

Song of Solomon 4:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

Analysis

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair—the bridegroom's doubled declaration employs the Hebrew yaphah (יָפָה, beautiful) twice for emphatic affirmation. **Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks** (eynayikh yonim, עַיִנִים יוֹנִים) celebrates the bride's gentle, pure gaze—doves symbolize faithfulness and the Holy Spirit's presence (Matthew 3:16). The phrase **within thy locks** suggests modest beauty, partially veiled yet captivating.

Thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead compares flowing dark hair to black goats descending Gilead's slopes in undulating waves. Ancient readers understood: Gilead's goats were prized for their lustrous black hair used in luxury textiles. The beloved celebrates natural, unadorned beauty—the bride's hair moves gracefully like living creatures in motion. This wasf (descriptive love poem) ascends from eyes to hair, building a portrait of comprehensive beauty. Church tradition saw Christ declaring His Church beautiful—not because of inherent righteousness but because He clothes her in His beauty (Ezekiel 16:14).

Historical Context

The wasf genre—anatomical love poetry describing the beloved from head to toe—was common in ancient Near Eastern love literature. Mount Gilead, east of the Jordan, was known for excellent pasture producing healthy, beautiful livestock.

Black goat herds descending hillsides created striking visual imagery of flowing, rhythmic movement. Solomon's court would have valued such literary sophistication. Early church fathers applied this allegorically: the Church's "doves' eyes" represent spiritual discernment through the Holy Spirit, while the "hair like goats" symbolized those who sacrifice worldly comforts (goat hair made sackcloth). The Reformers recovered appreciation for the literal celebration of marital beauty while maintaining typological connections to Christ and the Church.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 – Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 – God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's repeated declaration "thou art fair" transform your self-perception, knowing He sees you clothed in His righteousness?
2. What does it mean to have "doves' eyes"—gentle, pure, Spirit-filled vision—in how you see others and yourself?
3. How can married couples cultivate the practice of detailed, appreciative praise as the bridegroom models here?

Interlinear Text

הַבָּן הַזֶּה	בְּעִיטִי	הַבָּן הַזֶּה	בְּעִיטִי	הַבָּן הַזֶּה	בְּעִיטִי
H2005	Behold thou art fair	my love	H2005	Behold thou art fair	eyes
	H3303	H7474		H3303	H5869
Thou hast doves	within	thy locks	thy hair	is as a flock	of goats
H3123	H1157	H6777	H8181	H5739	H5795
that appear	from mount	Gilead			
H1570	H2022	H1568			

Additional Cross-References

Song of Solomon 1:15: Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

Song of Solomon 6:5: Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

Song of Solomon 6:7: As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.

Micah 7:14: Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

Song of Solomon 7:5: Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org