

## **Session #12 The Wisdom Bird: A Tale of Solomon and Sheba**

### **Overview**

The story, The Wisdom Bird, expresses respect for different people, creatures and forms of wisdom. King Solomon is wise and so is the Queen of Sheba. The queen travels from Africa to the ancient city of Jerusalem to learn whether King Solomon can put his wisdom to work.

**Goal:** Children will find out how important it is to practice patience and understanding between cultures and religions. Here is a strong African queen and the value of different kinds of wisdom.

**Principle:** Search for what is true.

**Source:** Jewish and Christian teachings

**Belief:** We make decisions using love and reason.

**UU Identity:** multiracial/ multicultural

**Holiday/Theme:** Multiracial/ multicultural

### **Supplies:**

Book

Copies of Take Home Page

Do Re Mi Principles as a wall hanging

Supplies for the activities you chose

Décor for the room- Principle and Sources posters in adult language, optional.

Sharing circle supplies –

chalice

candle

match

match holder

snuffer (optional)

polished rocks

bowl of water

decorative tray

talking stick – a crown or something gold this time.

### **Set Up:**

Make or copy the Do-Re-Mi Poster

Copy the Take Home Page

Supplies for the activity(ies) you choose.

### **Entering Activity:**

Use the enclosed coloring page of the Queen of Sheba.

**Sharing Circle:**

After the children have arrived, invite them to tidy up and gather in a circle around the chalice for the chalice lighting and the story.

**Chalice Lighting:**

Bring out the chalice and candle, matchbook, match holder, and snuffer. Set out the chalice and the water bowl with rocks to drop in for sharing “Joys and Concerns.”

Invite the children to recite with you the following chalice lighting words:

“To this quiet place of beauty we come from busy things, pausing for a moment for the thoughts that quiet brings.”

Light the match and hold it to the candle wick.

“We light this chalice for the warmth of love, the light of truth and the energy of action.”

Invite the children to share important things that have happened in their lives, passing a talking stick, shell or rock to indicate whose turn it is to share. This would be a good session to use a crown or something gold as a talking stick. Have each child share a joy or a concern by dropping a small polished rock into the water bowl.

Say something like: “We will now share our joys and concerns in our sharing circle. Each of us will have a turn to speak while the rest listen. You don’t have to share, you can always say, “pass.”

After everyone has shared who wishes to, add one more rock and say, “For all the joys and concerns which remain unspoken, we add this rock.”

You may prefer to extinguish the chalice flame with the snuffer at this point saying “Though we extinguish this flame, we kindle the flame to carry in our hearts together.”

Read “**The Wisdom Bird, A Tale of Solomon and Sheba.**”

**UU Identity teachable moment:**

Ask the children for their reflections on the story. Say something like, “Our second principle states that “We search for what is true.” Show them the poster of the Do-Re-Mi Principles with the Principles in children’s language. Sing it if you wish. “In this book, the Queen of Sheba searches for wisdom. She and King Solomon are both taught by the wisdom of the hoopoe bird. No matter who we are, we all have great things to learn, even from a little bird. We Unitarian Universalists search for wisdom, too. We search for

wisdom from different lands and different people.” Describe the activities that you have prepared and invite the children to engage in them.

**Activities:** Choose from the following options.

### 1) Riddles

King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba posed riddles to each other to test for wisdom. Here are two from midrash (Jewish Stories about the Bible:)

*"What when alive does not move, yet when its head cut off, moves?" Solomon's answer: "the timber used to build a ship."*

Another riddle she proposed was: *"It is many-headed. In a storm at sea it goes above us all, it raises a loud and bitter wailing and moaning; it bends its head like a reed, is the glory of the rich and the shame of the poor, it honors the dead and dishonors the living; it is a delight to the birds, but a sorrow to the fishes. What is it?"* Solomon replied, *"Flax, for it makes sails for ships that moan in the storm. It provides fine linen for the rich and rags for the poor, a burial shroud for the dead, and a rope for hanging the living. As seed it nourishes the birds, and as a net it traps the fish."*

Sheba also brought Solomon two flowers alike in appearance, but one was real while the other was artificial; he distinguished them by noting how bees swarmed to the flower with the genuine fragrance. Then, giving him a large emerald with a curved hole in the middle, she asked him to draw a thread through it; he sent for a silkworm, which crawled through the hole drawing with it a silken thread.

What riddles can the children share with each other?

Here are some favorites to get you started:

What is the same about an elephant and a plum? They are both purple, except the elephant!

What did the mother tomato tell the baby tomato that kept falling behind?  
Ketchup!

An electric train is traveling east, which way is the smoke traveling?  
Nowhere, it's electric.

If John's mom had three children and one was named Tuesday and another Wednesday, what was the third child named?

John.

### 2) Ethiopian Cuisine

Ethiopia is traditionally located as the home of Sheba.

- a. Serve popcorn in a paper cone ( or a coffee filter) – a popular Ethiopian snack as it is in the Americas.
- b. Find an Ethiopian restaurant and order some dishes to bring to the session.
- c. Ethiopia is the origin of coffee. Serve something coffee flavored, a small sip of coffee to taste, coffee ice cream, or coffee yogurt or coffee candy.

### 3) **Make a crown.**

Bulletin board border in metallic gold or silver (often available from teacher supply stores) or yellow construction paper.

Stick on jewels or glue sticks and sequins

Stapler or Scotch tape

Measure the length of border needed to go around each child's head and cut it out (leave a little extra just in case). Invite the children to stick on the jewels. Staple or tape the ends of the crowns together. You can buy metallic border from teacher supply stores.

### 4) **Take digital or Polaroid pictures for the session on “Our Own Picturebook.”**

Digital or Polaroid camera

Film or photo developing

Take pictures of the participants and their activities for inclusion in their own storybook at the end of the session.

### **Background for Teachers:**

African legends continue the biblical story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The story includes the marriage of Sheba and Solomon, which ends with the Queen needing to return to her homeland to rule, pregnant with a son. Sheba's son Menelik lived in Africa until he was old enough to leave, then he lived with his father and learned to practice his father's religion. "Prince Menelik stayed with his father, King Solomon, until he had learned all the King Solomon could teach him about being a ruler. When Menelik finally went home to Sheba, King Solomon sent with him an amazing gift: 12,000 of his own people – 1,000 from each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel – to help Menelik rule and to help his people continue the worship of God. Eventually, the people of Sheba stopped worshipping the sun god.

After the death of his beloved mother, Queen Makeda, Prince Menelik was crowned Emperor Menelik. He and his descendants ruled the land of Sheba wisely and well for many generations. By then, the religion of the country was called Judaism. Even the name of the country had changed, from Sheba to Ethiopia....

...in 1991 more than 14,000 Ethiopian Jews were airlifted out of the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, in just one day. That airlift was called Operation Solomon!

Today, practically all Ethiopian Jews live in Israel...

But one thing will never change. Ethiopian mothers and fathers will always tell their children about how their people first came to be; how the great Queen Makeda and the famous King Solomon met, how the beautiful queen tested the wise king, how they loved each other – and how they knew that even though they had to part, some day in the future their children would come home. And so they have.” From “King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba” by Blu Greenberg, Linda Tarry, and Avi Katz (illustrator.) This is also a great book but with too much text for reading aloud to primary grades.

There is a variety of information on the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry at <http://www.nacoej.org/index.html>

About Sigd, the unique Ethiopian Jewish holiday

[http://www.nacoej.org/pdf/sigd\\_lifeline.pdf](http://www.nacoej.org/pdf/sigd_lifeline.pdf)

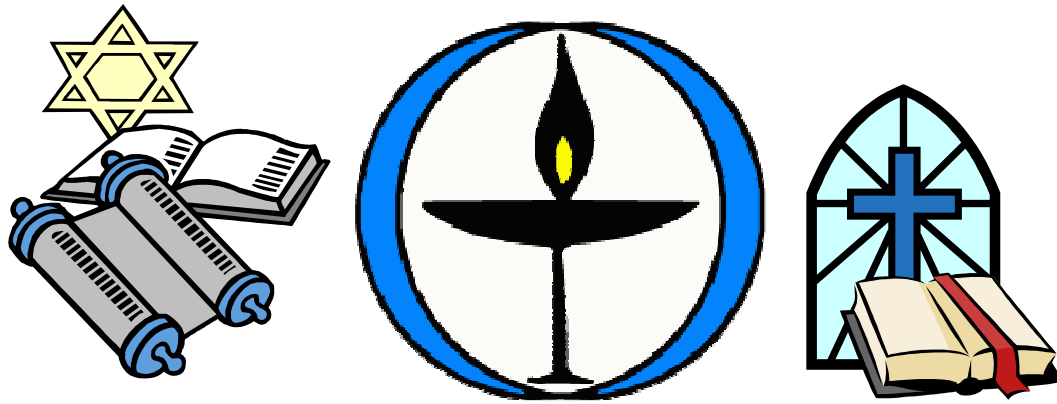
About the Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coffee\\_ceremony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coffee_ceremony)

About Ethiopian Cuisine

<http://www.gonomad.com/features/0211/ethiopiafood.html>





## Picture Book Bible Tales: **The Wisdom Bird: A Tale of Solomon and Sheba**

Today we read **The Wisdom Bird, a Tale of Solomon and Sheba** retold by Sheldon Oberman, illustrated by Neil Waldman. The story expresses respect for different people, creatures and forms of wisdom. King Solomon is wise and so is the Queen of Sheba. The queen travels from Africa to the ancient city of Jerusalem to learn whether King Solomon can put his wisdom to work.

**Goal:** Children will find out how important it is to practice patience and understanding between cultures. Here is a strong African queen and the value of different kinds of wisdom.