

The Shulammite Makes a Desperate Midnight Search for the Shepherd & Is Profiled & Unveiled by Shulam Law Enforcement, SOS 5:6b-7

SOS 5:6b - [SW] "I searched for him but I did not find him; I called him but he did not answer me."

23. Here we find a woman who only a few minutes before had refused the Shepherd's invitation to join him outside now desperately walking the streets of Shulam in the dark of night looking for him.
24. Why did she not stand by her original decision to stay inside? What caused her to change her mind and belatedly rush to the door to see him?
25. Passions and desires, which are legitimate, became a detriment when her refusal resulted in the Shepherd's withdrawal. Their frustration led to the cluster of mental attitude sins just noted: despair, despondency, and desperation.
26. The Shulammite is now out of fellowship and this causes her to make an emotional decision that will become an embarrassment to her. It all started when her "soul became despondent."
27. Notice that her body didn't. The sinful nature can only tempt, it is the soul that makes the volitional decision to sin. Young people as well as adults who have legitimate passions and desires can become despondent over peccadilloes and start a series of bad decisions.
28. The practical lesson we will learn here is that a woman should never put herself in a compromising position by being at the wrong place at the wrong time for the wrong reasons.
29. The spiritual lesson to be learned is that the believer should never be out of phase with the plan of God due to unconfessed sin. It results in making poor decisions that limit future options.
30. The thing that is missing from both these examples is rebound: confession alone to God alone. The Shulammite moved on but without rebound. She should have stayed in the safety of her room, in her home, with her mother and brothers.
31. Instead while out of fellowship she is out searching and calling for her right man whom she has just told to leave. The word "searched" is the Piel perfect of the verb **שָׁקַשׁ baqash**: to seek someone's presence.
32. The Piel stem is intensive and means "to busy oneself eagerly with the action indicated" [*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 141]. Therefore her search was one of desperation. A phrase to describe her action would be "to pursue, to follow in order to overtake." This Piel is iterative and indicates repeated action. A way to characterize her desperation would be to say "I desperately kept on chasing after him."
33. As she kept up her pursuit she failed to find him and along the way she called out for him but received no response. Both her answering of the door and her venture out into the streets of Shulam occur in verse 6:

SOS 5:6- [SW] "I opened the door for my beloved, but my beloved had already turned and gone away. My soul became despondent at his departure. I desperately kept on chasing after him but could not overtake him. I called out to him but he did not respond."

SOS 5:7 - [NASB][SW] “The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, they struck me and wounded me; the guardsmen of the walls took away my shawl from me.”

1. Peace in the city of Shulam is protected at night by a police force referred to in Song of Solomon by the Qal participle, masculine plural, of **שָׁמַר** *shamar*: **הַשָּׁמָרִים** *hashshomerim*, the municipal policemen. The ranks “watchmen” and “guardsmen” in the NASB are the same word in the Hebrew. The time of the apprehension is most likely after ten o’clock in the evening:

Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Joseph Fabry (eds.). *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Translated by David E. Green. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 15:286-89:

The night was divided into three watches: the first watch (*lero'sh 'ashmoreth*, Lamantations 2:19) [6:00–10:00 p.m.], the middle watch (*ha'ashmoreth hattichona*, Judges 7:19) [10:00 p.m.–2:00 a.m.], and the morning watch (*'ashmoreth habboqer*, Exodus 14:24, 1 Samuel 11:11) [2:00–6:00 a.m.]. (pp. 286-87)

The town guards deserve special mention. Many guards were needed to keep watch over a town, since towns were the most important targets of enemies. Canticles [SOS] 3:3 and 5:7a speak of the sentinels making their rounds and patrolling the walls. (pp. 288-89)

2. The police were of two categories: (1) Those who patrol the streets: the “watchmen.” These are the ones who first apprehended the Shulammite and bruised her. (2) The ones who patrol the walls: the “guardsmen.” These are the ones who removed her veil. We will distinguish between the two groups by calling the watchmen “police” and the guardsmen “sentries.”
3. The first to apprehend the Shulammite are the policemen whom she says struck and wounded her. The word “struck” is the Hiphil perfect of **נָכַח** *nachah* which means they were caused to strike her which resulted in bruises, **פָּצַע** *pasa'*.
4. What caused those who are commissioned to keep the peace to inflict violence on a woman? At the close of Act I the Shulammite longs to be with the Shepherd, gets out of bed, and goes out into the streets looking for him.
5. On that occasion she is discovered by the police but they do not abuse her but rather allow her to continue her search which results in her finding the Shepherd. She then takes him up to the family estate to introduce him to her mother.
6. This time these same policemen physically attack her and the sentries took away her “shawl,” **רֶתִיב** *rethith*, translated “veil” by the King James Version and “cloak” by the NIV.
7. The garment is a really nice outer garment of fine material worn only by the well-to-do ladies of the day. A clue for how we are to interpret the officers’ brutality and the sentries’ removal of the “veil” is found in:

Under, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 278:

Headdress. That of the lower class of Israelitish women is unknown, but the *veil* was regarded from ancient times by women of character as indispensable.

Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., nd), 2:557:

... taking away her veil was the greatest indignity to an Eastern lady, as though she were positively immodest.



8. The different ways the authorities confront the Shulammite in 3:3 and 5:7 enable us to draw some conclusions:
 - (1) The meeting in 3:3 was during the first watch, or early evening between 6:00 and 10:00, when it would be considered appropriate for a lady to be on the streets.
 - (2) The incident in 5:7 was in the second watch, or somewhere between 10:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. when no lady would be expected out on the streets.
 - (3) The police immediately assume she is a lady of the evening trying to pass herself off as a true lady. This is profiling and profiling is wrong, but regardless, the Shulammite should not have been out past a lady's curfew.
 - (4) The sentries come down from the wall to assist the police and tear off her veil as a means of exposing her attempted ruse.
 - (5) It is obvious that she was able to successfully identify herself since we have no record of her being hauled downtown but it was an embarrassing situation nonetheless.
9. What we see is the result of living life out of fellowship and thus outside the plan of God. The Shulammite made a good decision to deny the Shepherd a portion of her time in verse 3, but when she saw his hand and responded to his physical presence she changed her mind and hurried to open the door.
10. When she felt the liquid myrrh on the door latch and then learned the Shepherd had gone she made the emotional decision to try and catch him.
11. This decision was inspired not by doctrine but by frustration which led to a cluster of mental-attitude sins including despair, despondency, and desperation.
12. When emotions dictate one's decision-making and rebound does not immediately correct the problem, then subsequent decisions are based on human viewpoint.
13. The Shulammite went against the standards of proper behavior. She went out into the night, unaccompanied, and at an hour most frequented by prostitutes. This ill-timed attempt to catch the Shepherd caused her to fall into the hands of law enforcement personnel who felt justified in roughing up one whom they assumed to be a trollop.
14. Principle: Women must never allow their passions and desires to cause them to make decisions while under the influence of the sinful nature. Emotional sins are difficult to identify at first especially when they are motivated by a previous bad decision.
15. She should never have changed her mind about going to the door. But once she made that decision a series of poor decisions followed and she wound up at the wrong place, at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons.

SOS 5:7 - [SW] "The policemen who make the rounds in the city found me, they were caused to strike me, and I was bruised; the sentries of the walls took away my veil."