

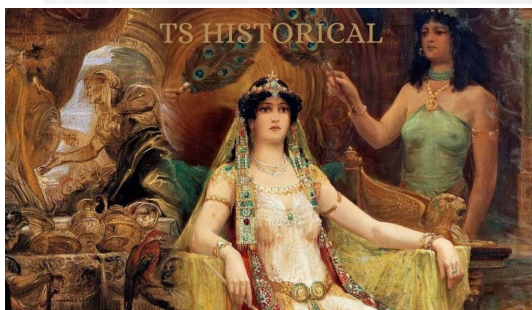


Queen of Sheba | Legend, History, & Bible

Queen of Sheba: The [Ancient](#) Middle East and the Arab World were famous for their folktales and storytelling abilities. This tendency existed across the entire religious spectrum, including but not restricted to the Jews. Merchants and traders passed these stories around the region, which makes historians question the veracity of these tales. Some tales have multiple versions, others are soaked with supernatural intent that is simply impossible to verify, and some tales have no physical and historical evidence to back them up, yet. This tradition of storytelling has presented scholars with question marks on every turn.

Some stories have suitable archaeological evidence to back them up, while others do not. In the case of the latter, it is quite easy to call their validity into question. One such tale is the tale of the **Queen of Sheba**. The major trouble with this story is the existence of various versions; still, historians are divided about whether such a figure even existed in the first place! The different versions could easily have been the consequence of the local storytelling fervor. Whether myth or [history](#), the Queen of Sheba is a beacon of female empowerment, a woman who inspires us with her guiding wisdom, selflessness, and bold demeanor. Three major religions recall the story, in varying scope: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Who Was Queen of Sheba



Queen of Sheba



Queen of Sheba: The Ethiopian national epic, *Kebrä Nagast*, translated as “the Glory of the Kings,” also speaks of the **Queen of Sheba**. *Kebrä Nagast*, as well as the Quran, the Hebrew Bible’s Books of the Chronicle, the Bible, and the Jewish Antiquities, all mention a single radical event of the queen’s life: her visit to meet King Solomon of Israel. If we stick with the Hebrew version, the queen visited Solomon sometime around 950 B.C. The trouble with that particular chronology, as with several other chronologies, is that historians find it hard to trace her exact origins. Some people think she came from Yemen, some say southern Arabia, and others claim Africa. Archaeological results show that Ethiopia was home to some of the earliest civilizations on the planet.

Egyptian hieroglyphs associate the land with an abundance of trade, especially in gold. The first known kingdom of Ethiopia, formed between 1000 and 700 BCE, D’mt, depicts its fair share of ruins today and might have been a neighboring kingdom or under the direct rule Queen of Sheba. General estimations describe the **Kingdom of Sheba**, wherever it may have been, as a lucrative land – unsurprising as it probably had access to both Egypt and Israel.

All this speculation puts Ethiopia as a serious contender for the queen’s home. In the Ethiopian tradition, the queen is remembered as Makeda. The Quran mentions that she averted her people away from the worship of the sun and turned them into monotheistic believers. Makeda was faithful to her followers and was a determined figure of authority.

Queen of Sheba and Her Mighty Throne





Queen of Sheba: However, in ancient times, queens rarely ruled without a king at the helm. When the **king of Sheba** died or was unexpectedly removed from the throne, Makeda rose to prevent chaos from prevailing. As details of the exact region are murky, some think that Makeda ruled the **Kingdom of Aksum**, whereas others believe that the Sabaeen migration, which brought about the **Kingdom of Aksum**, took place a few centuries later. Whatever the case may be, Makeda stepped into the role of the ruler and restored security and stability to her land. The problem arose when she realized that she had not been groomed for the role like most male heirs usually were.

As such, she lacked the necessary education required to rule such a vast kingdom. She was in desperate need of a mentor, and her yearning for guidance gained ground every day. As destiny would have it, just 2000 miles away sat the son of David, the mighty **King Solomon of Israel**.

David had slain Goliath as a youngster and had earned a name for himself long before becoming king. Understandably, Solomon had big shoes to fill. Solomon was David's illegitimate son with Bathsheba. It is said that God asked Solomon for his ultimate desire. Instead of opting for wealth, glory, or fame, Solomon decided to choose wisdom, and thus, wisdom was granted unto him. His wisdom soon became the talk of ancient times, and it helped him and his kingdom grow rich. He set out to construct a magnificent and colossal temple in honor of his God.

Such an undertaking would inspire him to search far-off lands for priceless fabrics and tempting metals, leading him through Israel and into Egypt and Assyria – even across the Mediterranean. In his attempt to build the largest temple the world had ever seen, Solomon sent out a request throughout the land, asking the people for the finest building materials. Tamrin, a well-known merchant who resided in the Kingdom of Sheba, had seen the majestic pyramids and the riches of the pharaohs. He had even walked the Silk Road to China. When the opportunity arose, he decided to set his sail for Israel.

Upon reaching Jerusalem, Tamrin was in complete awe of the wealth and culture of Israel. The gleaming armors of the soldiers, the bronze ingots, the luxurious fabrics, the laden merchants, the music in the streets, and the palace decorations were a

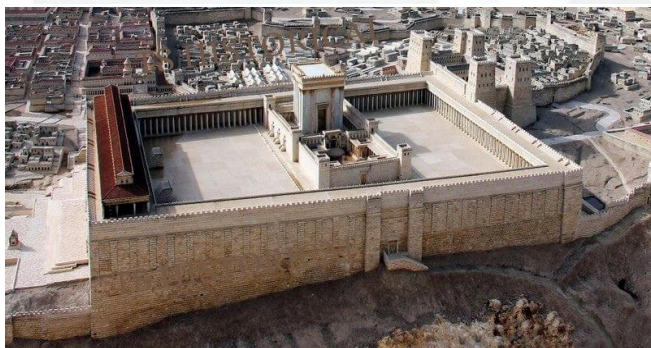


remarkable sight. Finally, he was awarded the company with King Solomon and approached the throne. He was surprised by the ways of the humble king.

For someone who ruled as wealthy and glamorous a kingdom, his personality exuded a certain earthiness. Impressed by the king's wisdom – and fully aware of Queen Makeda's search for a mentor – he returned to Sheba with a purpose. When Tamrin started regaling the tales of Solomon in front of Makeda, she was instantly taken by the king's disposition and love for pensive contemplation. She could see that the Israeli king had genuinely impressed Tamrin – and Tamrin had seen quite a lot of the world, so much admiration was quite unusual.

Enamored by the tales of Solomon, she would summon Tamrin every day and learn about his sayings and habits. Makeda had a strong desire to rule her kingdom in the same vein as Solomon ruled his. She decided to travel to Israel to meet him. With her kingdom safe and sound and her people fond of her policies, she set off. To ward off hostile gestures and convey a sense of camaraderie between the two kingdoms, Makeda prepared a gift for Solomon. It took almost 800 camels and a few mules and donkeys to carry the stones and gold to Israel.

Soloman's Temple



Soloman's Temple

Solomon had completed the **Holy Temple** in **Jerusalem** and now had a lot of time on his hands. There were no overwhelming foes in the land, nor were there any grievances



among the people. All was well, yet he could not shake off a thirst for something more: something that was missing from his wealth, his nation's prosperity, and his God-gifted wisdom. He kept thinking back to **Tamrin**, the merchant who was cynical towards everyone but highly praised his queen. Solomon was getting impatient, but the day finally arrived when Makeda reached Israel. Solomon stood and saw as the hordes of camels made their way to his city. As she entered the room, her tall and slender body, dark skin, and flamboyant yet fearless attitude immediately attracted the king of Israel.

In the Islamic and Christian versions of the tale, the queen stepped over a glass floor, thinking it was a stream of water. According to the Muslim accounts, the glass floor was constructed to reveal the queen's legs as demons had warned Solomon of her hairy and unnatural limbs. The Ethiopian accounts do not mention the floors at all. Despite the difference in details, the intention of the visit is consistent across all accounts. Makeda had left her home, traveled a long distance, and arrived in Solomon's court to test his wisdom. She had prepared some tough questions and wanted to test the limits of the king's intellect. Solomon had shown the utmost hospitality to the queen, bestowing her with the most lavish guest quarters, the finest food, and the most desirable entertainers. Makeda had seen luxury all her life, but this was beyond even her comprehension.

One day, she requested an audience with the king, which she was immediately granted. This time, the air of awkwardness had been lifted as they both exhumed their usual royal gaits and mannerisms. Makeda had prepared a set of riddles to test Solomon. In ancient stories, solving complex riddles was often treated as the epitome of an individual's intellectual ability. She started with different puzzles, asked him difficult questions, and tried to beguile him with complicated dilemmas. Solomon had been expecting all this and was more than up to the task. He answered her initial riddles easily, but Makeda had several more ready to go. The visits continued over the days, and every day she would visit Solomon to ask him difficult questions. The daily interactions worked as a catalyst for their physical attraction to each other.

Makeda knew she had traveled the land to learn from the king, and falling in love with him would hinder that objective. At the same time, she knew that Solomon had developed reciprocal feelings for her. Solomon was a monotheist man, and Makeda was a worshipper of the sun and moon at that point in her life. She was taken by Solomon's humility and his trust in one God. She admired his knowledge so much that



she converted to his faith. As the two of them got closer and closer, their temptations gave into the moment, and one night, Solomon had a chamber prepared for the two of them. It was time for Makeda to leave for home, but the nostalgia of their night beckoned her back to Solomon. She had gained the wisdom she had sought so much, and there was no professional reason to stay in Israel for long. As they parted, Solomon gave her a ring, telling her to remember him by it.

He further said that if she should bear him a son, the ring would be a sign for him and that she should send him to Solomon. They both knew it was goodbye; to stay any longer would be unwise and unfaithful to their respective kingdoms. So, they said their final greetings, and Makeda started her journey back home. Solomon had awarded her with luxurious gifts for her kingdom. Six thousand camels hauled the embroidered garments, the precious gemstones, and the rest of the lavish items. On her way back, the journey became arduous by the day as Makeda realized that she was pregnant.

The traveling party had to halt at different points due to scheduling conflicts or administrative issues. She knew that she could not give birth to her child in Sheba. Nine months and five days after their departure from Jerusalem, she gave birth to a baby boy. Her people welcomed her and her son with open arms. The kingdom rejoiced in the news of a male heir, and the arrival of the gifts meant that they were even richer than before.



Menelik



The son, **Menelik**, was around twelve years old when he started to get curious about his biological father. He pestered his mother, and she had to tell him that his father was far away, and the journey was long. But Makeda's tactics did not work for long, and the little boy stayed adamant in his desire to travel to Jerusalem.

With his mother's blessing, he left Sheba and headed for Israel. The boy had promised her mother that he would return, so after he met with Solomon, Solomon crowned him the King of Sheba and set him off with pomp. When he returned, Sheba had gained something it had been missing for a long time: a male ruler.

As Makeda watched her son, the spitting image of Solomon, take the reins of the kingdom, she rested easily and faded from the spotlight. Not much is known about Makeda after her son took the throne. What is remembered and cherished about the queen of Sheba is her desire for wisdom and knowledge and her courage to undertake the most difficult journey for the sake of her kingdom and its prosperity.