

# A Study of the Wisdom Literature

## OT Survey Lesson 303—The Song of Songs

**Introduction:** The “Song of Solomon” has been subjected to several different interpretations—some allegorical, some typical, and some literal. It appears the book might be seen as a love poem written in dramatic form. It teaches the nature of true mating love. The student is encouraged to read the book through as many times as possible with the outline before him. In class we will discuss various approaches to the book

**Lesson aim:** To survey the overall message of the book

### OUTLINE OF THE SONG OF SONGS

(by Johnny Felker)

#### Background of the Song

Solomon has been king for some time and has already enlarged his harem considerably (6:8). As king he possesses many vineyards throughout the countryside and has come to northern Palestine to inspect his holdings and perhaps collect revenues from his tenants (8:11). While there he sees a beautiful young maiden whom he wants to wed. However, her heart is already attached to a shepherd who has befriended her. Perhaps Solomon agrees with her brothers (her guardians) to forfeit the proceeds of the vineyard as dowry (8:12), if they will give her the maiden as a wife. Solomon sends for her and she is brought to his royal tents in Issachar where Solomon seeks to persuade her to marry him.

#### PART I

*In the Royal Tents in Issachar--Love introduced, 1:2-3:5.*

##### Scene 1

*Shulammite and chorus in the tent, 1:2—8*

*(Imagine a conversation between some of Solomon’s attendants (or wives) who consider it a great honor that Shulammite has been considered for the royal harem; yet consider that she is apprehensive in view of her background and love for another whom she calls “my beloved” )*

Shulammite: 1 :2-4a (Thinking of her true beloved, the shepherd)

Solomon’s attendants or wives praise him: 1:4b

Shulammite: 1:4c-7 She expresses her misgiving about where she is and wonders where her “beloved” might be right now (v. 7)

Solomon’s maidens respond: 1:8

## Scene 2

*Solomon and Shulammitte in the Royal Tent, 1:9—2: 7*

*(Solomon appears and makes his first attempts to persuade this beautiful girl to marry him. He speaks directly to her of her beauty: but she can only think of “her beloved.”)*

Solomon: 1:9-10

Solomon’s attendants: 1:11

Shulammitte: 1:12-14 (Relates her experience at the table and how it made her think of her “beloved”. She imagines a conversation with her beloved shepherd.)

Shepherd: 1:15

Shulammitte: 1:16—2:1

Shepherd: 2:2

Shulammitte: 2:3-6 (She recalls his wonderful qualities and it leads her to think of uniting with him in marriage.)

Shulammitte: 2:7 (An appeal to the king’s attendants not to force a relationship upon her for which she is not ready.)

## Scene 3

*First Song of Shulammitte—Reminiscence of her Lover’s visit, 2:8—17*

*Though the attractions of being a royal wife are many the maiden’s thoughts turn to her beloved. She thinks of how he expressed his love and he helped her. She realizes that they belong together and she longs for him to come to her.*

Shulammitte: 2:8-10a (She imagines him coming to where she was staying).

Shepherd: 2:1 10b-17 (In her imagination she hears him, as she reflects on their past relationship and his songs to her.)

## Scene 4

*In a dream the Shulammitte seeks and finds her lover, 3:1-5*

*The Shulammitte, held among the women of Solomon’s court longs for her beloved.*

Shulammitte: 3:1-4 (Her anxiety manifests itself in a dream sequence where she seeks him out and brings him, into her in other’s house.)

Shulammitte: 3:5 (A second appeal not to force a relationship with Solomon.)

## **PART II**

*The Royal Procession Entering Jerusalem, 3:6-11*

*Shulammitte is brought by Solomon to the palace. The comments of the by-standers underscore the impressive pomp of Solomon’s entourage.*

Chorus of people: 3:6

First citizen: 3:7

Second citizen: 3:8

Third citizen: 3:9-10

Chorus of people: 3:11

### **PART III**

*In the Royal Palace in Jerusalem--Love Tested, 4:1-8:4*

#### Scene 1

*Solomon's Second effort (first in the palace) to woo Shulammite, 4:1-5:1*

*Solomon seeks to win the Shulammite's heart through many compliments to her physical attractiveness: but his appeals cannot match the words of her "beloved" who has also spoken of her attractiveness to him.*

Solomon: 4:1-5

Shulammite: 4:6

Shepherd: 4:8-15 (As in fancy Shulammite sees and hears her lover coming to take her away)

Shulammite: 4:16 (It is to this man that the Shulammite wants to give herself)

Shepherd: 5:1 (The shepherd responds and such love is encouraged by the poet.)

#### Scene 2

*Second dream of Shulammite and conversation which followed, 5:2-6:3*

*Again Shulammite's anxiety takes the form of a dream where she remembers her beloved's presence. She speaks to the king's attendant about why she so loves the man whom she left back home.*

Shulammite: 5:2-8 (Dreaming that she was at home and her lover visits her. She hesitates and before she can open to him he is gone. She appeals to her attendants to help her find him.)

Shulammite's attendants: 5:9 (What is it about this man that makes you long for him?)

Shulammite: 5:10-16 (She describes her shepherd-lover)

Attendants: 6:1 (Even they would help her find such a man.)

Shulammite: 6:2-3 ("I know where he is and he belongs only to me".)

#### Scene 3

*Solomon's second effort of love making in the Palace, 6:4-8:4*

*Solomon intensifies his efforts in persuading Shulammite to marry him, but he can see that his appeals are not working. Shulammite can stay no longer; she leaves to go back home to her "beloved" whom she addresses.*

Solomon: 6:4-9 (His praises of the Shulammite.)

Solomon's attendants or wives: 6:10

Shulammite: 6:11-12 (I went to my garden but before I knew it I was here in the palace with Solomon)

Attendants: 6:13a (Implying that Shulammite is leaving)

Shulammite: 6:13b

Solomon's attendants: 7:1-5 (Admiring Shulammite)

Solomon: 7:6-9a (Adding his last words of appeal for her to stay)

Shulammite: 7:9b (interrupting) -10 (her final decision.)

7:11-8:3 (She now knows the life she wants to live)

8:4 (A final appeal not for force love.)

## **PART IV**

*In Issachar: the Shepherd and Shulammitte--Love Victorious, 8:5-14*

### Scene 1

*The Shepherd-lover and the Shulammitte approaching their mountain home, 8:5—7  
Now Shulammitte comes with her real love, not riding in a palanquin but walking with him and leaning upon him.*

Chorus of country people: 8:5a  
Shulammitte or Shepherd?: 8:5b  
Shepherd: 8:6-7

### Scene 2

*The Bride and her Brothers, 8:8-14*

Perhaps at the wedding feast the Shulammitte is asked a question by wedding guests.

First Brother: 8:8  
Second Brother: 8:9  
Shulammitte: 8:10-12 (Relays how these principles had affected her life and enabled her to choose the mate best for her.)  
Shepherd-bridegroom: 8:13  
Shulammitte: 8:14 (Shulammitte's desire expressed at the beginning of the book has now become a reality for her. She does not plead for time; but instead says "Hurry"; for she knows this is the one for her).

## **Lesson**

The Song of songs then teaches a valuable lesson on mating love. Love cannot be hurried, but must be cultivated with time. It is not founded merely on personal appearance or bought with money, but grows naturally between a man and a woman. Such a love causes both husband and wife to look forward to a giving relationship with one another as husband and wife. Such a lesson is a fitting contribution to the canon of the OT; for the husband-wife relationship was God's first institution and the success of it has a profound impact on all society.

Perhaps also the beauty of the love between the shepherd and Shulammitte reminded Israel of the special relationship they had with God on a spiritual level. Perhaps it encouraged them to remember to seek the true love of God and not be lured by the wealth and power of the nations around them. Consequently the book was often read at the Passover assemblies among the Jews as they were reminded of how God had brought Israel to Himself to be His bride.

However, its primary purpose appears to be didactic, showing the importance, features, and value of true love between a man and a woman.