

Dr. Lloyd Carr, Song of Songs, Session 2 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 2 of 4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Lloyd Carr's second lecture on the Song of Songs analyzes the book as love poetry, comparing its structure and themes to ancient Near Eastern love poetry. He highlights the use of **parallelism** in Hebrew poetry and examines **similarities** such as the I-Thou relationship, expressions of joy and obstacles to love, and physical descriptions. **Key differences** are also noted, such as the Song's lack of religious elements, hunting motifs, and the confusion of God and nature present in other works. Finally, the lecture discusses the Song's unique vocabulary, including many rare words, and the ambiguous nature of the Hebrew word for "love."

**2. 32 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Carr, Song of Songs, Session 2 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
02.mp3**

3. Briefing Document, Carr, Song of Songs, Session 2 of 4

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpt by Dr. Lloyd Carr on the Song of Songs.

Briefing Document: Dr. Lloyd Carr on the Song of Songs - Lecture 2

Overview: This lecture by Dr. Carr focuses on understanding the Song of Songs as a work of poetry, specifically love poetry, and how it relates to other ancient Near Eastern love poetry. He emphasizes that the Song is not an allegory or typology, but rather a natural expression of love through poetic form. Key to his analysis are the literary devices used, common elements found across ancient love poetry, and the unique distinctions of the Song of Songs.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Song as Poetry:

- **Poetry as Constructed Work:** Carr emphasizes that poetry is not spontaneous but a crafted piece involving "shaping, structuring, some choice of words and idioms and formats." This is in contrast to the idea of a poem being jotted down quickly.
- **Parallelism:** Biblical and ancient Near Eastern poetry primarily uses parallelism rather than rhyme or rhythm. Parallelism is the repetition or addition of a statement in a way that creates a "thought rhyme." Dr. Carr outlines several types:
 - **Standard Parallelism:** Second line repeats the idea of the first (e.g., "leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills").
 - **Antithetical Parallelism:** Second line reverses the idea of the first.
 - **Additive Parallelism:** Second line adds to the first, and subsequent lines may continue this progression.
 - **Chiastic (Cross-shaped) Parallelism:** A statement is made and commented on, and the structure then reverses itself.

1. The Song as Love Poetry:

- **Universal Genre:** Love poetry is common across cultures, from ancient Mesopotamia to the present. While all love poetry deals with similar themes, quality varies.

- **Ancient Near Eastern Love Poetry:** Examples are drawn from Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan. Common elements are shared, as well as some notable differences.
- **Mesopotamian Love Poetry:** Often tied to fertility rituals and the worship of gods and goddesses. The reenactment of sacred marriage between deities was a key theme, often involving the king and a priestess. Explicit sexual language is common in these poems. Dr. Carr quotes an example of the goddess Inanna preparing for her meeting with king Dumuzi.
 - “She picks up the buttock stones and puts them on her buttocks...She picks the sweet honey, and puts it about her loins...She picks black willow, and puts it on her vulva.”
- **Egyptian Love Poetry:** Characterized by shorter pieces, frequently using nature imagery, such as pomegranates and the voice of the turtle dove. Dr. Carr offers examples where the female lover is compared to a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots, and a love poem using the image of the turtle dove.
 1. “The voice of the turtle dove speaks out. The voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.”
- 2. **Common Elements of Love Poetry:**
 - **Gendered Speech:** Women consistently speak twice as many lines as men across all examined examples of love poetry.
 - **I-Thou Statements:** Intimate, singular second-person pronouns are used between lovers ("tu" in French, similar to the second-person singular in Hebrew). This emphasizes personal closeness.
 - **Joy and Excitement:** Love poetry captures the anticipation and joy of the romantic relationship and includes expressions of longing for intimacy.
 - **Hindrances to Love:** Obstacles to love are present, such as family opposition, weather, or other interferences. Obstacles are ultimately overcome as a testament to the strength of the relationship.
 - **Physical Descriptions:** Detailed descriptions of the physical beauty of the beloved are commonplace. Examples are offered from Song of Songs, such as hair like "a flock of goats," and detailed descriptions of facial features, breasts, etc.

- “Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle that feed among the lilies.”
- **Physical Intimacy:** Love poems include references to physical intimacy, often with explicit language, and can include double entendres and metaphorical imagery. The use of bedchambers and secluded places as settings, along with references to fondling, touching, and kissing are common.
- “If I met you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me. I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother, into the chamber of her who conceived me, the bed-chamber.”
- **Family Terms:** The use of terms like "sister," "brother," "king," and "queen" to describe the relationship between lovers is common, even when the lovers are not biologically related. This seems to be a common literary motif rather than literal familial relationships.
- “Come to me my sister, my bride.”

1. **Distinctions of the Song of Songs:**

- **Secular Nature:** Unlike other ancient Near Eastern love poetry, the Song of Songs contains *no* religious vocabulary or cultic references. There are *no* “God-words” in the text. This, according to Dr. Carr, rules out the possibility that it’s allegorical. He does acknowledge that the phrase “a most vehement flame” could potentially be interpreted as a reference to God, but the original text is not explicit.
- “This is a purely secular book.”
- **Absence of Hunting Motifs:** Unlike other ancient love poetry, which uses hunting as a metaphor, the Song of Songs does not contain any hunting imagery. This is notable because hunting was not a common practice in Israel.
- “In ancient Israel, hunting was not part of the culture.”
- **Clear Distinction Between God and Nature:** Unlike other fertility-based poetry, the Song of Songs keeps a clear separation between God and creation. Nature is not divinized.
- “Nature is God’s creation. It is not God.”
- **Lack of Beer References:** While other ancient literature references both wine and beer, there are no references to the brewing of beer in the Song or other biblical materials.

- “I have not been able to find any reference...to the brewing of beer in ancient Israel.”
- **Commitment:** The Song of Songs portrays a consistent, committed relationship with no hint of infidelity or deterioration. This stands in contrast to other literature where relationships are more fluid.
- **Focus on the Present:** The Song focuses on the love relationship and does not include references to family, raising children, or growing old. This is different from other ancient literature that references those life aspects.

1. Vocabulary of the Song of Songs:

- **Unusual Words:** The Song employs a large number of uncommon Hebrew words, with 10% of the vocabulary appearing only once in the entire Hebrew literature. Many other words appear fewer than five times.
- **Problem of Interpretation:** The unusual vocabulary makes precise interpretation of the text difficult and can lead to uncertainty about specific meanings.
- “More than half the time...we have to say, Hmm, this is a good guess, but I really can't be sure.”
- **Common Love Vocabulary:** Despite the unusual words, it uses a common stock of love poetry terms, such as:
 - **Pet names:** fox, gazelle, etc.
 - **Animal names:** locust, turtle dove, etc.
 - **Plant/flower names:** rose of Sharon, etc.
 - **Jewels, spices, trees**
- **Local Specificity:** While using common categories, the vocabulary is specific to the locale of Palestine. This is in contrast to the vocabulary of Egyptian and Babylonian love poems, which would reflect those regions.
- **Double Entendres:** The Song employs words and phrases with double meanings, disguising the explicitness but not concealing it.
- “The meaning here is not hidden, but disguised.”
- **Terms for "To Know":** Three distinct Hebrew words for "to know" are used in the text. One term means to discern or understand, one means to look at or

recognize, and one means to gain knowledge through experience, often used in a sexual context.

- **"Love" Vocabulary:** The Hebrew word *ahav* is the single word for all forms of love (erotic, brotherly, divine) unlike the distinctions of Greek vocabulary. Therefore, interpreting what "love" means requires an understanding of context.

Conclusion: Dr. Carr's analysis highlights the Song of Songs as a sophisticated work of poetry, rooted in the traditions of ancient Near Eastern love poetry. However, it is distinctly secular and human-centered, with unique features that set it apart from other literature of its kind. The analysis of parallelism, the common and uncommon vocabulary, and the exploration of how it compares to love poetry from surrounding cultures provide a deeper insight into the text's form and content. He sets up a problem of interpretation that will require further lectures.

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the core ideas and themes in Dr. Carr's lecture. It is intended to serve as a briefing resource for further discussion and study.

4. Study Guide: Carr, Song of Songs, Session 1 of 4

Song of Songs: Lecture 2 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Dr. Carr, what is the primary characteristic of ancient Near Eastern and biblical poetry, and how does it differ from modern English poetry?
2. Explain the concept of "parallelism" in ancient poetry, including two specific types mentioned by Dr. Carr.
3. How does ancient Mesopotamian love poetry relate to religious worship, and what is the significance of the sacred marriage ritual?
4. What is the significance of the female voice in ancient love poetry, including the Song of Solomon, as discussed by Dr. Carr?
5. What are "I-Thou" statements in love poetry, and why are they important in understanding intimate relationships?
6. Describe the common theme of "hindrances" in love poetry, and give one example of a hindrance from the Song of Solomon.
7. How are physical descriptions of the lovers used in the Song of Solomon, and provide an example of this imagery?
8. What are double entendres in the context of love poetry, and why are they used?
9. What is the significance of the word *yada* in Hebrew, and how is it used in the Song of Solomon?
10. According to Carr, why is the Song of Songs a secular book, unlike other ancient Near Eastern love poetry?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary characteristic of ancient Near Eastern and biblical poetry is parallelism, which focuses on "thought rhyme" rather than word rhyme or rhythm. This differs from modern English poetry, which often relies on free verse or formalized structures of rhythm and rhyme.
2. Parallelism is the repetition or addition of an idea, often creating a "thought rhyme." Two types include standard parallelism where the second line repeats

the first and antithetical parallelism where the second line reverses the first line's idea.

3. Ancient Mesopotamian love poetry is closely tied to religious worship and fertility rituals. The reenactment of the sacred marriage between a god and a goddess, often between the king and a high priestess, was believed to ensure fertility in the land.
4. In ancient love poetry, the female voice often has twice as many lines as the male voice. This is a consistent pattern, suggesting a specific emphasis on the woman's perspective and experience within these poems.
5. "I-Thou" statements are when the lovers address each other using a singular second-person pronoun (like "tu" in French). This form indicates an intimate and personal relationship, distinct from addressing someone in the third person.
6. Hindrances are obstacles that the lovers face in their relationship. An example of this in the Song of Solomon is the brothers who are angry with the woman and assign her the duty of keeping the vineyard to keep her away from the man she loves.
7. Physical descriptions of the lovers in the Song of Solomon are used to express their beauty and desirability. One example is how the woman's eyes are described as "doves behind her veil," and her hair is like "a flock of goats moving down the slopes of Gilead."
8. Double entendres are words or phrases with multiple meanings, often used to create suggestive or layered interpretations. This technique is used in love poetry to disguise meaning while also conveying it to those who are ready to interpret them.
9. *Yada* in Hebrew means knowledge gained by the senses or through experience, and it can denote sexual intimacy. It is used explicitly in the Song of Solomon to reference sexual relationships, distinguishing it from the other uses of "to know."
10. According to Carr, the Song of Songs is secular because it lacks religious vocabulary, and none of the common religious terms found in other Old Testament books are present. Unlike other ancient love poetry, there is no connection to cultic rituals or deities.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer the following essay questions thoroughly, using details from the lecture.

1. Compare and contrast the religious context of ancient Mesopotamian love poetry with the apparent lack of religious context in the Song of Solomon. What implications does this distinction have for the interpretation of the Song of Songs?
2. Analyze the use of parallelism in the Song of Solomon, providing examples of different types of parallelism and explaining how this poetic technique contributes to the overall meaning and impact of the verses.
3. Discuss the significance of the woman's voice in the Song of Solomon and other ancient Near Eastern love poetry. What does the disproportionate number of lines spoken by the female characters suggest about the cultural and social contexts in which these poems were created?
4. Examine the common themes and motifs in love poetry (physical descriptions, hindrances, family terms, etc.) and their representation in the Song of Solomon. To what extent does the Song of Solomon adhere to these traditions, and how does it diverge from them?
5. Explore the complexities of the Song of Solomon's vocabulary, including the high proportion of rare words and the use of double entendres. How do these linguistic challenges affect our understanding and interpretation of the text?

Glossary of Key Terms

Allegory: A story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.

Antithetical Parallelism: A type of parallelism in poetry where the second line presents the opposite idea of the first line, creating a contrasting thought rhyme.

Chiastic Parallelism: A poetic structure where the elements of the first part of a verse are reversed in the second part, creating an "ABBA" pattern (cross-shaped).

Double Entendre: A word or phrase open to two interpretations, one of which is usually risqué or suggestive.

Fertility Ritual: A religious practice aimed at ensuring the reproductive success of land, animals, and people, often involving symbolic or literal sexual acts.

I-Thou Relationship: A personal and intimate relationship where two individuals address each other using singular second-person pronouns, like "tu" in French, indicating closeness.

Parallelism: A poetic technique in ancient Near Eastern and biblical literature where a statement is repeated or added to in a way that creates a "thought rhyme" rather than a word rhyme.

Standard Parallelism: A type of parallelism in poetry where the second line repeats or affirms the idea of the first line, creating a reinforcing thought rhyme.

Typology: A way of interpreting the Old Testament by identifying persons, events, or things that foreshadow similar ones in the New Testament.

Yada: A Hebrew word meaning to know through experience, often used to refer to sexual intimacy.

5. FAQs on Carr, Song of Songs, Session 2 of 4, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided lecture excerpts, formatted in markdown:

Frequently Asked Questions about the Song of Songs

- **What kind of literature is the Song of Songs?**
- The Song of Songs is primarily understood as love poetry, not as allegory, typology, or drama. It is a carefully constructed work, not just random thoughts. It uses literary devices such as parallelism, which involves repeating or adding to a thought, rather than relying on rhyme or rhythm like much of modern poetry. Different forms of parallelism include synonymous, where the second line repeats the first, antithetical where the second line reverses the first, and synthetic where each line adds to the previous. It is a sophisticated work using various poetic techniques.
- **How does the love poetry in Song of Songs compare to other ancient Near Eastern love poetry?**
- Love poetry was common in the ancient world, with examples from Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan. These often relate to fertility rituals and worship, involving gods and goddesses. Mesopotamian poetry, for instance, often includes detailed descriptions tied to the sacred marriage between deities. While the Song of Songs shares common elements with this literature like I-Thou statements, the joy and excitement of love, and physical descriptions, it uniquely lacks any connection to religious or cultic contexts and does not have any references to God.

- **What are some common elements found in love poetry of the ancient Near East, including the Song of Songs?**
- Common elements include the use of I-Thou statements between lovers, expressing a personal and intimate relationship. The poems often highlight the joy and excitement of love, as well as the obstacles or hindrances the lovers face. Physical descriptions are frequent, celebrating the beauty of the beloved. These poems often emphasize the act of looking at the beloved, hearing their voice, and physical contact between them. Family terms such as "brother," "sister," "king," and "queen" are used to describe the relationship, even when not literal.
- **What are some distinct features of the Song of Songs that separate it from other love poetry of the time?**
- Unlike Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian, and Babylonian love poetry, the Song of Songs does not have any connection to fertility cults or religion. There are no religious terms or references to deities found within its text, making it a purely secular love poem. Additionally, the Song of Songs does not include references to the hunt like many other love poems of the time. While other literature often blurs the lines between gods and nature, the Song of Songs maintains a clear distinction between them, aligning with the biblical worldview. It also focuses on the commitment between the lovers without suggesting infidelity or family planning, which is often found in other literature of the period.
- **How do the speakers in the Song of Songs compare, in terms of lines or verses?**
- Consistently, in the Song of Songs, as well as other ancient Near Eastern love poems, the woman speaks twice as many lines as the man. This suggests a deliberate pattern rather than mere happenstance, a common feature of the love poems from the region.
- **What is the significance of the unique vocabulary used in the Song of Songs?**
- The Song of Songs contains a significant number of rare words. Around 10% of the words only appear once in the entire Hebrew literature, with an additional 51 words occurring fewer than five times. This uniqueness of vocabulary, with about 200 words appearing fewer than 20 times in the Old Testament, makes precise interpretation challenging and leads to much debate among scholars. Despite this, common love vocabulary is employed, including pet names, animal names, and references to local plants and places.

- **What are "double entendres" and how do they feature in the Song of Songs?**
- "Double entendres" are words or phrases with multiple meanings. The Song of Songs, like other ancient love poetry, uses many of these. These meanings might be suggestive or more explicit and are meant to be understood on more than one level. In the Song of Songs, this is often used to describe the physical nature of the relationship between the two lovers. These are common in the book and add layers of meaning and appreciation to the text.
- **How is the word 'love' used in Hebrew, and what does it mean for understanding the Song of Songs?**

In Hebrew, there is only one word for love, *ahav*, which does not distinguish between different types of love the way that the Greek language does (agape, phileo, eros). *Ahav* is used to express erotic, brotherly, and sexual love. Therefore, when reading the Song of Songs, it's important to understand the context of the word love to ascertain whether sexual, brotherly, or a more general form of love is being described. The word can refer to the range of human emotions and desires, from desire to affection to intense commitment, so understanding what the word specifically means in each verse requires careful consideration.