



The Shulammite's Imaginary Tryst with the Shepherd, SOS 2:6; Her Oath for the Virgins; A Tutorial on Gazelles & Deer; Restraint against Temptation, 2:7

SOS 2:6 - [SW] "Let his left hand be under my head and his right hand embrace me."

1. This is the New American Standard Bible's translation and it doesn't convey the right tense and therefore the right context.
2. The Shulammite and the Shepherd are not married, only engaged. It is in opposition to divine mandates for a man and a woman, even if right for each other, to engage in sexual acts prior to marriage.
3. Here the Shulammite is recovering from a bout with lovesickness caused by unfulfilled passions and desires for her Shepherd. She was shocked by Solomon's repeated reference to her as "my love" and this caused her to shift in her thinking to her own true love.
4. She immediately began to think of how she truly responds to the Shepherd referring to her as "my love" and thus grows faint. Upon being revived she expresses her desire to submit to the Shepherd were it possible.
5. It is her way of rejecting the idea of having sex with Solomon. Repulsed by the thought she now expresses her devotion to the Shepherd and her willingness to submit sexually to him and him alone.
6. The verse needs very little exegesis except for the tense of the verb "embrace." It is the Piel imperfect of **הִבֵּק** *havaq* but the function of the imperfect form may be classified several ways. For these we consult the:

NET Bible. Beta Edition (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 1199-1200:

Song of Songs 2:6, translator's note 7. Hebrew "embraces." In the Piel stem ... the imperfect form: (1) ingressive: "His right hand is beginning to stimulate me," (2) instantaneous: "His right hand is stimulating me [right now]," (3) progressive: "His right hand stimulates me," (4) desire: "May his right hand stimulate me!" (5) injunction: "Let his right hand stimulate me!" or (6) permission: "His right hand may stimulate me. Based upon their view that the couple is not yet married, Glickman and Deere argue for an imperfect of desire ("May his right hand stimulate me!").

7. This is an expression of how the Shulammite yearns for the moment she can give herself sexually to the Shepherd. However, she is not at all influenced by the attempts of the Daughters of Jerusalem to stimulate her affections and direct them toward Solomon:

SOS 2:7 - [SW] "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, that you do not arouse or awaken my love until she pleases."

1. At this point the Shulammite issues an oath to be sworn to by the Virgins and she brings in gazelles and hinds for witnesses.
2. These are members of the bovine and deer families that roamed the area in the tenth century B.C. The gazelles are male bovines, the masculine plural of **צִבִּי** *s°viy*. There were around fifteen different types found in Israel.
3. The hinds are females, the feminine plural of **אַיִלָּה** *'ayyalah*, a female deer (the males are often referred to as "harts").
4. These animals were beautiful, fast, and graceful and thus displayed the attributes of youth that speak of virility but with mannerisms that suggest sensitivity and gentleness.



5. As with all animals, gazelles and deer have mating seasons but most males are not overly aggressive at the expense of the female. Some of the mating habits of these animals are included in the article on artiodactyla \är-tē-ō-dak' te-la\, the mammalian order that includes gazelles and deer, found in the:

Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia, 15th ed., s.v.:

Reproduction. In the mating ceremonies of antelopes the male follows the female, nuzzling her neck several times. In Thompson's gazelle, the male runs close behind the female and finally taps her hindleg with his foreleg. Similar leg contact also occurs in some other antelopes. Another pattern occurs in the normally solitary Indian hog deer; as many as 20 or 30 aggregate loosely in a certain area, then females and males leave in pairs and usually remain together until they have mated.

6. There is controversy as to why Solomon quoted this comment by the Shulammitte in his Song. It is obvious that she is trying to use the gazelles and deer as illustrations of how courtship should occur between men and women.
7. These members of the bovine and deer families have characteristics that suggest from the animal kingdom some of the principles of right man-right woman. The gazelle gently pursues the doe but waits for her positive response. The deer pair off and remain with each other until after the birth of the fawn.
8. The message the Shulammitte is sending to the Virgins is witnessed by these animals: The Daughters should not try to stimulate her love for Solomon since she is committed to the Shepherd. And she will not fully commit even to him until she pleases.
9. From this we see the importance of the woman's free will in the right man-right woman relationship. This is why there is a tradition for the man to ask the woman if she would consent to marry him.