



The Shulammitte & Flock Followers, SOS 1:7; the Virgins' Sarcasm, 1:8; Solomon's 1st Pick-Up Line; Pick Ups, Pickups, & Shooting a Line, 1:9

SOS 1:7 - "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?"

1. The Shulammitte muses about where her Shepherd could be found. She desires to be with him and imagines finding him with his sheep at noon, the time when shepherds allow their flock to rest in the heat of the day while taking a break.
2. This period lasted for several hours and was often a time when shepherds would be entertained by what might be referred to as Flock Followers.
3. Armies have historically had non-military personnel follow the troops such as specialists in various disciplines related to matériel. In addition there are cooks, those who repair equipment, and perform various duties associated with logistics.
4. These are known as Camp Followers and they provide important assistance to those who are involved in armed combat. However, there was yet another category of Camp Followers who were civilian prostitutes. They followed the army's movements in order to exploit its soldiers who were interested in expressing their passions and desires but with no particular person in mind.
5. In the ancient world there were such women who followed shepherds and their flocks and when these noontime breaks provided the opportunity for cordiality the Flock Followers would provide them with some afternoon delight.
6. The Shulammitte has passion and desire for her Shepherd Lover. She is in the vestibule of Solomon's tent but longs to know where the Shepherd is resting his flock and desires to be with him.
7. She desires to go directly to him otherwise she might be mistaken as a Flock Follower if she had to go from one flock to another in her search.
8. The phrase "Why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions" is her way of saying that she does not want to be mistaken by his fellow shepherds as a Flock Follower.
9. The key to this interpretation is the phrase "one who veils herself." It is the Qal active participle of **אָתַח** 'atah, which means "one who wanders wrapped in a veil."
10. This interpretation of the word developed from the practice of temple prostitutes who covered themselves in long veils. Tamar uses such an outfit to deceive her father-in-law, Judah, in Genesis 38.
11. The Shulammitte desires to join her Shepherd Lover but does not want to be mistaken for a prostitute in the process.
12. Notice that the Shepherd is on the job tending the sheep. He is dedicated to his profession and presently is unaware that his right woman is in danger.
13. As she is about to confront Solomon she expresses her desire to be with her Shepherd Lover to which the Daughters of Jerusalem respond in the next verse:



SOS 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.”

1. This is a sarcastic remark by the Virgins. They imply that she is stupid to pine over a mere shepherd when she is about to be invited by the king of Israel to join his harem in Jerusalem with all of the benefits pertaining thereunto.
2. Their solution is for her to track down the Shepherd and be with him. Their comment implies that with her beauty she can have the most powerful man in Israel yet she is obsessed with wasting such assets on a shepherd.
3. With this last retort the scene now proceeds to include the entrance of King Solomon who shoots his first pick-up line:

SOS 1:9 - [KS: Pick-Up Line #1] “To me, my love, you are like a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots.”

1. Before analyzing what Solomon has to say, let’s define the term “Pick-Up Line.” It is a slang term that has made its way into *Merriam-Webster’s* dictionary. We start with definitions from:
 - Chapman, Robert L. (ed.). *American Slang*. (St. Louis: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), 328; 267; 394:**
 - Pick up.** To make someone’s acquaintance boldly, especially in a bar, on the street, etc., for sexual purposes. (p. 328)
 - Pickup.** A person accosted and made a companion, especially at a bar, on the street, etc., for sexual purposes. (p. 267)
 - Shoot someone a line.** To flatter and cajole; overwhelm with glib plausibility [praise or complement that is insincere but sounds both pleasing and believable]. (p. 328)
2. Merriam-Webster has brought these ideas into its standard dictionaries. Here are its definitions from:
 - Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*. 11th ed. (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 2003):**
 - Pick up.** To enter informally into conversation or companionship with a previously unknown person.
 - Pickup.** The act or technique of making the acquaintance of a previously unknown person especially for amorous purposes.
3. This definition is also included as a part of English idiom:
 - Cowie, A. P. and R. Mackin. *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1:220:**
 - Pick up.** (Informal) Make somebody’s acquaintance, usually with a view to having sexual relations.
4. Therefore the best way to describe Solomon’s approach to the Shulammitte is that he views her as an easy pickup. His strategy to accomplish the pick up is to shoot her lines which he believes will woo her into his harem. We’ve just observed his first volley.
5. I’m sure you are amazed at how his first shot is so suave and debonair, “To me, my love, you are like a company of horses among Pharaoh’s chariots.” Say what?



6. Solomon has just compared the Shulammitte to a horse. Now horses are quite beautiful creatures but not very smart. So is he saying she is beautiful but stupid?
7. The war chariots of the ancient world were hooked to “male horses, fleet of foot, tender of mouth, and long of wind” [Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 340]. But the word for “horse” in verse 9 is feminine singular, so is Solomon casting her in the roll of a war horse among his chariots?
8. Horses and chariots were a major part of Solomon’s army, and the background of his development of this division is yet another illustration of how out of fellowship Solomon has become:

Tenney, Merrill C. (gen. ed.). *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 3:204:

Egypt was an important source of horses, some of which Solomon's Traders handled as agents (1 Kings 10:28-29), when Solomon had control of the two main routes parallel to the coast along which horses could be brought safely. The amassing of horses had been specifically forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 17:16); the context of this ban is notable; it follows the statement that the Hebrews would one day demand a king. When the people made this request some two centuries later (1 Samuel 8:11) Samson warned them that the ban would be ignored, to their detriment.

Solomon made no attempt to obey God on this point and within a year or so of becoming king he had built stables for 4,000 horses (2 Chronicles 9:25). He imported horses from Egypt, with which he had profitable connections through marrying the daughter of the pharaoh [Siamon], paying 60 ounces of silver per horse [\$470]. Horses also formed part of the regular tribute paid him (1 Kings 10:25 [26]). From then on Judah and Israel regarded horses and chariots as essential for fighting the frequent wars with neighboring nations.

9. The divine prohibition against the accumulation of horses (Deuteronomy 17:16) was two-fold: (1) the Israelites were to depend on the Lord for their protection, not on cavalry or chariot forces, and (2) Egypt was the major source of horses in the region and the Jews were commanded to never depend on the people of their enslavement as a means of defending themselves.
10. The extent of Solomon’s violation of this prohibition is given in:

1 Kings 10:23 -So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.

v. 24 - All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.

v. 25 - They brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.

v. 26 - Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.

1 Kings 10:28 -Also Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue [Cilicia], and the king's merchants procured them from Kue for a price.

v. 29 - A chariot was imported from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver [\$1,870], and a horse for 150 [\$470]; and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans.



11. From this we are able to conclude that Solomon is comparing the Shulammitte with one of the horses in his chariot corps, all of which were purchased from the Pharaoh of Egypt. This doesn't seem to be a very smart first line to use if he wants to impress the lady.
12. Yet his logic is sound for he is describing her as his right woman. Solomon is the chariot, she is the horse hooked to it.