

KING SOLOMON

Solomon began his reign with a prayer to God. The Lord appeared to him, saying, "Ask Me whatever you will, and I will give it to you."

"Lord," Solomon replied, "as You have allowed me to be king, give me wisdom, so that I might judge and guide the people with truth."

Solomon's request pleased God, Who in turn answered, "Since you are so selfless and ask nothing of Me but wisdom, I will give you the wisdom you request, and also wealth and glory. If you always obey Me, you will have a long life."

Soon, Solomon had an opportunity to show the wisdom with which God had blessed him. Two women who shared a house came to him to solve their difference. They both had had small babies, and one of the women explained, "Good king, judge which of us is at fault. Last night, while we slept, this other woman rolled over onto her son and smothered him. Then she took my child for herself and put the dead baby next to me in bed. Please tell her to return my son to me."

The other woman disagreed. "No, it is her baby who died. This live child is mine."

Solomon thought for a moment and said, "Bring me a sword." To his servants he said, "Cut the baby in two, and give each woman a half."

Hearing the king's pronouncement, the first woman sobbed, saying, "No, do not kill the child. It would be better to give the child to her than that it be harmed."

The other woman disagreed, saying, "Divide the child in half, then neither she nor I will have it."

The wise Solomon ordered, "Give the child to the first woman who cares enough for him to give him up, that his life might be spared. She is the true mother." Everyone was amazed at the king's wisdom in solving this problem.

When Solomon had been king four years, he began to build a house of the Lord in fulfillment of his father David's wish. It was a magnificent temple. Hundreds of thousands of people worked on its construction, and its beauty surpassed that of any other earthly structure. Rich tapestries hung on its stone walls. The ceilings and columns were clad in gold; candlesticks and censers were cast of gold; and precious stones adorned the building. The exterior was covered with white marble. All the neighboring kings marveled at Solomon's wisdom and wealth. When the Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's wisdom, she visited him, bringing gifts of gold, precious stones, and spices in thanksgiving for his counsel. In turn, Solomon bestowed gifts upon the queen, which she carried back to her own country.

Unfortunately, Solomon gradually ceased to seek and to use the wisdom with which God had blessed him. The praise of his peers made Solomon proud, and he began to

squander his wealth, spending it on lavish feasts. He even built and visited pagan temples. When he no longer turned to God with his prayer, the Lord became angry with him, and warned him, saying, "Because you have forgotten Me and choose no longer to keep My commandments, your children will lose their royal inheritance. They will not always reign over Israel."

And it came to pass that, when Solomon died, his son ruled only a portion of the Jews, while another king ruled the remainder. The two kingdoms of the Hebrew people were called Israel and Judah.

