The biblical King Solomon was known for his wisdom, his wealth and his writings. He became ruler in approximately 967 [B.C.E.](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/gloss.html#bce) and his kingdom extended from the Euphrates River in the north to Egypt in the south. His crowning achievement was the building of the [Holy Temple](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/The_Temple.html) in [Jerusalem](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/jerutoc.html). Almost all knowledge of him is derived from the biblical books of [Kings I](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Bible/Kingstoc.html) and [Chronicles II](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Bible/2Chroniclestoc.html).

Solomon was the son of King [David](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/David.html) and Bathsheba. Solomon was not the oldest son of David, but David promised Bathsheba that Solomon would be the next king. When David’s elder son Adonijah declared himself king, David ordered his servants to bring Solomon to the Gihon spring where the priest anointed him while David was still alive. Solomon inherited a considerable empire from his father.

At first Solomon was faced with opposition. Two of David’s closest advisors, Joab son of Zeruiah and the priest Abiathar, sided with Adonijah. When Adonijah came to Solomon and requested the king’s servant as a wife, Solomon saw that this was a veiled threat to take over his kingdom and sent a messenger to kill Adonijah. He banished Abiathar to the city of Anathoth. Solomon then followed his father’s last instructions in which David had ordered him to kill both Joab and one of his father’s enemies, Shimei son of Gera. Solomon thus overcame the last potential threats to his kingdom. He then appointed his friends to key military, governmental and religious posts.

Solomon accumulated enormous wealth. He controlled the entire region west of the Euphrates and had peace on his borders. [Kings I](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Bible/Kingstoc.html) states that he owned 12,000 horses with horsemen and 1,400 chariots. Remains of stalls for 450 horses have in fact been found in [Megiddo](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vie/Megiddo.html). Solomon strengthened his kingdom through marital alliances. Kings I records that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines, although some regard this number as an exaggeration.2 He had a large share in the trade between northern and southern countries. He established Israelite colonies around his province to look after military, administrative and commercial matters. The empire was divided into twelve districts, with Judah constituting its own political unit and enjoying certain privileges.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Solomon.html>

In olden times there ruled a great and powerful king, whose name was Solomon. All the land of Israel was under his sway, and there was no one so rich or so honoured on the face of the earth.  
Upon succeeding to the throne, Solomon had been filled with awe at the mightiness of the task before him, and in the humility of his heart, prayed for the wisdom to govern justly.  
“For,” he said, “I am but a little child, and how should I discern between right and wrong?  
His wish was granted and, above and beyond his wealth and honour, Solomon was famed for his wisdom.

One day two women came before the King. They carried with them a little baby, which was set down on the floor, at the foot of Solomon’s throne  
“O my lord,” said one of the women, “five days ago I gave birth to a child. This woman and I live in the same house, and three days later she also gave birth, but that same night her child died, and at midnight she arose and, while I was sleeping, took my son away from me, and laid her dead child in its place. When I awoke in the morning I thought at first that my son was dead, until I realised that it was not my child.”  
“No,” interrupted the second woman, “she lies, my lord, she lies! The living child is mine and the dead is hers!”  
“No,” cried the first woman, wildly. “No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine.”  
King Solomon raised his hand for silence.  
“One of you says ‘*my* child lives and yours is dead ’, and the other says ‘your child is dead and *my* child lives’: there is a simple way to resolve the matter. Bring me a sword.”  
A sword was brought, and the assembly waited to see how the King would proceed.  
“Very well,” he said, “ cut the child in two, and give half to one mother, and half to the other.”  
The first woman turned pale.  
“O my lord,” she said in a faltering voice. “Pray, give her the child. I beg you, do not kill it.”  
But the other woman’s face remained hard.  
“Let it be neither mine nor yours,” she said, “divide it as the King has ordained.”  
Then Solomon arose, and pointed to the first woman.  
“The child belongs to her, ” he said. “Give her the child, and do not kill it. She is its mother.”  
Word of this judgement spread throughout Israel, and people marvelled at the wisdom of the King.

<http://www.jamboree.freedom-in-education.co.uk/real_history/solomon.htm>