

King Solomon and His Flying Carpet

by Ahimaaz, Court Historian



Translated and Annotated by
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King Solomon and His Flying Carpet

KING SOLOMON WAS RENOWNED FOR A UNIQUE MODE of transport: his flying carpet, upon which he was wont to cruise the hills, pay visits, or journey to the far reaches of his realm.*

The carpet was kept on the roof of the palace. When Solomon felt the urge to ramble, he would summon Benaiah and the Singing Guards. Everyone climbed aboard and took his place: Solomon on the portable throne, the others

* A popular misconception (then and now) was that the carpet possessed an inherent capability of flight. In fact, it was an ordinary—though exquisite—rug of Persian origin. It flew solely by dint of the wind, which Solomon was able to control with his ring. (The four jewels gave him dominion over animals, jinn, wind, and water.)

Descriptions of the carpet are to be found in both Jewish and Arabian lore. Fashioned of green silk, it was interwoven with gold and embroidered with images. Accounts differ as to its size. According to some, it could accommodate all the members of the court, who would crowd aboard for a ride. More likely, the carpet was just large enough for Solomon and a contingent of guards, along with a portable throne.

As for its speed and range, we are told that Solomon could “breakfast in Damascus and sup in Media.” The distance from Damascus to Media (a kingdom at the southern end of the Caspian Sea) was 650 miles. Solomon (no early riser) may be presumed to have breakfasted around nine in the morning, and to have supped at eight in the evening. Thus, the speed of the carpet was approximately 60 miles an hour.

Nicholas Roerich, traveler and author of *Shambhala*, mentions the mountaintops to which Solomon is said to have flown. He also quotes an old Muslim man in the kingdom of the Uighurs. “Of King Solomon,” the man told Roerich, “everyone knows that he flew throughout the earth and that he learned the Truth in all lands and that he had even been on the far-off stars.”

pressed closely about him. Solomon then raised his ring and summoned the Wind. Immediately, the Wind arrived and bore the carpet aloft. Like a kite it glided over Jerusalem, to the awe of the populace.

One afternoon, Solomon and the guards were joy-riding at a great height. The Wind was flying them among the clouds. Seated on the throne, Solomon was flushed with exhilaration—from the combined effects of flight and the wine he was drinking. Beside the throne stood Benaiah: cape streaming behind him, helmet glinting in the sun. Far below, the Judean hills rolled toward the coastal plain. Just visible in the distance was the sea.

“How glorious a view!” said Solomon, waving his goblet at the vista. “And how glorious, too, am I—Solomon, king of Israel! Am I not the most magnificent of monarchs? Who is equal to me, in riches or in wisdom? And who else is able to fly about like an eagle? Say, Benaiah, who? Am I not without peer?”

“Certainly, you are rich, wise, and able to fly. But—”

Suddenly the Wind ceased to blow. And the carpet plummeted earthward. Like riders on a roller coaster, its passengers gasped.

Solomon clutched the throne as they plunged. “Return, O Wind!” he cried.

“Return?” came the voice of the Wind. “That I shall, O Solomon—when you, puffed up by pride, return to GOD.”

Realizing his transgression, Solomon hung his head in shame. “O Lord,” he said, “pardon my pride. I am but a wretch who wears a crown. Whilst Thou art GOD, king of the universe—glorious beyond compare.”

Whereupon, the Wind returned, bore up the carpet, and resumed its course—pleased to have taught the wisest of men a lesson.



On another occasion, Solomon traveled on his carpet to the Valley of the Ape-men.

Reports had reached him of an isolated valley, inhabited by a tribe of Israelites whom GOD had cursed and transformed into apes. Their sin had been to repeatedly violate

the Sabbath, despite warnings from the few pious men among them. Simian now in physique, they continued nonetheless to speak Hebrew, wear clothes, and dwell in houses.

Solomon was curious about this tribe. So he hopped aboard the carpet, along with Benaiah and the Singing Guards; summoned the Wind; and flew to the valley. There he spent a day among the ape-men. He conversed and dined with them—and prayed, too. For their affliction had brought about a return to piety. Solomon took pity on the ape-men; and before leaving, he signed a document giving them perpetual rights to their valley, and ordering that no one harm them.*



* In the seventh century the Caliph Omar and his army passed this way. As they approached the valley (according to *Tales of King Solomon* by St. John Seymour), they were met by an elderly ape, wearing a robe and clutching a document. A converted Jew among Omar's men was able to read the document—written in ancient Hebrew—and identify it as a deed from King Solomon. Omar detoured around the valley and left its inhabitants in peace.