

The Good Life
and
Marital Love

Study Guide to Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon

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To the Teacher

The Good Life and Marital Love, Study Guide to Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon is a Bible study guide for teenagers and adults to be used in Bible classes in local congregations. This workbook is not intended to replace the word of God as the class text. Nor is it a commentary. Rather, it consists of questions within the framework of an analytical outline designed to help the class study properly, so each can discover for himself what the Bible teaches.

My experience is that adult and teenage classes generally do not like graded lessons. Thus, this book has no grading system.

However, these same classes have a tendency to “bog down” or stray from the lesson unless some time goals are established and followed. Thus, this study guide is designed to lead the student through Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon in twelve lessons.

Because the lessons call for a fast overview of the books, it is crucial that each student study his lesson and complete the questions outside class.

The student should first read all the verses covered by each lesson and then read each section again separately as he comes to it in the analytical outline. Finally, in order to answer the discussion questions, every student must read the passage that answers each question. If the student will follow the suggested steps in the lesson, he will read each verse of the lesson three times: beginning with the longest for overall grasp, then shorter reading for outline, and finally shortest reading for analysis.

No workbook can even begin to replace a competent teacher, with a good working knowledge of the Scriptures, an unswerving love of and loyalty to truth, a deep faith in God and His word, a pure life, an humble opinion of himself, an understanding of and love for his students, and the ability to communicate.

I hope and pray this volume is useful to you in learning and teaching more about the will of God and its application to us. May it deepen your faith and enliven your interest for deeper study and more diligent service to the Lord. - The Author

Course Plan

Lesson One: Introduction to Ecclesiastes

Lesson Two: The Grand Experiment - Ecclesiastes 1:1 - 2:26

Lesson Three: Observations Demonstrating Vanity of Life without God - Ecclesiastes 3:1 - 4:16

Lesson Four: More Observations Demonstrating Vanity of Life without God - Ecclesiastes 5:1 - 6:9

Lesson Five: The Search for Good - Ecclesiastes 6:10 - 7:29

Lesson Six: The Continued Search for Good - Ecclesiastes 8:1 - 9:12

Lesson Seven: The Value of Wisdom - Ecclesiastes 9:13 - 11:6

Lesson Eight: The Conclusion of the Whole Matter - Ecclesiastes 11:7 - 12:14

Lesson Nine: Introduction to Song of Solomon

Lesson Ten: Love Introduced - Song of Solomon 1:1 - 3:5

Lesson Eleven: Love Tested - Song of Solomon 3:6 - 6:3

Lesson Twelve: Love Victorious - Song of Solomon 6:4 - 8:14

Lesson One

Introduction to Ecclesiastes

Memory Verse: Ecclesiastes 1:2

The word “Ecclesiastes” literally means “the preacher.” Thus, Ecclesiastes takes its name from the opening phrase of the book, “The words of the Preacher” (1:1). The word “Preacher” “probably indicates one who holds or addresses an assembly.... The word thus designates the function of the leader who speaks in the assembly” (Young. 347). The Hebrew term is in the feminine rather than the masculine, thus representing “the personification of Wisdom, whose business it is to gather people unto the Lord and make them a holy congregation” (Deane. 1). Seven times the book is ascribed to “the Preacher” (1:1,2,12; 7:27; 12:8,9,10), thus indicating perfection of wisdom.

The author of the book not only calls himself “the Preacher” (one with whom wisdom dwelt in perfection), but also identifies himself as “the son of David, king in Jerusalem” (1:1) and “king over Israel in Jerusalem” (1:12). He had “attained greatness” and had “gained more wisdom than all who were before” him “in Jerusalem” (1:16). He also excelled in riches more than any before him in Jerusalem (2:4-9). The only man who fits this description is Solomon, and to deny Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes is to deny the truthfulness of the book. Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes.

The author specifically addresses himself to “youth” (12:1), thus, Solomon wrote to young people. In Ecclesiastes, “youth” refers, not to young children, but to those nearing or in young adulthood (4:13,15; 11:9-10).

Solomon set himself to “see what was good for the sons of men to do under the heaven all the days of their lives” (2:3). The phrases “under the sun” (1:3,9,14; 2:11,17,18,19, 20,22; 3:16; 4:1,3,7,15; 5:13,18; 6:1,12; 8:9,15,17; 9:3,6,9,11,13; 10:5) and “under heaven” (1:13; 2:3; 3:1) are used in Ecclesiastes to refer to life here and now, upon this earth, in contrast with eternity, or life after death. Young people, whose lives seem to them to stretch on into the future endlessly, who think little if at all of death, who are struggling to decide on the course of life they will pursue, should be and are especially concerned with how to live a good life, a happy and fulfilling life, on earth. Thus, Solomon does not really address himself to the question of eternal salvation. The book of Ecclesiastes answers the question, **How can I live the good life upon this earth?**

As the wisest and wealthiest of men, whose reign was peaceful, Solomon had the wealth, wisdom, and leisure to experiment in the various ways of life (1 Kings 4:24; 10:23; 1 Chronicles 22:9; Ecclesiastes 2:9). He set out to conduct a great scientific experiment into the various courses and philosophies of life, using his wisdom and practical experience to determine which is the good life, the one that brings happiness and fulfillment (2:3; cf. 7:25,27). Ecclesiastes is in effect Solomon’s scientific notations on a grand experiment, the experiment of life. It records the efforts of the wisest and wealthiest man in the world to find the good life.

Solomon traveled each road of life that promised to lead to happiness and fulfillment. He made the attainment of great human wisdom his primary goal, and found this to be “grasping for the wind,” a way that only led to “grief” and “sorrow” (1:17-18).

He tried the way of “mirth” and “pleasure,” the hedonistic life that seeks to gain the most pleasure from each moment. He was the “party animal,” following the philosophy that advises, “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die.” This included seeking pleasure in wine (and mind-altering drugs). He found this road to be “vanity” and “madness.” He bitterly inquired, “What does it accomplish?” (2:1-3)

Solomon pursued wealth as his goal. He did not just sit on his money, but used it to acquire the things he craved. If he saw something he liked, he bought it. If he thought of something nice he didn’t have, he purchased it. He used his wealth for his own pleasure. He was the man who had everything. But he found this course to be “vanity and grasping after the wind.” He discovered there is no real profit in profit (2:4-11).

At the entrance to every way of life that does not have God as its center, guide, and goal, the great wise man placed a one word sign: “Vanity” (1:17; 2:1,11,17,23). This word, found thirty-eight times in Ecclesiastes (1:2,14; 2:1,11,14,17,19,21,23,26; 3:19; 4:4,7,8,16; 5:7,10; 6:2,4,9,11; 7:6,15; 8:10,14; 9:9; 11:8,10; 12:8), more than the remainder of the Old Testament combined, literally means “vapour, breath” (BDBG. 210) and is used to mean “empty, void, useless.”

This led the Preacher to a great conclusion. A life lived for here and now, a life without God, is “grasping for the wind,” “vanity,” “empty, void, useless.” The book begins and ends with this great truth. What is life without God?

*"Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher;
'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'" (1:2; cf. 12:8)*

In the body of the book Solomon states principles which demonstrate the vanity of worldly living (3:1 - 6:9), gives some great principles to help live a good life (6:10 - 9:12), contemplates the value of wisdom (9:13 - 11:6), presents a beautiful poem on aging (11:7 - 12:8), and then draws the conclusion to what constitutes the good life (12:9-14)

Wisdom does not advise youth to withdraw from life and fun.

*“Rejoice, O young man, in your youth,
And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth;
Walk in the ways of your heart,
And in the sight of your eyes;
But know that for all these
God will bring you into judgment.
Therefore remove sorrow from your heart,
And put away evil from your flesh,
For childhood and youth are vanity” (11:9-10).*

While you are young, healthy, relatively care free, and full of life, enjoy life, do the things you

like to do, don't be sorrowful, don't do the things that will cause future suffering, but don't forget God and the judgment, and don't forget that childhood and youth are also vanity, just a passing vapor.

Finally the great, wise king answers his own inquiry. If one cannot find the good life in the various ways of worldly living, how can one live such a life? The answer is one of the great principles of Scripture: "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth" (12:1).

The sage proceeds to describe in movingly beautiful, metaphoric language old age and death (12:2-7). In essence Wisdom advises, Before you are too old to enjoy life under the sun, live it so as to attain its greatest joy, its highest fulfillment. Make God the center and circumference of your life. Live your life for God. This is the only way to give life real meaning and purpose. This is the good life.

Why is this the good life? True joy comes in the fulfillment of one's purpose in life. A life that is useless, a life that has no purpose, is a miserable existence. To have the highest joy, one must fulfill his noblest purpose. What is that purpose?

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man's all.
For God will bring every work into judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil (12:13-14).*

Our reason for being on this earth is to fear God and keep His commandments. Only by so living can one truly lead a life of fulfillment and joy - the good life.

But, young people might protest, Solomon lived three thousand years ago. What could he know of our situation? Even our parents don't understand. Wisdom replies:

That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, 'See, this is new'? It has already been in ancient times before us (1:9-10).

Human nature and human needs are no different today than three thousand years ago. The principles of "the good life" that were true in the Solomon's generation apply even today. His advice is as relevant now as then.

How can young people live the good life? All worldly living is vanity, grasping for the wind. The only road to true joy and personal fulfillment is to "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth."

Outline

- I. Introduction - 1:1-11
 - A. Author - 1:1
 - B. Theme: The Vanity of Life without God - 1:2-3
 - C. Life Under the Sun: Ever Changing Never Changing - 1:4-11

- II. The Grand Experiment - 1:12 - 2:26
 - A. Restatement of Theme - 1:12-15
 - B. Vanity of Life without God - 1:16 - 2:26
 - 1. Wisdom: Vain - 1:16-18
 - 2. Pleasure: Vain - 2:1-3
 - 3. Riches: No Profit to Profit - 2:4-11
 - 4. Ultimate End of Wise and Foolish Same: Vanity - 2:12-17
 - 5. Human Labor: Vain - 2:18-23
 - C. Restatement of Theme - 2:24-26
 - III. Observations Demonstrating Vanity of Life without God - 3:1 - 6:9
 - IV. The Search for Good - 6:9 - 9:12
 - V. The Value of Wisdom - 9:13 - 11:6
 - VI. Aging and Death - 11:7 - 12:8
 - VII. The Conclusion of the Whole Matter - 12:9-14
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Works Cited

- Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius. **Hebrew and English Lexicon.**
 Deane, W.J., **Pulpit Commentary**, Ecclesiastes.
 Young, Edward J., **An Introduction to the Old Testament.**

Questions

A. Terms to Define

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Ecclesiastes | 4. under the sun |
| 2. Preacher | 5. under heaven |
| 3. youth | 6. vanity |

B. Fact Questions

1. Who wrote Ecclesiastes?
2. To whom is the book addressed?
3. What questions does Ecclesiastes answer?

C. Thought Questions

1. How does the term “Preacher” relate the book to Wisdom as personified in Proverbs?
2. How was Solomon preeminently qualified to write this book?

3. How did he go about finding the answer to the question?
4. What did the Preacher conclude concerning each of these roads as a way to find the good life?
 - a. human wisdom
 - b. pleasure
 - c. wealth
5. What is the Preacher's conclusion concerning any way of life that excludes God?
6. What is the secret to living the good life?
7. Why?
8. Do the lessons from Ecclesiastes apply to young people today?

Lesson Two
The Grand Experiment
Ecclesiastes 1:1 - 2:26
Memory Verse: Ecclesiastes 1:9-10

Reading Assignment: Ecclesiastes 1:1 - 2:11.

I. Introduction:

Please read Ecclesiastes 1:1-3.

Fact Question

What question does the Preacher first consider? (Verse 3)

II. Life Under the Sun: Ever Changing - Never Changing (The more things change, the more they remain the same.)

Please read Ecclesiastes 1:4 - 11.

A. Terms to Define

forever

B. Fact Question

What problem does he state? (Verse 4)

C. Thought Questions

1. How do the forces of nature illustrate the problem? (Verses 5-8)

2. What conclusions does Solomon draw? (Verses 9-11)

III. The Grand Experiment

Please read Ecclesiastes 1:12 - 2:26

A. Terms to Define

1. wisdom

4. mirth

2. madness

5. orchards

3. folly

6. despaired

B. Fact Questions

What does the Preacher conclude concerning work under the sun? (1:14)

C. Thought Questions

1. What did Solomon strive to learn? (1:13; 2:3)

2. How did he seek to learn this? (1:13)

3. Can men by human wisdom explain all life's problems and mysteries? (1:15)

4. Will the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge bring the good life? (1:16-18)
5. What about a life of sensual pleasure? (2:1-2)
(Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die. You only go around once; grab all the gusto you can.)
6. What about a life of wine (alcohol and/or drugs)? (2:3)
7. What about acquiring all the “things” money can buy? (2:4-11)
(Is greed good?)
8. Could anyone in the future add to what Solomon learned? (2:12)
9. Does wisdom have any advantage over madness and folly? (2:13-14)
10. Is it ultimately any better? (2:15-16)
11. Will any worldly avenue bring the good life? (2:17)
12. Why did Solomon hate all his labors? (2:18-23)
13. What conclusion does he draw concerning all endeavors under the sun? (2:24-26)

Lesson Three
Observations Demonstrating Vanity of Life without God
Memory Verse: Ecclesiastes 3:1

Reading Assignment: Ecclesiastes 3:1 - 4:16

I. To Everything There Is a Season.

Please read Ecclesiastes 3:1-15.

A. Term to Define
season

B. Fact Questions

1. To what question does Solomon return? (Verse 9; cf. 1:3)
2. What problem does he now consider? (Verse 1)

C. Thought Questions

1. Who determines the proper time for each kind of activity? (Verses 1-8)
2. How can we tell the proper time to do something? (Ibid)
3. What burden has God placed on man? (Verses 10-11)
4. Can we handle that burden? (Verse 11)
5. Do we have control over the success or failure of our pursuits? (Verses 10-11)
6. So, what should be our attitude toward our work? (Verses 12-13)
7. How do God's plans and activities compare to ours? (Verse 14)
8. What does God want us to learn from this? (Ibid)
9. Do these principles change? (Verse 15; cf. 1:9-10)
10. How do these observations demonstrate the vanity of life without God?

II. The Prevalence of Wickedness

Please read Ecclesiastes 3:16-22.

A. Terms to Define

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| 1. judgment | 4. Iniquity |
| 2. Wickedness | 5. spirit |
| 3. Righteousness | 6. heritage |

A. Fact Questions

1. What problem does the Preacher consider next? (Verse 16)
2. What will God do about injustice? (Verse 17)

B. Thought Questions

1. How does the problem of injustice in the world relate to the principle of everything in its proper time? (Verse 17)
2. Why does God allow injustice to remain? (Verse 18)
3. Is there any difference between people and animals? (Verses 18-21)
4. How does this demonstrate the vanity of life without God? (Verse 19)
5. So, what should our attitude be toward our labor? (Verse 22)
6. Why? (Ibid)

III. Oppression without Comfort

Please read Ecclesiastes 4:1-3.

A. Term to Define
oppression

B. Fact Question

What did Solomon next consider? (Verse 1)

C. Thought Question

What did he conclude? (Verses 2-3)

IV. Envy in Skillful Work

Please read Ecclesiastes 4:4-6

A. Term to Define
envied

B. Fact Question

What did Solomon see in all labor?

C. Thought Questions

1. Does this mean it is better not to work? (Verse 5)
2. What is the conclusion concerning labor? (Verse 6; cf. Proverbs 15:16-17)

V. Selfish Work

Please read Ecclesiastes 4:7-12.

A. Fact Question

What evil did Solomon next observe? (Verses 7-8)

B. Thought Question

Why is it better to have companions? (Verses 9-12)

VI. Passing Popularity

Please read Ecclesiastes 4:13-16.

A. Term to Define

be admonished

B. Fact Questions

1. What turn of events does the Preacher then describe? (Verses 13-16)

2. What conclusions does he draw? (Verses 13,16)

C. Thought Question

What life lesson is found here?

V. The Evil of Being Unable to Enjoy One's Blessings

Please read Ecclesiastes 6:1-9

A. Term to Define

evil affliction

B. Fact Questions

1. What evil did Solomon next observe? (Verses 1-2)
2. Which is better off, a stillborn child or a man who cannot enjoy the blessings he receives from God? (Verses 3-6)

C. Thought Question

1. Why are these observations true?
2. What is the conclusion concerning living for wealth? (Verses 7,9)
3. Does this mean its better to be poor? (Verse 8)

Lesson Five
The Search for Good
Memory Verse: Ecclesiastes 7:14

Reading Assignment: Ecclesiastes 6:10 - 7:29

I. Who Knows What Is Good for Man in Life? (Summary of 6:9 - 9:12)

Please read Ecclesiastes 6:10-12.

Thought Questions

1. Can we change what we are? (Verse 10)

2. Are we capable of arguing with God? (Verse 10)

3. What question does the Preacher now consider? (Verses 11-12; cf. 8:1,7,17)

4. Why is the problem so difficult? (Ibid)

II. Proverbs of Better Things (key word: “better,” 8 occurrences)

Please read Ecclesiastes 7:1-12

A. Terms to Define

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| 1. name | 4. patient |
| 2. precious ointment | 5. in spirit |
| 3. countenance | 6. proud |

B. Thought Questions

1. Why is
 - a. “a good name better than precious ointment?” (Verse 1)

 - b. the day of one’s death better than his birthday? (Ibid)

 - c. it better to go to a funeral than to a wedding? (Verses 2-4)

 - d. a wise man’s rebuke better than the song of fools? (Verses 5-6)

 - e. the end better than the beginning? (Verse 8)

 - f. patience better than pride? (Ibid)

 - g. it not good to be quick to anger? (Verse 9)

 - h. it not good to glorify the past? (Verse 10)

i. wisdom better than wealth? (Verses 11-12)

2. What can cause a wise man to become a fool? (Verse 7)

III. Learning to Live in All Seasons

Please read Ecclesiastes 7:13-14.

Thought Question

How can we learn to be content in both good times and bad?

IV. Righteousness, Wickedness, and Wisdom

Please read Ecclesiastes 7:15-29.

A. Terms to Define

1. cursing

3. schemes

2. upright

B. Thought questions

1. In this life, does righteousness always give an advantage over wickedness? (Verse 15)

2. Can one rely on his own righteousness or wisdom for success? (Verse 16)

3. Should we then be wicked? (Verse 17)

4. What course should we pursue? (Verse 18)

5. Does wisdom give one an advantage in life? (Verse 19)

6. Are any of us without sin, truly righteous in ourselves? (Verse 20)

7. How should this cause us to react to the bad things other people say about us? (Verses 21-22)

8. How did the Preacher learn these things? (Verse 23)

9. How was even the wisdom of Solomon limited? (Verses 23-24)

10. How did Solomon seek to learn wisdom? (Verses 25,27)

11. What did he conclude concerning human righteousness? (Verses 26-29)

12. Whose fault is it? (Verse 29)

Lesson Six
The Continued Search for Good
Memory Verse: Ecclesiastes 9:11

Reading Assignment: Ecclesiastes 8:1 - 9:12

I. Wisdom Searches for Good in Relationship to Human Power

Please read Ecclesiastes 8:1-9

A. Terms to Define

1. interpretation
2. oath

B. Discussion Questions

1. Why should we submit to the ruler? (Verse 2; cf. 1 Chronicles 29:24, **NASB, ESV**)
2. How should one behave toward the king? (Verse 3)
3. Why? (Verses 3-4)

C. Thought Questions

1. What is the value of wisdom? (Verse 1)
2. Why do the wise obey the ruler even though that rule causes human misery? (Verses 5-7)
3. What are the limitations of human power? (Verse 8)
4. What is the theme of chapter eight? (Verse 9)

II. The Vanity of Life's Injustice

Please read Ecclesiastes 8:10-17

A. Term to Define

place of holiness

B. Discussion Questions

1. What injustice had the Preacher seen? (Verse 10)
2. What is the result of the fact that God does not immediately punish sinners? (Verse 11)
3. Will God ultimately execute justice? (Verses 12-13)
4. Is this what we see on earth? (Verse 14)

C. Thought Questions

1. How should we live in view of the injustice we see? (Verse 15)

2. Do we have the ability to ultimately know and understand God's rule over us? (Verses 16-17)

III. The Common Fate

Please read Ecclesiastes 9:1-12.

A. Terms to Define

1. clean
2. unclean
3. sacrifices

B. Discussion Questions

1. Can we know by wisdom and experience whether God loves us or hates us? (Verse 1)
2. What will happen to all of us, regardless how we live? (Verses 2-3)
3. Which is better, death or life? (Verses 4-6)
4. How should we live in view of death? (Verses 7-10)
5. Do we know or have control over when we will die? (Verses 11-12)

C. Thought Questions

1. Is Solomon teaching that it makes no difference how we live? (Verses 1-2)
2. Is he teaching that blind fate controls our lives and destiny? (Verses 1-2,11-12)
3. Does he teach that there is no conscious existence for the dead? (Verse 5)
4. Does he affirm that God accepts whatever we do? (Verse 7)

Observation: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of both knowledge and wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). The next step is to daily live in the awareness that death is certain, but its time is unknown.

Lesson Seven
The Value of Wisdom
Memory Verse: Ecclesiastes 9:17

Reading Assignment: Ecclesiastes 9:13 - 11:6

I. The Poor Wise Man and the Value of Wisdom

Please read Ecclesiastes 9:13 - 10:4

A. Terms to Define

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. snares | 3. despised |
| 2. besieged | 4. conciliation |

B. Discussion Question

Relate the story of the poor wise man (9:13-15).

C. Thought Questions

1. Which is better, wisdom or strength? (9:16,18)
2. Does this mean people will appreciate those who are wise? (9:16)
3. Should we pay more careful attention to the words of the wise or of the powerful? (9:17)
4. What does it take to offset all the good the wise can accomplish? (9:18 - 10:1)
5. How are the wise and the foolish distinguished? (10:2-3)
6. How does a wise man deal with an outraged ruler? (10:4)

II. Proverbs About the Value of Wisdom

Please read Ecclesiastes 10:5 - 11:6.

A. Term to Define

Folly

B. Discussion Questions

1. Are the wrong people sometimes in places of power and honor? (10:5-7)
2. Do risks attend ventures? (10:8-9)
3. Does wisdom make work easier? (10:10)
4. Does it insure success? (10:11)
5. What is the difference between the speech of the wise and the speech of fools? (10:12-15)

6. What kind of rulers does a land need? (10:16-17)
7. What effect does laziness have on a person? (10:18)
8. What is the value of money? (10:19)
9. Why should we not curse rulers and the rich? (10:20)
10. Why should we be generous and do good works? (11:1)
11. But what if times are uncertain? (11:2-6)

C. Thought Questions

1. Does life bring uncertainties, injustices, and absurdities?
2. Who ultimately is in charge of the world? (11:5)
3. Can we by wisdom fully comprehend His rule? (Ibid)

Lesson Eight
The Conclusion of the Whole Matter
Memory Verse: Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Reading Assignment: Ecclesiastes 11:7 - 12:14

I. Youth

A. Terms to Define

- | | |
|----------|-------------|
| 1. light | 2. darkness |
|----------|-------------|

B. Discussion Questions

1. Is it good to be alive? (Verse 7)
2. But what should we remember? (Verses 8)

C. Thought Questions

1. So, how should young people live? (Verses 9-10)
2. But what must they remember? (Ibid)

II. Old Age and Death

Please read Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

A. Discussion Questions

1. What is old age like? (Verses 2-5)
2. What about death? (Verses 5-6)

B. Thought Questions

1. What principle should guide the lives of young people (verse 1)
2. Why? (Ibid)
3. What happens when we die? (Verse 7)
4. What is the summation of a life lived without God? (Verse 8)

III. Epilogue

Please read Ecclesiastes 12:9-14.

Thought Questions

1. What was the work of the Preacher? (Verses 9-10)
2. What use are the words of the wise to students? (Verse 11)
3. Should we set ourselves to study all the books written by men? (Verse 12)

4. What is the sum of our lives? (Verse 13)

5. Why? (Verse 14)

Lesson Nine

Introduction to Song of Solomon

Memory Verse: Song of Solomon 8:7

The Bible is the complete book, supplying every spiritual need of man and providing principles for guidance in every aspect of life. One of man's strongest needs, recognized by the Lord from the very beginning, is the need for companionship from the opposite sex (Genesis 2:18-24).

Reville Writes of the nature of the Song of Solomon:

The song of Songs is a lyrical and pastoral poem, containing dramatic action, and having for its subject the victory of chaste and faithful love over the seductions of a king, whose passion, without being precisely illegitimate in the age and country into which it carries us, has nevertheless licentiousness for its motive (Reville. 20).

Thus, the theme of Song of Solomon is **Marital Love, the Victory of True Love** (1:2; 6:3; 7:10; 8:6-7).

The book calls itself, in the very opening verse, "The song of songs, which is Solomon's." Thus, Solomon is the author of the "song of songs." The short, poetic drama contains seven specific references to Solomon (1:1,5; 3:7,9,11; 8:11-12).

In some ways Solomon was uniquely qualified to write the Song. Of course, he was inspired of God. He wrote "one thousand and five" songs (1 Kings 4:32). As the husband of 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3), Solomon was quite skilled in the carnal aspects of marital love. But, from the content of the Song, it appears Solomon came to appreciate what he himself never experienced - the deep, committed, faithful love of one woman and one man.

The phrase "song of songs" does not mean a song composed of songs but is a Hebrew superlative, meaning the song that is chief among all songs, the most beautiful of all songs (cf. Genesis 9:25; Deuteronomy 10:17; 1 Kings 8:27; Ecclesiastes 1:2). As "the song of songs," this is the height of Solomon's songs.

Song of Solomon is one of the least known and most difficult to understand of the books of the Old Testament. There are several reasons for this. Since the book deals exclusively with marital love, several of its passages are quite sensual. It is the only book in the Bible which consists entirely of poetry and conversation. The book is filled with Hebrew figures of speech.

The three chief characters of the book are a beautiful, dark skinned, country maiden of the hills of northern Palestine; King Solomon, who attempts by the art of seduction to win her to his harem; and the shepherd, the handsome country lad whom the maiden truly loves. The maiden ("the Shulamite") is truly a heroine of virtue and dedication to her true love.

Hailey summarizes the story thus:

I believe that Solomon was infatuated with the girl's charm and beauty, but that she was in love with a shepherd lad. In the struggle within her own heart, true love triumphs. When Solomon unwittingly revealed the sensual nature of his infatuation (7:7-9a), the die was cast: her mind was completely determined to return to the shepherd. The poem is God's commendation of true mating love, and His condemnation of Solomon's polygamy. (cf. 6:8, sixty queens and eighty concubines. His marriage machinery was just getting into high gear.) (Hailey. 24).

This beautiful, poetic story closes with the maiden pledging her wedding vow to the shepherd lad she truly loved:

*Set me as a seal upon your heart,
As a seal upon your arm;
For love is as strong as death,
Jealousy as cruel as the grave;
Its flames are flames of fire,
A most vehement flame.
Many waters cannot quench love,
Nor can the floods drown it.
If a man would give for love
All the wealth of his house,
It would be utterly despised (8:6-7).*

There is no description of the purity and strength of marital love more sublime for beauty and accuracy in any literature, human or divine! Thus, the song reaches its crescendo and the drama its climax. Truly, a young woman with such exalted ideals and principles, can be called: "... the rose of Sharon, And the lily of the valleys" (2:1).

With Song of Solomon the Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry Literature comes to a close. Each book has a valuable contribution to the overall character of servants of the Lord. Job shows us how to endure suffering, the Psalms demonstrate how to praise and pray to the Lord, Proverbs instructs us in wisdom in daily affairs, Ecclesiastes teaches us how to be happy, and Song of Solomon poetically leads us to understand how to love our mates.

Outline

- I. Introduction - 1:1
- II. In the Royal Tents in Issachar, Love Introduced - 1:2 - 3:5
- III. The Royal Procession Entering Jerusalem - 3:6-11
- IV. In the Royal Palace in Jerusalem, Love Tested - 4:1 - 8:4
- V. In Issachar, the Shepherd and the Maiden, Love Victorious - 8:5-14

Works Cited

Hailey, Homer. "Wisdom Literature: Proverbs - Ecclesiastes - Song of Solomon."
Reville, Albert, **The Song of Songs**.

Questions

1. What is the theme of Song of Solomon?
2. Who is its author?
3. How was Solomon qualified to write this book?
4. What is the meaning of the phrase "song of songs"?
5. Why is the book so little known and so difficult?
6. Who are its chief characters?
7. Summarize its story.
8. How does each of the poetry and wisdom books of the Old Testament help our spiritual development?

(I am heavily indebted to Homer Hailey for both this material and my understanding of the Song of Solomon. - K.S.)

Lesson Ten Love Introduced

Memory Verse: Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5

Reading Assignment: Song of Solomon 1:1 - 3:5

I. Introduction

Please read Song of Solomon 1:1.

II. Scene 1: Maiden and Chorus in the Royal Tent in Issachar

Please read Song of Solomon 1:2-8.

A. Figures to Explain

1. tents of Kedar
2. curtains of Solomon
3. my own vineyard
4. one who veils herself



B. Place to Locate

Kedar

C. Speakers

1. Maiden to Lover - 1:2-4a

a. Discussion Questions

- (1) What did the maiden desire? (Verses 2,4a; read from **English Standard Version**)
- (2) How did she describe the love of her lover for her? (Verses 2-3)
- (3) Was she the only one who loved him? (Verse 3)
- (4) What has happened to the maiden? (Verse 4)
- (5) Who is “the king”?

b. Thought Questions

- (1) How was the “name” of her lover like “ointment poured forth”? (Verse 3)
- (2) Are the one whom the maiden loves and the king the same man or different men?

2. Chorus to King - 1:4b (beginning with “We will be glad” to end of verse)

Discussion Questions

- (1) Who is this chorus? (cf. Verse 5)
- (2) Whom are they extolling?

3. Maiden - 1:5-7

Discussion Questions

- (1) What does the maiden think of her own appearance? (Verse 5)
- (2) How does she account for her appearance? (Verse 6)
- (3) What request does she make of her lover? (Verse 7)

4. Chorus to Maiden - 1:8

Discussion Question

How does the chorus respond to the maiden?

III. Scene 2: Solomon and the Maiden in the Royal Tent - 1:9 - 2:7

A. Terms to Define

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. spikenard | 3. henna |
| 2. myrrh | 4. I charge you |

B. Figures to Explain

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. filly among Pharaoh's chariots | 5. lily of the valleys |
| 2. vineyards of En Gedi | 6. lily among thorns |
| 3. dove's eyes | 7. apple tree |
| 4. rose of Sharon | |

C. Places to Locate

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| 1. En Gedi | 2. Sharon |
|------------|-----------|

D. Speakers

1. Solomon to Maiden - 1:9-10

a. Discussion Question

How does the king describe the maiden?

2. Chorus to Maiden - 1:11

Discussion Question

What do the daughters of Jerusalem promise her?

3. Maiden (Thinking of Shepherd) - 1:12-14

Discussion Questions

(1) What did the maiden think appealed to Solomon about her? (Verse 12)

(2) Of whom was she thinking? (Verses 13-14)

(3) What was her lover to her? (Ibid)

4. Solomon to Maiden - 1:15

Discussion Question

What did the king think about the maiden?

5. Maiden (to Shepherd of Whom She Is Thinking) - 1:16 - 2:1

Discussion Questions

(1) Of whom was she thinking

(2) What did she think of her lover? (1:16)

(3) For what did she long? (1:16-17)

(4) What did she think of herself? (2:1)

6. Solomon to Maiden - 2:2

Discussion Question

What did the king think of her?

7. Maiden (Again of Shepherd of Whom She Is Thinking) - 2:3-7

a. Discussion Question

What did the maiden think concerning her beloved? (Verses 3-6)

b. Thought Question

Explain the charge the maiden makes to the daughters of Jerusalem. (Verse 7)

IV. Scene 3: The Shepherd/Lover and the Maiden (Perhaps in Her Dream)

Please read Song of Solomon 2:8-17.

A. Terms to Define

lattice

B. Figures to Explain

1. gazelle

3. mountains of Bether

2. young stag

4. little foxes

C. Speakers

1. Maiden - 2:8-9

Discussion Questions

(1) What was her beloved like?

(2) What did he do?

2. Shepherd/Lover - 2:10-15

a. Discussion Questions

(1) What did her lover invite her to do? (Verses 10,13-14)

(2) What was the occasion? (Verses 11-14)

b. Thought Question

What was her lover's concern? (Verse 15)

3. Maiden - 2:16-17

Thought Questions

(1) What was the relationship of the maiden and her lover? (Verse 16)

(2) What did she invite him to do? (Verses 16-17)

V. Scene 4: In Dream the Maiden Seeks and Finds Her Shepherd/Love

Please read Song of Solomon 3:1-5.

A. Figure to Explain

the chamber of her who conceived me

B. Discussion Questions

1. In her night dream, what did the maiden do? (Verses 1-2)

2. What happened? (Verses 2-4)

C. Thought Question

Why does she repeat her charge to the daughters of Jerusalem? (Verse 5)

Lesson Eleven
Love Tested
Memory Verse: Song of Solomon 6:3

Reading Assignment: Song of Solomon 3:6 - 6:3

I. Part II: The Royal Procession Entering Jerusalem

Please read Song of Solomon 3:6-11.

A. Terms to Define

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. frankincense | 2. palanquin |
|-----------------|--------------|

B. Speakers

1. Chorus (Speaking of Royal Procession) - 3:6
2. Replies of Citizens of Jerusalem - 3:7-11

Discussion Question

How majestic was Solomon's royal procession from the wilderness to Jerusalem?

II. Part III: In the Royal Palace in Jerusalem, Love Tested - 4:1 - 8:4

A. Scene 1: Solomon's Second Effort to Woo the Maiden (1st in the Palace)

Please read Song of Solomon 4:1- 5:1.

1. Terms to Define

- | | |
|----------------------|------------|
| a. bucklers | d. Calamus |
| b. ravished my heart | e. aloes |
| c. saffron | |

2. Figures to Explain

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. flock of goats | h. garden enclosed |
| b. flock of shorn sheep | i. spring shut up |
| c. twins | j. fountain sealed |
| d. none is barren | k. fountain of gardens |
| e. pomegranate | l. well of living waters |
| f. two fawns | m. streams from Lebanon |
| g. sister | |

3. Places to Locate

- a. Amana
- b. Lebanon
- c. Mount Gilead
- d. Senir
- e. Hermon

4. Speakers

a. Solomon to Maiden - 4:1-5

(1) Discussion Questions

How did the king describe the maiden? (4:1-5)

(2) Thought Question

Was Solomon smitten with love or lust for the maiden?

b. Maiden to Solomon - 4:6

Thought Question

Did she accept or reject Solomon's courtship?

c. Shepherd to Maiden (in Her Day Dream) - 4:7-15

(1) Discussion Questions

(a) What did her beloved think of her? (4:7)

(b) What did he want her to do? (4:8)

[c] What did he think of her love? (4:9-15)

(2) Thought Question

Were they married? (4:9-12)

d. Maiden Gives Her Love to Shepherd (in Her Day Dream) - 4:16

Thought Question

In her mind, to whom does she belong?

e. Shepherd's Reply (in Her Day Dream) - 5:1

Thought Question

Does he return her love?

B. Scene 2: The Maiden Tells Her Dream to the Ladies of the Court and They Converse - 5:2 - 6:3

1. Terms to Define

1. ruddy
2. beryl
3. sapphires

2. Speakers

a. The Maiden Tells Her Dream that Her Shepherd Comes for Her - 5:2-7

(1) Discussion Questions

- (a) What is the mental state of the maiden during this section? (Verse 2)
- (b) What story does she relate? (Verses 2-7)

(2) Thought Question

What does her dream reveal about her attitude toward her lover?

b. Maiden Addresses Ladies of the Court - 5:8

Discussion Question

What is her mental condition?

c. Reply of Ladies of the Court - 5:9

Thought Question

What would especially lead the women of the court to wonder what was so special about her lover?

d. Maiden to Ladies of the Court (Describes Her Shepherd) - 5:10-16

(1) Discussion Question

What did the maiden think of her beloved's appearance?

(2) Thought Question

What did he mean to her? (Verse 6)

e. Reply of Ladies of the Court - 6:1

Discussion Question

Were the women impressed?

f. Maiden to Ladies of the Court - 6:2-3

Thought Questions

(1) What is the meaning of the maiden's answer?

(2) What does this reveal about the nature of true love?

Lesson Twelve
Love Victorious
Memory Verse: Song of Solomon 8:6-7

Reading Assignment: Song of Solomon 6:4 - 8:14

I. Scene 3: Solomon's Third Effort to Woo the Maiden (2nd in Palace)

Please read Song of Solomon 6:4 - 8:4.

A. Terms to Define

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. concubines | 5. dance of the two camps |
| 2. garden of nuts | 6. tresses |
| 3. verdure | 7. stature |
| 4. Shulamite | 8. mandrakes |

B. Figures to Explain

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. chariots of my noble people | 5. Damascus |
| 2. prince's daughter | 6. Mount Carmel |
| 3. Heshbon | 7. purple |
| 4. Bath Rabbim | |

C. Speakers

1. Solomon to Maiden - 6:4-9

a. Discussion Questions

(1) How did the king praise her beauty? (Verses 4-7)

(2) What did Solomon claim she meant to him? (Verses 8-9)

b. Thought Question

What kind of relationship did Solomon want with the maiden?

2. Chorus of Ladies of the Court - 6:10

Discussion Question

How did the women praise her beauty?

3. Maiden (Thinking of Her Sudden Change from Rural Maid to Royalty) - 6:11-12

a. Discussion Question

How had the king's courtship of the maiden changed her life?

- b. Thought Question
 - Would it be easy to give up this new life?

- 4. Chorus of Ladies of the Court (Calling for Her to Dance) - 6:13a
 - Discussion Question
 - What did the ladies of the court want the maiden to do?

- 5. Maiden (Humble Reply) - 6:13b
 - Discussion Question
 - How did she respond?

- 6. Chorus of Ladies of the Court (Praise Her Beauty as She Dances) - 7:1-5
 - Discussion Question
 - How did the women praise her beauty?

- 7. Solomon (Interrupts to Praise Her Beauty and Express Lust) - 7:6-9
 - a. Discussion Question
 - How did the king do so?

 - b. Thought Question
 - Was Solomon motivated by love or lust?

- 8. Maiden - 7:10 - 8:4
 - a. Interrupts, Announces Her Decision to Return to Shepherd - 7:10
 - Thought Questions
 - (1) To whom did the maiden belong?

 - (2) What does this say about her decision?

 - (3) Did her beloved love her?

 - b. To Her Shepherd/Beloved (As If Present) - 7:11 - 8:3
 - Thought Question
 - What is her message to her beloved?

 - c. To the Ladies of the Court - 8:4
 - Thought Questions: This is the fourth time the maiden has put the ladies of the court under oath (cf. 2:7; 3:5; 5:8) and the third time for the same oath.
 - (1) Is this an important lesson to be learned from Song of Solomon

 - (2) What is the lesson?

V. Part IV: In Issachar, the Shepherd and the Maiden, Love Victorious

Please read Song of Solomon 8:5-14

A. Scene 1: The Bride and Her Shepherd/Groom Approach Their Mountain Home (Their Wedding Vows) - 8:5-7

1. Terms to Define

1. seal

3. vehement flame

2. Jealousy

2. Speakers

a. Chorus of Country People - 8:5a (They serve to introduce the couple as they come home to be wed.)

b. Groom to Bride - 8:5b

Discussion Question

Of what does her beloved remind the maiden?

c. Bride to Groom: Wedding Vow (There is no description of the purity and strength of marital love more sublime for beauty and accuracy in any literature, human or divine! Thus, the song reaches its crescendo and the drama its climax.) - 8:6-7

Thought Question

Explain the wedding vow of the maiden.

B. Scene 2: Epilogue, the Bride, Her Brothers, and Her Husband - 8:8-14

1. Term to Define

battlement

2. Figures to Explain

a. battlement of silver

e. vineyard (verse 11)

b. boards of cedar

f. vineyard (verse 12)

c. wall

g. leased

d. Baal Hamon

h. thousand

3. Speakers

a. First Brother - 8:8

Discussion Question

What does the first brother ask?

b. Second Brother - 8:9

(1) Discussion Question

How does the second brother respond?

(2) Thought Question

What message are the brothers sending to their sister, the bride?

c. Bride (Solomon can have his thousand, but my vineyard is mine!) - 8:10-12

Explain the bride's response to her brothers.

d. Husband (Asks for Her Companionship) - 8:13

Thought Questions

(1) What does her shepherd/husband desire?

(2) How does this compare with what King Solomon desired?

e. Bride (Invites His Love) - 8:14 (cf. 2:9)

Thought Question

How does the maiden/bride respond?

Glossary

A

aloes - pleasant smelling spice, not the medicinal aloe
Amana - a peak of the Anti-Lebanon range of mountains, overlooking Damascus, symbol of remoteness
apple tree - symbol of romance and love

B

Baal Hamon - possessor of abundance
Bath Rabbim - “daughters of multitude,” a crowded thoroughfare in Heshbon
battlement - fortification on a city wall for defense of city
battlement of silver - decorative defense against sexual defilement
be admonished - receive instruction, receive advice
beryl - the ancient chrysolite, gold in color, our topaz
besieged - surrounded it with machines designed to conquer
boards of cedar - decorative defense against sexual defilement
bucklers - warriors’ shields

C

Calamus - wild sugar cane
chariots of my noble people - exalted, as one who resides on the high places of the earth
clean - ceremonially pure under the law of Moses
conciliation - calmness, composure, healing
concubines - slave wives
countenance - appearance of the face
cursing - invoking evil
curtains of Solomon - probably reference to dark, goat hair curtains covering the pleasure tent or pavilion used by Solomon

D

Damascus -the most ancient city of Bible lands; the capital of Syria, about 133 miles north of Jerusalem, said to be the most beautiful city of Western Asia
dance of the two camps - literally, “dance of Mahanaim,” meaning uncertain
darkness - metaphor for death
despaired - gave up hope
despised - regarded with contempt
dove’s eyes - large and beautiful eyes

E

Ecclesiastes - Hebrew “Qoheleth,” “Preacher,” the leader who speaks in the assembly
En Gedi - oasis west of the Dead Sea
envied - desired what belongs to another

evil affliction - literally, “evil sickness,” grievous evil

F

filly among Pharaoh’s chariots - beautiful young, female horse, as Solomon was very fond of horses

flock of goats - dark and flowing, like flock of dark goats descending mountain

flock of shorn sheep - very white

folly (1:17) - foolishness

Folly (10:6) - senseless, stupid, moron

forever - long, indefinite duration

fountain of gardens - or garden fountain, pure, refreshing

fountain sealed - inaccessible love

frankincense - a white resin burned as an incense

G

garden enclosed - inaccessible love

garden of nuts- walnut grove, reference to simple life as country girl

gazelle - handsome, graceful, swift

H

henna - pleasant smelling blossoms of henna shrub

heritage - possessions

Hermon - 9,200 foot peak at southern end of Anti-Lebanon range, marks the north boundary of Palestine

Heshbon - capital city of Sihon, King of Amorites, east of north end of Dead Sea, containing fish pools that were clear, deep, and smooth

I

I charge you - I put you under oath

Iniquity - same Hebrew word as “Wickedness” (cf. **NASB**)

in spirit - mind, disposition

interpretation - explanation

J

Jealousy - ardent, passionate possessiveness, passionate unwillingness to lose or share

judgment - justice

K

Kedar - Northwest corner of Arabia, Bedouin inhabitants descended from Ishmael

L

lattice - crisscrossing rods or boards with spaces between across a window

leased - figure of impersonal relationship

Lebanon - mountain range north of Palestine

light - metaphor for life

lily among thorns - beauty far surpassing others
lily of the valleys - wild flower, common, unremarkable for beauty
little foxes - little disagreements that spoil love

M

madness - delusion, insanity
mandrakes - tomato-like fruit of common Palestinian plant, considered to be aphrodisiac, called
“love apples”
mirth - pleasure, having fun
Mount Carmel - as pleasant to the sight as Mount Carmel, which jutted out into the
Mediterranean
Mount Gilead - mountainous, grazing region east of Jordan River
mountains of Bethel - Bethron, hilly district east of Jordan River
my own vineyard - my own body
myrrh - sweet-smelling gum of species of balsam

N

name - reputation
none is barren - no teeth missing

O

oath - vow, promise or affirmation made by calling something or someone as witness
one who veils herself - prostitute
oppression - mistreatment
orchards - parks (literally, “paradises”)

P

palanquin - carriage, portable recliner
patient - longsuffering
place of holiness - temple, place of worship
pomegranate - round and reddish (maybe reference to cheeks rather than to temples)
Preacher - see Ecclesiastes
precious ointment - valuable perfume
prince’s daughter - raised to this rank by association with the king
proud - thinking highly of oneself
prudently - literally, guard your steps, cautiously, carefully
purple - beautiful, shining, dark black hair is sometimes called purple

Q-R

rash - hasty, without thinking carefully
ravished my heart - made my heart beat faster, stolen my heart
Righteousness - what is right or just in government
rose of Sharon - meadow flower of the plain of Sharon, common, unremarkable for beauty
ruddy - reddish, color of good health

S

sacrifices - offerings
saffron - a crocus cultivated in Palestine, the orange colored stylus of which yields the yellow dye, saffron
sapphires - stone ancients called "*lapis lazuli*," very precious, transparent, blue
schemes - sinful plans and actions
seal - stamp of ownership
season - proper time
Senir - peak of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range
Sharon - rich plain in Palestine southeast of Mount Carmel
Shulamite - feminine of Solomon, Princess of Peace or Perfection
sister - close, pure relationship
snares - siege works
sorrow - mental pain
spikenard - aromatic plant of Arabia, source of perfume
spirit - literally, breath or wind, inward, invisible part that gives life
spring shut up - inaccessible love
stature - height, tall and slender
streams from Lebanon - pure, lovely, refreshing

T

tents of Kedar - portable dwellings of Arab Bedouins covered with dark, goat hair skins
thousand - wives and concubines in Solomon's harem
tresses - locks of hair
twins - each tooth above has matching one below, none are missing
two fawns - beautiful, graceful, symmetrical, small and youthful

U

unclean - ceremonially impure under the law of Moses
under heaven - life here and now on the earth
under the sun - same as "under heaven"
upright - straight, correct, right, righteous

V

vanity - literally, breath or vapor, something with no substance, meaningless, worthless, empty, futile, soon passing
vehement flame - literally, flame of the Lord, strongest possible, completely consuming
verdure - fresh greenery
vineyard
 (8:11) - harem
 (8:12) - love
vineyards of En Gedi - pleasant, private place away from the throngs of the city

W

wall - steadfast against impure or unwanted suitors
well of living waters - well of flowing water, pure, lovely, refreshing
Wickedness - violence and crime against civil law
wisdom - ability to properly apply knowledge

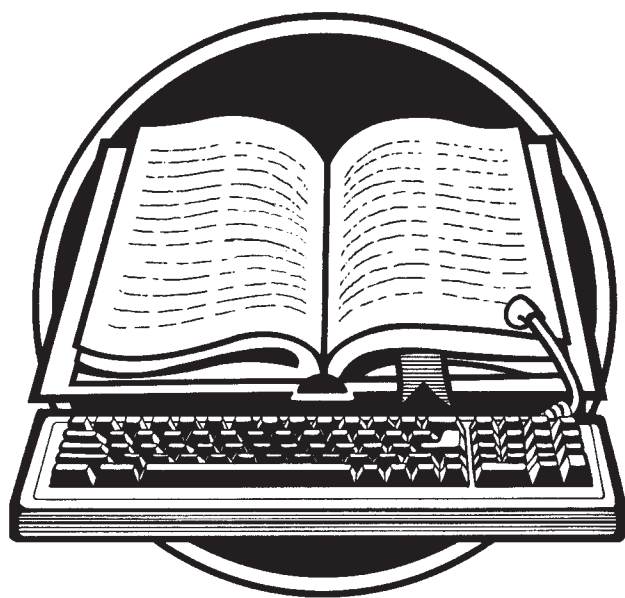
X-Y-Z

young stag - - handsome, graceful, swift
youth - young person

**United Israelite Kingdom,
Israel in the Time of Kings Saul, David and Solomon, 1000 to 924 B.C.**



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