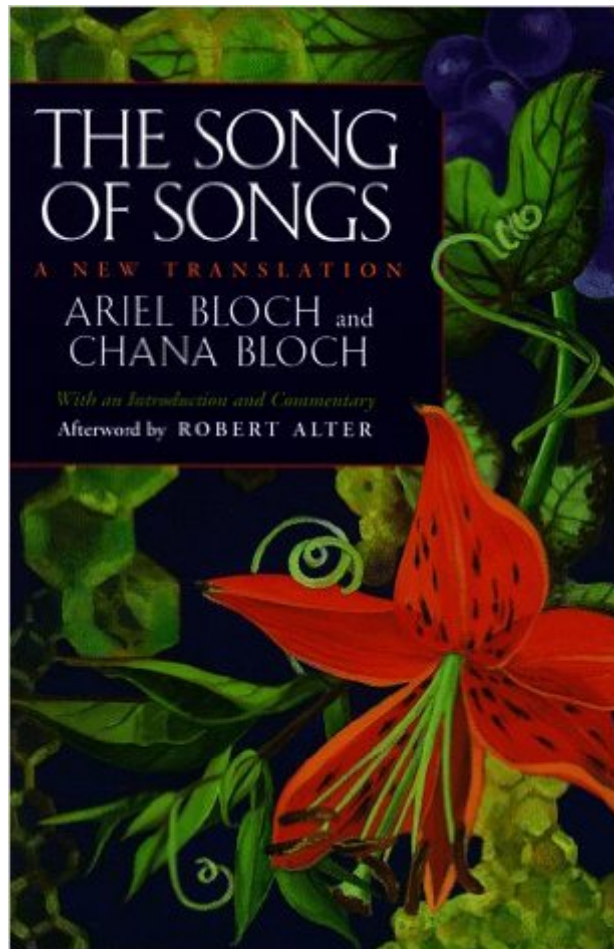


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The Song Of Songs: A New Translation



Synopsis

The Song of Songs, often referred to as the Song of Solomon, is one of the greatest love poems of all time. In their lyrical new translation, Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch restore the sensuousness of the original language and strip away the veils of mistranslation that have obscured the power and meaning of the poem. Presented en face, this translation is scrupulously faithful to the Hebrew text.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Reading "The Song of Songs" directly out of the Bible and reading the work of Ariel and Chana Bloch is a complete different experience. The later enriches the first! An academic approach providing a first rate translation of "The Song of Songs," an in depth study and analysis of the poem itself, will broaden your understanding and enjoyment of this forever lasting and debated love poem. Its love transcending sexual imaginary!

The best translation, hands down, is this Modern Library Classics by Bloch and Bloch. The layout is very user-friendly, with the original Hebrew on one side, with the English translation on the other. Anyone who knows or is studying Hebrew will appreciate this feature. Also the Song jumps between voices and narration without the typical "he said"/"she said" obtrusions that are common to modern writing. Using context clues it is not too challenging to figure out if the lines belong to the Lover or the Beloved, but the translators' use of italics and bold, makes this distinction clear and renders a very smooth reading. What makes this translation supreme is Bloch and Bloch's great command of

Biblical Hebrew combined with their artistry in maintaining the poetic beauty of this text. They took great care to translate this text as closely as possible to the original Hebrew, but still made some artistic adjustments when a too literal translation would be awkward. This edition includes a wonderful introduction which discusses the various historical interpretations of this text, as well as their own take. A detailed commentary follows which explains in minutiae the justifications for various translation decisions. For example the word "love" in 5:1, Bloch and Bloch argue has in Hebrew really the specific meaning of "love-making" as opposed to other Biblical terms for love such as the NT Greek "philos," or "agape," or the OT Hebrew "chesed" all of which can have meanings quite different from the act of coitus implied in "love-making." But the Blochs are careful to point out that the same Hebrew word used for love in 5:1 is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, and in those instances is very clearly in the context of romantic lovers spending the night together. The Bloch translation manages to capture the mystery, the beauty, the sensuality of the language, in a way that is fresh, readable, and true to the Hebrew.

As love poetry in the midst of theology and prophecy, The Song of Songs (or "of Solomon") is an often-ignored book of scripture. This translation celebrates its important place in our faith traditions. While it is aimed for the Jewish reader, as a Christian in love I found this a moving book, and as a scholar I found the commentary useful. Thank you for showing this to me, Rebbe!

My comment is not about the Song of Songs, nor do I write to praise this beautiful translation. I write to complain about this Modern Library edition, which is inferior in two ways to the edition published by the University of California Press. First, the University of California edition contains the entirety (two pages) of the authors' Acknowledgments. Since this is what we would routinely expect, it would not be worth mentioning, except for the fact that the Modern Library edition omits the first page almost entirely: this first page is completely blank except for the word "Acknowledgments." Upon turning this page, the reader encounters the second page of the Acknowledgments, the text merrily rolling along in midstream and mid-sentence. I believe this happened because standards of proofreading today are so low, with some famous publishers considering proofreaders expendable. Second, the University of California Press edition is printed on high-quality paper; this makes for a pleasant reading experience, because when reading one side of a page the reader does not have to contend with text bleeding through from the other side. Again, this is so taken for granted that it would not be worth mentioning, except for the fact that the Modern Library edition is printed on cheaper, thinner paper, so that the text from the other side of the page does bleed through. This is

yet another reflection of the lowering of standards by publishers who once stood for quality. Modern Library, modern times.

There are so many commentaries & angles on The Song of Songs in Scripture. But this one is translated from the Hebrew by the authors themselves, with more of a literary understanding from the original Hebrew than a spiritual treatise of the book, although that aspect is there. What this book does is take the writing out of the religious realms & down into each of our lives, personal, deep, evocative, & sexually explicit without being sanitized. In other words, it's really real in every sense. It's especially rich for anyone who loves Hebrew & related languages.

I am reading this slowly. Expect to use it a lifetime. I love it! I have rested under the branches of the scholarly work done and tasted of the fruit. I return frequently, opening the pages of the text and comments. It is refreshing and provokes me to admire love in all its forms, both earthly and heavenly. I love Robert Alters contribution and the insights offered by the two authors. I would highly recommend this book.

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