. This method tends towards spiritualization, often at the expense of the historical setting.
- **Typology:** Accepts the historical validity of the Old Testament event (the type) and then finds a fulfillment in the New Testament (the anti-type).
- An example of this is with the idea of Jesus fulfilling the Messianic prophecy.
- Psalm 45, a love song about a king, is seen in Hebrews 1 as referring to Jesus. Solomon (or another king) is the type, while Jesus is the anti-type.
- Dr. Carr cautions that typology should be used carefully, particularly when the New Testament does not directly make those connections and warns that it is "dangerous if it's taken beyond what the scripture itself permits."
- **Drama:** Views the Song as a stage play or cultic ritual. Origen was an early proponent of this, and Franz Delitzsch revived the idea in the 1900s.
- There is no real plot, and it goes around in circles instead of progressing linearly. "It doesn't start, move through, and come to a conclusion."
- There are no stage directions, and the speakers are not clearly identified, and no directions for specific acts on stage.
- Dr. Carr, with his own experience directing drama, concludes that "this simply would not make a good stage play."

- **Natural/Literal Approach:** Interprets the text as a love song or love poem depicting the relationship between a man and woman. It sees the Song as a treatment of ordinary human relations and love.
- Dr. Carr notes the desire to approach the material in its apparent form, as a natural approach.

Concluding Remarks:

Dr. Carr's first lecture sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the Song of Songs. He emphasizes the book's place within wisdom literature, raises questions regarding authorship and dating, and introduces the four major interpretative lenses through which the text has traditionally been approached. He subtly indicates a preference for the "natural approach" which will be further elaborated in subsequent lectures. The lecture underscores the importance of considering these interpretive approaches in order to fully appreciate the nuances of this book of the Bible.

4. Carr, Song of Songs, Session 1 of 4

Song of Songs Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the three main sections of the Old Testament, and what is the general focus of each?
2. How is the title "Song of Songs" meant to be understood in Hebrew, and what is its significance?
3. What are the three possible roles of Solomon in relation to the Song of Songs as discussed in the lecture?
4. According to the lecture, what are the possible date ranges for when the Song of Songs was written, and what factors contribute to the uncertainty?
5. What is the allegorical approach to interpreting the Song of Songs, and what are its roots in Greek philosophy?
6. How did the Jewish community in Alexandria come to adopt the allegorical method of interpretation?
7. What is typology, and how does it relate to the interpretation of the Song of Songs?
8. Why is the dramatic interpretation of the Song of Songs ultimately rejected in the lecture?
9. What is the "natural approach" to interpreting the Song of Songs, and what does it suggest about the content of the book?
10. What does Dr. Carr suggest about his own interpretation of the author and the date of the Song of Songs?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The three main sections are the Torah, the historical books (including the prophets), and the wisdom literature. The Torah is the foundation, the law; the historical books detail the civic and political life of the nation; and the wisdom literature explores practical, philosophical questions.

2. "Song of Songs" is a Hebrew idiom signifying the superlative, meaning it's the greatest song ever written. It emphasizes the exceptional quality of the song, comparing it to the "holy of holies."
3. Solomon could be the author, the person to whom the song is dedicated, or a literary image of a great lover or king. These possibilities explore different connections to Solomon's historical and symbolic roles.
4. The dates range from Solomon's time (mid-900s BC) to the first or second centuries BC, with the post-exilic period (400s-300s BC) being a common scholarly position. The uncertainty stems from varying opinions on vocabulary, theology, and the book's unity.
5. The allegorical approach interprets the Song of Songs by understanding it to mean something other than what it literally says. Its roots are in Greek philosophy of the 500s BC, where philosophers reinterpreted Homer's stories to fit their own ideas.
6. The Jewish community in Alexandria adopted allegory through exposure to Greek philosophy and education centers. This led them to reinterpret their own scriptures to align with evolving philosophical and religious views.
7. Typology sees an Old Testament event or figure as a type, with a later figure or event being its fulfillment or anti-type. While it has some relevance in biblical interpretation, it can be dangerous to over apply beyond what the text allows.
8. The dramatic interpretation of the Song of Songs is rejected because it lacks a plot, clear speaker identifications, and stage directions, unlike known dramatic works of the period. This makes it unsuitable for a stage play.
9. The natural approach suggests the Song of Songs is a love poem expressing the relationship between a man and a woman. It is about the experiences, thoughts, and feelings that arise in this love.
10. Dr. Carr believes the Song of Songs was likely written during the period of Solomon, though not necessarily by Solomon himself. He also suggests that it may have been dedicated to Solomon.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the allegorical and typological approaches to interpreting the Song of Songs. How do these approaches differ in their treatment of the literal meaning of the text, and what are the strengths and weaknesses of each?
2. Discuss the significance of the various references to Solomon within the Song of Songs. How might these references influence or shape our understanding of the book's authorship, purpose, and meaning?
3. Evaluate the arguments for and against the Song of Songs as a unified whole versus a collection of shorter poems. How does this debate affect the interpretation of the book, and what evidence supports each side of the argument?
4. How does the historical and cultural context of ancient Israel inform our understanding of the Song of Songs? Explore the various ways that cultural practices and beliefs may have shaped the creation and interpretation of this text.
5. Consider the different ways the Song of Songs has been interpreted throughout history. How do these various approaches reflect the broader cultural, religious, and intellectual trends of their time?

Glossary

- **Torah:** The first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Pentateuch, considered the foundation of Jewish law and teachings.
- **Wisdom Literature:** A genre of Old Testament books focused on practical and philosophical questions, such as Proverbs, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
- **Superlative:** The highest degree of comparison, expressing that something is the best or greatest.
- **Post-exilic period:** The period in Jewish history following the Babylonian exile, typically dated after 539 BC.
- **Allegory:** A method of interpretation in which a literary text is understood to represent a deeper, hidden meaning that is different from its surface meaning.
- **Typology:** A method of interpretation that sees a specific Old Testament event, person, or thing as a "type" or foreshadowing of a "anti-type" or fulfillment in the New Testament or later history.
- **Shekinah:** The dwelling or settling presence of God.
- **Harem:** A secluded area in a palace, often housing the wives and concubines of a ruler.
- **Oratorio:** A large-scale musical work for orchestra, choir, and soloists, often based on a biblical or religious text.
- **Liturgy:** A set form of public religious worship.
- **Natural approach:** An interpretive method which aims to understand the text in its most direct and readily apparent sense, typically not assuming a deeper metaphorical or symbolic interpretation.

5. FAQs on Carr, Song of Songs, Session 1 of 4, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Song of Songs

1. **What is the Song of Songs and where does it fit within the Old Testament?** The Song of Songs, also known as the Song of Solomon or Canticles, is a book within the Old Testament considered part of Wisdom Literature, alongside books like Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Unlike the Torah (Law) and Historical Books which focus on law, national history, and the civic life of the nation, Wisdom Literature, including the Song of Songs, delves into practical aspects of daily life, relationships, and the search for meaning. It seeks to answer big questions like "why are we here?" and "what is the good life?".
2. **Why is it called "Song of Songs"?** The title "Song of Songs" is a Hebrew idiom that signifies the superlative, indicating that this is the greatest or most excellent song ever written. It is akin to saying "the holy of holies," which denotes the most sacred place. Other titles for the book include "The Song," "Canticles," or simply "The Greatest Song."
3. **Who is the author of the Song of Songs and when was it likely written?** While the book is attributed to Solomon in the title, the actual authorship is debated. Some scholars propose Solomon himself wrote it during his reign in the 10th century BC. However, others suggest it could be a later work, possibly from the post-exilic period (400s-300s BC), or that it was dedicated to Solomon or attributed to him due to his status as a wise king and great lover. The text includes references to Solomon, but these don't definitively confirm his authorship. The scholarly consensus places its composition after the exile, between the 4th and 7th centuries BC, though earlier or later dates are not ruled out.
4. **How does the text of the Song of Songs portray Solomon?** Solomon is mentioned in the Song of Songs in several contexts. He is named in the title, referenced in descriptions of his possessions and structures, and depicted in a parade scene of a royal wedding procession. While the text acknowledges his status as a powerful king and wealthy landowner, and also potentially his status as the great lover in ancient Israel, the references might serve to contrast the woman in the poem who chooses her own love over the allure of Solomon's power. This could also represent the king as a literary figure, or an allegory for something greater, like the Messiah.

5. **What are the main approaches to interpreting the Song of Songs?** There are four primary approaches to interpreting the Song of Songs:

- **Allegory:** This approach interprets the text as symbolic, where the literal words point to a hidden spiritual meaning. For example, the love between a man and woman is seen as a representation of the love between God and Israel or Christ and the Church.
- **Typology:** This view sees the Song of Songs as having an original historical meaning but also a deeper meaning, fulfilling a prophecy. Old Testament events and characters are viewed as "types" that foreshadow "antitypes" in the New Testament.
- **Drama:** This approach interprets the book as a dramatic work with various characters, but there isn't enough evidence to support this idea and it lacks plot or explicit stage directions.
- **Natural/Literal Approach:** This perspective interprets the text as it appears to be, as a love song or poem expressing the natural, human relationship between a man and a woman.

1. **What are some examples of how the allegorical approach interprets the text?**

An example of allegorical interpretation in the Song of Songs is the passage where the woman describes her beloved as "a bag of myrrh that lies between my breasts" (1:13). An allegorical reading might interpret this not as a literal image of affection, but as the presence of God's glory (Shekinah) residing between the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. This spiritual interpretation removes the natural, physical aspect of the text.

2. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of the typology approach to the Song of Songs?** The strength of typology is that it's biblically based, the New Testament itself sets up a typological reading of certain Old Testament passages like Psalm 45, but its weaknesses arise when one attempts to impose types onto passages where the scripture makes no such claims. Typology can become problematic when applied too broadly, leading to forced interpretations that may not align with the text's intended meaning. For instance, reading the "queen" in Psalm 45 as a type of the church can cause difficulties, as the word may simply be referring to a woman in the royal harem.

3. **Why is the "natural" or "literal" approach favored, and what does it suggest about the purpose of the Song of Songs?** The natural or literal approach is favored because it seeks to understand the text based on its straightforward meaning, acknowledging the use of poetic and figurative language, without resorting to spiritual or symbolic allegorization. This method sees the book as an exploration of human love and the intimate relationship between a man and a woman, highlighting its value within a normal and healthy experience of human connection. This view emphasizes the natural, emotional, and physical aspects of human love as part of God's design.