

שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמָה



# **The Song of Songs**

**3-Week  
Devotional  
Guide  
Week 1**



**PILLAR  
SEMINARY**  
for CONTEXTUAL LEADERSHIP

# Week 1

## Solomon's Tragic Tale



If we hope to grow from our study of God's word, we need to be willing to change our perspectives, even deeply held ones, on the meaning of texts in the pursuit of the truth. This is often the case with the Song of Songs. Though the Song has often been viewed as providing a pattern or model of a loving intimate relationship, the evidence of the biblical narrative surrounding Solomon, in addition to Solomon's description within the Song itself, make this reading difficult.

The biblical narrative describing the rise and fall of King Solomon is tragic. It's clear that the author of 1 Kings views Solomon in a negative light when placed alongside the Lord's expectations for Israel's kings as described in Deuteronomy 17. For example, despite the biblical law's proscription against amassing large amounts of horses, resources, and wives, Solomon does all three.

|               | Torah             | Solomon       |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <b>Horses</b> | Deuteronomy 17:16 | 1 Kings 10:26 |
| <b>Wives</b>  | Deuteronomy 17:17 | 1 Kings 11:13 |
| <b>Riches</b> |                   | 1 Kings 10:14 |

Even with this negative depiction in the biblical narrative, somehow the church has historically read the song associated with Solomon as providing an exemplar of love, either between God and humans, or between a husband (Solomon) and his wife.

# Week 1

## Solomon's Tragic Tale

The difficulty might arise from the assumption that the Song was authored by or dedicated to Solomon, and is therefore laudatory. Solomon's relationship to the Song is unclear, however, in light of the Hebrew text of verse 1, which states

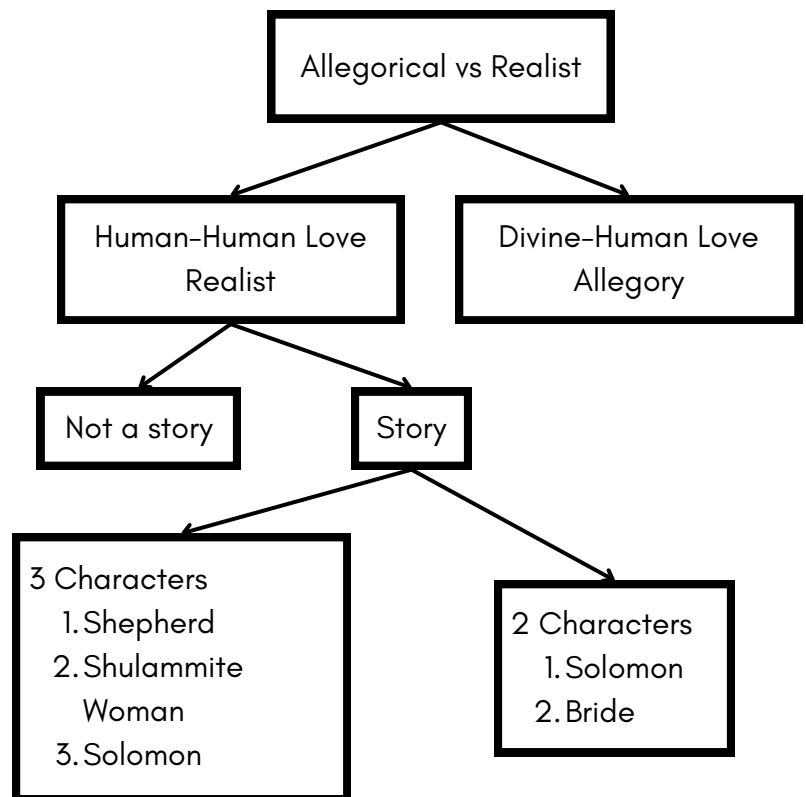
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A song of songs, which is \_\_\_\_\_ Solomon.

The preposition *lamed*, of which "Solomon" is the object in this verse, can be translated into English as "belonging to," "for," or "about" Solomon. Since Solomon receives heavy criticism in our interpretation of the Song, it's unlikely that Solomon wrote it, or it was written "for" him. Therefore, the Song is *about* Solomon.

Throughout the history of the church, readers assumed that the Song should be interpreted as an allegory of divine-human love--that it provides an example of God's love for his people, the Church. Given the New Testament analogy of marriage as a love relationship modeling Christ's love for the church, implications for a relationship of marital love were drawn from the text.

As we'll see in the following weeks of our study, the three-character interpretation, with Solomon serving as the antagonist of the story, is most consistent with the overall biblical perspective on Solomon, in addition to the text of the Song itself.



# Week 1

## Solomon's Tragic Tale

### Guided Prayer

Father, please help me to seek the truth of the Song by faithfully reading, interpreting, and applying it to my life in the coming weeks.

# 1

### Read


Deuteronomy 17


1 Kings 1-11


Song of Songs 1

# 2

### Reflect


 What has been your experience with the Song? Have you read it or studied it church? Which approach did you take?

 Why do you think the divine-human approach has dominated interpretations of the Song for much of church history? What does this say about the way sex is viewed and discussed in the Church?

 How do you think viewing Solomon as a negative character in the story will impact your reading of the Song?

# 3

### Respond

 As people of the text, we must follow the evidence of the text wherever it leads. Does this approach to the Song challenge your understanding of love, marriage, and intimate relationships?



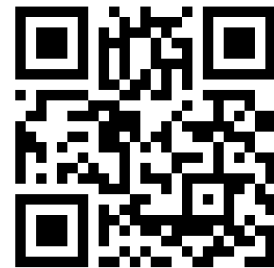
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**Email**    [info@pillarseminary.org](mailto:info@pillarseminary.org)

**Phone**    402.807.3060

[pillarseminary.org](http://pillarseminary.org)