

Your Name: Fang Li

OT645/745.RW Song of Songs Introductory Analysis

Write a 1000+ word compilation of questions and observations about the Song of Songs based on a fresh reading of the English text. No secondary sources are to be read or consulted prior to this analysis. The point is to engage the book critically and inquisitively to surface any presumptions or understandings you already have and to inspire further study.

Part 1: What do you know (or think you know) about the Song of Songs?

First, prior to reading the book or any secondary literature, state your understanding of the book by answering all the questions below. If you have no clue, feel free to just say that. This is not about giving a right or wrong answer, it's about identifying your assumptions coming into this study. You do not need to employ a scholarly style with this particular assignment, though proper grammar and spelling is expected. You can use a conversational style, but you should run a spelling and grammar check prior to submission.

- How familiar are you with the Song of Songs, also known as Song of Solomon, *Shir Hashirim*, and Canticles?

I have read this book many times. I really like its literary writing style. But I don't have a very clear understanding of its spiritual meaning.

- To what extent do you think this book was considered a controversial part of the Jewish and Christian canon of Scripture and why?

From the text, it is hard to find any spiritual teaching as other canon books in the bible. This book does not mention God directly. There is no reference to the word of God in this book, and people will wonder why the Bible needs this book.

- What do you know about the different ways people have interpreted the book?

People use this love story in this book to express the relationship between Christ and the church. There is very little preaching of this book in the church, and very little teaching in Sunday school. People basically only accept this kind of explanation.

- What is your understanding about why this is part of the Bible?
I think because it is in the Old Testament of the Hebrew Bible. When people determine the canon, it simply includes all the Old Testament Scriptures.

Part 2: What questions are sparked by your investigative reading of the book?

Read or listen through the book afresh from beginning to end without stopping to get the overall feel.

I read or listened through the entire book from beginning to end:

Yes

No

I went back through a second time to address the questions below:

Yes

No

As go back through a second time, write down your questions or observations about the following:

1. **Author/audience:** what do you pick up about the author, audience, and/or genre?

- From V1:1, we know this book has some relationship with Solomon.
- Chapter 3 mentions the wedding of Solomon, it looks like Solomon is a character in the story. It is hard to say that Solomon is the author of this book.
- V8:11-12 also mention Solomon's name, most likely Solomon is not the author of this book
- I feel that this is a play written by later people to tell a beautiful love story to Israelites.

2. **Language/literary features:** what strikes you as intriguing about the language or style of writing? What metaphors pique your interest? What questions do you have about the original Hebrew?

- The description of the love story in this book is very detailed and beautiful. The author uses many metaphors, such as vineyards, trees, meadows, flowers and fruits. There are also many wonderful descriptions of the inner feelings between the two young people.

3. **Structure/organization:** how easily does the book "flow," in your opinion? Where are there "seams" or "speed bumps" you "trip" over? What indications of organization do you see?

- This book is carefully laid out by the author. Much like the structure of a drama, one scene after another. The writing is very smooth, but the content is a bit jumpy.

- In v2:7-8, 3:5, 8:4, the same sentence appears, you can see the author's arrangement.
 - Solomon's role is not very clear: whether Solomon and the shepherd are the same person or not.
 - Like a drama, each chapter of this book appears in different places, such as inside and outside the city, the streets in the city, the city walls, the city gates, the vineyards, the pastures, and the rooms. It can be seen that the scene is quite rich.
4. **History/geography:** what historical, political, or geographical references do you wish you knew more about?
- I find it difficult to find more historical and geographic information. The book itself does not seem to provide more information in this regard.
 - The book mentions Jerusalem, the shepherds, Solomon, and Solomon's concubines, all of which obviously have an Israeli national background.
5. **Culture:** where are there references to cultural things that intrigue you? What do you wish you knew about the cultural background so you could understand the context better?
- This book obviously has an Israeli cultural background. But I am not very sure whether more cultural background can help me understand this book.
6. **Other:** what stands out as unusual? What do you want to research further?
- What confuse me most is whether the shepherd and Solomon are the same person. Is this story a love story between two people, or three people?
 - The character of the shepherd is obviously different from that of Solomon, but the description of Solomon always appears in the book. How to understand Solomon's role is a key issue.
 - What is the purpose of the description of Solomon's wedding in Chapter 3? Is Solomon marrying this woman, or is this woman just a bystander?
 - What is the purpose of the description of Solomon's vineyard in Chapter 8 verses 11-12?
 - Solomon's queen and concubines are mentioned in chapter 6 verse 18. Is this woman one of them? Or is the author just use these concubines as a comparison.