

Review: Song of Solomon, Act I: SOS 1:7-2:5: Pick-Up Lines 1-5; the Shulammite Begins Her Aria: the Shepherd's Proposal, Her Lovesickness

1:7 –

SW

“Tell me, O you whom my soul loves [It is the soul that identifies the right person.], 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 as a camp follower beside the flocks of your companions?”

NOTE: Passions and desires excite the lust patterns of the sinful nature and unassuaged result in fornication. These same passions and desires are excited by true love for one's right person and those with Christian integrity are able to assuage them with self-control.

Paul recommends marriage as the solution for single people who cannot control their passions and desires, “If the unmarried do not have self-control, let them marry” (1 Corinthians 7:9).

The word “self-control” is *ἐγκρατεύομαι*, *enkrateuomai* which is a compound that means “the power of self-restraint” but with the negative particle *οὐκ*, *ouk* means “no power of self-restraint.”

In marriage self-restraint is no longer a virtue since it is in this environment that the sexual expressions of passions and desires are designed to be released.

1:8 –

DJ

“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.”

NOTE: This is a sarcastic comment by the virgins who imply that although she can have a great king she is obsessed with a lowly shepherd. They seek to belittle her choice of a “right man.”

PRINCIPLE: Never judge another's spouse. They are designed by God for each other and it is not a subject for your approval.

1:9 –

KS

Pick-Up Line #1: “To me, my love, you are like a mare [war horse] among Pharaoh's chariots.

NOTE: To “pick-up” means to make someone's acquaintance boldly for sexual purposes. To “shoot someone a line” means to flatter or cajole; a compliment that is insincere but sounds pleasing and believable.”

The mare is a “war horse” that pulls Solomon's chariots. He had a 4,000-horse stable supported by 12,000 cavalymen and 1,400 chariots. However, the Law contains a divine mandate in Deuteronomy 17:16 that prohibits the Israelites from depending on anything but God for their protection.

The principle behind the pick-up line is that a chariot and is useless without a horse to pull it. And the horse and chariot are not effective unless there is a charioteer to direct its movements. Thus Solomon was insinuating that his life was incomplete without a woman to fulfill it. Chauvinistic in our day and time but it made perfect sense in 1,000 B.C.

1:10 -

KS

Pick-Up Line #2: "Your cheek bones are a beautiful set of orderly rows. **Pick-Up Line #3:** Your neck complements your facial symmetry as would strings of jewels."

NOTE: Solomon is very interested in the symmetry of the Shulammitte's features and consistently refers to them in many of his pick-up lines.

SOS 1:11 -

DJ

"We will make for you a wedding dress with orderly rows of gold with beads of silver."

NOTE: This is another attempt by the virgins to promote the relationship with Solomon. By appeals to the lust for materialism and approbation they offer their service as palaces couturiers to design her wedding dress. They emphasize how they would embroider with "orderly rows of Gold and beads of silver.

1:12 -

SW

"While King Solomon was at his table, my perfume gave forth its fragrance of memories."

NOTE: The "perfume" refers to the "pouch of myrrh" in the next verse. Its aroma serves as an olfactory vector that reminds her of the Shepherd. This fragrance of memories sustains her in his absence and makes reference to occupation with Christ as a problem-solving device. To love the invisible person one must know the person.

Solomon represents the temptations of the devil's world. Temptations can only be repulsed by one's capacity to recall resident doctrine acquired through spiritual growth.

1:13 -

SW

"My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh which lies all night between my breasts."

NOTE: It is not the "beloved" that lies all night between the Shulammitte's breasts but rather a "pouch of myrrh." Its aroma reminds the Shulammitte of her Shepherd and is an illustration of the fragrance of memories mentioned in verse 12.

1:14 -

SW

"My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi 'en-ged' 'l."

NOTE: Again we see the Shepherd serving as a protector of the Shulammitte even though absent from her. Confronted by Solomon she compares her circumstance with that of being isolated in the desert but being sustained by an oasis. Engedi is such a place. The Eastern Shore of the Dead Sea is a desert wilderness: *yeshimon* in the Hebrew. But at Engedi underground springs emerge that water the area thus creating an oasis enabling certain flora to flourish such as the vineyard and henna blossoms mentioned in the verse. She compares the aroma of henna blossoms at Engedi to her Shepherd who continues to sustain and protect her in her personal *Jornada*.

1:15 –

KS

Pick-Up Line #4: “How beautiful you are my love,
how beautiful you are. Your eyes are like doves.”

NOTE: Solomon’s arrogance is revealed in his careless use of the personal possessive pronoun in “my beloved.” His description of her as “beautiful” is the feminine *yaphah*. The reference to her eyes as being like doves’ eyes is another attempt to win the Shulammitte by coaxing her to be impressed with her own beauty.

1:16 –

SW

“How handsome you are, my beloved. How
delightful you are. Indeed, the timber for our bed still
grows green in the forest.

NOTE: The Shulammitte counters by using the masculine form of *yapheh* to describe her Shepherd as “handsome.” She emphasizes that they are not married but will be by her description of their home and its furnishings.

It was customary in the tenth-century B.C. for family and friends to build a new bed for the married couple. She indicates that the timber for their bed still grows green in the forest.

1:17 –

SW

“The beams of our house are cedars, our rafters,
cypresses.

NOTE: The Shulammitte continues this line of thinking by pointing out that the beams of their house are presently cedars and its rafters cypresses.

SOS 2:1 –

SW

“I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys.”

NOTE: This verse would best be placed at the end of chapter 1 as verse 18. Nevertheless, we find the Shulammitte not only identifying herself but also helping us determine the present whereabouts of the Shepherd. The phrase “rose of Sharon” is a way to describe a lily that is prolific in the Sharon Plain which is in the West Coast of Israel. This plain runs about 50 miles from Mount Carmel south. The fragrance of these lilies serve as olfactory vectors for the Shepherd just as the pouch of myrrh has done for the Shulammitte. As he pastures his flock, the Shepherd is reminded of his right woman as he smells the aroma of the “lily of the valley.”

2:2 –

KS

Pick-Up Line #5: “Like a lily among the thorns, so is my love among the virgins.”

NOTE: Solomon picks up on the Shulammite’s comment and fires his next pick-up line. He correctly identifies her

SOS 2:3 –

(The Shulammite’s aria.)

SW

“Like an apple tree among the trees of the grove, 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.

NOTE:

Some commentators impute sexual innuendoes to this verse by asserting that apples are aphrodisiacs. This is ridiculous. When people are right for each other aphrodisiacs are never necessary to arouse passions and desires. Prior to marriage such responses are controlled by reliance on doctrine of right man-right woman and managed by fantasy and imagination.

The phrase “in his shade” makes reference to the protection she enjoys by being his right woman. The “shade” or “shadow” concept is related to divine protection of the believer throughout Scripture. The phrase “shadow of His wings” is used by David in four of his psalms as an illustration of this.

2:4 –

SW

“He brought me to the banquet house and proposed, and planted his *aquila*, his standard of love, in my soul.

NOTE:

This verse is the Shulammite’s recollection of the night the Shepherd proposed to her. He takes her to a banquet house: *bayith yayin*, house of wine. This is a restaurant that serves wine with its meals. The proposal is found in the phrase “his banner over me is love.” The key is the word for “banner”: *degel*, a standard, such as the Roman *aquila*. This is the guidon that Roman soldiers rallied round in the midst of battle. When the standard was planted the army staked claim to the land as conquered territory for SPQR. This is what the Shepherd is described as doing with the Shulammite’s soul. He planted his standard in her soul thus identifying her as his right woman, a description of his proposal of marriage.

2:5 –

SW

“Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, because I am lovesick.

NOTE:

Again the commentators insist that raisins and apples are aphrodisiacs for sexual excitement. Again, those who are right for each other do not need to ingest stimulants to ignite their passions and desires. The Shulammite is experiencing a condition the Hebrew refers to as *chalah ahavah*: love sick. What actually happens is that her desire for her Shepherd is so intense that she suffers a psychosomatic disorder that causes her to almost faint. Yearning for her absent right man causes her blood pressure to decrease and she thus needs sustenance. She asks for raisin cakes for energy and apples for refreshment. The sugar in each will increase her blood pressure and restore her strength.