

שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמָה

The Song of Songs

**3-Week
Devotional
Guide
Week 3**



**PILLAR
SEMINARY**
for CONTEXTUAL LEADERSHIP

Week 3

A Song of Protest



As we continue with our study of the Song of Songs, we turn to the theme of protest embedded within the three-person interpretation of the Song. We've seen that this Song gives voice to the vulnerable Shulammitte woman in her critique of Solomon. While 1 Kings 10-11 provide summary assessments of Solomon's tragic tale on the macro-level, the Song zooms into one particular example of a person and relationship disrupted by Solomon's abuse of power. The Song carries with it a prophetic voice that echoes the Lord's judgement against those who abuse the authority they've been given. The Song of Protest demonstrates how much the Lord hates the abuse of power.

As we've previously seen, Deuteronomy 17 provided Israel with the criteria for successful kingship. It's clear, however, that from the time of Solomon forward, Israel's kings generally did not abide by these expectations. Failure of leadership led to a general failure to abide by Torah's ethics throughout the nation, as seen in the prophets. The critiques of Solomon in the Song are therefore consistent with the concerns toward the vulnerable seen throughout the prophets.

| | Example |
|------------------|---------------|
| Oppressed | Isaiah 1:17 |
| Foreigner | Jeremiah 22:3 |
| Poor | Amos 5:11-12 |

Rather than protecting a vulnerable woman, as would be Solomon's charge as Israel's king, he takes advantage of his position to fill his harem with wives and concubines, evidently, at times, against their will.

Week 3

A Song of Protest

In the case of the Shulammitte woman, Solomon and the woman's brothers conspired together to rip her away from the relationship she truly desired with the Shepherd. This criticism, when read within the three-person story we've discussed, is directed squarely at Solomon's abuse of power.

"The Bible repeatedly reminds readers that God will hear those who are least powerful in society and who are the victims of abuse of power by others."

--Carol Smith

There are several clear instances of such a critique, such as the contrast of beautiful, outside, and possibly edenic imagery used in conjunction with the Shulammitte's love for the shepherd (1:4, 7, 8, 14, 17), with the images used in relation to Solomon's bed chamber, which is inside (1:4, 12). The Shulammitte does not want to be with Solomon. Though these critiques are leveled against Solomon in particular, it's reasonable to take them as expressing God's overall distaste for and indictment against the abuse of power in general--especially against those in vulnerable populations.

Of course, there are times when we ourselves are vulnerable and need protection. During these times we have God's assurance that he hears us and has not forgotten our plight. Yet, we must also ask ourselves where we might abuse our own privilege. We must allow the text of the Song to place a mirror before us and critique our own abuse of power in our families and communities.

Outside ↔ *Inside*

Personal ↔ *Impersonal*

Week 3

A Song of Protest

Guided Prayer

Father, please help me to see where I possess power and privilege that should be used to care for those who are vulnerable and oppressed.


1


Read

- Amos 2; 5
- Song of Songs 5-8

2


Reflect

 As you read through the passages in the Song today, take note of all potential critiques of Solomon. How does the idea that the Song is a protest against Solomon's abuse of power update the way you think about God's hatred of the abuse of power?

 Which character do you most identify with in the story of the Song? Do you find yourself more in the place of the vulnerable woman, or the king who has abused his God-given authority? Why?

3

Respond

 Create a list of all the spheres in which you possess influence (e.g., employment, home, community, church). In the next week, seek to improve and more faithfully exercise your authority to look out for the vulnerable in at least one of these spheres.

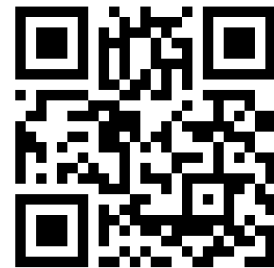
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**PILLAR
SEMINARY**
for CONTEXTUAL LEADERSHIP



Partner with us



Study with us

Email info@pillarseminary.org

Phone 402.807.3060

pillarseminary.org