The set of dialogues we have in this Song indicate that here we have a romance which went too far too quickly between Solomon and an Egyptian girl. He ought to have married an Israelite, one of the “daughters of Jerusalem”. The Song is full of tension between the girl and these “daughters”, whom she fears as being more attractive to Solomon than herself; and they speak to her sarcastically. Solomon in the Proverbs warned the Israelites about being attracted by pretty Gentile women who would lead them astray; and yet he does the very opposite of what he had taught to be true. The Song ends not with a wedding, as the genre of love poems might suggest, but with the couple parting in acrimony. Not running relationships God’s way doesn’t lead to satisfaction.

1:2 The Song begins by the daughters of Jerusalem and the Egyptian girl being in some kind of competition for Solomon; they both state their desire for him, and both of them compare his love to wine (:2, 4). Note how the Song doesn't begin as a romance is supposed to- with the first meeting, love at first sight scene. As early as 1:2 she comments that "your lovemaking is more delightful than wine". This is all a subversion of the whole genre of romance. It was all too far too fast. The Egyptian justifies her darker complexion to the Jerusalem girls, and praises her own beauty: "I am dark but lovely" (:5). She likewise yells at them not to sexually stimulate her lover, Solomon (2:7). "My beloved is mine" (2:16) to be the same catty kind of defensiveness. The girl is jealous of how the daughters of Jerusalem admire Solomon, not least because of his fame in Israelite circles (:3,4). And the Jerusalem girls respond with sarcasm as in 6:1.

1:9 Solomon should  have  admired  neither the horses nor the women of Egypt;  yet he begins his Song with an unashamed breach of the command   not  to  desire  either  of  these  things.  The unashamedness of Solomon coupled with his spirituality indicates that  at  this  time he was genuinely convinced that what he was doing  was  deeply  spiritual;  when in fact it was completely carnal. He totally ignored his own advice in Proverbs about choosing a spiritual Israelite woman as a wife.

1:11 The Song is shot through with allusion to the Law and tabernacle rituals; he speaks of making her borders on her clothes, alluding to the borders of blue to be worn  by  the  faithful  Israelite.  Solomon  wanted her to be a spiritual  woman,  and  he  was  going  to  make her one in his mind, to his eyes. He wanted to see her as a spiritual woman, and eventually he became persuaded that she was just this. This is often the psychology of marriage out of the faith.

2:1 The girl says she is merely a common "rose of Sharon", but Solomon responds that in his eyes, she is like a lily among thorns, referring to the Jerusalem girls. Ironically enough, Num. 33:55 had warned that the Gentiles within the land promised to Abraham would be "thorns" to Israel if they married them. And yet Solomon sees the Israelite women as "thorns" and the Gentile as a lily amongst them. He likewise compares her to them in 6:8,9.

2:10-13 Solomon describes her in Jewish terms,  likening her  to many well-known places in Israel: the Heshbon  fishpools,  the tower of Lebanon etc. (see too 4:1,4). He wanted to  see  her  as  an  Israelite  girl,  and  so that was how she appeared  to  him. Such is the self-deception we are capable of when we seek to justify ourselves. Solomon takes her on a tour of Israel (4:8), enthusing about the sights, speaking of them as the things of  "our  land”. See on 4:16.

2:13,14 It was because of the impossible tension between the Egyptian girl and the Jerusalem maidens that there's the constant theme of needing to hold meetings in secrecy, often in the countryside or mountains around Jerusalem, and to "go away" in order to be together. They appear to have slept together in the open air, beneath the trees (1:16,17; 7:11). 2:17 and 4:6 suggest they spent a night together in the hills, and then before dawn Solomon got back to Jerusalem. Illicit relationships are powerfully attractive at the time, but doomed to ultimate failure.

3:4 She walked the streets of Jerusalem whilst he was confined in the palace (:2). Her mother moved to Jerusalem from Egypt, but it wasn’t possible for Solomon and her to easily be together in that house (also 8:2). 3:4 is very similar to Solomon's own warnings against Gentile marriage in Prov. 7:13,27; 5:8). We have an amazing ability to do the very opposite of what we know is right.

3:4,11 This is her sarcastic comments to the Jerusalem girls, mocking the crown his mother Bathsheba had made for him, wishing instead that he would be under the influence of her mother

4:1 Parts of the Song are very sexually explicit once the fairly obvious allusions are figured out. He's describing the vaginal lips of his girlfriend, his intended spouse (4:1,3,8 ); and he has seen "behind your veil", the symbol of her virginity. And yet he glorifies all this in his song. Quite clearly, Solomon was guilty of fornication with the one whom he wished to marry, although the ending of the Song seems to imply the relationship somehow broke up. And this was all right at the beginning of his reign.

4:4 She loves him because of his ointment, and he loves her because of her jewellery (:4). He says that deep kissing with her gives the same after effect as drinking enough wine that you talk in your sleep afterwards (7:9). It’s all very human and carnal; one lesson of the Song is that superficial attraction isn’t the basis for true love.

4:15,6 Solomon saw her as a “paradise”, a garden with rivers and exotic fruits, surrounded by a wall- the language of Eden. And she was a fount of “living waters”, the language of Messiah. He saw her as the Kingdom / Eden personified. And yet her response to being described in this way is almost inappropriate- for she invites him to come and eat the fruit of the garden (:16), exactly after the pattern of Eve destroying Adam. Yet Solomon didn’t want to see this connection; she was the Kingdom to him, just as so many have felt that having their new partner means that nothing, not even the Kingdom, is meaningful any more.  See on 2:10-13.

5:1 Song 5 seems to give insight into the unworthy elements of the potential bride of Christ. Notice the sequence: While she sleeps at night, the bridegroom comes and knocks [unworthy virgins sleeping instead of being awake; the Lord Jesus comes; Lk. 12:36 uses the same figure, of the Lord's return being like a knock]. She replies that she's not dressed properly, makes excuses about her feet, she can't come and open [the unworthy don't respond immediately]. He tries to open the door from the outside, putting his hand through the latch-hole [by grace, after the pattern of Lot being encouraged to leave Sodom when he hesitated, the Lord will be patient even with sleepy virgins in His desire for their salvation]. Her heart is moved with desire for him [the rejected still call Jesus 'Lord, Lord'; they love Him emotionally]. She starts dressing herself up, and then is overtaken by desire and rushes to the door, her hands dripping all kinds of perfume and make up over the lock as she opens it [cp. the virgins going to buy oil, the unworthy trying to prepare themselves all too late, not trusting that their Lord loves them as they are at the moment of His coming]. But he's gone , he *withdraws himself* [all too late, the door is shut, He never knew them]. Her soul fails [the shock of rejection]. She seeks him but doesn't find him, calls but he doesn't answer [Prov. 1:28; Hos. 5:6; the rejected call, but aren't answered; they seek the Lord early, but don't find Him]. She feels tired of her relationship with him ("sick of love"). She is persecuted by the world around her ["condemned with the world"]. If we don't immediately respond to the Lord's knock, we show ourselves to not love Him enough. If we don't open immediately, it's as if we didn't open at all. The Lord wants us as we are, bleary eyed and without our make up, but with a basic overriding love of Him, and faith in the depth of His love, which will lead us to immediately go out to meet Him. This will be the ultimate and crucial divide- between those who believe in the Lord's love for us; and those who think they need to make themselves good enough for Him. Solomon called to the girl through the keyhole: "...my undefiled...". But she doesn't want to immediately come to Him because she doesn't want to meet him with 'defiled' feet (:2,3). She couldn't believe his words, that in his eyes, she was *un*defiled. And the enormity of the passion of Christ for us is likewise so hard for us to accept. In 3:1 we find the girl again at night, dreaming of having Solomon with her. But when one night he does actually come, she doesn't go to meet him immediately. And there's a warning for us. Like Israel we may 'desire the day of the Lord', study prophecy about it, write about it, enthuse about it. But when He comes, to what end will it be to us? Will we *in a moment* drop everything and go to Him, believing that He loves us just as we are? Or will we run off to buy oil, slap make up on...? She finally realized that he had loved her for who she was, how she was. But it was tragically too late. He'd gone. We need to learn that lesson *now*, to know the love of Christ... so that in that moment when we know for sure 'He's back!', we will without hesitation *go to Him* with that perfect / mature love, that casts out fear.

6:13 Solomon boasts that he has many Jewish queens and concubines, but there is only one woman, the Egyptian, that he truly loves (6:8,9); he even calls her his “sister”, associating himself thereby with Egypt. Perhaps this tension between the two groups- the Jerusalem women and the Egyptian girl and her family- is behind the enigmatic reference to “the company of two armies” or “the dance of the two camps” or lines. She suspects there may be two camps in Solomon's mind.

7:12 See on 8:1.

8:1 She deeply wished  that  Solomon was her brother, i.e. an Egyptian, because in  that  case  their relationship could be much more open, they would  not  be despised because of their love, and Solomon could come  and live in her mother's house back in Egypt. Clearly she  was attracted to Solomon rather than to the God of Israel. In :2,3 she seems to be saying ‘I’ll have sex with you, as you offered in 7:12, if you agree to be an Egyptian’ (and 4:16; 5:1,4-6 could imply they did have intercourse).

8:5 The daughters of Jerusalem mock her by saying this. We expect a romantic song to end with the wedding; but it doesn't. It ends with the couple parting; and this dream wedding is no more than the Egyptian girl fantasizing. The fact the wedding 'scene' or dream comes in the middle of the song rather than at the end is again a subversion of the whole genre of romance. The climax is in the wrong place. And this just indicates how unfulfilling are relationships which flout Divine principles.

8:12 She utters the final warning to the daughters of Jerusalem not to stimulate Solomon, and then breaks down with the lament that jealousy is cruel as death (:6) and unrequited love is impossible; Solomon's true love cannot be bought by her. The daughters of Jerusalem then speak of how they have a younger sister whose breasts aren't yet developed, but they will care for her until she is ready for Solomon (:8,9). The Egyptian girl then reminisces in the past tense: "I was a wall, and my breasts were like fortress towers; then I found acceptance in his eyes" (8:10). Solomon throughout the Songs has commented positively upon her breasts; and now she is left to lament that that is all just how it was, it's all over now. She then makes the enigmatic comment about how Solomon has a vineyard which he leases out, and yet she is a vineyard which belongs to her alone. The Songs have likened her to a vineyard (2:13,15), but Solomon's vineyard, she says, was associated with Baal-Hamon- Lord / husband of a multitude. She finally realized that he was a womanizer, who would go on to have over 1000 women in his life... Lord [or husband] of a multitude. Perhaps his 1000 wives and concubines lay behind her reference to the 1000 shekels that Solomon can have for his vineyard (:12). But now she was splitting up with him, her vineyard was hers alone, her grapes were now solely at her disposal and were not his any more. The final couplet of the Song is one of bitter sarcasm, typical of the worst order of romantic breakup. Solomon says that his "companions"- the daughters of Jerusalem whom she had so hated- are listening carefully to her, as he is. And she responds by telling him to run away, whilst still calling him her "beloved"- for although jealousy is cruel as the grave, her love for him was unquenchable by many waters. So the Song ends with Solomon in rather a bad light- off to his next women, whilst the Egyptian girl walks off the scene bitterly protesting her love for him and how she's a victim of circumstance and jealousy. Yet Solomon, presumably, authored the Song. We read it therefore in the same way as we do Ecclesiastes- his jaded statement of how life has been for him, how he sought fulfilment of his human lusts but it never worked out, leaving him with a tragic sense of unfulfilment because he had not gone God's way.