

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

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, פְּנֵיו קְיוֹנִים עַל־אֲפִיקִים רְחֹצֹת בְּחַלָּב יֹשְׁבֹת עַל־מִלְאָת—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, יֹשְׁבֹת עַל־מִלְאָת 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

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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

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

רְחִצּוֹת מִן אֶת יַם עַל אֶת יַם עַל עַיִן יְמִינָה

washed of the rivers of waters by the eyes of eyes

H7364 H4325 H650 H5921 H3123 H5869

מְלָאָת: עַל יִשְׁבֶּת בְּקָל בְּ

with milk and fitly set H4402 H5921

H2461 H3427

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 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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