

SONG OF SOLOMON¹

Outline

- I. Introduction: The superior song by Solomon 1:1.
 - 1:1** The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.
- II. Initial meeting between the Shulamite and Solomon 1:2--2:7.
 - A. Conversations between the friends and the Shulamite 1:2-7.

The Shulamite²

¹ While most of the notes are the work of this professor, the influence of Dr. Elliott Johnson, his lectures, and his notes, from whom I took this course, cannot be diminished. Thus, credit is given for the appearance of his greatly appreciated influence.

² **SHULAMMITE** [Heb *šūlammît* (שׁוּלַמִּיט)]. A reference to the woman in Cant 7:1—Eng 6:13. Four interpretations occur individually and in combination. The first interprets it as the feminine form of Solomon, which is used to refer to the man in Cant 1:5; 3:7, 11; 8:11, 12 (in addition to the superscription in 1:1). However, the expected feminine form of Solomon is *šēlōmît* (which occurs in Lev 24:11 and 1 Chr 3:19); in addition, unlike proper names, “Shulammite” is used with the article.

The second regards it as a designation for an inhabitant of the town of SHUNEM (identified with modern Solem). Alteration of liquid sounds is not uncommon, and did occur later with Shunem, as its modern equivalent indicates. However, substitution of *l* for *n* in this name is unattested in biblical times, and the woman of Cant is elsewhere associated with Jerusalem rather than Shunem. In addition, given the strong alliteration of the verse as a whole, it would be surprising for a less alliterative option to be used (*nun* also occurs in *wēnehēzeh* and *hammahānāyim*; *lamed* does not occur elsewhere in the verse). Some proponents of this theory identify the woman of Cant with Abishag, for which there is no clear evidence.

The third interpretation sees Shulammite as a reference to a goddess (Šala or Šulmānītu), equivalent of Ishtar. This explanation is popular with proponents of the sacred marriage interpretation of Cant.

The fourth interprets it as a noun from the root *šlm*, with meaning “the perfect one.” Although there are morphological difficulties, Fox (1985:157–58) explains the word as a *nisbe* form of the otherwise unknown *šūlam*, perhaps pointed incorrectly.

1. The Shulamite describes her desirable lover - Solomon 1:2-4a.

² "May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. ³ "Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, Your name is *like* purified oil; Therefore the maidens love you. ⁴ "Draw me after you *and* let us run *together*! The king has brought me into his chambers."

The Friends of the Shulamite

2. The friends of the Shulamite express their share in her joy 1:4b.

"We will rejoice in you and be glad; We will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you."

3. The Shulamite describes herself as beautiful, but uncared for 1:5-6.

⁵ "I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, Like the tents of Kedar, Like the curtains of Solomon. ⁶ "Do not stare at me because I am swarthy, For the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They made me caretaker of the vineyards, *But* I have not taken care of my own vineyard.

4. The Shulamite desires to know where her lover will be. 1:7

⁷ "Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture *your flock*, Where do you make *it* lie down at noon? For why should I be like one who veils herself Beside the flocks of your companions?"

The first and fourth options are reflected in rabbinic references to the term; LXX B has *hē Soumaneitis*, which probably reflects the second option.

Since none of these explanations has won majority approval, many interpreters choose to transliterate the name rather than attempting to translate. This seems the best option. It is possible that no single explanation is adequate (and in fact a number of commentators combine elements of two theories): the form may well be related to *šlm*, and influenced by the name of Solomon. The *u*-vowel may be affected by the long *u* of *šûbî* to increase the assonance of the verse. Recent thorough discussions may be found in Fox (1985:157–58) and Pope (*Song of Songs* AB, 600).

Reference: Libronix: Anchor Bible Dictionary, "Shulammite", Vol. 5, p. 1227.

B. Initial conversations between the Shulamite and Solomon 1:8--2:7.

Solomon

1. He replies that she needs to look for him among the shepherds in the field 1:8.

⁸ "If you yourself do not know, Most beautiful among women, Go forth on the trail of the flock, And pasture your young goats By the tents of the shepherds.

2. Solomon describes the Shulamite as beautiful 1:9-11.

⁹ "To me, my darling, you are like My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh. ¹⁰ "Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with strings of beads." ¹¹ "We will make for you ornaments of gold With beads of silver."

The Shulamite

3. The Shulamite expresses her appreciation of her lover 1:12-14.

¹² "While the king was at his table, My perfume gave forth its fragrance. ¹³ "My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh Which lies all night between my breasts. ¹⁴ "My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms In the vineyards of Engedi."

Solomon

4. Solomon expresses her beauty 1:15.

¹⁵ "How beautiful you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are *like* doves."

The Shulamite

5. The Shulamite speaks 1:16-2:1.

- a. She expresses his beauty 1:16a.

"How handsome you are, my beloved, ¹⁶ *And* so pleasant!

- b. She describes their scenery of lying together under the trees on the grass 1:16b-17.

Indeed, our couch is luxuriant! ¹⁷ "The beams of our houses are cedars, Our rafters, cypresses.

- c. She describes herself as a rose and a lily 2:1.

"I am the rose of Sharon, The lily of the valleys."

Solomon

6. Solomon reacts and describes her as an exceptional lily 2:2.

² "Like a lily among the thorns, So is my darling among the maidens."

The Shulamite

7. The Shulamite expresses 2:3-6.

- a. She expresses the fact that he is special and satisfies her 2:3.

³ "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, So is my beloved among the young men. In his shade I took great delight and sat down, And his fruit was sweet to my taste.

- b. She expresses the fact that he has brought her to the King's palace 2:4.

⁴ "He has brought me to *his* banquet hall, And his banner over me is love.

- c. She expresses the desire that he be the one who continues to sustain her needs 2:5-6.

⁵ "Sustain me with raisin cakes, Refresh me with apples, Because I am lovesick. ⁶ "Let his left hand be under my head And his right hand embrace me."

THE AUTHOR

8. The author expresses to the friends that they not wake love out of sleep until it is ready. 2:7.

⁷ *"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, That you will not arouse or awaken love, Until she (lit.: "it") pleases."*

III. Second meeting of the Shulamite and Solomon 2:8-3:5.

The Shulamite

A. The Shulamite sees Solomon coming 2:8-9.

⁸ "Listen! My beloved! Behold, he is coming, Climbing on the mountains, Leaping on the hills! ⁹ "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he is standing behind our wall, He is looking through the windows, He is peering through the lattice.

Solomon

B. Solomon wakes the Shulamite 2:10-13.

1. He desires to have her awake 2:10.

¹⁰ "My beloved responded and said to me, 'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along.

2. Winter is gone as well as the rain 2:11.

¹¹ 'For behold, the winter is past, The rain is over *and* gone.

3. Everything is at its fullest state 2:12-13a.

¹² 'The flowers have *already* appeared in the land; The time has arrived for pruning *the vines*, And the voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land. ¹³ 'The fig tree has ripened its figs, And the vines in blossom have given forth *their* fragrance.

4. He desires her to come 2:13b.

Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along!"

C. Solomon expresses the desire to admire her while on their walk 2:14.

¹⁴ "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret place of the steep pathway, Let me see your form, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, And your form is lovely."

The Shulamite

D. The Shulamite speaks 2:15-3:4

1. She expresses a desire for him to subdue the foxes 2:15.

¹⁵ "Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, While our vineyards are in blossom."

2. She is excited that she possesses Solomon 2:16.

¹⁶ "*My beloved is mine, and I am his*; He pastures *his flock* among the lilies.

3. She bids him good-bye 2:17.

¹⁷ "Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle Or a young stag on the mountains of Bether."

4. She misses him as she sleeps alone 3:1-4.

- a. She wakes up longing for him 3:1.

"On my bed night after night I sought him Whom my soul loves; I sought him but did not find him.

- b. She searches for him in the streets 3:2.

² 'I must arise now and go about the city; In the streets and in the squares I must seek him whom my soul loves.' I sought him but did not find him. ³ "The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, *And I said*, 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'

- c. She finds him and brings him to her mother's house 3:4.

⁴ "Scarcely had I left them When I found him whom my soul loves; I held on to him and would not let him go, Until I had brought him to my mother's house, And into the room of her who conceived me."

THE AUTHOR

- E. The author expresses to the friends that they not wake love out of its sleep until it is ready 3:5.
- ⁵ "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, That you will not arouse or awaken *my* love, Until she pleases."
- IV. Third meeting of the Shulamite and Solomon (The Wedding) 3:6-5:1b.
- A. The Shulamite observes as Solomon approaches with his wedding procession 3:6-11.
1. She describes the smell of the oncoming Solomon 3:6.

⁶ "What is this coming up from the wilderness Like columns of smoke, Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, With all scented powders of the merchant?"
 2. She describes the strong soldiers who accompany him 3:7-8.

⁷ "Behold, it is the *traveling* couch of Solomon; Sixty mighty men around it, Of the mighty men of Israel. ⁸ "All of them are wielders of the sword, Expert in war; Each man has his sword at his side, *Guarding* against the terrors of the night.
 3. She describes the sedan chair he rides in 3:9-10.

⁹ "King Solomon has made for himself a sedan chair From the timber of Lebanon. ¹⁰ "He made its posts of silver, Its back of gold *And* its seat of purple fabric, *With* its interior lovingly fitted out By the daughters of Jerusalem.
 4. She implores the maidens to go and gaze at him 3:11.

¹¹ "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, And gaze on King Solomon with the crown With which his mother has crowned him On the day of his wedding, And on the day of his gladness of heart."
- B. Solomon describes his bride 4:1-15.
1. The beauty of the features of her head 4:1-3.
 2. The beauty of her neck 4:4.
 3. The beauty of her breasts 4:5-6.

4. An exclamation of her beauty 4:7.
 5. An expression of her effect on him 4:8-9.
 6. An expression of her love and his appreciation 4:10.
 7. The tastes and smells of his love 4:11.
 8. A beautiful garden which is sealed 4:12-15.
- C. The Shulamite invites Solomon to enjoy her 4:16.
- D. Solomon enjoys her 5:1a.
- E. The author expresses his encouragement to the joy of the lovers 5:1b.
- V. The fourth meeting of the Shulamite and Solomon 5:2a-8:4.
- A. The Shulamite is awakened 5:2a.
 - B. Solomon has come to her 5:2b.
 - C. She expresses misgivings about involvement now that she has prepared for bed 5:3.
 - D. The Shulamite's desire for Solomon is aroused 5:4-8.
 1. She is aroused by his presence 5:4.
 2. She opens the door 5:5.
 3. He has gone 5:6
 4. She looks in the streets for him but is treated harshly by the guards 5:7.
 5. She asks the women to look for him 5:8.
 - E. The women of the city ask what he looks like 5:9.
 - F. She recalls the object of her desire specifically skin, head, hair, eyes, cheeks, lips, hands, abdomen, legs, appearance, mouth 5:10-16.
 - G. The women of the city ask where he has gone 6:1.
 - H. She replies that he has gone to his flocks, but she is assured that he is committed to her, and she to him. 6:2-3.
 - I. The king describes the Shulamite 6:4-9.
 1. He praises her beauty 6:4.
 2. Her eyes are too much for him 6:5a.
 3. Her hair, teeth, temples are beautiful 6:5b-8.
 4. She is praised among women 6:9-10.
 - J. The Shulamite goes to the garden where Solomon is and is restored to her standing by Solomon 6:11-12.
 - K. The people desire to gaze on the Shulamite's beauty 6:13.

- L. They return and Solomon comments on the beauty of her body 7:1-7.
 - 1. Her feet, hips, navel, belly, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head, hair 7:1-5.
 - 2. Her overall beauty 7:6.
 - 3. Her stature, breasts 7:7.
 - M. Solomon again desires to enjoy the pleasures of her body 7:8-9a.
 - N. Solomon and the Shulamite begin to fall asleep 7:9b.
 - O. The Shulamite expresses confidence that their love commitment is secure 7:10.
 - P. The Shulamite requests to go again to the country, expressing joy that he has become her companion again 7:11-8:3.
 - Q. Solomon expresses to the friends that they not wake love out of its sleep before it is ready 8:4.
- VI. Review of their love 8:5-14.
- A. The poet asks who it is that is with Solomon 8:5a.
 - B. She replies that their love is strong 8:5b-7.
 - C. Her brothers express that they will protect her 8:8-9.
 - D. She describes her meeting with Solomon 8:11-12.
 - E. She describes that their love has continued as intensely as it was previously 8:13-14.

Synthesis

Background

Authorship

Solomon is attributed the authorship in 1:1. Although some argue that this implies only that it is addressed to, dedicated to, or written about Solomon, it appears that the most likely literary intent is to indicate that Solomon was indeed the author and that it was written about him. He is referred to by name six times throughout the book. Further the expensive trappings given the main character are those of a king, and as such he is referred in five places throughout the book.

There is, of course, objection to the fact that Solomon was polygamous, and here is a drama about a man who focuses on one woman. It appears to this author that the point is the blessings of marital love based on Genesis 2, and makes no reference to Solomon's exploits since they certainly weren't part of Genesis 2. Solomon certainly had insight into Genesis 1-5 based on Ecclesiastes and Proverbs.

Purpose

The purpose of The Song of Solomon is to demonstrate the beauty of marital love as God intended it in Genesis 2, with an emphasis on the protection of one's love until the time of marital love.

Date

The date therefore follows that it was during Solomon's reign between and 931.

Structure

The book is structured on several meaningful comments at the end of each section, either by the author, by the Shulamite, or by God as observer. These breaks occur in 2:7, 3:5, 5:1b, 8:4. All the passages end one of the four meetings between Solomon and the Shulamite. All but 5:1b are a reference to the daughters of Jerusalem with instruction of preserving their love.

Commentary

I. Introduction: The superior song by Solomon 1:1.

II. Initial meeting between the Shulamite and Solomon 1:2-2:7.

The friends, i.e., the daughters of Jerusalem, are here introduced and are the witnesses and observers to the drama that is unfolding. First the Shulamite describes her beauty, and her love for Solomon. She meets him and he expresses her beauty, as they lie together in the grass. This is an early meeting in their courtship as they innocently trade compliments in symbolic terms of nature.

The first section ends with the exhortation (2:7) to the observers that love (emotional and physical) be not awakened until its time. This is a major exhortation of the Song that of preserving one's chastity (emotional, spiritual, physical) until the Sovereign God brings the man into one's life.

III. Second meeting of the Shulamite and Solomon 2:8-3:5.

The second meeting of Solomon is one of walking, as they admire each other. Solomon points out that he desires to have her arise (2:10,13). Then they part, and she misses him as she sleeps alone. She finds him and brings him to her mother's house. This indicates the cycle of love that continues in creation. She is experiencing the very thing that her mother did when she bore her.

Again the section ends with the exhortation to the observers of the story that they preserve their chastity and love until it is time. (3:5).

IV. Third meeting of the Shulamite and Solomon (The Wedding) 3:6-5:1b.

The third meeting is the wedding (cf. 3:11). The Shulamite sees Solomon as he approaches in the wedding procession. He describes his bride, and they consummate the marriage. The closing verse of this section (5:1) involves a shift from Solomon addressing his new wife to a third person who addresses the friends and the lovers. This author feels that the commentator here is God. He is proclaiming His blessing of a Genesis 2 relationship in 5:1b, "Drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers."

V. The fourth meeting of the Shulamite and Solomon 5:2a-8:4.

This is the fourth meeting of Solomon with the Shulamite and she is now 'awakened' (5:2). While she was preparing for bed, Solomon came to her, she thought about the trouble of having to again prepare herself for bed, should she involve herself

physically or emotionally with Solomon at this time. By the time her thoughts have settled she finds he has gone. She searches the streets for him. He finally returns and they enjoy each other's presence once again. In this section it is repeated that their love commitment is secure (6:2,3; 7:10).

Again the section closes with the exhortation to the observers that love is sacred and not to be awakened until the time is ready.

VI. Review of their love 8:5-14.

The review of their love at the end of the book speaks of the strength and importance and value of love. It gives honor to her brothers who have seen to her chastity. It closes with the excitement of two people who enjoy each other's presence both physically and emotionally. The book has employed a joyful abandon within the bonds of marriage. It is a perfect picture of something that may still be maintained despite the fall of man.

Characters

Solomon: 1:1 (written by, dedicated to, addressed to, or about)

Shulamite 1:2 (object of the desire of the man)

(Shepherd) 1:6, 8:12

(three character hypothesis; “the vineyard” of the Shulamite is a symbol for the rural lover).

(two character hypothesis; “the vineyard” is possessed by Solomon where her family lived, yet she was not interested in cultivating it (8:11,12)

Daughters of Jerusalem

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 1:5 | I am black but lovely
<i>O daughters of Jerusalem...</i> | Shulamite |
| 2:7 | I adjure you <i>O daughters of Jerusalem</i> ,
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,
That you will not arouse or awaken love,
Until it pleases | Shulamite |
| 3:5 | I adjure you, <i>O daughters of Jerusalem</i>
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,
That you will not arouse or awaken love
Until it pleases. | Shulamite |
| 3:1 | He made its posts of silver,
Its back of gold
And its seat of purple fabric
With its interior lovingly fitted out
By <i>the daughters of Jerusalem</i> | Shulamite |
| | Go forth <i>O daughters of Zion</i>
And gaze on King Solomon with the crown | Shulamite |
| 5:8 | I adjure you, <i>O daughters of Jerusalem</i> ,
If you find my beloved
As to what you will tell him:
For I am lovesick | Shulamite |

5:1 His mouth is full of sweetness Shulamite
 And he is wholly desirable
 This is my beloved and this, my friend
O daughters of Jerusalem

8:4 I want you to swear, *O daughters of* Shulamite
Jerusalem,
 Do not arouse or awaken love
 Until it pleases

Awaken, stir up, arouse

2:7 Do not *arouse* or awaken love *Hiphil* Future
 2:7 Do not arouse or *awaken* love *Polel* Future
 3:5 Do not arouse or *awaken* love *Polel* Future
 3:5 Do not *arouse* or awaken love *Hiphil* Future
 4:16 *Awake*, O north wind... *Kal* Imperative
 5:2 I sleep, but my heart waketh *Kal* Future
 8:4 that you do not arouse nor *awaken* love *Polel* Future
 8:4 that you do not *arouse* nor awaken love *Hiphil* Future
 8:5 Beneath the apple tree I *awakened* you *Polel* Preterite

Refrains: 2:7, 3:5, 8:4

2:7 I adjure you O daughters of Jerusalem,
 By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,
 That you will not arouse or awaken love,
 Until it pleases

3:5 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem
 By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,
 That you will not arouse or awaken love
 Until it pleases.

Intro. & 2:6 Let his left hand be under my head
Refrain And his right hand embrace me.

Concl. & Refrain 8:3 Let his left hand be under my head
And his right hand embrace me.

8:4 I want you to swear, O daughters of Jerusalem,
Do not arouse or awaken love
Until it pleases

Statements³ of Shul. Love 2:16 My beloved is mine, and I am his
(each has possession for self-interest)

6:3 I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine
(submission of self-interest for other)

7:10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me
(confidence in other with no thought of self)

Statements about Love

8:6 For love is as strong as death,
Jealousy is as severe as Sheol;
Its flashes are flashes of fire
The flame of the LORD

Many waters cannot quench love
Nor will rivers overflow it;
If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love
It would be utterly despised.

Response: 8:8 We have a little sister
And she has no breasts;
What shall we do for our sister
On the day when she is spoken for?

If she is a wall
We shall build on her a battlement of silver;
But if she is a door,
We shall barricade her with planks of cedar

(i.e.)
I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers;
Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace.

³ This section particularly reflects the influence of the lectures and notes of Dr. Elliott Johnson from the course on Song of Solomon, Dallas Theological Seminary, and gives credit.