

Reflection: 1 Kings 10: 1 – 10 The Queen of Sheba Linda E Hunter

The arrival of the Queen of Sheba.

Who is she? Where is Sheba? Why was she going to visit Solomon? It's all very interesting we don't actually know her name, her identity remains a mystery

In the first reading today, we have the remarkable scene of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. Sheba was located at the bottom of the Arabian Peninsula, encompassing modern Yemen, across the Red Sea from Ethiopia. It was a very rich and wealthy kingdom with fine spices, jewels and precious woods. It was a place where there were queens as well as kings

The Queen of Sheba was very curious to learn more about Solomon, to visit him and find out whether he was as wise and knowledgeable as he was reputed to be, will her questioning verify or discount the fame of Solomon of whom she had heard. He lived a long distance from her, but she was curious, she was determined, she was strong willed, she wanted to question Solomon about what he knew about God, she wanted to see how wise he was.

So, as part of a huge trade caravan, she set off with her retinue, laden with gifts and goods to trade, precious stones, spices and gold. Travelling over 1,500 miles to get to Solomon's palace – to come into his presence in search of his wisdom

And so, she arrived at his palace, with many attendants and a range of riches ready to interrogate King Solomon. But, we hear in a one verse summary that: *'Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her.'* We don't know what she asked, what they talked about or the kind of interrogation she put King Solomon through.

Perhaps they talked about diplomatic or ethical issues, but every topic she raised Solomon was able to give a profound answer. The queen asked all that was on her mind and Solomon answered all her questions. What the queen concludes from listening to Solomon is reinforced by what she observes. Despite all that she had heard and the opulence within which she herself lived, the Queen of Sheba was absolutely overwhelmed, with Solomon's wisdom, his palace, the food he served and the way in which he organised his officials, and ran his household. She observed the burnt offerings to the house of the Lord, the extravagance here must have been breathtaking. She had not seen anything like this before. In fact, the whole scenario makes her quite breathless *'there was no more spirit within her'*.

So, the queen, embarks upon the final phase of her investigative visit when she lavishes the king with praise. First, she praises him for his accomplishments and his wisdom. She said that his wisdom surpassed even the reports she had heard and she praised the great fortune of Solomon's servants who had a chance to be with him and hear his wisdom.

Next, she recognises the bliss of Solomon's wives and his servants. Finally, her speech ends with a blessing which ties all that has come to Solomon, his success prosperity and wisdom to the Lord, the God of Israel. She brings her visit to a conclusion with the presentation of extraordinary gift. She provides the king with 120 talents of gold, precious stones and an abundance of extravagant spices. More than would ever be seen again. She was not only impressed but she also gave glory and praise to Solomon's God. So he must have sensed that such greatness came from something higher than a mere human.

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In a sense the explanations about the Queen and her interchange with Solomon can draw us away from what we can learn from this passage. The influences that bring about success, power and fame can at the best of times be precarious and life can in a second change or be changed for ever. They are the 'trappings' that often hide us from what we should be seeking and searching for.

Jesus used the Queen of Sheba as an example of someone seeking and searching for wisdom and truth. Jesus, who is greater than Solomon, wants to give us an even greater wisdom than he gave Solomon and Solomon shared with the Queen of Sheba. Jesus gives us his holy word and even more importantly he gives us his Holy Spirit to guide us through the gift of wisdom.

If the Queen of Sheba looked for Solomon and the splendour of his kingdom so diligently, how much more should we today seek Jesus and the glory of his Kingdom.

What lengths are you prepared to go to, to seek and find Jesus and the glory of his kingdom? How much do you value God's wisdom

Will you travel a great distance, would you bring gifts to offer, what might they be, will you come asking questions and seeking answers? Will you come on your own or with a huge group of people, will you share what you have discovered?

Only you know the answer to that!