



SOLOMON



When David became too old to rule, he chose his son Solomon to take his place. The small kingdoms of Israel and Judah, over which Solomon ruled, needed strong allies in order to survive. The great Egyptian Empire to the south also needed a friendly neighbor. So Pharaoh gave his daughter in marriage to Solomon, to establish friendship and peace between the two countries.

Solomon knew that in addition to the military strength of a strong ally like Egypt, he, himself, must be a good ruler. So he prayed to God for the strength and wisdom to lead his people and to know the difference between good and evil. Solomon's prayers pleased God, and He told Solomon, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, I will make you wiser than any other man. I will give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you."

God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, so that indeed no man compared to him. One day two women came to King Solomon. Both women were very upset, and one of them said to

the king, "This woman and I live in the same house. I gave birth to a son and three days later this woman also gave birth to a son. One night this woman's son died, and she arose while I was sleeping and stole my child, and laid her dead son at my side." Then the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." And the two women began to argue.

Solomon quieted the women and said to his servant, "Bring me a sword." When the servant returned with the sword, the king said to him, "Divide the child in two and give half to one woman and half to the other."

The second woman agreed. "It shall be neither mine nor yours," she said; "divide it." The first woman, however, whose son it *really* was, could not bear to see the child killed. She begged the king, "Oh my lord, give her the living child, and by no means slay it."

King Solomon saw that the first woman loved her son and would rather give him up than see him harmed, while the other woman was simply jealous of her. Then the king said to his servant, "Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means slay it, for she is the mother."

All of Israel heard of King Solomon's judgement, and they admired him because they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, helping him to give justice. He wrote songs and spoke over a thousand proverbs, which are short sayings that teach a lesson about life.

As God also promised, Solomon became the wealthiest king in the land. People came from all over to bring Solomon gifts and to listen to his wisdom. One of the king's visitors was the famous queen of Sheba, who had heard of Solomon's greatness. She came to see him for herself and to test him with hard questions. King Solomon amazed her by answering all of them, and she admired Solomon and marveled at the greatness and splendor of his kingdom.

King Hiram of Tyre, who had been a friend of David's, also admired Solomon and made a treaty of friendship with him. When Solomon prepared to build a great Temple to God as his father, David, had wished,







he obtained from King Hiram the materials he needed in exchange for wheat and oil.

The Temple was built with the finest cedar wood from the forest of Lebanon. The walls were carved with figures of angels, palm trees, and flowers. The inside of the sanctuary and the altar were covered with pure gold.

When the great Temple was finished, Solomon gathered his people for worship and brought the Ark of the Covenant, the Laws of God, into the "Holy of Holies". Here Solomon prayed with his people for God's guidance in knowing right from wrong; God's protection against the enemies of the Israelites; and God's forgiveness when the people sinned, for Solomon knew that no man was perfect.

After the people had gone home, God appeared to Solomon for the second time and said, "I have heard your prayer and I have blessed this house which you have built for me. If you will do all I have commanded you, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever."

But even Solomon, who was blessed with great wisdom, was not a perfect king. God had warned the Israelites not to marry anyone from a nation that worshipped idols, because He knew that the people would be tempted to worship idols themselves. As the years passed, Solomon married many women who were from nations that worshipped idols. And just as God had predicted, Solomon, himself, was tempted by these women and turned to worship other gods.

God became very angry with Solomon and told him that as punishment for his sins, He would deliver Solomon into the hands of his enemies, and Solomon's sons would *not* inherit the land. However, God did not forget the good things that Solomon had done. And he promised that some day Solomon's descendants would inherit the land again.