

Song of Songs

Chapter 1

The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. The Bride Confesses Her Love

1:1 *Solomon's*. Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba (2Sm 12:15b–25). He prefigured our Lord, who is likewise called “the Son of David” (Mt 1:1). Solomon is said to have penned 1,005 songs (1Ki 4:32), and this poem is his greatest. Songs in the ancient world were often accompanied by instrumentation, which assisted the singing or chanting of lyrics. Luth: “I place music next to theology and give it the highest praise. And we see how David and all saints put their pious thoughts into verse, rhyme, and songs, because music reigns in times of peace” (WLS § 3091). (TLSB)

Song of Songs. Greatest of songs. 1Ki 4:32 says that Solomon wrote 1,005 songs. (CSB)

1:1 In the Song, Solomon elevates our sensibilities to their highest level. Nothing is so worthy of praise as that which extols God’s love and devotion toward His beloved, His Bride, His people. Throughout history, the songs of God’s people have been of the highest caliber, inspired by the Holy Spirit Himself, with names such as the Sanctus, the Kyrie, and the Gloria in Excelsis. The highest praise is always sounding from the mouths of the baptized as well as ringing in their ears. • O Lord, continue to let the Word of Christ dwell among us as we teach and admonish one another, “singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in [our] hearts to God” (Col 3:16). Amen. (TLSB)

She

**2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine;
3 your anointing oils are fragrant; your name is oil poured out; therefore virgins love you.
4 Draw me after you; let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers.**

1:2-4 Though its modes of expression vary, “love” remains the impetus, the catalyst, and the eschatological goal that will forever endure (1 Corinthians 13). Within the broader canonical context, the beloved bride’s passionate yearning and the virgin’s love (Song 1:2-4) relate to the eschatological yearning of the church – the virgin bride of Christ – for the second advent of her Bridegroom and the consummation of all things. Israel was created through the baptismal washing in the exodus, and her longing was for the first advent of the long-promised Christ. The Christian church on earth lives in the period of time demarcated by Christ’s two advents. Betrothed to Him, yet awaiting the consummation, she yearns for Him to lead her into the kingdom’s mansions (John 14:2). Through this hope she is purified (1 John 3:2-3). (CC)

1:2-3 *kisses ... your love ... your perfumes*. Cf. 4:10–11, “your love ... your perfume ... Your lips.” (CSB)

When people love each other they are always with each other, even then they are apart. He is always on her mind and in her heart. (PBC)

“To kiss” occurs in the Song only in 1:2 and 8:1. In both verses it denotes an intimate kiss between the married lovers, while in most other OT passages it denotes kissing as a (nonsexual) display of affection between relatives or friends. There is no hint in the Song that Solomon has other kisses reserved for anyone else. (CC)

1:2 *him ... his ... your.* These pronouns all refer to the same person, the lover (Solomon). (CSB)

Solomon, the husband and lover who is the subject of his bride's affections. (TLSB)

The beloved bride of Solomon, called the Shulammitte in 6:13. (TLSB)

kisses of his mouth! More than friendly affection; the intimate kiss of married lovers. (TLSB)

In the Near East a kiss with the mouth was the most intimate and sensual kind of kiss, as opposed to a kiss with the nose, which was a gesture of affection frequent in the ancient East ... in which the couple would rub faces together and smell each other's nose. (CC)

The repeated comparison of heaven-sent "love" ("the flame of Yahweh," 8:6) to "wine" (1:2,4), together with the Song's vineyard motif, provides exegetical stimulus for the interpretation of the Song's Gospel of love with recourse to the Sacraments, particularly the Lord's Supper. Already the OT anticipated the eschatological banquet, which would afford the finest wines. Wine was selected by our Lord for His Holy Supper, by which His church is to remember Him (cf. "we will commemorate you love" in Song 1:4). In the Sacrament of the Altar, the communicant receives Christ's blood, which was shed for the forgiveness of sin, together with the wine. The Sacrament anticipates the eternal wedding feasts, when our Lord will drink the cup anew with all the faithful. Christ described His outpouring of love for the redemption of all in connection with wine (in language that also relates to "poured out" in Song 1:3. (CC)

love. Expressions of love—caresses, embraces and consummation (see v. 4; 4:10; 7:12; see also Pr 7:18; Ez 16:8; 23:17). (CSB)

better than wine. See v. 4. In 4:10 the lover speaks similarly of the beloved's love. (CSB)

Luth: "[Wine] makes the heart glad (Ps. 104:15). Wine is thus metaphorically used for all the world's delights and gratifications" (AE 15:197). (TLSB)

Modern Western culture is obsessed with visual and tactile stimuli, but the Song frequently refers to olfactory sensations and considers them equally appealing. Both kissing and tasting wine are done with the mouth, and so "mouth" at the end of 1:2a facilitates the transition from the first image to the second. (CC)

1:3 *anointing oils.* Aromatic spices and gums blended in cosmetic oil. (CSB)

Used at ordination of priests, inauguration of kings, and appointment of prophets to consecrate and endow with the gifts and Spirit required for a particular calling (cf 1Sm 16:13; Is 61:1). Fragrant oils were also applied at festive occasions such as wedding feasts or in preparation for burial (Mk 14:3–9). (TLSB)

Ancient Jewish custom was for the bride to be anointed and perfumed in preparation for the wedding ceremony, which would explain the Shulammitte's fragrant "oils" in 4:10. This verse suggests a similar custom of anointing and perfuming the groom though marriage would not be the only occasion for which Solomon would be anointed. Oil was poured out to anoint kings (e.g. 1 Sam.10:1; 16:1, 13), including Solomon (1 Kings 1:39), about whom the beloved is speaking here. (CC)

your name. The very mention of the lover’s name fills the air as with a pleasant aroma. The Hebrew words for “name” and “perfume” sound alike. (CSB)

To hear his name was soothing. (TLSB)

God has given to Jesus “a name which is above every name.” To all who had a true discovery of their own emptiness and His infinite fullness, it is “as ointment poured forth;” and it draws them to Christ in sweet confidence and love. (CB)

Name (shem) is like perfume (shemen)!” Even to hear his name is thrilling. Everything about him delights her! (PBC)

virgins. Probably girls of the court or of the royal city (see 6:8–9). (CSB)

The word translated “maidens” is the same word Isaiah used to describe the mother of the Savior, “The virgin will be with child…” (Isaiah 7:14). (PBC)

1:4 draw me after you – By inviting him to act, rather than initiating the action herself, she indicates her dependence on his headship. An Israelite king such as Solomon would have the full authority to decide whether to marry a woman such as the Shulammitte. An Israelite bride might reject his advances (cf. Gen 24:57-58), but she could not initiate the union. (CC)

NT passages with verbal, thematic, and theological similarities to Song 1:4 include two in John. Jesus states, “No one is able to come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him and I will raise him up on the Last Day” (John 6:44). Using the same Greek verb again, Christ promises, “After I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). (CC)

king. Solomon. (CSB)

his chambers. The king’s private quarters. (CSB)

Bedroom, bridal chamber. Plural is unusual, but may imply a large, palatial dwelling with many rooms. (TLSB)

Others

We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you.

We. Probably the maidens of v. 3. (CSB)

extol your love more than wine. For the reason given in v. 2. (CSB)

A girl today should be able to say the same things about the boy she may someday marry. Generally speaking, she should not be the only person in the world who sees what a good person her potential mate is. She should not be so infatuated that she imagines a scoundrel or knave to be her knight in shining armor. She should be able to say “rightly do I love you.” He should be the kind of person one ought to respect. For if he is not, she may find it much more difficult to respond to his leadership. (PBC)

The love of the virgins for Solomon and their eagerness to run after him as he lead his bride may be appropriated as a poetic affirmation of the entire church' joyful love for the Bridegroom. A verbal and theological parallel to Israel is found in Is. 55:5-6, where God promises that surrounding nations will run to Israel because of Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, who invites all people to seek Him (cf. Is 40:31; Ps. 119:32) The Christian life itself is a kind of race in love in pursuit of the Bridegroom and King, who draws us (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:24, 26; Gal. 2:2; Heb 12:1). (CC)

you. The king, but ultimately the Lord Himself. Luth: “[Solomon’s] words *in You* are emphatic. It is as if he were saying: ‘Outside Your solace and aid one experiences nothing but toils’ ” (AE 15:199). (TLSB)

She

5 I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. 6 Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept! 7 Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?

1:5-8 The imagery of this periscope of the Song depicts God’s people, among whom God has condescended to dwell in grace. The divine presence in both of the two main settings in the text – the vineyard and the pastoral shepherding – ultimately points to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It also relates to the ongoing presence of Christ with His church through the means of grace. The vineyard motif finds its fulfillment in the Lord’s Supper, and the pastoral setting relates to the pastoral ministry, which is rooted in the ministry of Good Shepherd. (CC)

1:5 *Dark.* Deeply browned by the sun (see v. 6); not considered desirable. (CSB)

The Song returns to the period of courtship prior to the wedding, when the Shulammitte confesses her lowly state. She is darkened, perhaps by exposure to the sun, indicating a life of manual labor. Though weathered by hard work, she is beautiful in the eyes of her fiancé (cf Ru 2:2–13). Cf Is 61:10; Eph 5:27; Rv 21:2. (TLSB)

Her dark, swarthy complexion stands in sharp contrast to the fair-skinned girls of the palace. Today a dark tan is often a sign of wealth, leisure and beauty. For the ancients it was just the opposite. The wealthy and the nobility stayed out of the sun, while the lower class people were forced to work out in the open. To be darkened by the sun symbolized work and frequently poverty for the ancients. The Bible pictures heaven itself as an escape from toil under the sun – “The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat” (Revelation 7:16). (PBC)

“The bride, the Lamb’s wife,” is comely in the eyes of God, even in her deepest humiliation. Though others may despise her, he will still honor her and have mercy upon her. (CB)

Apparently here family owned vineyards, as many a family did in ancient Israel. The Promised Land contained vineyards previously planted by the Canaanites and inherited by grace by the Israelites (Duet. 6:11; Josh 24:13). The Shulammitte’s full brothers stationed her as a caretaker in the vineyard which constituted a family business, so to speak. (CC)

daughters of Jerusalem. Probably the maidens of v. 3 and usually the “Friends” in the sectional headings. (CSB)

Implied audience of the Song. Taught by the king's bride (8:2), they stand as an image of younger women learning from older women (cf 2Tm 1:5; Ti 2:3–5). (TLSB)

tents ... curtains. Handwoven from black goat hair. (CSB)

Perhaps wordplay, referencing the bride's dark complexion, because nomadic tents were dark in color to diminish the desert sun's glare. Kedar may refer to a nomadic tribe of the Syrian-Arabian desert, south of Jerusalem, descendants of Ishmael. (TLSB)

Her comparison to these tents also have been dark, is a second reference to her darkness. (PBC)

Kedar. This refers to the nomads or Bedouin tribes, in particular those who lived in the area south-east of Damascus. They were the descendants of Kedar, a son of Abraham's son Ishmael (Genesis 25:13). She was from the area nearby. (PBC)

The eschatological prophetic prospect for Kedar involves the Gospel. Isaiah twice refers to Kedar as a foreign place and people that will, by God's grace, be privileged to share in the Christological redemption of the future, restored Israel. Is 42:11 promises that Kedar will rejoice because of the ministry of the Suffering Servant (Is. 42:1-9). (CC)

curtains of Solomon. The curtains in Solomon's palace or temple must have also been dark, but lovely. The bride's adornment is not merely outward, but hidden, as God's glory in the tabernacle or temple, and in God's holy people throughout history (cf 1Pt 3:1–6). (TLSB)

This is a unique phrase in the OT. Since the phrase occurs nowhere else, it may be impossible to state with certainty to what it refers. The most natural interpretation would be that they refer to curtains closely associated with Solomon. Such would be the case with curtains in Solomon's palace and/or temple. (CC)

The phrase conveys rich connotations of God's gracious presence and indwelling. (CC)

1:6 *Do not gaze.* Because the Shulammitte is darkened by her labor in the sun, the daughters of Jerusalem look on her with contempt. Yet she is beautiful in the eyes of her bridegroom. (TLSB)

This is a wonderful example for people contemplating marriage today – an openness about their own shortcomings and a willingness to overlook those in their future mate. Such attitudes remind us of the fruits which the gospel produces in Christians. Though we are scorched and scarred by sin, in Christ's eyes we are beautiful. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,” declares the Lord, “though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool” (Isaiah 1:18). (PBC)

my mother's sons – her brothers' anger (apparently because she neglected the vineyard) may be another negative factor associated with her tan. (CC)

angry with me ... keeper. Her brothers are angry that she failed to keep the family vineyards. Instead of concerning herself with her family's well-being, she may have given all of the proceeds of her vineyard to her husband (Sg 8:11–12). (TLSB)

In ancient Israel, brothers – especially the full brothers – had weighty responsibilities for the welfare of the family and specifically for safeguarding the purity of their sisters and negotiating their marriages. (CC)

Perhaps out of the family vineyards, she was given responsibility for one in particular. Eventually she abandoned the vineyards, for which she was responsible. Instead of pursuing financial gain for her family, she pursues Solomon. It seems that out of love, she gave the income from the vineyard's fruit – one thousand shekels – to Solomon (who didn't really need it – more on this in 8:11-12). Apparently that is why her brothers became enraged at her, and understandably so. (CC)

my own vineyard. Her body, as in 8:12 (see 2:15). Vineyard is an apt metaphor since it yields wine, and the excitements of love are compared with those produced by wine. The beloved is also compared to a garden, yielding precious fruits for the lover. (CSB)

The strength of the church lies in her union with Christ. When she forsakes him, he leaves her for a season to the oppression of the wicked, without any power to deliver herself. (CB)

1:7 *you.* Solomon. (TLSB)

where you pasture your flock. The lover is portrayed as a shepherd. In v. 8 the beloved is depicted as a shepherdess. (CSB)

The pastoral imagery of shepherds and sheep has deep roots in Israel's history. The first shepherd (Gen 4:2) was Abel, upon whose sacrifice God looked with favor (Gen 4:4). Many of Israel's most prominent leaders had engaged in that occupation. The patriarchs owned flocks, and the patriarchal narratives testify to their pastoral pursuits. Moses and David were literal shepherds who were called to shepherd Israel. (CC)

By analogy, we may affirm that the church must be ever mindful of where her Bridegroom and Lord is located: in His pure Gospel, the unadulterated Word of God, and in the Sacraments He has ordained, Holy Baptism and the Table that anticipates His wedding banquet. If she does not continue faithfully to search for her Lord and visit Him in the place where He has ordained that He may be found in His grace – the Divine Service, with His Word and Sacraments – she runs the risk of seduction or violation. (CC)

noon. A time of rest in warm climates. (CSB)

who veils herself. Prostitute (see Ge 38:14–15). The beloved does not wish to look for her lover among the shepherds, appearing as though she were a prostitute. (CSB)

Context suggests a negative sense to this veiling, as though she were covering herself for mourning or even prostitution (cf Gn 38:15). (TLSB)

For the Middle Eastern woman to go out alone, veiled or not, is considered immodest, except in the larger, westernized cities. (PBC)

1:2–7 The Shulammite is of lowly birth. Her skin is weathered, and she is easily despised, but she is the love of her husband-king. The Church, too, is the beloved of our Bridegroom, Christ Jesus. Her sins may be obvious, even to other sinners, but her Husband-King calls her holy and forgiven, beautiful and radiant in the glory of His grace. • Lord, lead us not to judge ourselves or one another by outward appearance, but to listen to Your Word, which calls us God-pleasing in Your sight, for Jesus' sake. Amen. (TLSB)

Solomon and His Bride Delight in Each Other

He

8 If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds' tents. 9 I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots. 10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.

1:8 beautiful. The beloved; also in v. 15; 2:10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:9; 6:1, 4, 10 (“fair”). The lover is called “handsome” in v. 16 (in Hebrew the same word as that for “beautiful”). (CSB)

follow in the tracks. The Shulammitte is gently rebuked by her husband, who suggests she should know where to find him. The tracks of his flock will guide her. (TLSB)

your young goats. The beloved is pictured as a shepherdess (see v. 7). (CSB)

beside the shepherds tents. The beloved is instructed to learn where the lover is by joining the shepherds in the fields. (CSB)

She should care for her flock, keeping them close to the tents so the shepherds will make sure they dwell in peace and safety. (TLSB)

This commentary considers 1:9-11 to depict the splendor of the wedding ceremony. The bride’s finery in 1:10-11 ornament her for the wedding itself. This commentary’s view finds support in various other OT passages. For example, the book of Esther describes the elaborate preparations of a virgin bride before her union with Ahasuerus, king of Persia (Esther 2:3, 12-13). For twelve months she was pampered. During the first six months, the beauty treatments included oil spiced with myrrh, and during the second six months she was perfumed with various spices and ointments (Esther 2:12). On the appointed day of her union with the king, she could bring whatever she wished (Esther 2:13), which may have included jewelry and appropriate dress. (CC)

1:9 my love. Used only of the beloved. (CSB)

Then for the first time the lover speaks. He gives no clue as to how or where he met the country girl. None of that seems to matter. What is important is the love they share. (PBC)

mare. A flattering comparison, similar to Theocritus’s praise of the beautiful Helen of Troy (*Idyl*, 18.30–31). (CSB)

Image of nobility. Not a stable beast, but a stately, regal creature in one of the finest armies of the ancient Near East. (TLSB)

No girl today would be swept off her feet by such a line! Yet a compliment it was. Several pairs of horses pulled the chariots, but the prize mare was out in front. More graceful, beautiful and noble than all the others, she stood out from the crowd. (PBC)

Pharaoh’s chariots. Her beauty attracts attention the way a mare would among the Egyptian chariot stallions. According to 1Ki 10:28, Solomon imported horses from Egypt. (CSB)

A mare among the war chariots of one of the most feared armies in the ancient Near East is no metaphor for a fragile or retiring woman. The image is one of bold power and majesty: a regal horse gallantly leading the charge. Pharaoh's horses and war chariots had been Israel's foe. The redemptive act by God that was foundational for Israel's existence as a nation and for her faith was her redemption from Egypt (1 Kings 6:1; 8:16, 21; ;9) and the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, beneath whose waves Pharaoh's horses and chariots sank. (CC)

Nevertheless during the Solomon era, Israel enjoyed peace with her neighbors, including Egypt, which was a commercial trading partner (e.g. 1 Kings 9:16; 10:27-29; cf. 1 Kings 11:17-22). Solomon even married a daughter of Pharaoh, cementing peace between their nations (1 Kings 3:1; 9:16) (CC)

The Song employs military imagery but in a context of love that has overcome enmity with peace. It is one of a surprising number of military images in the Song, all of which depict victory by Love. (CC)

The military image relates to the church militant, who fights against spiritual enemies. It also pertains to the church's patience in bearing the cross. The strength of the church comes from her relationship with Christ, the heavenly Solomon, and that explains the military image of her in other passages of the Song such as 6:4, 10. (CC)

King Solomon himself was well supplied with "fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses" (1 Kings 10:26). These horses were "imported from Egypt and from all other countries" (2 Chronicles 9:28). The fact that Egypt is singled out and that Solomon uses it in his comparison indicates that Egyptian horses must have been considered the cream of the crop. (PBC)

1:10 ornaments. Though of lowly origin, Solomon's bride is decorated in splendor for her wedding. (TLSB)

An Israelite bride would wear glorious raiment and jewelry, according to passages such as Is. 61:10 and Jer. 2:32. The ornaments worn by the Shulammitte (1:9-11) are also consistent with later Jewish practice in preparation for an actual wedding. The bride's preparation included a complicated array of clothes and adornments and crowning with a wreath. (CC)

Others

11 We will make for you ornaments of gold, studded with silver.

1:11 We. Perhaps the "daughters of Jerusalem." (CSB)

He is speaking for himself and his artisans who will do the actual work. Again we cannot but notice a spiritual parallel. We are poor and spiritually bankrupt. We have nothing to offer God. But in His love He furnishes us with the most priceless things to wear. In the words of Isaiah, "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). (PBC)

The words, "we will make," bring to mind the words of the triune God in the opening chapter of the Bible. When God created man, the Almighty said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). (PBC)

Ornaments. The bride's ornaments are her spiritual graces. Ps. 45:13, 14; Rev. 19:8. (CB)

Nowhere does the Song hint that her finery originally belonged to her or was supplied by her own family. Ancient custom was for the bridegroom to confer items such as garments, jewelry, and ornaments upon the bride, and sometimes upon her family too (e.g. Gen. 24:52-53). (CC)

Scripture applies the custom of the bridegroom bestowing gifts upon his bride metaphorically and theologically to God's grace toward his undeserving people. In the allegory of Ezekiel 16, Yahweh likens Israel to a woman whom he found as an abandoned infant, then raised and clothed in splendor. Yahweh stresses that the fine linen, silk, bracelets, necklace, earrings,, crown, and other jewelry with which Israel's was adorned were solely His gift (Ez. 16:10-14. Her outward beauty resulted from His love and beneficence alone. Apart from Him she would have remained naked and wretched, but because of His affections she acquired "the ornament of ornaments" (Ez. 16:7, a superlative construction like the Song's title. (CC)

The NT depicts the church as the bride of Christ, richly robed in righteousness through the forgiveness of sin (Eph. 5:27; Rev. 21:2). The imagery of Christ washing, cleansing, and adorning His bride, the church in Eph 5:26-27 in the nuptial bath of Baptism and baptismal clothing with Christ (Gal 3:27) resembles the bridal preparations in Ezekiel 16:9-14. Yahweh washes His bride, anoints her with oil, and feeds her with money and oil, and the same nuptial uses of those items is attested in the Song. (CC)

The church's glorious dress is solely God's gift, the imputed righteousness of Christ Himself. His is the wedding garment given to the guests invited to the nuptial banquet (Mt. 22:1-14). Even the good works done by those who comprise Christ's bride are His gifts to her: "It was given to her that she may wear fine linen, bright and clean. For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8; cf. Rev 3:4-5, 18; 4:4). (CC)

The actual setting for the consummation would be Solomon's palace, though the imagery in 12-17 draws on that of the temple and the pristine natural splendor of the land of Israel ("En Gedi" in 1:14) and its environs (cedar and juniper from Lebanon. (CC)

She

12 While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance. 13 My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh that lies between my breasts. 14 My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi.

1:12 *king*. Solomon. (CSB)

The Song returns to the theme of consummated love. Solomon is on his "couch" for dining, suggesting the richness and festivity with which this regal marriage will be consummated. (TLSB)

on his couch. Reclining on his couch at the table. (CSB)

To sup with his bride, is a symbol of spiritual communion. See 5:1; Is 25:6; Rev. 3:20. (CB)

fragrance. Nard, an aromatic oil extracted from the roots of a perennial herb that grows in India (see 4:13-14; Mk 14:3; Jn 12:3). (CSB)

The Shulammitte bride's anticipation of her husband is rich with sensory appeal. She is a pleasing aroma to her bridegroom. (TLSB)

Luther interpreted the scent of the Shulammite's nard savored by the king on his couch, to signify prayer that reaches God and is pleasing to Him. (CC)

1:13 *My beloved.* Used only of the lover. (CSB)

myrrh. An aromatic gum exuding from the bark of a balsam tree that grows in Arabia, Ethiopia and India. It was commonly used as an alluring feminine perfume (Est 2:12; Pr 7:17). It was also used to perfume royal nuptial robes (Ps 45:8). The Magi brought myrrh to the young Jesus as a gift fit for a king (Mt 2:2, 11). Myrrh was an ingredient in the holy anointing oil (Ex 30:23). (CSB)

Bride and groom were adorned with aromatics in ancient weddings. (TLSB)

Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus with a year's wages worth of this expensive ointment (Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). A woman of means wore a little cloth of this costly resin. Wherever she went the fragrance went with her. In the same way her lover was in her heart wherever she went. (PBC)

That the myrrh is between her breasts signifies that the church inwardly contemplates Christ's pain and death, and with true faith in her heart in response to his inexpressible benefaction, she dedicates herself to love and praise him. The church is called to persevere through hardships as she lives for and in Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal 2:20; 6:14; Phil. 3:10). Christ, her Lord and God, remains her comfort and refreshes her through His Word and by the power of His Spirit. (CC)

1:14 *henna.* A shrub of Palestine (perhaps the cypress) with tightly clustered, aromatic blossoms. (CSB)

Like nard and myrrh, henna blossoms were made into perfume. (TLSB)

When crushed, the leaves of this shrub produce an orange dye used as a hair coloring or on fingernails. The small white flowers of this plant give off a sweet fragrance. (PBC)

EnGedi. An oasis watered by a spring, located on the west side of the Dead Sea. David sought refuge there from King Saul (1Sa 24:1). (CSB)

Lit, "the spring of the goat," an oasis on the western shore of the Salt Sea, where balsam incense was produced. Seals on the pottery at Engedi suggest that the industry was owned by the royal household. (TLSB)

This was and remains a luxuriant oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea. To the beloved the king is like an oasis in the desert. (PBC)

He

15 Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.

1:15 *you are beautiful ... love!* See 4:1; 6:4; cf. v. 16. (CSB)

doves. Gentle, fluttering, lively and pure. It is interesting that Job named one of his daughters Jemimah (Job 42:14, a Hebrew word for dove. Still more interesting is the fact that the Holy Spirit chose to appear as a dove at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:16). No doubt this says

something about the nature of the Spirit, who has been called “the shy member of the Trinity.” In His pure and gentle manner the Spirit works within the hearts of people, directing them not to himself but to Jesus. Christians, too, says Jesus, are to be “as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). (PBC)

Ancient Near Eastern portraits often emphasize the eyes. Pope includes a whole page of “eye-idol, small figurines with disproportionately large eyes that were found in Syria. The attention that the Song gives to the eyes indicates their importance in revealing the qualities and characteristics of a person. In the NT Jesus refers to the quality of one’s eyes: “The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye should be clear, your whole body is illumined” (Matthew 6:22). An American sculptor said, “The eye is the window of the soul.” (CC)

Commentary from Genesis 29:17 – LEAH HAD WEAK EYES – In a culture where bright, flashing eyes were considered a mark of beauty in a woman, Leah’s weak eyes were a handicap. (PBC)

This according to the oriental standard did not imply defective vision but merely the absence of that clear-cut brilliance and luster that the Oriental’s love. “Tender” is in a sense even more correct than “weak.” (Leupold)

He

**15 Behold, you are beautiful, my love;
 behold, you are beautiful;
 your eyes are doves.**

She

16 Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful. Our couch is green; 17 the beams of our house are cedar; our rafters are pine.

1:16 beautiful. In Hebrew she uses the same word he used to describe her, translated “beautiful” in the previous verse. The exchange between the two is something like this: He says “You are comely.” And she responds, “No, you are comely.” One compliment is never quite enough for these two, and so she quickly adds, “Oh how charming!” This is the same basic word used by Moses in Psalm 90:17 (KJV): “And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.” (PBC)

couch is green. Lush, verdant, leafy. Perhaps denotes fertility or reflects the couple’s union beneath the rafters of cedar and pine (1:17). (TLSB)

The girl’s love for the country shines through as she hurriedly get in one more thought. “And our bed (or couch) is verdant. (PBC)

Lover

¹⁷The beams of our house are cedars; our rafters are firs.

While she might be thinking of tree branches beneath the open sky, the king apparently has in mind his palace back in Jerusalem. The structure was known as “the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.” Wood was scarce in Palestine and was imported for exclusive building projects. Although they are not yet married, he speaks of “our” house. What is his he wants to share with her. (PBC)

The costliness of the palace which the king has provided for his spouse represents her glory and excellence. (CB)

If Song 1:16-17 pictures the consummation of the king and his bride in the palace, it fits the theology and culture of ancient Israel. In Israel (and in other ancient Near Eastern cultures) the palace and temple were closely related and vitally important to the nation as a whole. The king reigned on God's behalf. God himself was accessible through His dwelling place, the temple, the location for sacrificial atonement for sin and His provision of grace. Through the palace and the temple, the kingdom of God came to earth. God's reign through and among His people brought the promise of a restoration of Edenic paradise in which creation would be transformed and permeated by the goodness and holiness of God, and His redeemed people would live in communion with Him. (CC)

Eschatologically, cedar appears in contexts where redemption brings with it the promise of a future paradise in communion with God. Another Christological perspective on the contextual usage of cedar and juniper in Song 1:16-17 emerges from a comparison to Hosea 14:6-9, which shares various verbal and thematic similarities with the Song. In Song 1:16-17 the couple partakes of love under the majestic timbers. In the salvation oracle in Hosea, God likens Himself to a "verdant juniper" who alone enables His people to be fruitful (Hosea 14:8) because He alone provides forgiveness and life. The imagery in Hosea 14:7-8) is similar to Jesus' discourse, "I am the true vine" (John 15:1), and His explanation that it is only through remaining in Him that His people may be fruitful (John 15:4-5). (CC)