

THE WESLEYAN HERITAGE LIBRARY  
COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON  
SONG OF SOLOMON

*by Adam Clarke.*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

Wesleyan Heritage Publications

© 2002

# A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

# HOLY BIBLE

## OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

**BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.**

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE  
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

**For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.**

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments  
A derivative of Adam Clarke's Commentary for the Online Bible

produced by

Sulu D. Kelley  
1690 Old Harmony Dr.  
Concord, NC 28027-8031  
(704) 782-4377

© 1994, 1995, 1997

© 1997 Registered U.S. Copyright Office

## INTRODUCTION TO THE CANTICLES, OR SONG OF SOLOMON

THE book before us is called in the Hebrew מְשֻׁרְיִם שִׁיר SHIR HASHSHIRIM, “The Song of Songs;” or, “An Ode of the Odes:” which might be understood, “An Ode *taken* or selected *from others* of a similar kind;” or, “An Ode the *most excellent* of all others;” this being an idiom common to the Hebrew language: e.g., the *God of gods* is the supreme God; the *Lord of lords*, the supreme Lord; the *King of kings*, the supreme King; the *heaven of heavens*, the supreme or highest heaven. It may therefore be designed to express “a song of the *utmost perfection; one of the best that existed, or had ever been penned.*” Perhaps the title may have a reference to the other poetical compositions of Solomon, which were no less than *one thousand and five*; and this was considered the *most excellent* of the whole, and the *only one* that remains, unless we suppose Solomon, with some of the Jews, to be the author of Psalms lxxii. and cxxvii.: but this cannot be proved.

There have been some doubts concerning the author of this book. Some of the rabbins supposed it to be the work of the prophet Isaiah; but this sentiment never gained much credit. Most have, without hesitation, attributed it to Solomon, whose name it bears; and if the book of Ecclesiastes be his, this will follow in course, as the *style* is exactly the same, allowing for the difference of the subject. Both books seem to have been written about the same *time*, and to have had the same *author*.

This book, if written by Solomon, could not have been written in his *old age*, as some have supposed the book of Ecclesiastes to have been; which sentiment is, I think, sufficiently disproved; for we find that long before Solomon’s old age he had *three hundred wives*, and *seven hundred concubines*; but at the time this Song was written, Solomon had only *sixty wives* and *eighty concubines*. And the Song most certainly celebrates a *marriage*; whether between *Solomon* and the *daughter of Pharaoh*, or between him and some *Jewish princess*, has not been fully agreed on among critics and commentators. It is most likely to have been a *juvenile* or *comparatively juvenile* production; and indeed the high and glowing colouring, and the strength of the images, are full proofs of this. Though *Anacreon* made amatory odes when he was *bald-headed*, yet neither he

nor *any one else*, humanly speaking, could have made such odes as the Canticles when stricken in years.

But to what denomination of writing do the Canticles belong? Are they mere *Odes*, or *Idyls*, or *Pastorals*; or are they an *Epithalamium*? Let us define these terms, and examine the Song of Solomon by them. 1. The ODE is generally understood to be a species of poetry containing sublime and important matter, always *sung*, or accompanied by the *harp*, or some proper *musical instrument*. 2. The IDYL implies a *short poem*, containing some *adventure*. 3. The PASTORAL contains what belongs to *shepherds*, and their occupations. 4. The EPITHALAMIUM is the congratulatory song, sung to a new married pair, wishing them abundant blessings, a numerous and happy offspring, &c. Strictly speaking, the book of Canticles falls under neither of these descriptions: it is rather a composition *sui generis*, and seems to partake more of the nature of what we call a MASK, than any thing else; an entertainment for the guests who attended the marriage ceremony, with a *dramatic cast* throughout the whole, though the *persons* who speak and act are not formally introduced. There are so many touches in the form and manner of this Song like those in the *Comus* of Milton, that it leads me to doubt whether the *English poet* has not taken the idea of his *mask* from the *Jewish*.

As to the *persons*, chiefly concerned, it is generally believed that *Solomon* and *Pharaoh's daughter* are the *bridegroom* and *bride*; with their proper *attendants*, viz., companions of the bridegroom, and companions of the bride, with certain *mutes*, who only appear, or are mentioned by others, without taking any particular part in the transactions.

But it is much more easy to be satisfied on the *species* of composition to which this book belongs, than on the *meaning* of the book itself. Is it to be understood in the *obvious manner* in which it presents itself? And are Solomon and his bride, their friends and companions, to be considered as mere *dramatis personæ*? Or are they *typical* or *representative* persons? Does this *marriage* represent a *celestial union*? Do the *speeches* of each contain Divine doctrines? Are the *metaphors*, taken from *earthly* things, to be understood of *spiritual* matters? In a word, does *Solomon* here represent *Jesus Christ*? Is the *daughter of Pharaoh* the *Christian Church*; or, according to some Roman Catholics, the *Virgin Mary*? Are *watchmen*, *vineyard-keepers*, *shepherds*, &c., the *ministers* of the *Gospel*? *Wine* and *various fruits*, the *influences* and *graces* of the *Divine Spirit*? &c., &c.

How multitudinous and *positive* are the *affirmative* answers to these questions! And yet, though the many agree in the general principle, how various their expositions of the different parts of the piece! And where, all this time, is the *proof* that the *principle* is not misunderstood? As to *conjectures*, they are as *uncertain* as they are endless; and what one pious or learned man may *think* to be the meaning, is no proof to any other that he should make up his mind in the *same way*.

Let us for a moment consider the different opinions held on this book, without entering into the discussion of their propriety or impropriety. They are the following:—

I. It is a plain *epithalamium* on the marriage of Solomon with the *daughter of Pharaoh*, king of Egypt; and is to be understood in no other way.

II. It is an *allegory* relative to the conduct of God towards the Hebrews, in bringing them out of Egypt, through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

III. It is intended to represent the *incarnation* of Jesus Christ, or his marriage with human nature, in reference to its redemption.

IV. It represents Christ's love to the Church or elected souls, and their love to him.

V. It is an *allegorical poem* on the glories of *Jesus Christ* and the *Virgin Mary*.

VI. It is a collection of sacred idyls; the spiritual meaning of which is not agreed on.

Now each of these opinions has its powerful supporters, and each of these has reasons to offer for the support of the opinion which is espoused; and nothing but a direct revelation from God can show us which of these opinions is the correct one, or whether any of them are correct.

The *antiquity* of an opinion, if that be not founded on a *revelation from God*, is no evidence of its truth; for there are many ungodly opinions which are more than a *thousand* years old. And as to *great men* and *great names*, we find them enrolled and arranged on each side of all controversies. It may be asked, What do Christ and his apostles say of it?

1. If Jesus Christ or any of his apostles had referred to it as an *allegory*, and told us the *subject* which it pointed out, the matter would have been

*plain*: we should then have had *data*, and had only to proceed in the way of *elucidation*. But we find nothing of this in the New Testament.

2. If they had referred to it as an *allegory*, without intimating the *meaning*, then we should be justified in searching everywhere for that meaning; and *conjecture* itself would have been legal, till we had arrived at some *self-testifying issue*.

3. If they had referred to it at all, in connection with *spiritual* subjects, then we should have at once seen that it was to be *spiritually understood*; and, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, we must have humbly sought for its spiritual interpretation.

4. Had the *Supreme Being* been introduced, or referred to in any of his *essential attributes*, or by any of the names which he has been pleased to assume in his revelations to men, we should have then seen that the writer was a *spiritual man*, and wrote probably in reference to a *spiritual end*; and, that we should pass by or through his *letter*, in order to get to the *spirit* concealed under it. But none of these things appear in this book: the *name of God* is not found in it; nor is it *quoted* in the *New Testament*. As to certain *references* which its allegorical expositors suppose are made to it, either in the *Gospels*, *Epistles*, or *Apocalypse*, they are not *express*, and do not, by any thing *in* or *connected* with them, appear *unequivocally* to point out this book. And after all that has been said, I am fully of opinion it is not once referred to in the New Testament. But this is no proof of its not being *canonical*, as there are other books, on which there is no doubt, that are in the same predicament. But still, if it refer so distinctly to Christ and his Church, as some suppose, it certainly would not have been passed over by both evangelists and apostles without pointed and especial notice; and particularly if it points out the *love of Christ to his Church*, and the whole *economy* of God's working in reference to the salvation of the souls of men.

From all this it will appear to the intelligent reader, that the *spiritual meaning* of this book cannot easily be made out: 1. Because we do not know that it is an *allegory*. 2. If one, the *principles* on which such allegory is to be explained do nowhere appear.

Whom then are we to follow in the interpretation of this very singular book? The *Targumist*, who applies it to God and the *Hebrews*, in their journeyings from Egypt to the promised land? *Origen*, who made it a

Christian allegory? *Apponius*, who spiritualized it? *Gregory the Great*, who in the main copied them? The *good man*, who in 1717, at Paris, so illustrated it as “to induce men to devote themselves to Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary?” Mr. *Durham*, Mr. *Robotham*, Mr. *Ainsworth*, Mr. *Romaine*, and Dr. *Gill*, who endeavoured to prove that it concerns *Christ* and the *elect*? Or Mr. *Harmer* and others who acknowledge it to be an inimitable composition, and to be understood only of Solomon and Pharaoh’s daughter? Or, finally, Dr. *Mason Good*, who considers it a collection of sacred idyls, the spiritual interpretation of which is not agreed on?

I had for a long time hesitated whether I should say any thing on this book; not because I did not think I understood its chief design and general meaning, for of this I really have no doubt, but because I did not understand it as a *spiritual allegory*, representing the *loves of Christ and his Church*. I must own I see no indubitable ground for this opinion. And is it of no moment whether the *doctrines* drawn from it, by those who allegorize and spiritualize it, be indubitably founded on it or not? The doctrines may be true in themselves, (which is indeed more than can be said of those of most of its interpreters,) but is it not a very *solemn*, and indeed *awful* thing to say, *This is the voice of Christ to his Church, This is the voice of the Church to Christ, &c., &c.*, when there is *no proof* from God, nor from any other portion of his word, that these things are so?

It is much better, therefore, if explained or illustrated at all, to take it in its *literal* meaning, and explain it in its *general* sense. I say *general* sense, because there are many passages in it which should not be explained, if taken literally, the references being too delicate; and Eastern phraseology on such subjects is too vivid for European imaginations. Let any sensible and pious medical man read over this book, and, if at all acquainted with Asiatic phraseology, say whether it would be proper, even in medical language, to explain all the descriptions and allusions in this poem.

After what I have said on the difficulty of interpreting this book in a *spiritual* way, it would not be fair to withhold from the reader the general *arguments* on which the *theory* of its allegorical meaning is founded. The principal part of the commentators on this book, especially those who have made it their *separate* study, have in general taken it for granted that their mode of interpretation is incontrovertible; and have proceeded to spiritualize every *figure* and every *verse* as if they had a Divine warrant for all they have said. Their conduct is dangerous; and the result of their

well-intentioned labours has been of very little service to the cause of *Christianity* in general, or to the interests of true *morality* in particular. By their mode of interpretation an undignified, not to say mean and carnal, language has been propagated among many well-meaning religious people, that has associated itself too much with *selfish* and *animal affections*, and created feelings that accorded little with the dignified spirituality of the religion of the Lord Jesus. I speak not from report; I speak from observation and experience, and observation not hastily made. The conviction on my mind and the conclusion to which I have conscientiously arrived, are the result of frequent examination, careful reading, and close thinking, at intervals, for nearly *fifty* years; and however I may be *blamed* by some, and *pitied* by others, I must say, and I say it as fearlessly as I do conscientiously, that in this inimitably fine elegant Hebrew ode I see nothing of *Christ* and *his Church*, and nothing that appears to have been *intended* to be *thus* understood; and nothing, if applied in this way, that, *per se*, can promote the interests of vital godliness, or cause the simple and sincere not to “know Christ after the flesh.” Here I conscientiously stand. May God help me!

The most rational view of the subject that I have seen is that taken by Mr. *Harmer*, who has indeed detailed and strengthened the arguments of his predecessors who have declared for the *spiritual* meaning. In his “*Outlines of a Comment upon Solomon’s Song*,” he supposes that the Song refers to *Solomon’s marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh*; and that he had a *Jewish queen*, who is frequently referred to in the work; and that, unless this be allowed, there are several important passages in the book that cannot be understood; and indeed it is on this principle that he finds his chief ground for a *spiritual* and *allegorical* interpretation.

“Whatever was the intention of God,” says he, “in bringing about this marriage, and in causing it to be celebrated in such an *extraordinary* manner, *by songs that were directed to be placed among the sacred writings*, it is certain there never was *any resemblance more striking* between the circumstances and transactions of any of the remarkable personages of the Old Testament and those of Messiah, than the *likeness* we may observe between *Solomon marrying a Gentile princess*, and making her *equal in honour and privileges* with his former *Jewish queen*, and in her being *frequently mentioned* afterwards in history, while the



other is passed over in *total silence*, and the *conduct of the Messiah towards the Gentile and Jewish Churches*.

“The two remarkable things in the conduct of the Messiah towards the two Churches are the making the Gentiles *fellow heirs* of the same body and partakers of the promises, *without any difference*; and the *giving up to neglect* the Jewish Church, while that of the Gentiles has long flourished in great honour, and been the subject of many a history. St. Paul takes notice of both these circumstances with particular solemnity; of the first, in the *third* chapter of *Ephesians*, and elsewhere; of the other, in the *eleventh* chapter of *Romans*. They are points, then, that deserve great attention.

“They are both called *mysteries*, (<sup><45125></sup>**Romans 11:25**; <sup><4908></sup>**Ephesians 3:3**.) that is, things that had been concealed aforetime; but it by no means follows that there were no shadowy representations of these events in the preceding ages, only that they were not *clearly and expressly revealed*.

“*Kingdoms and cities* are frequently spoken of in holy writ as *women*. *Sacred* as well as *secular* bodies of men are represented under that image. *The universal Church* is spoken of under the notion of a *bride*, and the *Messiah* as her *husband*, (<sup><4062></sup>**Ephesians 5:23-25, 32**. The two Churches of Jews and Gentiles, or the Church under the Mosaic dispensation and the Church freed from those ceremonies, are represented as *two women*—the one formerly treated as the *principal wife*; and the second, as having been for a long time neglected, but afterwards producing a much more numerous issue than the first—by the prophet Isaiah in his *fifty-fourth* chapter, according to the explanation St. Paul has given of that passage in <sup><4042></sup>**Galatians 4:22-31**. *Particular Churches* are mentioned after the same manner. So, concerning the Church at Corinth, St. Paul says, “I have espoused you to one husband, *that I may present you* as a chaste virgin to Christ;” <sup><47102></sup>**2 Corinthians 11:2**.

“Since then it is common for the Scriptures to represent the Church of God under the notion of a *woman*, and the Messiah under that of a *husband*; since the two bodies of men—that which worshipped God according to the *Mosaic* rites, and that which observed them *not*—are compared to *two women*; and since the circumstances of

these two Churches are such as I have given an account of from St. Paul, it must be acknowledged that there is a lively resemblance between Solomon's espousing the Egyptian princess and the Messiah's admitting the Gentiles to equal privileges with the Jews, whether it was or was not *designed* by God as an emblem and type of it celebrated by his prophets for this cause, in holy songs; and those songs preserved with care to this day among writings of the *most sacred* kind on that account."

This is the whole of Mr. *Harmer's* argument; see his *Outlines*, pages 74-77. And *what* is proved by it? Nothing, in reference to this book. We know that the *Jewish people*, not the *Church* exclusively, are represented under the notion of a *woman addicted*, and a *wife unfaithful, divorced, and forsaken, &c.*; and that the *Corinthians* were represented under the notion of a *chaste virgin espoused to Christ*. And we know that all this was done to show, that as the *marriage union* was the *closest, strictest, and most sacred* among men, the union of the soul to God, and its connection with him, might be most fitly represented by that union, and unfaithfulness to him by infidelity in the other case. But what has this to do with the *Canticles*? *Where is the intimation* that *Solomon* represents *Christ*; *Pharaoh's daughter*, the *Church of the Gentiles*; and the *Jewish queen*, the *Church of the Israelites*? Nowhere. Why then *assume* the thing that should be *proved*; and then build doctrines on it, and draw inferences from it, as if the *assumption* had been *demonstrated*?

Were this mode of interpretation to be applied to the Scriptures in general, (and why not, if legitimate here?) in what a state would religion soon be! Who could see any thing certain, determinate, and fixed in the meaning of the Divine oracles, when *fancy* and *imagination* must be the standard interpreters? God has *not* left his word to man's will in this way.

Every attempt, however well-intentioned, to revive this thriftless, not to say dangerous, *Origenian* method of seducing the Scriptures to particular creeds and purposes, should be regarded with jealousy; and nothing received as the *doctrine* of the Lord but what may be derived from those *plain words* of the Most High which lie most on a level with the capacities of mankind. Allegory, metaphor, and figures in general, where the design is clearly indicated, which is the case with all those employed by the sacred writers, may come in to *illustrate* and more forcibly to *apply* Divine truth; but to extort celestial meanings from *a whole book*, where no such

*indication* is given, is most certainly not the way to arrive at the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

As the Jewish marriages were celebrated for *seven days*, it has been often observed that this Song divides itself into *seven periods*, and describes the *transactions* of each.

I. The FIRST *chapter* represents the *bridegroom* and *bride* as a *shepherd* and *shepherdess*. The bride asks her spouse where he takes his flock at noon, to preserve them from the excessive heat, lest she, in seeking him, should go astray into some strange pastures. After this day, the *first night* succeeds, which is pointed out <sup><2104></sup>**Song of Solomon 2:4-6**. The bridegroom rises early in the morning, leaves the bride asleep, and goes hastily to the fields to his necessary occupations, <sup><2107></sup>**Song of Solomon 2:7**.

II. The SECOND *night* is pointed out <sup><2108></sup>**Song of Solomon 2:8, 9, &c.** The bridegroom comes to the window of his spouse. She opens it, and he enters; and on the morrow, he returns to the fields to his flocks, <sup><2107></sup>**Song of Solomon 2:17**.

III. The THIRD *night*, the bridegroom having delayed his coming, the bride, being uneasy, arises from her bed, and goes out and inquires of the guards of the city, whether they had seen her beloved. She had not gone far from them till she met with him; she conducts him to her apartment, <sup><2105></sup>**Song of Solomon 3:1-4**. Very early in the morning, he retires to the country, leaving the bride asleep, <sup><2105></sup>**Song of Solomon 3:5**. Afterwards she arises, and goes also to the fields, <sup><2106></sup>**Song of Solomon 3:6**.

The FOURTH *chapter* is an eulogium on the bride's beauty; and seems to be a conversation between the parties in the country. She invites the bridegroom to visit her, <sup><2101></sup>**Song of Solomon 5:1**. He leaves his friends, with whom he was feasting, and comes to the door of his spouse, <sup><2102></sup>**Song of Solomon 5:2**. She hesitating to let him in, he withdraws and goes to his garden. The bride follows; but, not knowing whither he had retired, asks the guards of the city, by whom she is maltreated; thence goes to the daughters of Jerusalem, and inquires of them, <sup><2103></sup>**Song of Solomon 5:3, &c.** At last she meets with him, <sup><2104></sup>**Song of Solomon 6:1, &c.**, and having spent some time with him, returns.

IV. <sup>2169</sup>**Song of Solomon 6:9**, points out the FOURTH *night* of the marriage.

V. The FIFTH *night* is pointed out <sup>2170</sup>**Song of Solomon 7:1**, &c. The bridegroom gives his bride nearly the same praise and commendations which he had received from her in the preceding chapters; and early in the morning they go out together to the fields, <sup>2171</sup>**Song of Solomon 7:11-13**.

VI. The SIXTH *night* they pass at a village in the country, at the house of a person who is termed the bride's *mother*, <sup>2173</sup>**Song of Solomon 7:13; 8:1-3**. She invites her spouse thither, and promises to regale him with excellent fruits and choice wine; and early in the morning the bridegroom arises, leaves the bride asleep as formerly, and retires to the country, <sup>2184</sup>**Song of Solomon 8:4**.

VII. The SEVENTH *night* is passed in the gardens. From <sup>2185</sup>**Song of Solomon 8:5**, we have a series of dialogues between the bride and bridegroom. In the morning the bridegroom, having perceived that they were overheard, begs the bride to permit him to retire. She assents, <sup>2183</sup>**Song of Solomon 8:13, 14**, and exhorts him "to make haste, and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices."

This is the division, which is in the main most followed, especially by the best critics. But, besides this, several others have been proposed; and the reader, who wishes to enter more particularly into the subject, may consult Bishop *Bossuet*, *Calmet*, and Bishop *Lowth*. For my own part I doubt the propriety of this technical arrangement, and do not think that any thing of the kind was intended by the author. The division is not *obvious*; and therefore, in my apprehension, not *natural*. Of Dr. *Good's* division I shall speak below.

The *dramatis personæ* have been marked by some of the ancient interpreters, and the different portions of the whole Song appointed to several persons who are specified; and this division served for the *basis* of a *commentary*. The most regular division of this kind with which I have met is in a MS. of my own; the Bible which I have often quoted in my *comment*.

This, attributed by some to Wiclif, and by others to an older translator, I have carefully transcribed, with all the distinction of *parts* and *speeches*. The translation is very simple; and in many cases is much more faithful to

the meaning of the *Hebrew* text, though in the main taken from the *Vulgate*, than our own version. It is a great curiosity, and certainly was never before printed; and is a fine specimen of our mother tongue as spoken in these countries in M.CCCLX., which may be about the date of this translation. On the common mode of interpretation I venture to assert that my readers will understand this Song ten times better from this translation and its *rubrics*, than they have ever done from all the forms in which it has been presented to them, to the present time. For this addition, I anticipate the thanks of every intelligent reader. The indications of the speakers, printed here in black letter, are all *rubrick*, in the beautiful original. I have added a short glossary on some of the more difficult or obsolete words, which will assist the less experienced reader, under whose notice such remote specimens of his own tongue seldom fall.

Between *twenty* and *thirty* years ago I received from India a *part* of the *Gitagovinda*, or *Songs of Jayadeva*. This poet, the finest lyric poet of India, flourished before the Christian era; and the poem above, which makes the tenth book of the *Bhagavet*, was written professedly to celebrate the *loves* of *Chrishna* and *Radha*, or the *reciprocal attraction between the Divine goodness and the human soul*. The author leaves us in no doubt concerning the *design* of this little *pastoral drama*; for in the conclusion he thus speaks: “Whatever is delightful in the modes of music, *whatever is* DIVINE *in* MEDITATIONS ON VISHNU, whatever is exquisite in the sweet art of love, whatever is graceful in the fine strains of poetry; all that, let the happy and wise learn from the Songs of Jayadeva, whose soul is united with the foot of *Narayan*.” *Vishnu* and *Narayan* are epithets of *Chrishna*, or the supreme incarnated god of the Hindoos. I found the general phraseology of this work, and its imagery as well as its *subject*, to correspond so much with those of the *Canticles*, that in the short notes which I wrote on this book in 1798, I proposed the illustration of many of its passages from the *Gitagovinda*; and was pleased to find, several years after, that my view of the subject had been confirmed by that encyclopedia of learning and science, Dr. *Mason Good*, who in his translation of the *Song of Songs*, with *critical notes*, published 1803, 8vo., has illustrated many passages from the *Gitagovinda*.

After having made a selection from this ancient poet for the illustration of the *Canticles*, I changed in some measure my purpose, and determined to give the whole work, and leave it to my readers to apply those passages which they might think best calculated to throw light upon a book which

professedly has the *wisest of men* for its *author*, and according to the opinion of many, the most *important doctrines* of the Christian religion for its *subject*. I have not followed the *metrical version* which I received from India, but rather the *prose translation* of Sir William Jones; dividing it into *parts* and *verses*, after the model of the metrical version above mentioned; and adding verbal interpretations of the principal proper names and difficult terms which are contained in the work.

Having been long convinced that the *Chaldee Targum* is at once the oldest and most valuable *comment* upon this book, I have also added this. And here I might say that I have not only followed my own judgment, but that also of a very learned divine, Dr. *John Gill*, who, having preached *one hundred and twenty-two* sermons on the Song of Solomon, to the Baptist congregation at *Horsleydown*, near London, embodied them all in what he calls "*An Exposition*" of this book; to which he added a *translation of the Targum*, with short *explanatory notes*, folio, 1728. This was, however, suppressed in all the later editions of this exposition; but why, I cannot tell. This piece I give to my readers, and for the same reasons alleged by this very learned and excellent man himself:-

"At the end of this exposition I have given," says he, "a version of the *Targum* or *Chaldee paraphrase* upon the whole book, with some notes thereon, induced hereunto by the following reasons:

"*First*, to gratify the curiosity of some who, observing frequent mention and use made of it in my exposition, might be desirous of perusing the whole.

"*Secondly*, for the profitableness thereof. Our learned countryman, Mr. *Broughton*, says, this paraphrase is worth our study both for delight and profit. It expounds several passages of Scripture, and some in the *New Testament*, which I have directed to in my notes upon it; and I am persuaded that the writings of the Jews, the ancient Jews especially, would give us much light into the phraseology and sense of abundance of texts in the New Testament."

It is certain that this paraphrase does very often direct us, or at least confirm us, as to the *persons speaking* in this Song, to know which is of very great use in the explication of it. I shall add another reason: I believe the book of Canticles refers more to the *Jewish* than to the *Christian*

*Church*, and I think the *Targumist* has made a more rational use of it than any of his successors.

I have thus places within the reach of all my readers *THREE especial helps* towards a good understanding of this book: 1. The ancient English translation, with its curious *dramatis personæ*. 2. The *Gitagovinda*, a most curious poem of the spiritual and allegorical kind. 3. The *Chaldee Targum*, the oldest comment on this Song. And I add my prayer, May God guide the reader into all truth, through Christ Jesus! Amen.

On this part of the subject it would be almost criminal not to mention, still more particularly, Dr. *Mason Good's translation and notes* on the *Song of Songs*. He has done much to elucidate its phraseology, and his notes are a treasury of critical learning. He considers the book to be a collection of *Sacred Idyls*, *twelve* in number; and his division is as follows:—

### IDYL 1

Royal Bride, <sup><2010></sup>Song of Solomon 1:2, 3, 4.

Attendant Virgins, Part of the fourth verse, beginning, “We will exult.”

Royal Bride, <sup><2015></sup>Song of Solomon 1:5, 6, 7.

Attendant Virgins, <sup><2018></sup>Song of Solomon 1:8.

### IDYL 2

King Solomon, <sup><2019></sup>Song of Solomon 1:9, 10, 11.

Royal Bride, <sup><2012></sup>Song of Solomon 1:12, 13, 14.

King Solomon, <sup><2015></sup>Song of Solomon 1:15.

Royal Bride, <sup><2016></sup>Song of Solomon 1:16, 17. 2:1.

King Solomon, <sup><2017></sup>Song of Solomon 2:2.

Royal Bride, <sup><2018></sup>Song of Solomon 2:3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

### IDYL 3

Royal Bride, <sup><2018></sup>Song of Solomon 2:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

### IDYL 4

Royal Bride, <sup><2011></sup>Song of Solomon 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

**IDYL 5***Scene, a Chiosk or Pavilion*Attendant Virgins, <sup><2186></sup>Song of Solomon 3:6.Other Virgins, <sup><2187></sup>Song of Solomon 3:7, 8, 9, 10.Royal Bride, <sup><2181></sup>Song of Solomon 3:11.King Solomon, <sup><2191></sup>Song of Solomon 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.**IDYL 6**King Solomon, <sup><2198></sup>Song of Solomon 4:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.Royal Bride, <sup><2196></sup>Song of Solomon 4:16.King Solomon, <sup><2191></sup>Song of Solomon 5:1.

Royal Bride, Part of the first verse, beginning, "Eat, O my friends."

**IDYL 7**Royal Bride, <sup><2182></sup>Song of Solomon 5:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,Virgins, <sup><2189></sup>Song of Solomon 5:9.Royal Bride, <sup><2150></sup>Song of Solomon 5:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.Virgins, <sup><2191></sup>Song of Solomon 6:1.Royal Bride, <sup><2182></sup>Song of Solomon 6:2, 3.King Solomon, <sup><2194></sup>Song of Solomon 6:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.**IDYL 8**Royal Bride, <sup><2161></sup>Song of Solomon 6:11, 12.Virgins, <sup><2163></sup>Song of Solomon 6:13.

Royal Bride, Part of the thirteenth verse, beginning, "What do you expect?"

Virgins, Latter part of the thirteenth verse, beginning "Fortitude."

**IDYL 9**Virgins, <sup><2171></sup>Song of Solomon 7:1, 2, 3, 4, 5.King Solomon, <sup><2175></sup>Song of Solomon 7:6, 7, 8, 9.**IDYL 10**Royal Bride, <sup><2170></sup>Song of Solomon 7:10, 11, 12, 13.<sup><2181></sup>Song of Solomon 8:1, 2, 3, 4.



## IDYL 11

Virgins, ~~2186~~ Song of Solomon 8:5.

King Solomon, Part of the fifth verse, beginning, "I excited thee."

Royal Bride, ~~2186~~ Song of Solomon 8:6.

King Solomon, ~~2187~~ Song of Solomon 8:7.

## IDYL 12

Royal Bride, ~~2188~~ Song of Solomon 8:8.

King Solomon, ~~2189~~ Song of Solomon 8:9.

Royal Bride, ~~2180~~ Song of Solomon 8:10, 11, 12.

King Solomon, ~~2183~~ Song of Solomon 8:13.

Royal Bride, ~~2184~~ Song of Solomon 8:14.

There have been various opinions on this division; and many will still think that much remains yet to be done. Dr. *Good* considers it a *spiritual allegory*; but he does not attempt a spiritual application of any part of it. This perhaps is no mean proof of his good sense and judgment. I have acted in the same way, though not so convinced of its spirituality as Dr. *Good* appears to be. If I took it up in this way, I should explain it *according to my own creed*, as others have done according to *theirs*; and could I lay it down as a maxim, that it is to be spiritually interpreted in reference to the Christian Revelation, I might soon show my reader that it points out the infinite love of God to every human soul, in the incarnation of Christ; the means he uses to bring all mankind to an acquaintance with himself; the redemption of true believers from all unrighteousness, through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit; their consequent holy life, and godly conversation; the calling of the Gentiles; the restoration of the Jews; and the final judgment! And my comment on this plan would have just as *solid a foundation* as those of my predecessors, from *Origen* to the present day.

To conclude: I advise all young ministers to avoid preaching on Solomon's Song. If they take a text out of it, to proclaim salvation to lost sinners, they must borrow their doctrines from other portions of Scripture, where all is *plain* and *pointed*. And why then leave such, and go out of their way to find allegorical meanings, taking a whole book by storm, and leaving the word of God to serve tables?

It is curious to see the manner in which many preachers and commentators attempt to expound this book. They first assume that the book refers to Christ and his Church; his union with human nature; his adoption of the

Gentiles; and his everlasting love to elect souls, gathered out of both people; then take the words bride, bridegroom, spouse, love, watchmen, shepherds, tents, door, lock, &c., &c., and, finding some words either *similar* or *parallel*, in other parts of the sacred writings, which have *there* an allegorical meaning, contend that those *here* are to be similarly understood; and what is spoken of *those* apply to *these*; and thus, in fact, are explaining other passages of Scripture in their own way, while professing to explain the *Canticles*! What eminent talents, precious time, great pains, and industry, have been wasted in this way! One eminent scholar preaches to his congregation *one hundred and twenty-two* sermons upon the Song of Solomon, while all this time the evangelists and apostles have been comparatively forgotten; except only as they are referred to in illustration of the particular creed which such writers and preachers found on this book. How can they account to God for so much time spent on a tract which requires all their ingenuity and skill to make edifying, even on their own plan; a text of which they are not permitted to allege, in controversy, to prove the truth of any disputed doctrine? This, however, is not the fault of any particular *class* of ministers *exclusively*; several of all classes, though of some more than of others, have been found, less or more, labouring at this thriftless craft. Some, having preached on it during the whole of their ministry, have carried it, in a certain way, beyond the grave. An aged minister once told me, in a very solemn manner, that as God had been exceedingly merciful to him in saving his soul, and putting him into the ministry, thus accounting him faithful, he hoped that, when called to the Church above, if any *funeral sermon* were preached for him, it should be from Canticles, ~~20108~~ **Song of Solomon 1:8**: “Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.” That he could have applied these words to his own state, and the use which should be made of his life and death, I have no doubt; but who, from this text, would have chosen to pronounce the funeral oration?

I repeat it, and I wish to be heard by young ministers in particular, take the plainest texts when you attempt to convince men of sin, and build up believers on their most holy faith; and thus show rather your love for their souls than your dexterity in finding out spiritual meanings for obscure passages, on the true signification of which few, either among the learned or pious, are agreed.

I now, according to my promise, lay before my readers a transcript from my own MS. Bible, which is most probably the first translation of this *Song*

that was ever made into the English language. I have *added*, for the sake of reference, the *figures* for the present division into verses, in the *margin*: these are not in the MS. The *dramatic personæ*, here in *black* letter, {bold for computer display,} are in *red* in the MS. The *orthography* is scrupulously followed.

## THE SONG OF SOLOMON

- Year from the Creation of the World, according to Archbishop Usher, 2990.
- Year from the Flood of Noah, according to the common Hebrew text, 1334.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 1010.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 1014.

### CHAPTER 1

*The bride's love to her spouse, 1-5. She confesses her unworthiness; desires to be directed to the flock, 6, 7; and she is directed to the shepherds' tents, 8. The bridegroom describes his bride, and shows how he will provide for her, and how comfortably they are accommodated, 9-17.*

#### NOTES ON CHAP. 1

**Verse 1. The song of songs]** A song of peculiar excellence. See the *Introduction*. The rabbins consider this superior to all songs. TEN *songs*, says the *Targum*, have been sung; but this excels them all. 1. The *first* was sung by *Adam* when his sin was pardoned. 2. The *second* was sung by *Moses* and the *Israelites* at the *Red Sea*. 3. The *third* was sung by the *Israelites* when they drank of the *rock* in the wilderness. 4. The *fourth* was sung by *Moses* when summoned to *depart* from this world. 5. The *fifth* was sung by *Joshua* when the *sun* and *moon stood still*. 6. The *sixth* was sung by *Deborah* and *Barak* after the defeat of *Sisera*. 7. The *seventh* was sung by *Hannah* when the Lord promised her a *son*. 8. The *eighth* was sung by *David* for all the *mercies* given him by God. 9. The *ninth* is the present, sung in the spirit of prophecy by *Solomon*. 10. The *tenth* is that which shall be sung by the *children of Israel* when restored from their *captivities*. See the *Targum*.

**Verse 2. Let him kiss me, &c.]** She speaks of the bridegroom in the *third* person, to testify her own *modesty*, and to show him the greater *respect*.

**Thy love is better than wine.]** The *versions* in general translate *Ëydd dodeyca*, *thy breasts*; and they are said to represent, spiritually, the *Old* and *New Testaments*.

**Verse 3. Thy name is as ointment poured forth]** Ointments and perfumes were, and still are, in great request among the Asiatics. They occur constantly in their entertainments. Thy *name* is as refreshing to my heart, as the best perfumes diffused through a chamber are to the senses of the guests.

**Therefore do the virgins love thee.]** She means *herself*; but uses this *periphrasis* through modesty.

**Verse 4. Draw me]** Let me have the full assurance of thy affection.

**We will run after thee]** Speaking in the plural through modesty, while still *herself* is meant.

**The king hath brought me]** My spouse is a *potentate*, a mighty *king*, no ordinary person.

**Into his chambers]** He has favoured me with his utmost confidence.

**The upright love thee.]** The most perfect and accomplished find thee worthy of their highest esteem.

**Verse 5. I am black, but comely]** This is literally true of many of the Asiatic women; though *black* or *brown*, they are exquisitely beautiful. Many of the Egyptian women are still fine; but their *complexion* is much inferior to that of the Palestine females. Though black or swarthy in my complexion, yet am I *comely*-well proportioned in every part.

**As the tents of Kedar]** I am *tawny*, like the *tents* of the *Arabians*, and like the pavilions of Solomon, probably covered by a kind of *tanned cloth*. The *daughters of Jerusalem* are said to represent the *synagogue*; the *bride*, the *Church of Christ*. It is easy to find spiritual meanings: *every creed* will furnish them.

**Verse 6. Because the sun hath looked upon me]** The bride gives here certain reasons why she was *dark complexioned*. "The sun hath looked upon me." I am sunburnt, tanned by the sun; being obliged, perhaps, through some domestic jealousy or uneasiness, to keep much without: "My mother's children were angry; they made me keeper of the vineyards." Here the *brown complexion* of the Egyptians is attributed to the influence of the *sun* or *climate*.

**My mother's children were angry with me]** Acted *severely*. The bringing of a *foreigner* to the throne would no doubt excite jealousy among the Jewish females; who, from their own superior complexion, national and religious advantages, might well suppose that Solomon should not have gone to *Egypt* for a wife and queen, while *Judea* could have furnished him with every kind of superior excellence.

**Verse 7. Tell me—where thou feedest]** This is spoken as if the parties were shepherds, or employed in the pastoral life. But how this would apply either to *Solomon*, or the *princes of Egypt*, is not easy to ascertain. Probably in the marriage festival there was something like our *masks*, in which persons of quality assumed rural characters and their employments. See that fine one composed by *Milton*, called COMUS.

**To rest at noon]** In hot countries the shepherds and their flocks are obliged to retire to shelter during the burning heats of the noon-day sun. This is common in all countries, in the summer heats, where *shelter* can be had.

**One that turneth aside]** As a *wanderer*; one who, not knowing where to find her companions, wanders fruitlessly in seeking them. It was customary for shepherds to *drive their flocks together* for the purpose of *conversing*, *playing on the pipe*, or having *trials of skill in poetry or music*. So VIRGIL:—

*Forte sub arguta consederat ilice Daphnis  
Compulerantque greges Corydon et Thyrsis in unum:  
Thyrsis oves, Corydon distentas lacte capellas;  
Ambo florentes cœtatibus, Arcades ambo,  
Et cantare pares, et respondere parati.  
ECL., vii. v. 1.*

*“Beneath a holm repair’d two jolly swains:  
Their sheep and goats together grazed the plains;  
Both young Arcadians, both alike inspired  
To sing and answer as the song required.”  
DRYDEN.*

This does not express the sense of the original: from the different pastures in which they had been accustomed to feed their flocks, *they drove their sheep and goats together* for the purpose mentioned in the pastoral; and, in

course, returned to their respective pasturages, when their business was over.

**Verse 8. If thou know not]** This appears to be the reply of the *virgins*. They know not exactly; and therefore direct the bride to the *shepherds*, who would give information.

**Verse 9. I have compared thee-to a company of horses]** This may be translated, more literally, “I have compared thee *ytssl lesusathi*, to my *mare*, in the chariots or courses of Pharaoh;” and so the *versions* understood it. *Mares*, in preference to *horses*, were used both for riding and for chariots in the East. They are much *swifter*, endure more *hardship*, and will go longer *without food*, than either the *stallion* or the *gelding*. There is perhaps no brute creature in the world so beautiful as a fine well-bred horse or mare; and the finest woman in the universe, *Helen*, has been compared to a *horse* in a *Thessalian chariot*, by *Theocritus*. Idyl. xviii. ver. 28:—

᾽Ωδε και χρυσεᾶ Ἑλενα διαφαινεῖ εν ημιν,  
Πιειρη, μεγαλη, αῦ ανεδραμεν ογμος αρουρα,  
Ἡ καπω κυπαρισσος, η αρματι Θεσσαλος ιππος.

“The golden Helen, tall and graceful, appears as distinguished among us as the furrow in the field, the cypress in the garden, or the *Thessalian horse in the chariot*.”

This passage amply justifies the Hebrew bard, in the simile before us. See <sup>2012</sup>**Jeremiah 6:2**.

**Verse 10. Thy cheeks are comely]** *D’Arvieux* has remarked that “the Arabian ladies wear a great many *pearls* about their *necks* and *caps*. They have *golds chains* about their *necks* which hang down upon their *bosoms* with strings of coloured gauze; the gauze itself *bordered* with *zechins* and other pieces of *gold coin*, which hang upon their *foreheads* and both *cheeks*. The ordinary women wear *small silver coins*, with which they cover their *forehead-piece* like *fish scales*, as this is one of the principal ornaments of their faces.” I have seen their *essence bottles* ornamented with festoons of *aspers*, and small pieces of silver *pearls*, *beads*, &c. One of these is now before me.

**Verse 11. Borders of gold]** I have observed several of the *handkerchiefs*, shawls, and head attire of the Eastern women, curiously and expensively

worked in the *borders* with *gold* and *silver*, and variously coloured silk, which has a splendid effect.

**Verse 12. While the king sitteth at his table]** *wbsmb bimsibbo*, in his *circle*, probably meaning the circle of his friends at the marriage festivals, or a *round table*.

**Verse 13. He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.]** Mr. *Harmer* contends that it is the *bundle of myrrh* which the bride says shall *lie all night betwixt her breasts*, to which she compares the bridegroom, his name being as pleasing and refreshing to her mind, as the myrrh or *stacte* was to her senses, by its continual fragrance.

**Verse 14. A cluster of camphire]** Mr. *Hasselquist* supposes this to mean a *bunch of the Cyprus grape*; but this is supposed to mean a *shrub* so called, not any production of the isle of *Cyprus*; the best kinds of which were found at *En-gedi*. This place belonged to the tribe of Judah.

Perhaps the poet alludes to the dark colour of the *hair*, which by the Greeks was not unfrequently compared to the *bunches of grapes*; by no means an unfit similitude for thick black clustering curls. The following lines represent the same idea:—

[Persian]

[Persian]

*“The dark black locks that ornament her neck  
Hang thick and clustering like the branchy palm.”*

**Verse 15. Thou hast doves’ eyes]** The large and beautiful dove of Syria is supposed to be here referred to, the eyes of which are remarkably fine.

**Verse 16. Also our bed is green.]** *cr [eres*, from its use in several places of the Hebrew Bible, generally signifies a *mattress*; and here probably a *green bank* is meant, on which they sat down, being now on a walk in the country. Or it may mean a *bower* in a *garden*, or the nuptial bed.

**Verse 17. The beams of our house are cedar]** Perhaps it was under a *cedar tree*, whose vast limbs were interwoven with the *twrb beroth*, a tree of the *cypress* kind, where they now sat. And this natural bower recommended itself to the poet’s attention by its strength, loftiness, and its affording them a *shady cover* and *cool retreat*. How natural to break out



into the praise of a *bower*, by whose *branches* and *foliage* we are shielded from the intense heat of the sun! Even the *shelter of a great rock to a weary land* is celebrated by the pen of the first of *prophets* and greatest of *poets*, ~~2311~~ **Isaiah 32:2**.

With this chapter the *first* day of the marriage ceremonies is supposed to end.

## SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER 2

*A description of the bridegroom, and his love to the bride, 1-9. A fine description of spring, 10-13. The mutual love of both, 14-17.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. 2

**Verse 1. I am the rose of Sharon]** *Sharon* was a very fruitful place, where David's cattle were fed, <sup><13272></sup>**1 Chronicles 27:29**. It is mentioned as a place of excellence, <sup><2338D></sup>**Isaiah 35:2**, and as a place of flocks, <sup><23610></sup>**Isaiah 65:10**. Perhaps it would be better, with almost all the *versions*, to translate, "I am the rose of the field." The bridegroom had just before called her *fair*; she with a becoming modesty, represents her beauty as nothing extraordinary, and compares herself to a *common flower of the field*. This, in the warmth of his affection, he denies, insisting that she as much surpasses all other maidens as the flower of the *lily* does the *bramble*, <sup><2311D></sup>**Song of Solomon 2:2**.

**Verse 3. As the apple tree]** The bride returns the compliment, and says, *As the apple or citron tree is among the trees of the wood*, so is the bridegroom among all other men.

**I sat down under his shadow]** I am become his spouse, and my union with him makes me indescribably happy.

**Verse 4. He brought me to the banqueting house]** Literally, *the house of wine*. The ancients preserved their wine, not in barrels or dark cellars under ground, as we do, but in large *pitchers*, ranged against the wall in some upper apartment in the house, the place where they kept their most precious effects. We have a proof of this in HOMER:—

Ως φαν, ο δ υποραφον θαλομον κατεβησατο πατρος  
 Ευρυν, οθι νητος χρυσος και χαλκος εκειτο,  
 Εσθης τ εν χηλοισιν, αλις τ ευωδες ελαιον.  
 Εν δε πιθοι οινοιο παλαιου ηδυποτοιο  
 Εστασαν, ακρητον θειον ποτον εντος εχοντες,  
 Εξειης ποτε τοιχον αρηροτες, ειποτ Οδυσσευς  
 Πικαδε νοστησειε, και αλγεα πολλα μογησας.  
 Κληισται δ επεσαν σανιδες πυκινως αραρυται,

Δικλιδες, εν δε γυνη ταμιη νυκτας τε και ημαρ  
Εσχ, κ. τ. λ. Od. lib. ii., ver. 337.

*Meantime the lofty rooms the prince surveys,  
Where lay the treasures of th' Ithacian race.  
Here, ruddy brass and gold refulgent blazed;  
There, polished chests embroider'd vestures graded.  
Here, pots of oil breathed forth a rich perfume;  
There, jars of wine in rows adorn'd the dome.  
(Pure flavorful wine, by gods in bounty given,  
And worthy to exalt the feasts of heaven.)  
Untouch'd they stood, till, his long labours o'er,  
The great Ulysses reach'd his native shore.  
A double strength of bars secured the gates;  
Fast by the door wise Euryclea waits, &c.*  
POPE.

**Verse 5. Stay me with flagons]** I believe the original words mean some kind of *cordials* with which we are unacquainted. The *versions* in general understand some kind of *ointment* or *perfumes* by the first term. I suppose the good man was perfectly sincere who took this for his *text*, and, after having repeated, *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love* sat down, perfectly overwhelmed with his own feelings, and was not able to proceed! But while we admit such a person's sincerity, who can help questioning his judgment?

**Verse 7. I charge you—by the roes]** This was probably some rustic mode of adjuration. The verses themselves require little comment.

With this verse the *first night* of the *first day* is supposed to end.

**Verse 8. Behold, he cometh leaping]** This appears to be highly characteristic of the gambols of the shepherds, and points out the ecstasy with which those who were enamoured ran to their mates. It is supposed that the *second day's eclogue* begins at this verse. The author of what was then called *A New Translation of Solomon's Song*, observes, 1. The bride relates how the bridegroom, attended by his companions, had come under her window, and called upon her to come forth and enjoy the beauties of the spring, ~~2111~~ **Song of Solomon 2:9-11**, &c. 2. She then returns to her narration, ~~2111~~ **Song of Solomon 3:1**. The bridegroom did not come according to her wishes. Night came on; she did not find him in her bed; she went out to seek him; found him, and brought him to her mother's

pavilion, <sup><2104></sup>**Song of Solomon 3:4**; and then, as before, conjures the virgins not to disturb his repose, <sup><2105></sup>**Song of Solomon 3:5**.

**Verse 9. He standeth behind our wall]** This may refer to the *wall* by which the house was *surrounded*, the space between which and the house constituted the *court*. He was seen first *behind the wall*, and then in the *court*; and lastly came to the *window* of his bride's chamber.

**Verse 11. The winter is past]** Mr. *Harmer* has made some good collections on this part, from Drs. *Shaw* and *Russel*, which I shall transcribe. One part of the winter is distinguished from the rest of it by the people of the East, on account of the *severity of the cold*. At *Aleppo* it lasts about forty days, and is called by the natives *maurbanie*. I would propose it to the consideration of the learned, whether the word here used, and translated *winter*, may not be understood to mean what the *Aleppines* express by the term *maurbanie*. It occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament; and another word is used for the *rainy* part of the year in general. If this thought be admitted, it will greatly illustrate the words of the bridegroom: *Lo, the winter is past; the rain is over, and gone*. For then the last clause will not be explanatory of the first, and signify that the moist part of the year was entirely past; with which, Dr. *Russel* assures us, all pleasantness withdraws at *Aleppo*; but the words will import: "The *maurbanie* is past and over; the weather is become agreeably warm; the rain too is just ceased, and consequently hath left us the prospect of several days of serenity and undisturbed pleasantness."

The weather of Judea was in this respect, I presume, like that at *Algiers*; where, after two or three days of rain, there is usually, according to Dr. *Shaw*, "a week, a fortnight, or more, of fair and good weather. Of such a sort of cessation of rain alone, the bridegroom, methinks, is here to be understood; not of the absolute termination of the rainy season, and the *summer droughts* being come on. And if so, what can the time that is *past* mean but the *maurbanie*? Indeed, Dr. *Russel*, in giving us an account of the excursions of the English merchants at *Aleppo*, has undesignedly furnished us with a good comment on this and the two following verses. These gentlemen, it seems, dine abroad under a tent, in spring and autumn on Saturdays, and often on Wednesdays. They do the same during the good weather in winter; but they live at the gardens in April, and part of May. In the heat of the summer they dine at the gardens, as once or twice a week they dine under a tent in autumn and spring." The cold weather is not

supposed by Solomon to have been long over, since it is distinctly mentioned; and the *Aleppines* make these incursions very early; the *narcissus* flowers during the whole of the *maurbanie*; the *hyacinths* and *violets* at least before it is quite over. The appearing of flowers, then, doth not mean the appearing of the first and earliest flowers, but must rather be understood of the earth's being covered with them; which at *Aleppo* is not till after the middle of *February*, a *small crane's bill* appearing on the banks of the river there about the middle of *February*, quickly after which comes a profusion of flowers. The *nightingales*, too, which are there in abundance, not only afford much pleasure by their songs in the gardens, but are also kept tame in the houses, and *let out* at a small rate to divert such as choose it in the city; so that no entertainments are made in the *spring* without a concert of these birds. No wonder, then, that *Solomon* makes the bridegroom speak of the singing of birds; and it teaches us what these birds are, which are expressly distinguished from turtle doves.

**Verse 13. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs]** The fig tree in Judea bears *double* crops; the first of which is ripe in *spring*. But the tree, as I have elsewhere observed, bears figs all the year through, in the climes congenial to it. That is, the fig tree has always *ripe* or *unripe* fruit on it. I never saw a healthy tree naked. But in the beginning of spring they grow fast, and become turgid.

**The vines with the tender grape]** The versions understand this of the *flowers* of the vine. These were formerly put into the new wine (2 lbs. to every cask) to give it a fine flavour.

**Verse 14. My dove—in the clefts of the rock]** He compares his bride hiding herself in her secret chambers and closets to a *dove* in the clefts of the rock.

**Verse 15. Take us the foxes]** That these were ruinous to vines all authors allow. They love the vine, and they are eaten in autumn in some countries, according to *Galen*, when they are very fat with eating the grapes. They abounded in Judea; and did most damage when the clusters were young and tender. It is likely that these are the words of the *bridegroom* to his *companions*, just as he was entering the apartment of his spouse. "Take care of the vineyard: set the traps for the foxes, which are spoiling the vines; and destroy their *young* as far as possible."

**Verse 16. My beloved is mine]** The words of the *bride* on his entering: “I am thy own; thou art wholly mine.”

**He feedeth among the lilies.]** The odour with which he is surrounded is as fine as if he passed the night among the sweetest scented flowers.

**Verse 17. Until the day break]** Literally, *until the day breathe*; until the first dawn, which is usually accompanied with the most refreshing *breezes*.

**The shadows flee away]** Referring to the *evening* or *setting of the sun*, at which all *shadows* vanish.

**The mountains of Bether.]** Translated also *mountains of division*, supposed to mean the mountains of *Beth-horon*.

There was a place called *Bithron*, <sup><1029></sup>**2 Samuel 2:29**, on the other side of Jordan; and as the name signifies PARTITION, it might have had its name from the circumstance of its being divided or separated from Judea by the river Jordan.

With this chapter the *second night* is supposed to end.

## SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER 3

*The bride mentions the absence of her spouse, her search after him, and her ultimate success, 1-5. A description of the bridegroom, his bed, chariot, &c., 6-11.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. 3

**Verse 1. By night on my bed I sought him]** It appears that the bridegroom only saw the bride *by night*: that on the night referred to here he did not come as usual. The bride troubled on the account, rose and sought him, inquired of the city guards, and continued to seek till at last she found him, and brought him to her apartment, <sup><2187></sup>**Song of Solomon 3:2-4.**

**Verse 4. Into my mother's house]** The *women* in the East have all *separate apartments*, into which no person ever attempts to enter except the *husband*. We find *Isaac* bringing *Rebecca* into his *mother's tent*, when he made her his wife, <sup><01246></sup>**Genesis 24:67**. What is here related appears to refer to the third night of the nuptials.

**Verse 5. I charge you]** The same adjuration as before, <sup><2187></sup>**Song of Solomon 2:7.**

**Verse 6. Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness]** Going to Egypt was called *descending* or *going down*, coming from it was termed *coming up*. The bride, having risen, goes after her spouse to the country, and the clouds of incense arising from her *palanquin* seemed like *pillars of smoke*; and the appearance was altogether so splendid as to attract the admiration of her own women, who converse about her splendour, excellence, &c., and then take occasion to describe Solomon's nuptial bed and chariot. Some think that it is the *bridegroom* who is spoken of here.

With this verse the *third night* is supposed to end.

**Verse 7. Threescore valiant men]** These were the *guards* about the pavilion of the bridegroom, who were placed there *because of fear in the night*. The *security and state* of the prince required such a guard as this, and the passage is to be *literally* understood.

**Verse 8. They all hold swords]** They are swordsmen. Every man has a sword, and is well instructed how to use it.

**Verse 9. Of the wood of Lebanon.]** Of the *cedar* that grew on that mount. It is very likely that a *nuptial bed*, not a *chariot*, is intended by the original word *wypa appiryon*. *Montanus* properly translates it *sponsarum thalamum*, a nuptial bed. It may, however, mean a *palanquin*.

**Verse 10. The pillars-of silver]** The *bedposts* were made of silver, or *cased* with wrought silver plates, like the king's chairs brought from Hanover, now, in one of the staterooms in *Windsor Castle*.

**The bottom thereof of gold]** This may refer to *cords* made of *gold thread*, or to the *mattress*, which was made of cloth ornamented with gold.

**The covering—of purple]** Most probably the *canopy*.

**The midst—paved with love]** The *counterpane*, a superb piece of *embroidery*, wrought by some of the noble maids of Jerusalem, and, as a proof of their affection, respect, and love, presented to the bride and bridegroom, on their nuptial day. This is most likely to be the sense of the passage, though some suppose it to refer to the whole court.

A Turkish couch is made of wooden *lattices* painted and gilded; the inside is painted with baskets of flowers and nosegays, intermixed with little *mottoes* according to the fancy of the artist. Solomon's couch may have been of the same kind, and decorated in the same way; and the *paving with love* may refer to the amatory verses worked either on the counterpane, hangings, or embroidered carpet. And as this was done by the *daughters of Jerusalem*, they might have expressed the most striking parts of such a *chaste history of love* as Halaly's *Leely* and *Mejnoon* on the different parts. I see that Dr. *Good* is of this opinion. It is sufficiently probable.

**Verse 11. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion]** This is the exhortation of the *companions* of the *bride* to the *females* of the *city* to examine the superb appearance of the bridegroom, and especially the *nuptial crown*, which appears to have been made by *Bathsheba*, who it is supposed might have lived till the time of Solomon's marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh. It is conjectured that the *prophet* refers to a *nuptial crown*,  
<sup><23610></sup>**Isaiah 61:10.** But a *crown*, both on the *bride* and *bridegroom*, was common among most people on such occasions. The nuptial crown among the Greeks and Romans was only a chaplet or wreath of flowers.



**In the day of the gladness of his heart.]** The day in which all his wishes were crowned, by being united to that female whom beyond all others he loved.

Here the *third day* is supposed to end.

## SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER 4

*The bridegroom's description of his bride, her person, her accomplishments, her chastity, and her general excellence, 1-16.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. 4

**Verse 1.** **Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks]** Perhaps this refers rather to a sort of veil worn by many of the Eastern women, but especially in Egypt. It is a species of black cloth made of the hair of some animal, probably the black goat; is suspended from the head by silken cords, one of which comes from the crown of the head, down the forehead, to the upper part of the nose, just under the eyes, at which place the veil begins; for the forehead and the eyes are uncovered, except the cord above mentioned, which is ornamented with gold, silver, and precious stones, according to the circumstances of the wearer. This partial veil not only covers all the face, the eyes and forehead excepted, but the neck also, and hangs loosely down over the bosom. One of them, lately brought from Egypt, now lies before me.

But the clause, *within thy locks*, **Ētmxl d[bm** *mibbaad letsammathech*, is not well translated, either by ourselves or by the *versions*. Jerome's translation is an indication of the meaning: *Absque eo quod intrinsecus latet; without that*, or independently of that, *which lies hidden within*. The *Septuagint*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic* have, *besides thy silence*. Calmet contends that none of these gives the *true meaning*, and that the word **tmx** *tsemath* has not the meaning of *hair* or *locks* wherever it occurs, and has quite a different meaning in <sup><23470></sup>**Isaiah 47:2**. St. Jerome on this place expresses himself thus: *Nolentibus qui interpretati sunt transferre nomen quod in Sancta Scriptura sonat turpitudinem.*—Ergo **Ētmx** *tsammathech*, quod Aquila *posuit*, verenda mulieris *appellanatur* *cujus etymologia apud eos sonat sitiens tuus*. Calmet translates: *Vous etes toute belle, won amie; vous etes toute belle: vos yeux sont des yeux de colombe; sans ce que la pudeur et la modestie tiennent cache*. I leave the translation of these to the learned reader. See another description under <sup><23407></sup>**Song of Solomon 4:7**.

**As a flock of goats]** Because it was black and sleek, as the hair of the goats of Arabia and Palestine is known to be; which, with its fine undulation, is supposed to bear some resemblance to the *curls* or *plaits* of a woman's tresses. The mountains of *Gilead* were beyond Jordan, on the frontiers of *Arabia Deserta*.

**Verse 2. Thy teeth are like a flock]** This comparison appears to be founded on the *evenness*, *neatness*, and *whiteness* of the *newly shorn* and *newly washed* sheep.

**Verse 3. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet]** Both *lips* and *cheeks* were *ruddy*; *sicut fragmen mali punici*.—VULGATE. *Like the section of a pomegranate*, that side cut off on which is the *finest blush*. This is a good and apt *metaphor*. But the inside may be referred to, as it is finely streaked with red and white melting into each other. She had beautiful *hair*, beautiful *eyes*, beautiful *cheeks* and *lips*, and a most pleasing and dulcet *voice*.

**Within thy locks.]** See on <sup><2140></sup>**Song of Solomon 4:1**, and on <sup><2147></sup>**Song of Solomon 4:7**.

**Verse 4. Thy neck is like the tower of David]** It is certain that *bucklers* were frequently hung about towers, both for their ornaments, and to have them at hand when their use was required; see <sup><2710></sup>**Ezekiel 27:10**. But the allusion here may be to those *pillars* which are often seen in armouries on which weapons of various kinds are hung, formed into a great variety of shapes and very splendid. Whoever has seen the *armoury* in the *tower* of London, or such like places, has most probably seen something very similar to that of which the poet speaks.

**Verse 5. Thy two breasts are like two young roes]** I have met with many attempts to support this *similitude*, or rather to show that there is a *similitude*; but I judge them unworthy of citation. The poet speaks the *language of nature*; and in a case of this kind, where the impassioned lover attempts to describe the different perfections of his bride, language often fails him, and his comparisons and similitudes are often without strict correctness. In love songs we have heard ladies' *necks* compared to that of the *swan*, not only for its *whiteness*, but also for its *length*! The description here shows more of *nature* than of *art*, which I consider a high recommendation.

**Feed among the lilies.]** It may be the *nipples* especially, which the poet compares to the *two young roes*; and the *lilies* may refer to the *whiteness* of the *breasts* themselves.

**Verse 6. Until the day break]** Until the morning *breeze*. See <sup><21217></sup>**Song of Solomon 2:17.**

**The shadows flee away]** Till the *sun sets*.

**Mountain of myrrh]** Probably the same as the mountains of *Bether*, <sup><21217></sup>**Song of Solomon 2:17.** Mountains where the trees grew from which *myrrh* and *incense* were extracted.

**Verse 7. Thou art all fair—**there is **no spot in thee.]** “My beloved, every part of thee is beautiful; thou hast not a single defect.”

The description given of the beauties of *Daphne*, by OVID, *Metam.* lib. i. ver. 497, has some similarity to the above verses:—

**Spectat inornatos collo pendere capillos.  
Et, quid si comantur? ait. Videt igne micantes  
Sideribus similes oculos; videt oscula, quae non  
Est vidisse satis. Laudat digitosque, manusque,  
Brachiaque, et nudos media plus parte lacertos.  
Si qua latent meliora putat.**

*Her well-turn'd neck he view'd, (her neck was bare,)  
And on her shoulders her disheveled hair.  
O, were it comb'd, said he, with what a grace  
Would every waving curl become her face!  
He view'd her eyes, like heavenly lamps that shone,  
He view'd her lips, too sweet to view alone;  
Her taper fingers, and her panting breast.  
He praises all he sees; and, for the rest,  
Believes the beauties yet unseen the best.*  
**DRYDEN.**

Jayadeva describes the beauty of Radha in nearly the same imagery: “Thy *lips*, O thou most beautiful among women, are a *bandhujiva* flower; the lustre of the *madhuca* beams upon thy *cheek*; thine *eye* outshines the blue *lotos*; thy *nose* is a bud of the *tila*; the *cunda* blossom yields to thy *teeth*. Surely thou descendedst from heaven, O slender damsel! attended by a

company of youthful goddesses; and all their beauties are collected in thee." See these poems, and the short notes at the end.

The same poet has a parallel thought to that in ~~2005~~ **Song of Solomon 4:5**, "Thy two breasts," &c. The companions of *Radha* thus address her: "Ask those *two round hillocks* which receive pure dew drops from the garland playing on thy neck, and the *buds* on *whose tops* start aloft with the thought of thy beloved."

**Verse 8. My spouse.]** The *hl k callah* which we translate *spouse*, seems to have a peculiar meaning. Mr. Harmer thinks the *Jewish princess* is intended by it; and this seems to receive confirmation from the bridegroom calling her *sister*, ~~2009~~ **Song of Solomon 4:9**, that is, one of the same stock and country; and thus different from the Egyptian bride.

Mr. Harmer's opinion is very probable, that TWO *queens* are mentioned in this song: one Pharaoh's daughter, the other a Jewess. See his *outlines*. But I contend for no system relative to this song.

**Look from the top of Amana, &c.]** Solomon, says *Calmet*, by an admirable poetic fiction, represents his beloved as a mountain nymph, wholly occupied in hunting the lion and the leopard on the mountains of Lebanon, Amana, Shenir, and Hermon. As a bold and undisciplined virgin, who is unwilling to leave her wild and rural retreats, he invites her to come from those hills; and promises to deck her with a crown and to make her his bride. Thus the poets represent their goddess *Diana*, and even *Venus* herself:—

*Per juga, per sylvas, dumosaque saxa vagatur  
Nuda genu, vestem ritu succincta Diane;  
Hortaturque canes; tutæque animalia prædæ,  
Aut pronos lepores, aut celsum in cornua cervum,  
Aut agitat damas: at fortibus abstinet apris.  
MET. lib. x., ver. 535.*

*Now buskin'd like the virgin huntress goes  
Through woods, and pathless wilds, and mountain snows.  
With her own tuneful voice she joys to cheer  
The panting hounds that chase the flying deer.  
She runs the labyrinth of the fearful hares,  
But fearless beasts and dangerous prey forbears.*

Mount *Libanus* separates Phœnicia from Syria. *Amanus* is between Syria and Silicia. *Shenir* and *Hermon* are beyond Jordan, to the south of Damascus and Mount Libanus, and northward of the mountains of Gilead. Hermon and Shenir are but different parts of the same chain of mountains which separates *Trachonitis*, or the country of *Manasses*, from Arabia Deserta. For these places, see <sup><1352></sup>**2 Kings 5:12**, and <sup><1810></sup>**Deuteronomy 3:9**, where they are probably meant.

**Verse 9. Thou hast ravished my heart]** *yntbbli libbabtini*, “Thou hast hearted me,” i.e., taken away my heart; as we say, “He has barked the tree,” i.e., he has stripped it of its bark; “He has fleeced the flock,” i.e., deprived them of their wool.

**With one of thine eyes]** *Ëyny[m dj ab beachad meeynayich*. This has been thought a harsh expression, and various emendations have been sought. The *Masorettes* have put *tj ab beachath*, “at once,” in the margin; and this is confirmed by *twenty* of *Kennicott’s MSS.* but *Deuteronomy Rossi* does not notice it. It is scarcely necessary; the sense to me is clear and good without it. “Even one of thine eyes, or one glance of thine eyes, has been sufficient to deprive me of all power; it has completely overcome me;” for *glance* may be understood, and such forms of speech are common in all languages, when speaking on such subjects. If even taken *literally*, the sense is good; for the poet may refer to a *side glance*, shot in *passing by* or *turning away*, where only *one eye* could be seen. I think this a better sense than that which is obtained from the Masoretic emendation.

**With one chain of thy neck]** Probably referring to the play of the *cervical muscles*, rather than to *necklaces*, or *ringlets of hair*.

**Verse 10. How much better is thy love]** *Ëydd dodayich; Hebrew.*

*Μαστοι σου; Septuagint. Ubera tua; Vulgate.* “Thy breasts.” And so all the *versions*, except the *Chaldee*.

**Smell of thine ointments]** Perfumes.

**Verse 11. Thy lips—drop as the honey-comb]** Thy words are as delicious to my heart as the first droppings of the honey-comb are to the palate.

**Honey and milk are under thy tongue]** Eloquence and persuasive speech were compared among the ancients to *honey* and *milk*.

Thus Homer, *Iliad*, lib. i., ver. 247:—

Τοισι δε Νεστωρ  
 Ἡδυεπης ανορουσε, λιγυς Πυλιων αγορητης.  
 Του και απο γλωσσης μελιτος γλυκιων ρεεν αυδη.

*Experienced Nestor, in persuasion skill'd,  
 Words sweet as honey from his lips distill'd.*

But the figure is common to all writers and languages. A similar expression will be seen in the *Gitagovinda*.

**Verse 12. A garden enclosed—a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.]**

Different expressions to point out the *fidelity* of the bride, or of the Jewish queen. See the *outlines*. She is *unsullied*, a chaste, pure *virgin*. None has ever *entered* into this *garden*; none has yet *tasted* of this *spring*; the *seal* of this *fountain* has never been *broken*. Among the Athenians, the interior part of the house, called the women's apartment, was not only locked but sealed; so Aristophan., *Thesmoph.* ver. 422:—

Ειτα δια τουτον ταις γυναικωνιτισιν  
 Σφραγιδας εμβαλλουσιν ηδη και μοχλους.

*And on this account, to the women's apartment  
 They place seals as well as bolts.*

And *seal*, as applicable to chaste conduct, is a phrase well known to the Greeks. Æschylus, in the *Agamemnon*, praises a woman, *σημαντη ριον ουδεν διαφθειρασαν*, who had not violated her seal of conjugal faith. But Nonnus, lib. ii., uses the form of speech exactly as Solomon does with reference to a pure virgin; he says, *Αψαυστον εης σφρηγιδα κορειης*; “She had preserved *the seal of her virginity untouched*.” All this is plain; but how many will make *metaphors* out of *metaphors*!

**Verse 13. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates]** This seems to refer to the *fecundity* of the bride or Jewish queen; to the former it would be a *prediction*; to the latter, a *statement* of *what had already taken place*. The word *sdrp pardes*, which we translate an *orchard*, is the same which has given birth to our *paradise*, a *garden of pleasure*. The other expressions, in this and the following verse, seem to refer wholly to matters of a *connubial* nature.

**Verse 15. A fountain of gardens]** Perhaps *μyng gannim*, “gardens,” was originally *μyyj chiyim*, “lives,” a *living fountain*, a *continual spring*. See *Houbigant*. But this is expressed afterwards; though there would be nothing improper in saying, “a living fountain, a well of living waters, and streams from Mount Lebanon.” A fountain of gardens may mean one so abundant as to be sufficient to supply many gardens, to water many plots of ground, an exuberant fountain. This is the allusion; the reference is plain enough.

**Verse 16. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south]** It is granted that the *south wind* in Palestine, in the summer, is *extremely hot and troublesome*; therefore, another interpretation of this passage has been proposed by Mr. *Harmer*; who thinks *yawb boi*, which we render *come*, signifies *enter into thy repositories*; and, therefore, supposes the true interpretation of the words to be as follows: “Arise, thou north wind, (and retire, thou south,) blow upon my garden; let the spices thereof flow forth, that my beloved may come into his garden, invited by the coolness and fragrantcy of the air, and may eat his pleasant fruits; for, if the *south wind* blow, the *excessive heat* will forbid his taking the air, and oblige him to shut close the doors and windows of his apartments.” Others think that he wishes the *winds from all directions* to carry throughout the land the *fume* of his spices, virtue, and perfections.

**Let my beloved come into his garden]** This is the invitation of the *bride*: and if we look not for far-fetched meanings, the sense is sufficiently evident. But commentators on this song sometimes take a *literal* sense where the *metaphor* is evident; at other times they build an *allegory* upon a *metaphor*. The *Gitagovinda* has an elegant passage similar to this. See the place, Part VII., beginning with *Enter, sweet Radha*.

The whole of this chapter is considered to be unconnected with any particular time of the marriage ceremonies.



## SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER 5

*The bridegroom calls on his spouse to admit him, 1-3. She hesitates; but arising finds him gone, seeks him, and is treated unworthily by the city watch, 4-7. Inquires of the daughters of Jerusalem, who question her concerning her beloved, 8, 9. This gives her occasion to enter into a fine description of his person and accomplishments, 10-16.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. 5

**Verse 1. I am come into my garden]** *ytab bathi*, I came, or have come; this should be translated in the *past* tense, as the other *preterite* verbs in this clause. I think the latter clause of the preceding verse should come in here: “Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. I have come into my garden, my sister, callah, or spouse; I have gathered my myrrh,” &c. I have taken thee for my spouse, and am perfectly satisfied that thou art pure and immaculate.

**Eat, O friends—drink abundantly]** These are generally supposed to be the words of the *bridegroom*, after he returned from the *nuptial chamber*, and exhibited those *signs* of his wife’s *purity* which the customs of those times required. This being a cause of universal joy, the entertainment is served up; and he invites his companions, and the friends of both parties, to eat and drink abundantly, as there was such a universal cause of rejoicing. Others think that these are the words of the bride to her spouse: but the original will not bear this meaning; the verbs are all plural.

**Verse 2. I sleep, but my heart waketh]** This is a *new part*; and some suppose that the *fifth day’s* solemnity begins here. *Though I sleep, yet so impressed is my heart* with the excellences of my beloved, that my imagination presents him to me in the most pleasing *dreams* throughout the night. I doubt whether the whole, from this verse to the end of the *seventh*, be not a *dream*: several parts of it bear this resemblance; and I confess there are some parts of it, such as her hesitating to rise, his sudden disappearance, &c., which would be of easier solution on this supposition. Or part of the transactions mentioned might be the *effects of the dream* she had, as rising up suddenly, and going out into the street, meeting with the watchmen, &c., before she was well awake. And her being in so much

*disorder* and *dishabille* might have induced them to treat her as a *suspicious person*, or one of questionable *character*. But it is most likely the whole was a *dream*.

**For my head is filled with dew]** She supposed he had come in the night, and was standing without, *wet*, and exposed to the inclemency of the weather.

**Verse 3. I have put off my coat]** The bride must have been in a *dream* or in much *disorder of mind* to have made the frivolous excuses here mentioned. The words relate to the case of a person who had gone to take rest on his bed. As they wore nothing but sandals, they were obliged to wash their feet previously to their lying down. I have washed my feet, taken off my clothes, and am gone to bed: I cannot therefore be disturbed. A Hindoo always washes his feet before he goes to bed. If called from his bed, he often makes this excuse, *I shall daub my feet*; and the excuse is reasonable, as the floors are of earth; and they do not wear shoes in the house.—WARD.

**Verse 4. My beloved put in his hand]** If it were a *real scene*, which is mentioned in this and the two following verses, it must refer, from the well-known use of the *metaphors*, to matrimonial endearments. Or, it may refer to his *attempts to open the door*, when she hesitated to arise, on the grounds mentioned <sup>218B</sup> **Song of Solomon 5:3**. But this also bears every evidence of a *dream*.

**Verse 5. My hands dropped with myrrh]** It was a custom among the Romans, as *Brissonius*, *Isidore*, and others relate, to conduct the bride to the house of the bridegroom with lighted torches; and those who brought her *anointed the door-posts with fragrant oils*, whence the name *uxor*, or as it was formerly written *unxor*, for a *wife* or *married woman*, because of the *anointing* which took place on the occasion; for sometimes the bride herself *anointed the door-posts*, and sometimes those who brought her; probably both at the same time. The same custom might have existed among the Jews. See *Vossius' Etymologicon*.

**Verse 7. Took away my veil]** They tore it off rudely, to discover who she was. See on <sup>218C</sup> **Song of Solomon 5:2**. To tear the veil signifies, in Eastern phrase, to deflower or dishonour a woman.

**Verse 8. I am sick of love.]** “I am exceedingly concerned for his absence; and am distressed on account of my thoughtless carriage towards him.” The latter clause may be well translated, “What should ye tell him?” Why, “that I am sick of love.” This ends the transactions of the *third day and night*.

**Verse 9. What is thy beloved more than another beloved]** This question gives the bride an opportunity to break out into a highly wrought description of the beauty and perfections of her spouse.

**Verse 10. My beloved is white and ruddy]** *Red and white*, properly mixed, are essential to a *fine complexion*; and this is what is intimated: he has the *finest complexion among ten thousand persons*; not one in that number is equal to *him*. Literally, “He bears the standard among ten thousand men;” or “He is one before whom a standard is borne,” i.e., he is *captain* or *chief* of the whole.

**Verse 11. His head is as the most fine gold]** He has the most beautiful head, fine and majestic. Gold is here used to express *excellence*.

**His locks are bushy]** *Crisped or curled*. This may refer to his mustachios.

**Black as a raven.]** His hair is black and glossy.

**Verse 12. His eyes are as the eyes of doves]** See on <sup>(234)</sup> **Song of Solomon 4:1**.

**Washed with milk]** The *white* of the eye, *exceedingly white*. By the use of *stibium*, in the East, the eye is rendered very *beautiful*; and receives such a *lustre* from the use of this article, that, to borrow the expression of a late traveller, “their eyes appear to be swimming in bliss.” I believe this expression to be the meaning of the text.

**Fitly set.]** Or, as the *margin*, very properly, *sitting in fullness*; not sunk, not contracted.

**Verse 13. His cheeks are as a bed of spices]** Possibly meaning a *bed in the garden*, where odoriferous herbs grew. But it has been supposed to refer to his *beard*, which in a *young well-made man* is exceedingly beautiful. I have seen young Turks, who had taken much care of their beards, mustachios, &c., look majestic. Scarcely any thing serves to set off the human face to greater advantage than the *beard*, when kept in proper order. Females admire it in their *suitors* and *husbands*. I have known cases,

where they not only *despised* but *execrated* Europeans, whose faces were close shaved. The men perfume their beards often; and this may be what is intended by *spices* and *sweet-smelling myrrh*.

**His lips like lilies]** The **מַיְנִוּוּ** *shoshannim* may mean any flower of the *lily* kind, such as the *rubens lilium*, mentioned by *Pliny*, or something of the *tulip* kind. There are tints in such flowers that bear a very near resemblance to a fine *ruby lip*.

**Verse 14. His hands—gold rings set with the beryl]** This really seems to refer to *gold rings* set with precious stones on the fingers, and perhaps to circlets or bracelets about the wrists. Some suppose it to refer to the roundness and exquisite symmetry of the hand and fingers. **וַיִּוֹרֵט** *tarshish*, which we translate *beryl*, a gem of a sea-green tint, had better be translated *chrysolite*, which is of a *gold* colour.

**His belly—bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.]** This must refer to some *garment* set with *precious stones* which went round his waist, and was peculiarly remarkable. If we take it *literally*, the sense is plain enough. His belly was beautifully white, and the blue veins appearing under the skin resembled the sapphire stone. But one can hardly think that this was intended.

**Verse 15. His legs are as pillars of marble]** Exquisitely turned and well-shaped; the *sockets of gold* may refer to his *slippers*. On these a profusion of gold and ornaments are still lavished in Asiatic countries.

**His countenance is as Lebanon]** As Lebanon exalts its head beyond all the other mountains near Jerusalem, so my beloved is tall and majestic, and surpasses in stature and majesty all other men. He is also as *straight* and as *firm* as the *cedars*.

**Verse 16. His mouth is most sweet]** His eloquence is great, and his voice is charming. Every word he speaks is sweetness, mildness, and benevolence itself. Then, her powers of description failing, and metaphor exhausted she cries out, “The whole of him is loveliness. This is my beloved, and this is my companion, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.”

## SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER 6

*The companions of the bride inquire after the bridegroom, 1-3. A description of the bride, 4-13.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. 6

**Verse 1. Whither is thy beloved gone]** These words are supposed to be addressed to the *bride* by her own *companions*, and are joined to the preceding chapter by the *Hebrew* and all the *versions*.

**Verse 2. My beloved is gone down into his garden]** The answer of the *bride* to her *companions*.

**Verse 4. Beautiful—as Tirzah]** This is supposed to be the address of Solomon to the bride. Tirzah was a city in the tribe of Ephraim, (<sup><161224></sup>**Joshua 12:24**.) and the capital of that district. It appears to have been *beautiful in itself*, and *beautifully situated*, for *Jeroboam* made it his residence before *Samaria* was built; and it seems to have been the ordinary residence of the kings of *Israel*, (<sup><1147></sup>**1 Kings 14:17; 15:21; 16:6**). Its *name* signifies *beautiful* or *delightful*.

**Comely as Jerusalem]** This was called *the perfection of beauty*, (<sup><1982></sup>**Psalm 48:2, 3; 50:2**). And thus the poet compares the bride's beauty to the *two finest places* in the land of Palestine, and the *capitals* of the *two kingdoms* of *Israel* and *Judah*.

**Terrible as an army with banners.]** This has been supposed to carry an allusion to the *caravans* in the East, and the manner in which they are conducted in their travels by night. The caravans are divided into *companies*, called *cottors*, according to *Thevenet*; and each company is distinguished by the *form* of the *brazier* in which they carry their *lights*. After night, these braziers are placed on the ends of long poles, and carried by a person who walks at the head of the company. Some have *ten* or *twelve* lights, and are of different forms; some *triangular*, or like an N; some like an M, by which each pilgrim readily knows *his own company*, both by *night* and *day*. A whole caravan, composed of many thousands of *hadgees* or *pilgrims*, divided into various *cottors* or companies, each

having its own distinguishing brazier or *light*, must necessarily produce a very *splendid*, if not a *terrible*, appearance.

**Verse 5. Turn away thine eyes]** As the sight of so many fires after night was extremely *dazzling*, and the *eye* could not *bear* the sight, so the *look* of the bride was such as pierced the heart, and quite overwhelmed the person who met it. Hence the bridegroom naturally cries out, “Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.”

**Thy hair is as a flock of goats]** See on <sup>2240E</sup>Song of Solomon 4:1.

**Verse 6. Thy teeth]** See on <sup>2240E</sup>Song of Solomon 4:2.

**Verse 7. As a piece of a pomegranate]** See on <sup>2240E</sup>Song of Solomon 4:3.

**Verse 8. There are threescore queens]** Though there be *sixty queens*, and *eighty concubines*, or *secondary wives*, and *virgins innumerable*, in my *harem*, yet thou, *my dove*, *my undefiled*, art **tj a achath**, ONE, the ONLY ONE, she in whom I delight beyond all.

**Verse 9. The daughters saw her, and blessed her]** Not only the *Jewish women in general* spoke well of her on her arrival, but the *queens* and *concubines* *praised her* as the most accomplished of her sex.

With this verse the *fourth night* of the marriage week is supposed to end.

**Verse 10. Looketh forth as the morning]** The bride is as lovely as the *dawn* of day, the *Aurora*, or perhaps the *morning star*, VENUS. She is even more resplendent, she is as *beautiful as the MOON*. She even surpasses *her*, for she is as *clear* and *bright* as the SUN; and *dangerous* withal to look on, for she is as formidable as the vast collection of lights that burn by night at the head of every company in a numerous caravan. **See Clarke’s note on <sup>2240E</sup>Song of Solomon 6:4**. The comparison of a fine woman to the splendour of an unclouded *full moon* is continually recurring in the writings of the Asiatic poets.

**Verse 11. I went down into the garden of nuts]** I believe this and the following verse refer at least to the preparations for a farther consummation of the marriage, or examination of the advancement of the bride’s pregnancy. But many circumstances of this kind are so interwoven, and often *anticipated* and also *postponed*, that it is exceedingly difficult to arrange the whole so as to ascertain the several parts, and who are the

actors and speakers. But other writers find no difficulty here, because they have their system; and that explains all things.

It is probably not the *hazel* but the *almond nut*, that is referred to here.

**Verse 12. The chariots of Amminadib.]** Probably for their great speed these chariots became proverbial. The passage marks a strong agitation of mind, and something like what we term palpitation of the heart. As I am not aware of any *spiritual* meaning here, I must be excused from commenting on that which is *literal*. *Amminadib* signifies *my noble* or *princely people*; but it may here be a proper name, and Amminadib might be celebrated for his skill and rapidity in driving, as Jehu was.

**Verse 13. Return, O Shulamite]** This appears to be addressed to the bride, as now the confirmed, acknowledged *wife* of *Solomon*; for **tyml wv shulammith**, appears to be a *feminine* formed from **hml v shelomoh**, or **^wml v shelomon**, as we form *Charlotte* from *Charles*; *Henrietta*, from *Henry*; *Janette*, from *John*, &c.

**The company of two armies.]** Or the *musicians of the camps*. She is as terrible as hosts of armed men, on the ground of what is said on <sup>צבאות</sup> **Song of Solomon 6:4, 5**. The two armies may refer to the *choirs* of the bride's *virgins*, and the bridegroom's *companions*; but the similitude is not very perceptible. The *Targum* explains it of "the camps of Israel and Judah:" as if the bridegroom should say, "My beloved possesses all the perfections both of the Israelitish and Jewish women." But how little satisfaction do the best *conjectures* afford!

With this chapter the *fifth night* is supposed to end.

## SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER 7

*A farther description of the bride, 1-9. Her invitation to the bridegroom, 10-13.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. 7

**Verse 1. How beautiful are thy feet with shoes]** “How graceful is thy walking.” In the *sixth* chapter the bridegroom praises the *Shulamite*, as we might express it, *from head to foot*. Here he begins a new description, taking her from *foot to head*.

The *shoes, sandals, or slippers* of the Eastern ladies are most beautifully formed, and richly embroidered. The *majestic walk* of a beautiful woman in such shoes is peculiarly grand. And to show that such a walk is intended, he calls her a *prince’s daughter*.

**The joints of thy thighs]** Must refer to the ornaments on the beautiful *drawers*, which are in general use among ladies of quality in most parts of the East.

**Verse 2. Thy navel is like a round goblet]** This may also refer to some ornamental dress about the *loins*. These suppositions are rendered very probable from hundreds of the best finished and highly decorated drawings of Asiatic *ladies* in my own collection, where every thing appears in the drawings, as in nature.

**A heap of wheat set about with lilies.]** This is another instance of the same kind. The richly embroidered dresses in the above drawings may amply illustrate this also. Ainsworth supposes the metaphor is taken from a pregnant woman; the child in the womb being nourished by means of the *umbilical cord* or *navel string*, till it is brought into the world. After which it is fed by means of the mother’s *breasts*, which are immediately mentioned. Possibly the whole may allude to the bride’s *pregnancy*.

**Verse 3. Thy two breasts]** Where the hair and breasts are fine, they are the highest ornaments of the person of a female.



**Verse 4. Thy neck—as a tower of ivory]** High, white, and ornamented with jewellery, *as the tower of David* was with *bucklers*. See on <sup><2004></sup>**Song of Solomon 4:4**.

**The fish-pools in Heshbon]** Clear, bright, and serene. These must have been very beautiful to have been introduced here in comparison. These two fountains appear to have been situated at the *gate* that led from *Heshbon* to *Rabba*, or *Rabboth Ammon*. There is a propriety in this metaphor, because *fountains* are considered to be the *eyes* of the *earth*.

**Thy nose—as the tower of Lebanon]** There was doubtless a propriety in this similitude also, which cannot now be discerned. If we are to understand the similitude as taken from the *projecting* form of the *nose*, even here I see nothing striking in the metaphor; for surely the tower of Lebanon did not *project* from the *mountain* as the human *nose* does from the *face*. It is better to acknowledge that there was undoubtedly some fit resemblances; but in what *circumstance* we know not. But some commentators are always extolling the correctness of the imagery in those very difficult places, where no soul sees the similitude but themselves.

**Verse 5. Thine head—like Carmel]** Rising majestically upon thy neck, and above thy shoulders, as Mount Carmel does in its district. Carmel was the name of the mountain where Elijah had his contest with the prophets of Baal. See <sup><1189></sup>**1 Kings 18:19**, &c.

**The hair of thine head like purple]** Ornamented with *ribbons* and *jewellery* of this *tint*.

**The king is held in the galleries.]** Or is detained in the antechamber. His heart is captivated by thy person and conduct. Some understand the ringlets of the bride's hair.

**Verse 6. How fair and how pleasant]** Thou art every way beautiful, and in every respect calculated to inspire pleasure and delight.

**Verse 7. Like to a palm tree]** Which is remarkably *straight*, *taper*, and *elegant*.

**And thy breasts to clusters of grapes.]** *Dates* are the fruit of the palm tree; they grow in clusters; and it is these, not *grapes*, which are intended.

**Verse 8. I will go up to the palm tree]** I will take hold on the boughs of this tree, and climb up by them, in order to gather the clusters of dates at

the top. The *rubric* here in the old MS. interprets this of the *cross of Christ*.

**Verse 9. The roof of thy mouth like the best wine]** The *voice* or *conversation* of the spouse is most probably what is meant.

**Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.]** As *good wine* has a tendency to cause the most backward to *speak fluently* when taken in moderation; so a sight of thee, and hearing the charms of thy conversation, is sufficient to excite the most taciturn to speak, and even to become eloquent in thy praises.

**Verse 10. I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.]** It is worthy of remark that the word which we translate *his desire* is the very same used <sup><01316></sup>**Genesis 3:16:** *Thy desire, thy ruling appetite, Ëtqwvt teshukathech, shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.* This was a part of the woman's curse. Now here it seems to be *reversed*; for the bride says, *I am my beloved's, and his desire* or *ruling appetite* and *affection, wtqwvt teshukatho, is yI [ ali, UPON ME.* The old MS. translates this with considerable force:—*I to my leef, and to me the turnynge of him.*

**Verse 11. Let us go forth into the field]** It has been conjectured that the bridegroom arose early every morning, and left the bride's apartment, and withdrew to the country; often leaving her asleep, and commanding her companions not to disturb her till she should awake of herself. Here the bride wishes to accompany her spouse to the country, and spend a night at his country house.

**Verse 12. Let us get up early to the vineyards]** When in the country, we shall have the better opportunity to contemplate the progress of the spring vegetation; and there she promises to be peculiarly affectionate to him.

**Verse 13. The mandrakes give a smell]** See Clarke's note on <sup><01314></sup>**Genesis 30:14**, where the *mandrake* is particularly described; from which this passage will receive considerable light. The reader is *requested* to consult it.

**All manner of pleasant fruits]** Fruits *new* and *old*; *flowers* and *herbs* of every kind which the season could yield. The literal sense, allowing for the concealing metaphors, is, I believe, of a widely different nature from what is generally given. But this must be left to the reader's sagacity and prudence.

## SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER 8

*The love of the bride to her spouse, and the nature of that love, 1-7. The younger sister, 8-10. Solomon's vineyard, 11, 12. The confidence of the bride and bridegroom in each other, 13, 14.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. 8

**Verse 1. O that thou wert as my brother]** The bride, fearing that her fondness for her spouse might be construed into too great a familiarity, wishes that he were *her little brother*; and then she might treat him in the most affectionate manner, and kiss him even in the *streets* without suspicion, and without giving offense to any one.

**Verse 2. Would—bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me]** She would teach me how to conduct myself towards thee, as she would how to nurse a young child.

**To drink of spiced: wine]** Wine rendered peculiarly strong and invigorating. The bride and bridegroom on the wedding day both drank out of the same cup, to show that they were to *enjoy* and equally *bear* together the *comforts* and *adversities* of life.

**Verse 3. His left hand]** See on <sup><2116></sup>Song of Solomon 2:6.

With the *fourth* verse the SIXTH *night* of the marriage week is supposed to end.

**Verse 5. That cometh up from the wilderness]** Perhaps the words of the *daughters of Jerusalem*, who, seeing the bride returning from the country, leaning on the arm of her beloved, are filled with admiration at her excellent carriage and beauty.

**I raised thee up under the apple tree]** The original of this clause is obscure, and has given birth to various translations. The following is nearly literal: "Under the apple tree I excited thee (to espouse me:) there, thy mother contracted thee;—there, she that brought thee forth contracted thee (to me.) Or it may be understood of the following circumstance: The bridegroom found her once asleep under an apple tree, and awoke her; and

this happened to be the very place where her mother, taken in untimely labour, had brought her into the world.” And here the bridegroom, in his fondness and familiarity, recalls these little adventures to her memory.

The *Vulgate* gives this an abominable meaning.

Sub arbore malo suscitavi te: ibi corrupta est mater tua; ibi violata est genetrix tua; “I raised thee up under the apple tree: it was there that thy mother was corrupted; it was there that she who brought thee forth was violated.” Spiritually, all this is applied to Eve losing her purity by sin; and Jesus as the promised seed *raising her up* by the promise of mercy, through the blood of his cross. But the *text* says nothing of this.

**Verse 6. Set me as a seal upon thine heart]** It was customary in the Levant and other places to make impressions of *various kinds* upon the *arms*, the *breast*, and other parts. I have seen these often: some slight punctures are made, and the place rubbed over with a sort of blue powder that, getting between the *cuticle* and *cutis*, is never discharged; it continues in all its distinctness throughout life. The figures of *young women* are frequently thus impressed on the *arms* and on the *breasts*. If the bride alludes to any thing of this kind, which is very probable, the interpretation is easy. Let me be thus depicted upon thine *arm*, which being constantly before thy eyes, thou wilt never forget me; and let me be thus depicted upon thy *breast*, the emblem of the share I have in thy *heart* and affections. Do this as a proof of the love I bear to thee, which is such as nothing but death can destroy; and do it to prevent any *jealousy* I might feel, which is as *cruel as the grave*, and as deadly as *fiery arrows* or poisoned darts shot into the body.

**A most vehement flame.]** *hytbhl v shalhebethyah*, “the flame of God;” for the word is divided *hy tbhl v shalhebeth Yah*, “the flame of Jehovah,” by *one hundred and sixteen* of Dr. Kennicott’s MSS., and by *one hundred and fourteen* of those of *Deuteronomy Rossi*. It may mean the *lightning*; or, as our text understands it, a most *vehement* or *intense fire*.

**Verse 7. Many waters]** Neither common nor uncommon *adversities*, even of the most *ruinous* nature, can destroy love when it is *pure*; and *pure love* is such that nothing can *procure* it. If it be not excited naturally, no money can purchase it, no property can procure it, no arts can persuade it. How vain is the thought of *old rich men* hoping to procure the affections of *young women* by loading them with *presents* and *wealth*! No woman can

command her affections; they are not in her power. Where they do not rise spontaneously, they can never exist. “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned.” Let the *old*, as well as the *gay* and the *giddy*, think of this.

**Verse 8. We have a little sister]** This young girl belonged most probably to the *bride*.

**She hath no breasts]** She is not yet marriageable.

**What shall we do for our sister]** How shall we secure her comfort and welfare?

**In the day when she shall be spoken for?]** When any person shall demand her in marriage.

**Verse 9. If she be a wall]** All these expressions, says *Calmet*, show that it was necessary to provide a husband for this young sister. For a *woman* without a *husband* is like a *wall* without *towers*, and without defense; is like a *gate* or *door* without *bar* or *lock*; and like a *city* without *walls*. They must therefore provide for their sister a *rich, powerful, and illustrious* man; qualities here figured by *towers* or *palaces* of *silver*, and *doors* of *cedar*. As it is customary to build *towers* upon a *wall*, and to put *bolts* and *bars* upon a *door* in order to secure it, so the expressions may point out the *defense, protection, and guardianship* which they imagined this young woman to require.

**Verse 10. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers]** I am become marriageable, and I stood in need of the *defense* I have now in my beloved; and as soon as I was so, and became pleasing in the eyes of my beloved, I was given to him in marriage, and have ever since *found favour in his sight*. As soon then as my sister is in my state, let a proper match be sought out for *her*. These expressions show the solicitude which the bride felt for her sister, and in her favour she wishes to interest her spouse.

**Verse 11. Solomon had a vineyard]** *Calmet* translates and paraphrases the *Hebrew* of these two verses thus: “Ver. 11. *Solomon has a vineyard at Baal-hamon: he has let it out to keepers, each of whom for the fruit of it was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.* Ver. 12. *As for me, my vineyard is before me; that is, it is my own; I am its proprietor. Keep thyself, O Solomon, thy thousand pieces of silver, and let those who dress (thy vineyard) have two hundred for their trouble.* I neither envy thee thy

vineyard, nor them their profits. I am satisfied with my own. My beloved is my vineyard-my heritage; I would not change him for all the riches of the universe.”

Some suppose that there is a reference here to some property which Pharaoh had given to Solomon with his daughter. See *Harmer's Outlines*, where this subject is considered at large.

**Verse 13. Thou that dwellest in the gardens]** This is supposed to refer to the bridegroom asking permission of his spouse early in the morning to retire, as was his usual custom. He intimates the *companions* were waiting to *hear*, and he wished to *hear it* in the way of *permission* to depart.

**Verse 14. Make haste, my beloved]** These appear to be the words of the bride giving permission, but entreating him to speed his *return*. What these *mountains of spices* were, we cannot particularly tell; but they must have been thus named from their producing the *trees* on which the *spices* grew. They might have been the same as the *mountains of Bether*, <sup>2217</sup>**Song of Solomon 2:17**, or the *mountains of myrrh*, <sup>2246</sup>**Song of Solomon 4:6**; where see the notes. **See Clarke “So 4:6”**.

Here ends the *seventh night* of the marriage week.

Thus ends this most singular book; the oldest *pastoral* in the world, if it may be ranked among this species of writing. To whatever species of composition it belongs, it is, beyond all controversy, the *finest*, the most *sublime* for *imagery* and *colouring*, that ever came from the pen of man.

In the preceding notes I have carefully avoided all attempts to *spiritualize* this song. My reasons I have already given in the *introduction*; and in the course of writing these short notes I have seen no cause to alter my opinion. Any man may *allegorize* it; that is an easy matter; for when he once considers it to be an *allegory*, his own *creed* will furnish him with enough to *say*, *write*, or *preach*, upon the *spiritual* meanings of every part, which will be an exhibition of his own *confession of faith*! But when he has finished his work, the question will recur, By what authority do you give it *these meanings*? And till the day of judgment none shall be able to say, “I have the authority of God for my exposition.”

**MASORETIC NOTES**

Number of verses in Canticles, 117.

Middle verse ~~2014~~ **Song of Solomon 4:14.**

See Ancillary data for

Targum  
or Chaldee paraphrase,  
on the Song of Songs.

Also

See Ancillary data for  
The Gitagovinda  
or the Songs of Jayadeva