

Song of Solomon 4:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

Analysis

Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing—the Hebrew tsinayikh (צִנְיַיךְ, your teeth) are compared to qatsubot (קָצְבוֹת, shorn/matched) sheep emerging clean from washing. This celebrates uniformity, cleanliness, and wholeness. The imagery suggests white, even teeth—a sign of health and beauty in the ancient world where dental hygiene was challenging.

Whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them (kullam mat'imot ve'shakulah eyn bahem, כלם מתקיימות ושבלה אין ביהם) extends the sheep metaphor: each tooth has its match (bear twins—perfect pairs), with no gaps (none barren). The beloved celebrates completeness and perfection. This verse teaches that godly love notices and appreciates even small details of the beloved's person. Allegorically, the Church's "teeth" represent her ability to receive and process divine truth—healthy doctrine produces spiritual nourishment (Hebrews 5:12-14).

Historical Context

Sheep-washing was essential preparation for shearing—creating pristine white wool. The comparison to freshly washed sheep celebrated the bride's cleanliness and purity. In ancient culture where dental care was rudimentary, complete, even, white teeth were prized signs of health and beauty. The "bearing twins" metaphor emphasized perfect symmetry—upper and lower teeth matching perfectly. Early

church interpretation saw the Church's "teeth" as her teaching function—sound doctrine that properly "chews" and distributes spiritual food to believers. Bernard of Clairvaux emphasized that Christ delights in every detail of His Church, even seemingly mundane aspects. The Puritans taught that marital love should involve comprehensive appreciation—noticing and celebrating the beloved's whole person, not just obvious attributes.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge superficial attraction, calling you to notice and appreciate comprehensive, detailed beauty in your spouse or in Christ's Church?
2. What "spiritual teeth"—capacity to receive and process truth—are you developing through studying Scripture and sound doctrine?
3. In what ways does Christ's detailed knowledge and appreciation of His Church (even her "teeth") assure you of His intimate, comprehensive love?

Interlinear Text

שְׁפָלָה	מִן	שָׁעֵל	וְ	בְּקַצְבֵּב	וְתַ	כְּעֵדָה	וְגַ	שְׁפָלָה
Thy teeth	are like a flock	of sheep that are even shorn	which came up					H4480
H8127	H5739	H7094						H5927
וְשָׁכֵל	אֵין	וְשָׁכֵל	הַ	מִתְאִים	וְתַ	שְׁפָלָם	בְּרַחַץ	הַ
from the washing				whereof every one bear twins	and none is barren		H3605	H369
H7367				H8382			H3605	H7909
בְּהָמָה								
H0								

Additional Cross-References

Song of Solomon 6:6: Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.

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