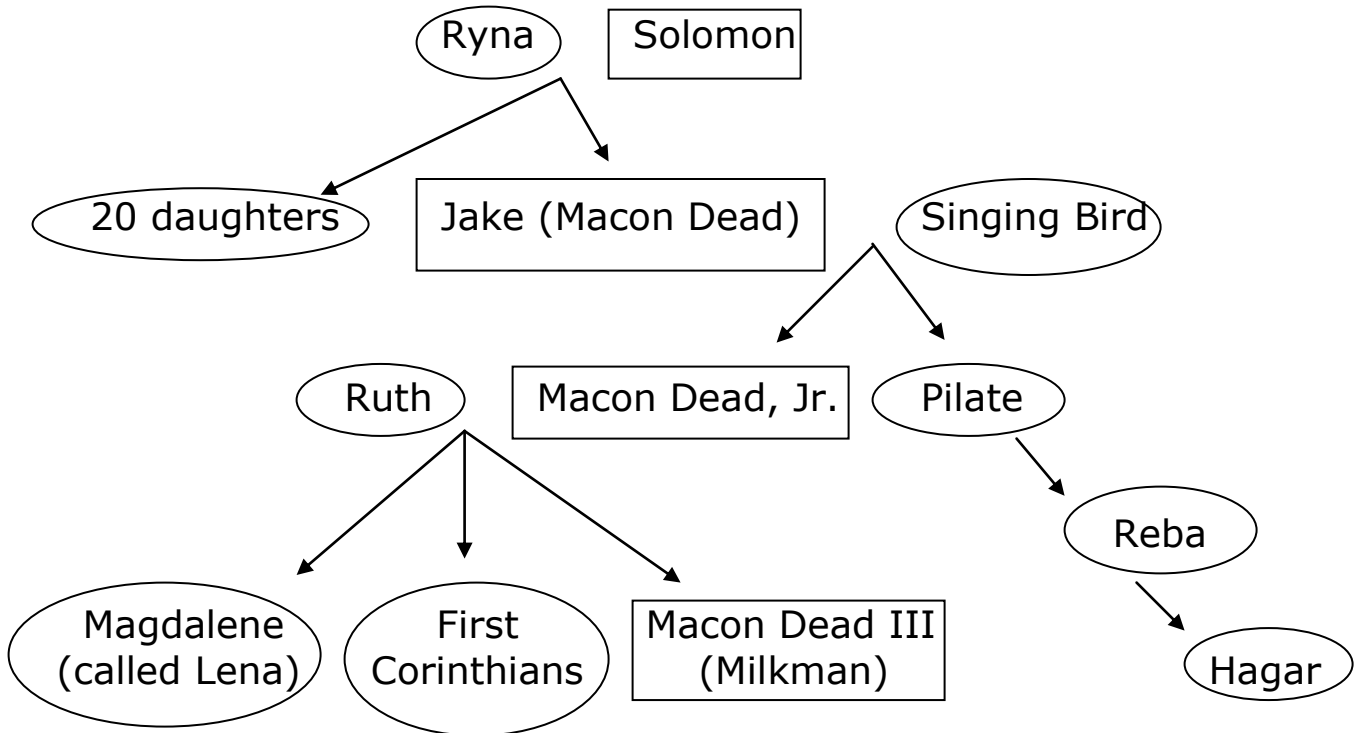


Characters in *Song of Solomon*



Biblical Allusions

Solomon

- son of David and king of Israel
- representative of wisdom and opulence
- fruitful in procreation (with 700 wives and 300 concubines)

Pilate

- Governor of Judea
- pronounced death sentence to Jesus after Jewish officials found him guilty of breaches in Judaic Law

Ruth

- widow who refused to leave her mother-in-law to return to her people
- representative of loyalty and devotion
- "Wither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; they people shall be my people, and thy God, my God."

Magdalene

- follower of Jesus; witness to the Crucifixion; first to speak to Jesus after his resurrection
- name derives from word for "tower" or "fortress"
- possibly a powerful teacher, priestess, or the only female disciple
- falsely referred to as a reformed prostitute (first by Pope Gregory) as a way to diminish the power of women in the church

First Corinthians

- letters written by the Apostle to the church in Corinth
- advises against factionalism and defines love
- "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away" (13.1-8)

Reba

- nickname for Rebekah, wife of Isaac
- favored youngest son Jacob, helping him to deceive his blind father and older brother Esau

Hagar

- Egyptian servant of Sarah, given by her as a concubine to Abraham when she remained childless
- gave birth to Ishmael but was cast out after Isaac's birth of Sarah

Song of Solomon or Song of Songs

- collection of poems about human love and courtship, containing sensuous and erotic imagery
- based on myth of the love of god and goddess on which the fertility of nature depends
- verbal celebration of complete and unselfish love

Mythological Allusions

Circe (from Homer's *Odyssey*)

- beautiful sorceress and temptress who lived in a large isolated home and turned those who offended her into animals, usually swine
- gave Odysseus crucial information to guide him on his homeward journey