

SONG OF SOLOMON

This book is a problem for most bible students because one must decide what he thinks the whole point of the book is in order to come to an interpretation of it. It poses a problem of circular reasoning. Below are listed several different theories of interpretation that have been suggested.

1. It is an anthology of love songs, that is, a collection of such.
2. It is an allegory (the description of one thing under the image of another).
 - a. Jewish view - a picture of the love of Jehovah for Israel.
 - b. Church view - a picture of the love of Christ for the church.
3. It is to be understood in its 'literal' sense - showing the love of a man and woman.
 - a. Some hold that there are TWO people involved - Solomon and the maid.
 - b. Others that there are THREE people, Solomon, the maid, and her shepherd that is her true love.

I agree with brother Hailey's comments concerning these views:

"It is my personal view that this last view is the correct view on which to proceed in interpreting the poem. I believe that Solomon was infatuated with the girl's charm and beauty, but that she was in love with a shepherd lad. In the struggle within her own heart, true love triumphs. when Solomon unwittingly revealed the sensual nature of his infatuation (7:7-9a), the die was cast: her mind was completely determined to return to the shepherd. The poem is God's commendation of true mating love and His condemnation of Solomon's polygamy. (cf. 6:8, sixty queens and eighty concubines. His marriage machinery was just getting into high gear.)"

"Three principles lead me to accept his view:

1. The Bible is a complete book, and as such it must deal with all aspects of human experience. Mating love is a strong factor in life and unless this poem deals with it, it is omitted from God's book.
2. The very structure and evidence of the poem.
3. If such a virtuous girl's marriage to Solomon was the theme, then Solomon's polygamy would be tacitly endorsed."

Having said such, the following is an outline that I have taken from Brother Hailey (who followed William Elliott Griffis' The Lily Among Thorns, and Albert Reville's The Song of Songs); and then revised according to James Smith's notes in his book "The Wisdom Literature and Psalms".

PART I

In the royal tents in Issachar -- love introduced, 1:2 - 3:5

Scene 1 Shulamite and Harem in the tent, 1:2-8

1st Girl – 1:2-4a

Harem - 1:4b (we will run after thee)

2nd Girl – 1:4c – The king has brought me into his tent...

Harem – 1:4d -

Shulamite, 1:4-7 (except for, "but comely," by the Chorus).

Chorus, 1:8 – 'then return home and tend sheep' ...

Scene 2, Solomon and Shulamite in the Royal Tent, 1:9-2:7

Solomon, 1:9-11

Shulamite, 1:12-14 – her steadfast resolve for her beloved

Solomon, 1:15

Shulamite, 1:16-2:1 (of her shepherd lover, of whom she is thinking)

Solomon, 2:2

Shulamite, 2:3-7 – daydreams of her Beloved

Scene 3, 1st Song of Shulamite - reminiscences of her lover's visit, 2:8-17

Shulamite, 2:8-10a -- as she thinks of her shepherd.

Shepherd, 2:10b - 15 (as in fancy she hears him, as she reflects upon the past and upon his songs to her.)

Shulamite, 2:16-17 – response of love and faithfulness

Scene 4, In a dream the Shulamite seeks and finds her lover, 3:1-5

Shulamite, 3:1-5 –all a dream? Not let him go until they are married...

PART 2 THE ROYAL PROCESSION ENTERING JERUSALEM 3:6-11

Chorus of people, 3:6

First citizen, 3:7

Second citizen, 3:8

Third Citizen, 3:9-10

Chorus of people, 3:11

PART 3 IN THE ROYAL PALACE IN JERUSALEM - LOVE TESTED, 4:1-8:4

Scene 1 Solomon's 2nd effort to woo the Shulamite, 4:1 - 5:1

Solomon, 4:1-5, & vs. 7 (vs. 6 seems to fit Shulamite's speech)

Shulamite, 4:6 – interrupts –I will flee! – desires to be left alone...

Solomon continues - 4:8-15

[Some - shepherd (as in fancy Shulamite sees and hears her lover coming to take her away)]

Shulamite, 4:16 – longs for her Beloved from the North...

Solomon – anticipating winning her love –

[some - Shepherd, 5:1 (Chorus, or approval of the poet, "Eat, o Friends....")]

Scene 2, 2nd "dream" of Shulamite and conversation which followed.

Shulamite, 5:2-8 (dreaming that she was at home and her lover visits her)
having gone to bed, she refuses to let him in, then goes to find him..

Chorus of Ladies, 5:9 Why are you so enraptured with HIM?

Shulamite, 5:10-16 (as she describes her Shepherd-lover)

Chorus of Ladies, 6:1 - WHERE is HE ?

Shulamite, 6:2-3 – Her Declaration – He is MINE, and I am HIS...

Scene 3, Solomon's third effort of love making

Solomon, 6:4-10 (His praises of the Shulamite)

Shulamite, 6:11-12 recounting how she met Solomon (?) -

13:1 – She flees ?

Chorus, 6:13a – return - return

Shulamite, 6:13b – why? So you can observe me – make a spectacle of me?

Harem - 7:1-5 – admires her beauty...

NOTE: some see that a 'dancer' is here introduced, probably the entertainment for the evening. She becomes the subject of both the chorus and of Solomon's speech - and the opening of the Shulamite's eyes to Solomon's lust (not love).

Solomon, 7:6-9a

Either to the Shulamite – yet another round of physical desire...

OR – to the dancer... (notice, same lines he used on the Shulamite!)

Shulamite, (interrupting) 7:9b, 10 - makes her final decision [for my beloved]

7:11 - 8:3, her speech to her expected lover.

8:4 - her speech to the ladies.

PART 4 In Issachar: the shepherd and the Shulamite, love victorious

Scene 1

The Shepherd and the Shulamite, approaching their mountain home, 8:5-7

Chorus of country people, 8:5a

Shulamite, 8:5b -7 – with her Beloved

Scene 2, The Bride and her Brothers, 8:8-14

- First Brother, 8:8
- 2nd brother, 8:9
- Shulamite, 8:10-12 – I am a WALL.. I made a choice. I kept myself
- Shepherd-bridegroom, 8:13
- Shulamite, 8:14.