

The importance of King Solomon in the Hebrew Bible:

Introduction:

King Solomon plays a significant role in Jewish tradition and beyond. Attributed with writing important pieces of Jewish scripture such as the song of Solomon and much of Proverbs.

Two pieces of his work are read in the synagogue on fixed days in the Jewish calendar.

Ecclesiastes is read on the Sukkot and Song of Songs at Passover.

The final chapter of Proverbs, a hymn known as Eishet Hayil, is customarily sung at the Shabbat evening meal.¹

Solomon is credited with building the first temple of Israel, the house of Yahweh, considered a sacred place of worship, where the Jewish religion could fully practice its faith, and a sacred site to house the Arc of the Covenant, the most holy item in Judaism.²

Solomon was renowned for his unparalleled wisdom and still to this day remains a central figure in Hebrew history. His reign was known as the golden era for the Jewish community. A time of prosperity for Israel.

A king who left an enduring legacy that spans the test of time.³

Who was King Solomon:

The third and final king of Israel. Fathered by King David, who killed the giant Goliath. His mother, Bathsheba, an Israelite queen consort.

Their firstborn son was conceived in adultery; as Bathsheba was already married to the king's best friend (Uriah the Hittite), as her husband led wars in foreign lands for his king, David had him killed in battle to hide the affair, for she was already pregnant.

The first born died, the subsequent-surviving child was Solomon, Said to have been the wisest king, his sexual immorality would be his downfall, it is claimed he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (sex slaves).⁴

Solomon is a significant figure in the history of the Jewish faith. Renowned for his wisdom, wealth and many building projects-the first temple, his own palace and many fortifications, not only in Jerusalem, but other cities, such as Hazor and Gezer.⁵

Solomon is said to have been tutored by the prophet Nathan, a man with significant court influences, who laid the foundation of Jewish religious teachings.

Solomon was the man who forged the twelve tribes into the true nation of Israel, giving the Jewish community their identity. Solomon's reign started with the uniting of the tribes to form one, Israel, and ended his reign causing its ultimate decline.

Solomon betrayed his god and worshipped false idols, angry God told Solomon;

“Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to

¹ My Jewishlearning, kingsolomon, (2025), <<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/king-solomon>>[accessed July 2025]

² Tyler J Biscontin, Solomons temple, (2023), ebsco.com <<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/religion-and-philosophy/solomons-temple>>[accessed July 2025].

³ Hebrewhistory, Solomon's wisdom, (2025), <<https://www.hebrewhistory.com/blog/solomons-wisdom-unraveling-the-glorious-reign-of-israels-king>>[accessed July 2025].

⁴ Who was the father of Solomon, (2025), free bible study hub, <<https://www.freebiblestudyhub.com/archives/49462>>[accessed July 2025].

⁵ Solomonic fortifications, (2017), the maiden project.com, <https://maidenproject.com/solomonic_fortifications>[accessed July 2025].

your servant. Yet for the sake of your father David I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ⁶

Life of Solomon:

Solomon was not the first son of King David. By the end of David's life he had around eighteen wives, Bathsheba being one of the last, if not the final wife.⁷

Solomon was the second eldest surviving son of King David, Adonijah should have been king but David had promised Bathsheba to give the crown to him.

Before David's death Adonijah gathered important political allies and announced he would become king upon his father's death, Nathan the prophet overhears this and reports to his king. Quickly they have the priest formally anoint Solomon as king.

Solomon was young and so travelled to Gibeon to make a sacrifice to Yahweh, Solomon made a thousand burnt sacrifices and God appeared to him in a dream. Solomon told God "But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties"⁸

Solomon asked for a discerning heart so he may rule over his people, God granted him wisdom, but also as Solomon was selfless God granted him long life, wealth and honor.

"And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life."⁹

Solomon started his reign in humility and divine guidance but would end it with a prideful heart, unable to see and hear his God.

Downfall of a foolish king:

Solomon's reign starts off in obedience to God, a faithful servant Solomon builds an empire and an ever lasting heritage.

Despite the warnings from Yahweh, his beloved God, Solomon marries many wives. The Bible tells us in 1st Kings that he not only married the Pharaoh's daughter (Egypt) but married many times throughout his reign including to Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women.

Yahweh had made it clear that the Israelites should keep their distance from these pagan tribes, yet Solomon wed them all.

Solomon saw his marriages as an alliance between neighbouring tribes to solidify the peace and prosperity of Israel, a political play or to satisfy his lust for women.

Solomon had more than any king that preceded him and any that succeeded him, he wanted to please each wife, he gave a place for them to worship their foreign gods and idols, and overtime they turned Solomon to do the same and worship false idols, Solomon turned from the God who had given him everything.

In some of his final pieces of writing such as Ecclesiastes, Solomon is a broken man, his kingdom slowly falls apart, he now has enemies and he writes that it is all meaningless, "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."¹⁰

⁶ 1 Kings 11:11-13 NRSV, (2003) Bible Gateway, <<https://www.biblegateway.com>> [accessed July 2025].

⁷ Before Solomon was born, (2020) Tough Bible Stuff, <<https://www.toughbiblestuff.org/lesson/before-solomon-was-born>> [accessed July 2025].

⁸ Bible Gateway NRSV-1 Kings 3:7.

⁹ Bible Gateway NRSV- 1 Kings 3:14.

¹⁰ Bible Gateway NRSV-Ecclesiastes 1:2.

Solomon's message to the reader in Ecclesiastes is that a life without god is meaningless, it all amounts to nothing if you don't keep your relationship with god. Solomon had vast wealth, horses, a palace, land and wives in abundance, but none of it made him happy, for anything to be worthwhile you must have god in your life.¹¹

Solomon in other literature:

Solomon is famous in ancient scripture for wisdom and architecture, but he also appears in numerous apocryphal writings that have created a legend.

Ancient texts portray Solomon as a master of arcane knowledge, a conjurer of demonic spirits, Solomon has become an esoteric legend, surpassing his biblical portrayal.

He subdued demonic figures with his god given (ring of Solomon), the star of David at its center. Writings such as the testament of Solomon shows his struggles and triumphs over evil and wisdom of Solomon is full of divine insight and moral lessons.

A divine gift from god or a dabble in forbidden knowledge, Solomon's legend stretched far and wide all the way up to medieval texts such as clavicula salomonis(key of Solomon), which claims to have preserved his methods, tools, ritual prayers and magic symbols.

Scholars study esoteric manuscripts in Hebrew, Greek and Latin examining the legacy.

"Its probably precisely the combination of Solomon's access to supernatural wisdom, combined with his moral ambiguity that prime Solomon as an occult king. His wisdom, power and desire push him into theological transgression, damming him."¹²

There was even a piece of literature called Consolatio peccatorum, printed in 1473, which depicts a lawsuit led by Satan against Jesus, presiding over the lawsuit is Solomon.

With his legendary wisdom, Solomon had control over demons, such as the Jinn, and could speak the language of animals. He was a masterful songwriter and composer of parables and proverbs. He was also an expert on botany and zoology.

The real Solomon:

For years biblical archaeologists and scholars have argued that there is a significant lack of evidence for the existence of Solomon and his kingdom as it is written in the Hebrew bible. Professor Thomas Thompson believes the first ten books of the Hebrew bible are almost certainly fiction.¹³

Thompson states:

'It is out of the question that Saul, David, and Solomon, as described as kings in the Bible, could have existed. I think the biblical accounts are wonderful stories, invented at a time when Jerusalem was part of the Persian Empire in the 5th Century BC.'¹⁴

Israel Finkelstein also believes that the stories are a work of fiction, he co wrote the book Solomon and David with Neil Asher Silberman

¹¹ Robert Driskell, (2010) The message of Ecclesiastes, (what christians want to know, <<https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/what-is-really-important-the-message-of-ecclesiastes>> [accessed July 2025].

¹² Dr Justin Sledge, who was Solomon? how a king of Israel became the master of demons, esoterica, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch/esoterica/how-a-king-of-israel-became-the-master-of-demons>> [accessed July 2025].

¹³ Independent newspaper, (1993), leading archeologist says the bible stories are fiction, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/leading-archeologist-says-old-testament-stories-are-fiction>> [accessed July 2025]

¹⁴ Independent newspaper, 1993.

“biblical history did not take place in either the particular era or the manner described. Some of the most famous events in the Bible clearly never happened at all.”¹⁵

Not all scholars and archeologists feel the same way, the Armstrong institute in Israel tells a different story. Through their archeological digs they try to show evidence that corresponds with the biblical account. They show that the Tel Dan stele shows proof of a king David, they published on their website that “The dating of the site to David’s time is so rock-solid” when talking about the archeological dig at Khirbet Qeiyafa.¹⁶

Other scholars range in the middle suggesting that we would not expect to find much said about them in non-Israelite sources, any more than we have extensive references to the kings of Moab or Edom in ancient sources. “We simply don’t have many other sources, and those that exist are not interested in talking about kings of other people”.¹⁷

Importance of Solomon:

Solomon was the bringer of peace, the builder of God's house, a sage and a passionate lover, but he is also a man of contradictions.

For being the wisest king he was also the most foolish, his love for many women became his un-doing, his polygamy knew no bounds.

Although the forty year reign of Solomon was known as Israel's most prosperous, Solomon was always in debt, due to his many lavish building projects, the first temple, his palaces and his throne. He had to acquire large amounts of tax money from major trade routes that went through Israel, this was not enough though and his financial problems forced him to give up territory, charging people heavy taxes, and having them work without pay.

Unrest grew throughout with many places, such as Edom and Damascus, becoming increasingly independent.

Despite every flaw his message reigns absolute, it is all meaningless if we do not have god in our lives.

For the man who had it all he was also the man who lost it all and it is a lesson to everyone who reads his work. Keep the faith, keep the commandments, ultimately do the right thing in life, whoever loves wealth will never have enough and perhaps that was Solomon's problem all along, he could never have enough, enough wisdom, enough power, enough money and enough women.

However he saw his faults and wrote Ecclesiastes as a message to man-kind not to stray from God and put your own selfish desires above God.

Conclusion:

Solomon was both heroic and cowardly. He represented grandeur, nobility, wisdom and piety at the same time that he represented primal urges, pettiness and self-destructive tendencies. Under Solomon's reign Israel had reached a height that surpassed the other kingdoms that surrounded it, when a kingdom has reached the highest heights, the only way is down.

Through Solomon's reign Israel had become united, built a temple and amassed riches, but also through his reign, his Polygamy turned not only himself, but Israel away from its one true god, he lost control as his many wives and their many gods took over.

¹⁵ Good reads, Israel Finkelstein, (2025) <https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/98755.israel_finkelstein> [accessed July 2025].

¹⁶ Brent Nagtegaal, Did David and Solomon actually exist, (2022), Armstrong institute, <<https://armstronginstitute.org/405-did-david-and-solomon-exist>> [accessed July 2025].

¹⁷ Bart Ehrman, did king David actually exist, (2022), Bart Ehrman blog, <<https://ehrmanblog.org/did-king-david-actually-exist>> [accessed July 2025].

The Jews would never again reach the heights they did during Solomon's reign. It is believed he frittered away virtually all of his wealth, so many wives and concubines would have been costly.

It is believed he died of old age and his body, the dust returns to the earth as it was.¹⁸

His final words in Ecclesiastes ask the reader to keep God's commandments, as he himself had not, for it was all in vanity.

His memory has bestowed much for Hebrew, Christians and even Muslims, whether a real king Solomon existed as described in the bible or not his story of divine downfall has left an eternal and enduring impact on the heritage of millions of people worldwide for millenia.

Bibliography:

Biscontin, Tyler J, solomons temple, 2023, ebsco,
<<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/religion-and-philosophy/solomons-temple>>[accessed July 2025]

Driskell, Robert, 2010, what is really important, the message of ecclesiastes, what christians want to know,
<<https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/what-is-really-important-the-message-of-ecclesiastes>>[accessed July 2025]

Eberhard, Paul, 2020, before Solomon was born, tough bible stuff
<<https://www.toughbiblestuff.org/lesson/before-solomon-was-born>>[accessed July 2025]

Ehrman, Bart, 2022, did king David actually exist?, Bart Ehrman blog,
<<https://ehrmannblog.org/did-king-david-actually-exist>>[accessed July 2025]

Finkelstein, Israel, 2025, Good reads,
<https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/98755.israel_finkelstein>[accessed July 2025]

Keys, David, leading archeologist says old testament stories are fiction, 1993, Independent newspaper,
<<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/leading-archeologist-says-old-testament-stories-are-fiction>>[accessed July 2025]

Nagtegaal, Brent, 2026, did David and Solomon actually exist? Armstrong institute of biblical archeology,
<<https://armstronginstitute.org/405-did-david-and-solomon-exist>>[accessed July 2025]

Payton, Jeremy, 2023, Solomon's Esoteric Legacy,
<<https://jeremypaytonbooks.com/2023/12/13/mystical-language-odes-solomon>>[accessed July 2025]

¹⁸ The writers, Solomon-jewish history.org(n,d)

Sledge, Dr Justin, Esoterica, who was Solomon? how a king of Israel became the master of demons,

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch/esoterica/how-a-king-of-israel-became-the-master-of-demons>>[accessed July 2025]

Solomon's wisdom, 2025, Hebrew history,

<<https://www.hebrewhistory.com/blog/solomons-wisdom-unraveling-the-glorious-reign-of-israels-king>>[accessed July 2025]

The editors, 2017, solomonic fortifications, the maiden project,

<https://maidenproject.com/solomonic_fortifications>[accessed July 2025]

The writers, 2025, king Solomon, my jewish learning,

<<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/king-solomon>>[accessed July 2025]

The writers, Solomon, Jewish [history.org](https://www.jewishhistory.org),

<<https://www.jewishhistory.org/solomon/>>[accessed July 2025]

The writers, Bible gateway, NRSV, 2003,

<<https://www.biblegateway.com>>[accessed July 2025]

Wilson, Amelia, 2025, who was the father of Solomon in the bible, free bible study hub,

<<https://www.freebiblestudyhub.com/archives/49462>>[accessed July 2025]