

**1Kings 10:1 ¶ And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.**

This chapter gives us the record of Solomon's visit from the queen of Sheba. The Hebrew identifies Sheba as the land of the Sabeans in the district of Ethiopia. I have often heard her kingdom connected to the area known today as Yemen. The NIV Commentary provides more insight about this location: "It is the best-watered and most fertile area of Arabia. By employing an extensive irrigation system, it developed a strong agricultural economy. But its chief strength lay in its being a center of trade. Its location kept it fairly secure from the power struggles in the Fertile Crescent and at the same time enabled it to be a convenient trade depot for traffic involving Africa, India, and the Mediterranean countries. It was famous for its trade in perfumes, incense, gold, and precious stones."

The queen determined to visit Solomon after hearing about his wisdom and how it was a gift from the LORD. The wording in verse 9 indicates that she recognized the LORD as his God—not hers. Her purpose was to test him and see if he lived up to his reputation.

"Hard questions" is defined as referencing a puzzle or riddle. JFB explains: "The Orientals delight in this species of intellectual exercise and test wisdom by the power and readiness to solve them."

The NIV Commentary adds: "No doubt the "hard questions" posed by the queen were not mere frivolous tests of mental quickness but a genuine seeking for truths hidden in some of the enigmatic sayings known to her."

**1Kings 10:2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.**

**1Kings 10:3 And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not *any* thing hid from the king, which he told her not.**

The queen didn't come to visit empty-handed. She came with a large caravan of servants (and soldiers I am sure) to ensure her comfort and safety. She also brought camels loaded with gifts of spices, gold and precious stones—resources for which her nation was famous. When she met with Solomon, she talked with him about everything on her heart. Solomon answered all of her questions thoroughly.

**1Kings 10:4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,**

**1Kings 10:5 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.**

The queen was left breathless—she was overwhelmed—after seeing proof of

Solomon's wisdom, the beauty and grandeur of his palace, the bounty of his table, the great number of ministers that ate at his table, the devotion of his personal servants, the quality of their clothing, and the burnt offerings he made to the LORD at the temple.

The IVP Commentary states: "It was a singular honor to eat at the king's table and the number of persons who could be accommodated there was a sign of the power of the ruler....It was also a further expression of the wealth of his kingdom that he could continuously provide for these men."

**1Kings 10:6** And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

**1Kings 10:7** Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

The queen told Solomon that the report she had heard of him and of his wisdom had not been exaggerated; it was true. She admitted that she had decided she must see for herself before believing it. Now that she had, she realized that the report had not come close to describing his wisdom and prosperity.

**1Kings 10:8** Happy *are* thy men, happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom.

**1Kings 10:9** Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

**1Kings 10:10** And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

The queen declared that those who served Solomon were certainly blessed to hear his wisdom. She praised "the LORD thy God" for showing His favor to Solomon by placing him on the throne of Israel. She even recognized that choice to be a sign of His love for Israel and His desire to see them ruled with justice and righteousness. Note that she didn't identify the LORD as "our" God, but as "thy" God.

I liked Guzik's application: "If we take the Queen of Sheba as an example of a *seeker*, we see that Solomon impressed her with his wealth and splendor, and also impressed her personally. But she returned home without an evident expression of faith in the God of Israel. This shows that impressing seekers with facilities and programs and organization and professionalism isn't enough."

This woman recognized what a blessing it was to serve such a good and wise king. We, as believers, are privileged to serve the best and wisest King. I think we sometimes lose sight of that blessing in light of the cares and distractions of this world. I am reminded of the truth of the words of an old hymn: "Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

The queen then gifted Solomon 120 talents of gold, a large quantity of spices and precious stones. It is stated that the gift of spices was without equal.

The IVP Commentary quantifies the gold as “amounting to nearly eight thousand pounds (four tons).” As I looked for today’s dollar equivalent, the amounts varied by source; but it seems clear that it would be over \$100,000,000.

**1Kings 10:11 And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones.**  
**1Kings 10:12 And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king’s house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.**

As he recorded the gift of the queen of Sheba, he was reminded of the tribute given by Hiram. He commissioned his navy to bring in gold from Ophir, as well as almug trees and precious stones.

JFB regarding the almug tree: “It is thought by some to be the sandalwood; by others, to be the deodar — a species of fragrant fir, much used in India for sacred and important works. Solomon used it for stairs in his temple and palace, but chiefly for musical instruments.”

**1Kings 10:13 And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside *that* which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.**

Solomon did not allow the queen’s generosity to go unreciprocated. Not only did he answer all her questions, he also gifted her from his own treasuries. She then returned to her own country.

Guzik notes: “According to tradition – fanciful stories, perhaps – the Queen of Sheba wanted a son by Solomon, and he obliged her. Her child was named Menilek, and he became the ancestor of all subsequent Ethiopian monarchs.”

**1Kings 10:14 ¶ Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold,**  
**1Kings 10:15 Beside *that he had* of the merchantmen, and of the traffick of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.**

It is noted that Solomon received a tribute of 666 talents (22-25 tons) of gold each year. This didn’t even include what he received from merchantmen, the profit from trade with spice merchants, and the tribute from the kings of Arabia and governors throughout the land.

Guzik notes that this amount of gold would value just under \$1,000,000,000,000 in 2015.

**1Kings 10:16** And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred *shekels* of gold went to one target.

**1Kings 10:17** And *he made* three hundred shields of beaten gold; three pound of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

Solomon even used the gold to make targets (shields). He made 200 targets of beaten gold, using 600 shekels or 15 pounds of gold for each target. He also made 300 smaller targets of beaten gold, using 3 pounds of gold for each. He then put all the shields in “the house of the forest of Lebanon,” in the weapons depository.

The NIV Commentary notes: “These verses describe the ceremonial shields that Solomon kept in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. They were wood or basket-work, covered with gold plate instead of leather. The large shield was either oval or rectangular to cover the whole body. The small shield was carried by archers (2Ch 14:8). The weights per shield were about seven and one-half and three and three-fourths pounds respectively.”

**1Kings 10:18** Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold.

**1Kings 10:19** The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne *was* round behind: and *there were* stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.

**1Kings 10:20** And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom.

Solomon also made a large throne out of ivory and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps ascending to it, and its back was rounded. Armrests were on each side of the seat, and two lions stood on each side of the armrests. A lion also stood on each side of the six steps. There was not another throne like it in any kingdom.

Gill makes this comment concerning the lions: They were “expressive of majesty, and of undaunted courage and resolution to do justice, and of the danger such expose themselves to, who oppose magistrates in the discharge of their office; and in which Solomon was a type of Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah; and for the same reasons were the like portraits on the steps, as follows.”

**1Kings 10:21** And all king Solomon’s drinking vessels *were* of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon *were* of pure gold; none *were* of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

**1Kings 10:22** For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

All of the drinking cups used by Solomon were made of gold, and all of the utensils in the house of the forest of Lebanon were made of pure gold. Silver wasn’t used because it was not valued in the days of Solomon since gold was so

abundant.

King Solomon sent his navy out with Hiram's navy every three years to bring back gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks from Tarshish. No one can positively identify where Tarshish was located, but three years was allowed for each trip.

**1Kings 10:23 So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.**

**1Kings 10:24 And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.**

**1Kings 10:25 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.**

The writer declares that Solomon far surpassed other earthly kings in both wealth and wisdom. People came from all over the world to hear wisdom from Solomon—wisdom that God had put in his heart. Every person that came brought a gift—vessels of silver, vessels of gold, clothing, armor, spices, horses, and mules. This continued from every year.

**1Kings 10:26 And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem.**

As wise as Solomon was, he was not smart enough to obey the LORD's command regarding the possession of horses.

*Deuteronomy 17:14–16 “When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose....**But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.**”*

Solomon assembled a cavalry of 1400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen and housed them in cities designated specifically for that purpose.

I would assume he reasoned to himself as many do today. Surely the LORD didn't mean that for me. Times are different now. You can't take the LORD's word literally. And he was just as wrong as those who choose to put their own spin on God's word today.

**1Kings 10:27 And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale, for abundance.**

Solomon's actions caused silver to be no more valuable than stones and either planted and/or imported cedar trees so that they were as common as sycamore trees.

**1Kings 10:28 And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price.**

**1Kings 10:29 And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring *them* out by their means.**

Again, in defiance of God's word as recorded in the verses from Deuteronomy cited above, Solomon sent his people to Egypt to buy horses and linen yarn. He paid 600 shekels of silver for a chariot and 150 shekels for a horse. It seems that he bought them not only for himself, but to sell to the kings of the Hittites and Syrians as well.