

**The Shepherd's Paraclausithyron & Departure; the Shulammite's Reaction: Despair, Despondency, & Desperation, SOS 5:4-6a**

**SOS 5:5 – [NASB] [SW]** “I arose to open to my beloved; and my hands dripped with myrrh, and my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt.”

1. This translation is fine and needs little analysis. When the Shulammite reached for the door latch she was greeted by the Shepherd's calling card. Her hands and fingers dripped with myrrh.
2. Myrrh is the resin of the terebinth tree found in Arabia and occurs as a solid and a liquid. Its stated uses in the Bible are as an ingredient for the anointing oil of the Tabernacle's furnishings and its priesthood (Exodus 30:22-33) and as a perfume which is the case for our passage.
3. Thus the Shepherd had brought a present of perfume to the Shulammite but when she informed him that his visit was inconvenient he smeared some of it on the door latch as his calling card.
4. She hurriedly opened the door only to discover that the Shepherd had vanished into the night:

**SOS 5:6 – [NASB] [SW]** “I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and had gone! My heart went out to him as he spoke. I searched for him but I did not find him; I called him but he did not answer me.”

1. Her motivation for hurrying to the door is caused by tone orientation to her right man. He speaks (5:2b), she responds. But when she finds him gone, she reacts.
2. By the phrase “My heart went out to him as he spoke” the NASB indicates that she reacted to something the Shepherd said, however, this is not what is found in this verse.
3. First of all note that in the first sentence of the verse we find that when the Shulammite opened the door the Shepherd was gone, therefore he cannot be speaking to her in the second sentence, especially when in the third sentence she goes out into the city to find him and call for him.
4. In the first sentence we find a figure of speech that helps sort it out, the hendiadys: “had turned away and had gone.” A hendiadys is “the expression of an idea by the use of two independent words connected by *and*” [MWCD-11].
5. Here we have two verbs: חָמַק **chamaq**: “to turn away; the departure of one person from another,” and אָבַר **'avar**: “to go away,” best translated, “my beloved had turned and gone away.”
6. Each of these verbs functions as a perfect of a recent past perfect action, describing a past event that took place shortly before another past event: “I opened [past action] for my beloved, but my lover had already turned and gone away [past perfect action]” [NET Bible, 1211, tn 5].
7. This hendiadys clearly indicates that the Shepherd had departed by the time the Shulammite opened the door.
8. Therefore, the next sentence makes no sense in the English translation of the NASB: “My heart went out to him as he spoke.”

9. The word “heart” is not “heart” at all but rather נֶפֶשׁ *nephesh*, which “refers to the soul’s fully formatted, immaterial essence which is provided by God at the moment the spark of life is given” [Thieme, *The Origin of Human Life*, 18].
10. The content of the soul is expressed through the format soul or the brain which is often influenced by the sinful nature in the form of emotional sins. This is brought out by the next word, the Qal perfect of the verb יָצָא *yasa’* which means literally “to go out” but in the perfect conjugation it expresses completed action therefore we use the English past tense, “went out.”
11. This would give us the literal translation, “My soul went out.” But taken together *nephesh yasa’* forms a Hebrew idiom that means “despair of soul” which is an emotional sin.
12. This translation is supported by Botterweck and Ringgren in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 6:230: “With נֶפֶשׁ *nephesh* as object, *yasa’* means ‘be beside oneself’ in Canticles [SOS] 5:6.”
13. The concept is supported by the NIV translation, “My heart *sank*.” The mental attitude sin here involves despair: “loss of hope and confidence.” Despair without rebound leads to despondency, “extreme discouragement and dejection” and left unchecked results in desperation: “reckless action” [MWCD-11] which occurs later in the verse.
14. This NIV translation also recognizes that the Shepherd did not speak to the Shulammite here: “My heart sank at his *departure*.” The NASB translation doesn’t use “departure” but rather “spoke”: “My heart went out to him as he spoke.” He didn’t speak; he was gone.
15. To determine why “departure” is correct we must consult the Hebrew. The word in question is the Piel infinitive construct of the verb דָּבַר *davar* which is the verb “to speak,” but it is *also* the verb “to depart.” To certify the latter we need to consult some resources. We go first to:

Jenni, Ernst and Claus Westermann. *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1:325:

דָּבַר *davar*. Lexicographers distinguish between two roots: 1 “to be behind, turn the back,” and 2 “word” [or, speech].

16. These two root words are spelled exactly alike but have different meanings. The determination of which definition belongs in this context is discussed in:

**NET Bible.** (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 1211-12 tn7:

Traditionally, the term דָּבַר *davar* [“when he spoke”] (Piel infinitive construct from דָּבַר *davar*) has been related to the common root (“to speak”) which occurs nearly 1150 times in verbal forms and nearly 1500 times as a noun. This approach is seen as early as the LXX [Septuagint]. Many translations adopt the same basic approach as the LXX: “when he spake” (KJV), “as he spoke” (NASB), “when he spoke” (NIV margin). However many recent scholars relate the phrase to the homonymic root דָּבַר (*davar*) (“to turn away, depart”). Several examples of this root have been found (Song 5:6). Several recent translations take this approach: “at his departure” (NIV). This makes better sense contextually, and it provides a tighter parallelism with the preceding line that also describes his departure: “My beloved had turned away; he was gone.”

17. What we learn from this translator’s note is that the word *davar*—דָּבַר—is homonymic which means that it can have more than one meaning.
18. We all learned in school that homonyms are words that are spelled alike and pronounced alike but have quite different meanings. We are familiar with many in the English language. Here are some examples:

1. Key: (1) opens a lock, (2) a musical pitch, and (3) an island.
2. Lock: (1) a security device, (2) a door of a canal, and (3) a tuft of hair.
3. Right: (1) a direction, (2) what is correct, and (3) a privilege.
4. Capital: (1) an upper-case letter, (2) a seat of government, (3) money, and (4) a vocative indicating excellence.

19. Thus *davar* means (1) to speak and (2) to depart. The correct use here is “to depart.” Here is a corrected translation of the verse for as far as we have gone:

**SOS 5:6a- [SW]** “I opened the door for my beloved, but my beloved had already turned and gone away. My soul became despondent at his departure.”

20. Here we see an occasion where the Shulammite failed under pressure. She failed to use the faith-rest drill and this lack of confidence caused her to do a very foolish thing.

21. The confidence she expressed in Act I is the doctrinal conclusion that sustains her under pressure: the doctrine of right man-right woman:

**SOS 2:16a - [SW]** “My beloved is mine, and I am his.”

22. However on this occasion she allows her confidence to waver and gets into mental attitude sins that start with worry, move into despair, decline into despondency, and end up in desperation.