

Song of Solomon 1:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

Analysis

The bride speaks: 'While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.' The 'king' refers to the bridegroom (Solomon). The Hebrew 'mesibbo' (מִסְבָּב, his table/couch) suggests intimate dining or reclining setting. The 'spikenard' (nerd, נֶרֶד) was costly aromatic ointment imported from India—the same perfume Mary used to anoint Jesus (John 12:3). The phrase 'sendeth forth the smell' (natan richo, נָתַן רִיחֹן) indicates releasing fragrance. The bride's presence and preparation (anointing with expensive perfume) creates fragrant atmosphere in the king's presence. This verse celebrates the bride's desire to please her beloved—preparing carefully, offering her best, creating delight. Spiritually, it represents believers offering costly worship to Christ, creating fragrant atmosphere through devotion, obedience, and love.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern banquets featured aromatic ointments and perfumes creating pleasant atmosphere. Nard was expensive—imported from the Himalayas, it represented sacrificial devotion. Mary's anointing of Jesus with nard (John 12:3) cost a year's wages, demonstrating costly love. The connection between the Song and Mary's act is striking—both involve expensive nard offered to the beloved king. Early church fathers saw this as the soul offering costly worship to Christ—not perfunctory religion but sacrificial devotion. Bernard of Clairvaux preached that believers should offer Christ their best, not leftovers. The Reformers emphasized that worship should involve both heart and resources—costly

discipleship, not cheap grace. Modern readers see both literal application (spouses preparing to please each other) and spiritual reality (offering Christ costly, fragrant worship).

Related Passages

James 2:17 – Faith and works

Romans 1:17 – The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What 'spikenard'—costly devotion, sacrificial worship, expensive obedience—are you offering to Christ?
2. How can you create 'fragrant atmosphere' in your home, church, and relationships through Christ-like character?

Interlinear Text

עד	שׁ פָּמָלֶךְ	בְּמִסְבֵּן	נְרָדֵךְ	נְתָנֵךְ	רִיחָן
H5704	While the king	sitteth at his table	my spikenard	sendeth forth	the smell

Additional Cross-References

John 12:3: Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Revelation 3:20: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.