

## Story Number 114

### SOLOMON'S SKILL

When Solomon came to the throne there was no central place to offer sacrifices to God, and people - even Solomon – would offer theirs on a *bamah*, which is usually taken to mean a hill or height, but more likely an artificial platform. This was against the Torah,<sup>1</sup> God disapproved but seems to have been willing to overlook the sin if that was the worst one, as long as there was no central place. Some maintain that if there was no central place it was even permitted.

At Gibeon, near Jerusalem, there was 'The Big Bamah' as well as the original Tabernacle and Altar made by Bezalel in the time of Moses and rescued from Shiloh.<sup>2</sup> One day Solomon went there to offer his sacrifice. While there God appeared to him in a dream, and said 'Ask me what I can give you.'

Solomon replied that he was inexperienced yet had been made king over a large nation, and wanted the mind to listen to and judge the people, understanding the difference between right and wrong.

God was very pleased with this answer. Because he did not ask for long life or the lives of his enemies God would give him intelligence and the skill to apply it more than any man before or after him might have. Because he did not ask for wealth or honour, these too would be granted to him as to as no other king. Finally, if he followed in God's ways and kept all his laws and instructions as David did he would also be granted long life.

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1. Lev. 17:5-7 etc.

2. But not the Ark, at any time – nobody knows why.

One day, two women brought Solomon a problem. The first explained.

‘We two live together, with nobody else in the house. I gave birth to a little boy, and three days later so did she.

‘One night she lay on top of her baby and it died, so while I was asleep she came and took my baby, and put her dead baby next to me. When I woke up in the morning I found the baby dead, then looked carefully at it and saw that it was not mine.’

But the other woman said ‘No, that is not true, the baby that is alive is mine, and the dead one is yours.’

Solomon listened to both, and said ‘Each says that the live one is hers, and the dead one belongs to the other. Nobody cares about the dead one, the question is about the one that is alive. Which does it belong to?

‘Since we have no evidence, the best thing is to divide it. Someone fetch a sword and we will cut it in half, and give half a baby to each.’

One of the women said ‘That is a good idea. Cut it. Then neither you nor I will have it.’

But the other one felt pity for the child. ‘No’, she said, ‘Give her the child but do not kill it.’

The king responded ‘Do not kill the child, give it to her. She is the mother, she feels for her child and would rather give it away than see it killed.’

All of Israel heard what happened, the famous Judgment of Solomon, and were greatly impressed with Solomon’s brilliant idea. He saw a difficult situation and found a wonderful way to solve the problem.

It was not just wisdom, knowing what to do and even how to do it,<sup>3</sup> but skill in having the ability to apply it that he asked for and received.

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3. Someone once said that the people who know best how to run the country today are the barbers and taxi-drivers.