



Standing on the Shoulders of Giants Curriculum

EFLA STUDY GUIDE

UNIT 1: Ancient Africa (200,000 B.C.E. – 476 A.C.E.)

CLASS 13: The Queen of Sheba and Solomon (10th Century B.C.E. – 955 B.C.E.)

OVERVIEW

The Queen of Sheba is one of the most famous queens of [antiquity](#) and her affair with King Solomon is one of the most celebrated stories in religious [mythology](#). What is particularly noteworthy today about the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba is that the Queen of Sheba is African/Black and King Solomon is Hebrew/White. Racism is a modern idea. It did not exist before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, or the African Holocaust as some refer to it. During the times of the Queen of Sheba Africans were held in high [esteem](#) as their genius was demonstrated through their numerous kingdoms in Africa and abroad, including ancient Kemet/Egypt, Nubia and ancient Ethiopia. King Solomon, one of the wisest men in the Bible, was so [intrigued](#) by the Queen of Sheba that he tricked her into submitting to him, which resulted in her giving birth to his first-born son, Ebna Hakim or Menelik I. Would one of the wisest men in the world be so intrigued by someone who is “racially” inferior to him? Would he go out of his way to have a child with her? The story of the Queen of Sheba stands as testimony to the vaulted place Africans held in the world for thousands of years before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. It also demonstrates the respect and power African women held in African societies. Nowhere else in the ancient world did women achieve such equality or power.

The Queen of Sheba is first mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible in I Kings 10:1–14 and in a nearly word-for-word repetition, 2 Chronicles 9:1–12. Her story is retold with variation in the Quran and the *[Kebra Nagast](#)*, a 14th century Ethiopian religious text translated by English Egyptologist Wallis Budge, as *The Glory of the Kings*. Outside of these texts, little is known about the Queen of Sheba. There are no images of her and no one knows for certain the full extent of the her kingdom. However, in Biblical text, she is referred to as the Queen of Ethiopia. This would not only make her kingdom to at least be partially in Africa, but it also makes her African. Yet, virtually all of the mainstream images of the Queen of Sheba [depict](#) her as white with little exception. In fact, you will find no images of the Queen of Sheba painted by Black or African artists on Wikipedia or on a random Google search. I was amazed to find the Black image of her pictured above, which was actually painted by a white artist.

The Kingdom of Sheba is believed to be in Ethiopia and Yemen. As a result, the people from Yemen claim that the Queen of Sheba was from Yemen and that the kingdom of Sheba was in present day Yemen. Yet, the Bible clearly states that she is from Ethiopia. It never mentions Yemen or Arabia as her place of origin albeit her kingdom may have stretched to Yemen. Conversely, the Ethiopians claim that the Queen of Sheba was their very own Queen Makeda, who after her famous meeting

with Solomon, **conceived** a son by him, Menelik I or Ebna Hakim. They consider Menelik I to be the father of their dynasty that ended in 1974 with the overthrow of emperor Haile Selassie.

Based on the Biblical text - the oldest reference to her, the Queen of Sheba was from Ethiopia and ruled the Kingdom of Sheba. Physical evidence suggests that the kingdom of Sheba stretched from Ethiopia to the area, which is now Yemen. It is highly unlikely that the Queen of Sheba would be from Yemen, since the Biblical text calls her the Queen of Ethiopia. Also, there are no known female queens in Yemen during this period of history. However, Africa has a longstanding tradition of female rulers dating all the way back to Hatshepsut. This tradition is almost exclusively African, which lends more credence to the fact that the Queen of Sheba was not from Yemen.

I include the story of the Queen of Sheba because of her lore in popular culture and her relationship to ancient African religious history. Africa figures a part in all major world religions, and without prejudice. The negative depictions of Black and African people and the **denigration** of African history is a modern **phenomenon**, roughly 500-years old. Racism was created to justify the wholesale enslavement of Africans. Therefore, Whites had to convince the world that Africans were inferior people who had no history and contributed nothing to civilization, and thus were destined for permanent enslavement. The story of the Queen of Sheba contradicts this assessment of African history and African people. She is yet another example of the power and influence Black people had in world history. Her story highlights the lack of racism in the ancient world, as the African genius was evident and African power was enforced.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- ✓ Discuss the story of the Queen of Sheba and her encounter with King Solomon as told in the Bible, The Quran, and the Kebra Nagast.
- ✓ Recognize the influence Africa and African women have had in the development of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and world history.
- ✓ Scrutinize the racial and religious propaganda associated with the story of the Queen of Sheba, including her racial identity.
- ✓ Locate Ethiopia, the home of the Queen of Sheba, and the Kingdom of Sheba on a map.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT: UNIT 1, CLASS 13

Read/View the following:

1. [Queen of Sheba](#), Encyclopedia of World Biography (10-15 min)

2. [Documentary: Queen of Sheba - Black \(African\), Arab \(mixed/white\) or both \(Semite\)? \(21:59 min\)](#)
3. [The Queen of Sheba, Wikipedia excerpts. \(15-20 mins\) Grades 7+.](#)

[Bonus Video: Dr. Yosef Ben Jochannan on Queen Makeda, Solomon, Menelik, Kebra Negast...\(8:10 mins\) Grades 9+](#)

Additional Resources:

[Ethiopia: King Solomon, The Queen of Sheba, and the Black Jews Parts 1 & 2](#)

[History Channel Documentary - The Queen of Sheba \(1:19 mins\)](#)

Recommended Book: [Queen of the South, By Faheem Judah-El](#)

STUDY QUESTIONS 1.13

From Queen of Sheba, Encyclopedia of World Biography

1. What are the two names the Queen of Sheba is known as?
2. What are the three religious traditions the Queen of Sheba figures prominently in?
3. “Although her kingdom is referred to as both to the south and to the east of Israel, scholars generally believe her to have ruled an area in northern Africa roughly equivalent to what modern-day African country?
4. The Queen of Sheba is most famous for her visit to the grand court of what Biblical king?
5. Where is the most widespread story of the Queen of Sheba found?
6. Describe the story of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon written in the Old Testament.
7. How does the Book of Esther’s description of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon’s meeting differ from the Old Testament account?
8. How does the Islamic tradition describe the story of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon?
9. True or False? Drawing on Jewish and Islamic traditions, the Ethiopian story of the Queen of Sheba—identified with Makeda, Queen of Ethiopia—provides the most extensive picture of the Queen.
10. In the Ethiopian tradition, how does Solomon trick Makeda, the Queen of Sheba into breaking her promise of not taking anything that belonged to him, which allowed him to mate with her and produce a son, Ebna Hakim?
11. Who was Ebna Hakim, later called Menelik I? What country did he rule?
12. According to the Kebra Nagast, how did the Ark of the Covenant get to Ethiopia? Where is it said to exist in Ethiopia?

Documentary: Queen of Sheba - Black (African), Arab (mixed/white) or both (Semite)?

1. The Queen of Sheba is known by different names. How is she known to the Arabian people?

2. How do the Persian people see her?
3. In what region of the world is the Queen of Sheba most revered and her legend kept most alive and why? What is the name she is best known here?
4. The Ethiopians believe that the Queen of Sheba lived in a region called Axum. What evidence is there to show that she may not have?
5. What clues exist in Axum that the Queen of Sheba may have lived there? What was the time frame within which these clues exist?
6. What is the modern-day area that was once at least a part of the Kingdom of Sheba?
7. What is the capital of ancient Sheba? Until what year was it inhabited? When was it destroyed?
8. The inscriptions on the walls of ancient Marib date back how long?
9. What do the images that were found within the walls of Marib point to? What is interesting about what was deciphered?
10. What commodity does the Queen of Sheba bring to King Solomon that is only found in Ethiopia and Yemen?

Questions to ponder:

If the Bible, the first document that mentions the Queen of Sheba, says she is the queen of Ethiopia and Egypt, why are all of the images of her Caucasian or European? Why is there even a debate that the Queen of Sheba was from Yemen or Arabia? Based on what you have read, what “race” would the Queen of Sheba belong to? Why is this important? How does the retelling of the story of the Queen of Sheba become propaganda?

From The Queen of Sheba, Wikipedia excerpts

1. Based on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, where is the Queen of Sheba from?
2. Who is Tamrin?
3. True or False? Solomon spoke with great wisdom and converted Makeda, Queen of Sheba, to Judaism.
4. True or False? After Ebna Hakim/Menelik I visited his father, Solomon in Jerusalem, Solomon and the people tried to get him to stay but he refused. Instead he went back to become King of Ethiopia.

5. What famous religious relic did Menelik I take back him back to Ethiopia from Jerusalem?
6. What did Solomon do after he learned that the Ark of the Covenant had been stolen and taken to Ethiopia with his son Ebna Hakim/Menelik I?
7. In the Jewish account, where is the Queen of Sheba from?