

Song of Solomon 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

Analysis

The bride explains her sun-darkened skin: 'Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.' The phrase 'sun hath looked upon me' (sheshezapatni hashamesh, שָׁשֶׁזֶתֶנִי הַשָּׁמֶשׁ) indicates sun exposure from outdoor labor. The bride's brothers ('mother's children') assigned her vineyard-keeping, preventing her from caring for her own appearance ('mine own vineyard'). This creates poignant irony: caring for others' vineyards, she neglected her own. The verse teaches that legitimate responsibilities can sometimes prevent proper self-care, and that life's circumstances—not character flaws—sometimes produce perceived deficiencies. Spiritually, it warns against exhausting oneself in external ministry while neglecting personal spiritual vitality.

Historical Context

Ancient patriarchal culture gave brothers authority over unmarried sisters. Vineyard work was laborious and exposed workers to sun, wind, and weather. The bride's explanation addresses potential criticism from privileged city women (daughters of Jerusalem) who had lighter skin from indoor living. Her darker skin reflected circumstance, not character. Early church fathers applied this

allegorically: the Church serves the world ('other vineyards') sometimes at cost to her own beauty, yet Christ loves her still. The warning about neglecting one's own vineyard became proverbial: ministers must guard their own souls while serving others (1 Timothy 4:16). The Puritans emphasized balancing outward ministry with personal devotion—Jonathan Edwards warned against ministerial burnout from neglecting one's own spiritual life.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Are you caring for 'others' vineyards' while neglecting your own spiritual vitality, health, or family?
2. How does this verse challenge judging others based on external appearances shaped by circumstances beyond their control?

Interlinear Text

שָׁאַף	תָּנִי	שָׁחַרְתָּ רְתָ	שָׁאַף	תָּנִי
Look		not upon me because I am black	hath looked	
H408	H589	H7840		H7805
בָּנִי	בָּנִי	אָמַ	בָּנִי	
because the sun	children	upon me my mother's	were angry	H0
H8121	H1121	H517	H2787	
שָׁמַת	בְּנֵרָתִי	אָתָ	כִּרְמָ	
with me they made	have I not kept	H853	but mine own vineyard	
H7760	H5201		H3754	
כִּרְמָ	בְּנֵרָתִי	לֹא שָׁלָ		
but mine own vineyard	H0	H3808	have I not kept	
H3754			H5201	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 69:8: I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.

Acts 14:22: Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Job 30:30: My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat.

Jeremiah 12:6: For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

Mark 4:6: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

Matthew 10:22: And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Matthew 10:25: It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

Galatians 4:29: But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Lamentations 4:8: Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.

Micah 7:6: For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

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