

Makeda, Queen of Sheba

Story & References

www.ProfessorEvans.com

1. Dictionary of African Christian Biography

<http://www.dacb.org/stories/ethiopia/makeda.html>

Makeda, 10th century B.C.

Pre-Christian, Ethiopia

According to Ethiopian tradition, Makeda (10th century BC), the Queen of Sheba, had a son, Menilek I, by king Solomon of Jerusalem, thus establishing the "Solomonic" dynasty of Ethiopia that ruled, with a few interruptions, until the deposition of Emperor Haile Selassie (q.v.) in 1974. Her story of the national epic of Ethiopia, as related in the *Kebrä Nagast* ("The Glory of Kings"), an historic-holy book that amalgamates Arabic and Jewish legends with indigenous themes. Her name and the location of her kingdom are vague to historians, but in Ethiopic her name means "not thus", as when she announced, "not thus is it good to worship the sun, but it is right to worship God." Her city was Dabra Makeda, built at her order as the capital of Ethiopia.

In the sixth year of her reign she learned from her head trader of the existence of a wonderfully-governed kingdom, Israel, and determined to visit its king and observe his methods. Her caravan took about 10 months to get through the Ethiopian mountains to the coast, cross the Red Sea and sands of Arabia. King Solomon received her cordially, and after six months' study she concluded that his rule was successful because of the affection and respect he inspired, his organization of government, and his fairness and humility. He convinced her that Ethiopia should relinquish worship of the sun, and adopt worship of God, creator of the Universe.

As she prepared to depart it occurred to Solomon that he could beget a child from this beautiful woman. He implied that he had yet another art of government to teach her, provided a great banquet, and had her food liberally peppered, and her drinks mingled with vinegar - then suggested she should spend the night. "Promise you will not take me by force," said Makeda. Solomon swore by God that he would not, if in turn she would swear not to take anything that belonged to him.

When Makeda became thirsty in the night, she drank water from a goblet placed at her bedside. Solomon, from his hidden vigil, saw her drink, and immediately claimed her - she had taken his water.

En route home, nine months and five days after leaving Jerusalem, she gave birth to a boy, whom she named Bayna Lehkem ("son of the wise man"). Despite the obvious loss of her virginity (a woman could be queen as long as she remained a virgin), Makeda continued to rule Ethiopia. When her son was 22 years of age, he insisted on meeting his father. Before he left for Jerusalem, Makeda reminded him that though the law in Ethiopia said a woman must rule, she had promised his father, Solomon, that "henceforth a man who is of thy seed shall reign," and she would abdicate on her son's return.

Despite every effort of Solomon to keep Makeda's son with him, the young man honored his pledge to his mother to return to her side, and not to marry any woman in Jerusalem. He returned to rule Ethiopia, having taken the name "Menilek I", accompanied by the eldest sons of the nobles of Israel. One of them delivered an oration praising the favorable climate and agricultural richness that they had found in Ethiopia, and then paid handsome tribute to its female monarch: "Thy wisdom is good and it surpasseth the wisdom of men ... none can be compared with thee in intelligence ... the understanding of thy heart is deeper than that of men, and thy wisdom exceeds Solomon in that thou hast been able to draw hither the mighty men of Israel."

The Ethiopians believe that these elder sons who accompanied their prince brought from Jerusalem the original Ark of the Covenant, and this treasure is symbolized by a square oblong box kept in every Ethiopian Orthodox church.

Scholars and historians are fascinated with the variations of the legend throughout the Middle East and Africa, with its psychological implications for the interpretation of Ethiopian culture; artists and musicians for centuries have been inspired by its dramatic content; ordinary people use the expression "Queen of Sheba" as a symbol for sexuality, elegance and pride. In Addis Ababa, the legend is depicted in street-sold paintings that add elements that are not in the Kebra Negast, and follow a version told in northern Ethiopia - a tyrannical dragon-serpent is killed by Agabos, whose daughter, Makeda, succeeds him. The trip to Jerusalem proceeds, but on the fateful night Solomon also sleeps with Makeda's maid-servant, who also gives birth to a son whose descendants, the Zagwé, usurp the throne between 1137 and 1270, after which the "Solomonic" dynasty of Makeda is restored. Since the Kebra Negast was committed to writing only at the beginning of the 14th century, a few historians view the entire story as a political justification for this "Solomonic" restoration. But that it is far more than this - an expression of national and religious feelings - is the consensus of Ethiopian and foreign scholars.

Chris Prouty Rosenfeld

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2. Tracy Marks

<http://www.windweaver.com/sheba/Sheba2.htm>

The Queen of Sheba

Legends of the Queen of Sheba are common throughout Arabia, Persia, Ethiopia and Israel. In Arabian tradition, Balkis ruled with the heart of a woman but the head and hands of a man. Islamic stories portray Solomon as marrying the Queen. In contrast to the Bible,⁽³⁾ they portray her abandoning her gods and converting to the God of the Israelites.

Arabian folklore and the Qu'ran present fanciful stories of the Queen of Sheba. Many of these tales involve magic carpets, talking birds, and teleportation - the miraculous transfer of Balkis' throne in Sheba to Solomon's palace. One notable tale involves the hoopoe bird, who tells Solomon about Balkis and delivers to her a demand from him - unless she visits him, he will annihilate her people. In one story, her foot which is shaped like an ass's foot is transformed into a human foot when she steps on Solomon's glass floor; in another story, Solomon invents a depilatory in order to remove goathair from her legs.

Several Jewish legends which developed in post-Biblical times also present dubious accounts of the Queen and Solomon. Although many of her challenges to Solomon are believable, others given in the Targum Sheni, the Midrash Mishle and the Midrash Hachefez are similar to Islamic tales, and likewise unconvincing. Here again we encounter the talking hoopoe bird; here, Solomon threatens: "*the beasts of the field are my kings, the birds my riders, the demons, spirits and shades of the night, my legions. The demons will throttle you in your beds at night, while the beasts slay you in the field and the birds will consume your flesh.*"⁽⁴⁾ Here also, she is described sending Solomon six thousand boys and girls all born the same hour, the same day, the same month and same year, all of equal size and dressed in identical purple garments.⁽⁵⁾

More realistic portraits of the Queen of Sheba appear in the Bible and the Kebra Negast. According to Ethiopian legend, she was born in 1020 B.C. in Ophir, and educated in Ethiopia. Her mother was Queen Ismenie; her father, chief minister to Za Sebado, succeeded him as King. One story describes that as a child Sheba (called Makeda) was to be sacrificed to a serpent god, but was rescued by the stranger 'Angaboo. Later, her pet jackal bit her badly on one foot and leg, leaving lasting scars and deformity. When her father died in 1005 B.C., Sheba became Queen at the age of fifteen. Contradictory legends refer to her as ruling for forty years, and reigning as a virgin queen for six years. In most accounts, she never married.

Sheba was known to be beautiful (despite her ankle and leg), intelligent, understanding, resourceful, and adventurous. A gracious queen, she had a melodious voice and was an eloquent speaker. Excelling in public relations and international diplomacy, she was also a competent ruler. The historian Josephus said of her, "*she was inquisitive into philosophy and on that and on other accounts also was to be admired.*"⁽⁶⁾

Power and riches could not satisfy Sheba's soul, for she possessed an ardent hunger for truth and wisdom. Before her visit to Solomon, she says to her people:

"I desire wisdom and my heart seeketh to find understanding. I am smitten with the love of wisdom.... for wisdom is far better than treasure of gold and silver... It is sweeter than honey, and it maketh one to rejoice more than wine, and it illumineth more than the sun.... It is a source of joy for the heart, and a bright and shining light for the eyes, and a giver of speed to the feet, and a shield for the breast, and a helmet for the head... It makes the ears to hear and hearts to understand."

"...And as for a kingdom, it cannot stand without wisdom, and riches cannot be preserved without wisdom.... He who heapeth up gold and silver doeth so to no profit without wisdom, but he who heapeth up wisdom - no man can filch it from his heart... I will follow the footprints of wisdom and she shall protect me forever. I will seek asylum with her, and she shall be unto me power and strength."

"Let us seek her, and we shall find her; let us love her, and she will not withdraw herself from us, let us pursue her, and we shall overtake her; let us ask, and we shall receive; and let us turn our hearts to her so that we may never forget her."⁽⁷⁾

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3. Answers.com

<http://www.answers.com/topic/queen-of-sheba>

Queen of Sheba was an ancient name for Abyssinia, a kingdom on the Red Sea in the vicinity of modern Ethiopia and Yemen. The Queen of Sheba is best known for a story in the Bible's book of Kings: at the head of a caravan of riches, she visits Israel's King Solomon to test his legendary wisdom. After Solomon successfully answers her riddles, the queen showers him with gifts. According to Ethiopian tradition the queen returned to Sheba and bore a son by Solomon, Menelik I, who was the beginning of the Ethiopian royal dynasty.

4. Wikipeda

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_of_Sheba

Diverse References

Known to the Ethiopian people as **Makeda** (ጠክዳ *mākidā*), this queen has been called a variety of names by different peoples in different times. To [King Solomon](#) of [Israel](#) she was the **Queen of Sheba**. In Islamic tradition she was **Bilqis**. The Roman historian [Josephus](#) calls her, **Nicaula**. She is thought to have lived in the [10th century BC](#) (1000 BC-901 BC).

In the Hebrew Bible, a tradition of the history of nations is preserved in *Beresh't* 10 ([Genesis 10](#)). In *Beresh't* 10:7 there is a reference to [Sheba](#), the son of [Raamah](#), the son of [Cush](#), the son of [Ham](#), son of [Noah](#). In *Beresh't* 10:26-29 there is a reference to another person named [Sheba](#), listed along with [Almodad](#), [Sheleph](#), [Hazarmaveth](#), [Jerah](#), [Hadoram](#), [Uzal](#), [Diklah](#), [Obal](#), [Abimael](#), [Ophir](#), [Havilah](#), and [Jobab](#) as the descendants of [Joktan](#), the son of [Eber](#), the son of [Shelah](#), the son of [Arphaxad](#), the descendant of [Shem](#), another son of Noah.

[Aharoni](#), [Avi-Yonah](#), [Rainey](#), and [Safrai](#) placed the Semitic Sheba in Southern Arabia in geographic proximity to the location of the tribes descended from their ancestor, Joktan. In addition to Sheba, Hazarmaveth and Ophir were identified. Semitic Havilah was located in Eastern [Africa](#), modern day [Ethiopia](#). Semitic Havilah (*Beresh't* 10:29) is to be distinguished from Cushite Havilah (*Beresh't* 10:7), the descendant of Cush, descendant of Ham; both locations for Havilah are thought by these scholars to have been located in present day Ethiopia.^[1]

The multiple references to Havilah may indicate historical Semitic migration from the southern Arabian peninsula to the African continent. An alternative account would place the origins of the Semites and the ancient Israelites in Ethiopia. The ancient Roman historian, [Tacitus](#), wrote that “many, again, say that they [the Israelites] were a race of Ethiopian origin” ([Histories \(Tacitus\)](#), Book 5, Paragraphs 2 and 3).^[2] Thus, the Queen of Sheba would rightly be placed as a descendant of the Semitic Sheba people located in southern Arabia, but with more than likely origins from Ethiopia.