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Introduction

The bridegroom calls on his spouse to admit him, Song of Solomon 5:1-3. She hesitates; but arising finds him gone, seeks him, and is treated unworthily by the city watch, Song of Solomon 5:4-7. Inquires of the daughters of Jerusalem, who question her concerning her beloved, Song of Solomon 5:8, Song of Solomon 5:9. This gives her occasion to enter into a fine description of his person and accomplishments, Song of Solomon 5:10-16.

Verse 1

I am come into my garden - $\text{x'x}^{\text{a}}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}$ (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," etc. 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, etc., 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, etc., 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 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's Etymologicon.

Verse 7

Took away my veil - They tore it off rudely, to discover who she was. See on Song of Solomon 5:2 (note). To tear the veil signifies, in Eastern phrase, to deflower or dishonor 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 Song of Solomon 4:1 (note).

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 traveler, "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, etc., 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 שושנים (shoshannim) may mean any flower of the lily kind, such as the rubens liliun, 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. טַרְשִׁישׁ (tarshish), which we translate beryl, a gem of a sea-green tint, had better be translated chrysolite, which is of a gold color.

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."