

# Song of Solomon 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters,  
washed with milk, and fitly set.

## Analysis

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**His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set** (eynav keyonim al apikey mayim rochotsot bechalav yoshevot al miluet, עֵינָיו כְּיוֹנִים עַל־אִפְיָקֵי מַיִם רֹחֹסוֹת בְּחֶלֶב יוֹשֵׁבוֹת עַל־מְלֵאֵת)—this complex metaphor celebrates the beloved's eyes. Doves represent gentleness, purity, faithfulness, and the Holy Spirit. "By the rivers of waters" suggests freshness and life. "Washed with milk" indicates pure whiteness surrounding the eyes—healthy, clear, beautiful.

"Fitly set" (yoshevot al miluet, יוֹשֵׁבוֹת עַל־מְלֵאֵת) literally means "sitting in fullness" or "perfectly placed"—eyes perfectly positioned, creating beautiful symmetry. The beloved's eyes are gentle (doves), pure (washed with milk), alive (by waters), and perfectly formed (fitly set). Christ's eyes combine tender love with pure holiness—He sees with compassion yet with perfect clarity. His gaze is both comforting and searching (Hebrews 4:13).

## Historical Context

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Doves featured prominently in Israelite life—temple sacrifices (Leviticus 1:14), symbols of purity and peace, representation of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16). The image of doves by rivers, washed with milk, perfectly set, creates layered beauty—gentleness, purity, vitality, symmetry. Ancient readers valued beautiful eyes highly—windows to the soul, expressing character and emotion. The beloved's dove-like eyes expressed gentle, faithful, pure character. Early church fathers saw Christ's "dove eyes" as His merciful, compassionate gaze toward sinners—gentle yet holy.

The "rivers of waters" represented the Spirit's life-giving flow. "Washed with milk" symbolized purity contrasting with sin's darkness. The Reformers emphasized that Christ's eyes see believers through grace—His gaze is loving, not condemning (though it exposes sin, it does so to cleanse). The Puritans taught that believers should seek Christ's gaze—His loving attention and approving look.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How does knowing that Christ's eyes are both gentle (doves) and pure (washed with milk) shape your understanding of how He sees you?
2. What does it mean to live under Christ's gaze—His loving yet holy eyes that see everything yet remain compassionate?
3. How can you cultivate awareness of Christ's constant, attentive, affectionate gaze toward you throughout daily life?

## Interlinear Text

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עֵינָיו יו	כְּיוֹנֵי יַם	עַל	אֶפְרַיִם יְקִי	מִיָּם	רְחֻצוֹת
<b>His eyes</b>	<b>are as the eyes of doves</b>	<b>by the rivers</b>	<b>of waters</b>	<b>washed</b>	
H5869	H3123	H5921	H650	H4325	H7364
בְּחֵלֶב	יֵשֶׁב וְ	עַל	מְלֵאֲתָ:		
<b>with milk</b>	<b>and fitly set</b>				
H2461	H3427	H5921	H4402		

## Additional Cross-References

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

**Song of Solomon 4:1:** 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.

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