

Song of Solomon 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

Analysis

The bride continues praising her beloved: 'Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.' The 'good ointments' (shemanim tovim, שְׁמָנִים טוֹבִים) refer to fragrant oils and perfumes highly valued in ancient Israel. Ointments represented luxury, celebration, and attractiveness. The beloved's 'name' (shem, שֵׁם) signifies his character, reputation, and essential identity. Saying his 'name is as ointment poured forth' (shemen turaq shemekha, שֶׁמֶן תִּירָק שְׁמֶכָּה) creates a wordplay: shemen (oil) sounds like shem (name). When ointment is poured out, its fragrance spreads widely—similarly, the beloved's reputation and character attract admiration. The result: 'the virgins love thee' (alamot ahevukha, עֲלָמוֹת אֶהְבֻּךָ)—young women universally admire him. This verse teaches that godly character creates attractive 'fragrance' drawing others. Christ's name is supremely fragrant (2 Corinthians 2:14-15), and believers are called to spread His aroma.

Historical Context

Perfumes and ointments were precious commodities in the ancient Near East—made from imported spices, they signified wealth and celebration. Anointing with oil marked special occasions: coronations (1 Samuel 16:13), festive meals (Psalm 23:5), and preparation for burial (Mark 14:3-9). The connection between fragrance and reputation resonates in Mary's anointing of Jesus: 'the house was filled with the odour of the ointment' (John 12:3)—her sacrificial love created fragrant memorial. Early church fathers saw Christ as the one whose 'name is as ointment

poured forth'—His character and work attracting people from every nation. Paul wrote that believers are 'a sweet savour of Christ' (2 Corinthians 2:15), spreading His fragrance. The virgins loving the bridegroom prefigures the Church's collective love for Christ.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What 'fragrance' does your character and reputation spread—does it attract others to Christ or repel them?
2. How is Christ's name like 'ointment poured forth' in your experience—spreading fragrance that draws you to love and follow Him?

Interlinear Text

לִּי יֵחַ	שֶׁ מֵן	טוֹב יֵחַ	שֶׁ מֵן	תִּיבֵּר קִי
Because of the savour	is as ointment	of thy good	is as ointment	poured forth
H7381	H8081	H2896	H8081	H7324
שְׁמִי בְּ	עַל יְ	עַל מֵן	אַהֲבָה:	
thy name		therefore do the virgins	love	
H8034	H5921 H3651	H5959	H157	

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 7:1: A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

Song of Solomon 4:10: How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!

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 14:4: These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Psalms 45:14: She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

Psalms 133:2: It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

Philippians 4:18: But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Isaiah 61:3: To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Matthew 25:1: Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 Corinthians 11:2: For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.