



## WAREHOUSE 23

# Solomon's Ring

## for *GURPS*

by James L. Cambias

One of the most powerful magical artifacts in history, the Ring of King Solomon has been the object of continual searches both in the mundane world and by magical means. So far it remains hidden.

### The King

Solomon, of course, was the Old Testament king of the Israelites, who probably ruled about 970 to 928 B.C. He was the son of David and Bathsheba. In the Bible, Solomon is portrayed as wise and wealthy, the builder of the great Temple in Jerusalem. His reign is remembered as a Golden Age for the kingdom of Israel. Solomon's proverbial wisdom was amplified in subsequent Jewish, Christian, and Muslim tradition; he was portrayed as superhumanly knowledgeable, an authority on all things. Occultists cited Solomon as being the ultimate human authority on magic and alchemy. According to legend, he bound the *djinn* and built the Temple by the power of his magic -- in particular by the power of his Ring.

### The Ring

The Ring was said to be a gift to Solomon from God, brought by the Archangel Raphael. According to the 19th-century French occultist Eliphas Levi, the ring is made of gold and silver, in the form of seven interbraided squares forming a circle. It holds two gems -- a white stone bearing the sign of the macrocosm set on one of the silver bands, and a red stone with the symbol of the microcosm set on a gold band. Wearing the ring with the white stone outward allows one to command spirits of light, while having the red one out gives power over spirits of darkness.

What makes the Ring so powerful is that it requires no ritual or preparation and can be used by non-mages as easily as mages. The wearer can simply summon and command spirits by speaking, and it appears that all spirit beings are *required* to obey. (It's not clear if actual *gods* could be commanded by the Ring, but there are plenty of occultists who would like to try it and find out.) The only limitation to its power is that the user must know the name of any spirit he wishes to call. A user who doesn't know any spirit names is limited to commanding whatever spirits he encounters -- though, of course, he could easily command a spirit to reveal its name, and thereby add it to the "buddy list" for future summoning.

In **GURPS Magic** terms, the Ring is a self-powered magic item which enables the wearer to cast Planar Summons, Summon Demon, Summon Elemental, and Summon Spirit, all with an effective skill level of 25. It has its own variant Powerstone enchantment, giving it a mana reserve of 100 points, which recharges fully each morning at dawn. The Ring's power cannot be used for other spells.

Since it once belonged to a revered king and prophet, and was possibly crafted by angels, the Ring is mystically significant in its own right. It gives its master an extra level of Magery -- but only when he actually wears the ring.

In **GURPS Cabal** terms, the Ring of Solomon is mystically aligned with the decans Iudal, Kurtael, and Sphandor. Any spell powered by those decans gets a +3 bonus if the caster wears the Ring. Because of the Ring's connection to an important figure in Jewish occult tradition, it may (at the GM's option) give the wearer the ability to freely enter and pass the Sephiroth.

Gamemasters should decide in advance what kind of supernatural beings are affected by the Ring's control of "spirits." The default assumption is that it controls angels, demons, *djinn*, spirits of the dead, and elementals. Gamemasters may add or exclude faeries, pagan gods, the undead, astral beings, Lovecraftian horrors, beings of pure thought, space energy beings, Ascended Masters, Arisians, and whatever other possible "spirits" are likely to turn up in the campaign.

## Finding the Ring

The Ring was owned by Solomon, but after his death its fate becomes unclear. According to some accounts the Ring was stored in the Ark of the Covenant, which would make the owner of that object supremely powerful. If it was in the Temple at Jerusalem, then it is curious nobody used the Ring to stop the Roman invasion which ultimately sacked and destroyed the Temple itself. If the Romans took it, the Ring may explain how their empire survived such a long time and achieved such tremendous worldly power. It probably passed out of Roman hands before the fall of the Empire.

After that it may have fallen into the hands of various Germanic or Norse tribes, as loot from their raids and conquests in Roman territory. The entire legend-cycle of the Ring of the Nibelungs may refer to Solomon's Ring, in which case it may rest today at the bottom of the Rhine, guarded by powerful water elementals. Norsemen ranged from North America to the Urals, and could have left the Ring anywhere.

If the Ring was kept by the Emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire (and the stories of the Emperor Justinian trafficking with demons may support that), the Ring presumably stayed in Byzantium until the coming of the Turks. It could be in some hidden Greek monastery, or among the treasures of the Ottoman conquerors of Constantinople.

Alternately, the Ring may have remained hidden on the site of Solomon's Temple, in which case the Knights Templar could have rediscovered it during the period they controlled the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Ring could then be the Big Secret of the Templars. Templar control of Solomon's Ring might mean it's hidden in Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland, or a secret Templar refuge in North America -- or that it was handed over to their occasional allies the Assassins, which would put the Ring in Alamut Castle in Iran (or in some hidden Mongol treasure-hoard after they sacked Alamut). It may even still be hidden under the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, in the fabled Well of Souls.

As with any magical item of power, adventures involving the Ring of Solomon are likely to center on finding it or getting it away from bad guys. It's especially appropriate for scenarios in which the heroes don't know what they have -- the historical possibilities outlined above mean the Ring could be found anywhere from Minnesota to Beijing. A group of PCs can be plagued by magically-aided burglary and assassination attempts for a long time before they realize that queer old ring is the reason for it all.

The people trying to get the Ring can be occult bad guys, The Cabal, spirits who want to destroy it to preserve their freedom, angels who want to take it back to Heaven, Kabbalists, the royal house of Ethiopia, and, of course, the Templars. Or all of them at once!

## Alternate Rings

Of course, the Ring doesn't have to be a supremely powerful magic item just because everyone thinks that's what it is. Here are some other possibilities.

*Alien Communicator:* Maybe when Solomon was commanding spirits he was really just asking his pyramid-building alien buddies for help. Antigrav beams built the Temple and orbital death rays defeated Solomon's foes. The Ring's gems hold one end of a submicroscopic interstellar wormhole, plus transmitting and receiving equipment. Will the aliens still come if you call?

*Psionic Amplifier:* In the ancient world, all magical effects were attributed to spirits. But Solomon has a reputation for incredible wisdom and insight -- was he psionic as well? The Ring might have been a focus or amplifier device for psi powers. It would increase any psi power by a good 10 levels, but the wearer uses his own skill. The question of who *made* the Ring could be very important.

*Sacred Item:* The legends are literally Gospel truth -- Solomon's power all came from the favor of God, and the Ring was simply an easy way for the King to communicate with the Lord. This is probably the most dangerous variant of the Ring, as anyone without the True Faith advantage (or the bloodline of Hebrew kings) may not be able to withstand direct contact with the Divine. They may pass out, undergo sudden religious conversions, or go mad. (Charitable GMs should reserve *Raiders*-style exploding head effects for truly evil characters who put on the ring.)

## Adventure Seeds

### The Ring of Truth

In the modern world, the heroes encounter a crackpot who is convinced that some prominent individual (a politician, tycoon, or celebrity) is secretly the owner of the Ring. The crackpot even

### One Ring to Rule Them All?

It is interesting to note that the scholar and author J.R.R. Tolkien wrote an epic fantasy about the quest to find and destroy a Ring suspiciously similar to Solomon's. Tolkien spent many years studying ancient texts in a variety of obscure European languages, and as an English Catholic and Oxford don may have been connected to the surviving Jacobite Templars. There are intriguing hints of this in his masterwork *The Lord of the Rings*. Do Tolkien's Rangers represent the Templars or the *Prieure de Sion* (hidden guardians of a secret royal lineage)? Is the best-known fantasy epic of our time really a coded guide to the Ring's true location? Or is it a warning that the Ring of Solomon must be destroyed lest it fall into the wrong hands?

has some blurry photos of the subject of his obsession, which seem to show a strange-looking ring on that person's hand. Utterly ridiculous -- until the crackpot is torn apart by unseen assailants. Can a group of ordinary people find a way to defeat the Master of the Ring?

## Three-Ring Circus

Eliphas Levi's description of the Ring led a clever Parisian jeweler to create an unknown number of duplicate Rings in the late 19th century. Now someone is tracking down every ring which matches that description, and won't stop until he finds the real one (if it even exists). The heroes have a duplicate ring, presumably not the real one. Will they join in the hunt to keep a murderous megalomaniac from getting ultimate power? Are they willing to kill for it themselves?

## Ring Around The Rosicrucian

A recent archaeological find in the Middle East includes an extremely well-preserved ring which exactly matches the description of Solomon's Ring. The entire global occult underground are scrambling to be the first to get possession of it. But what if the whole thing is a scam -- a kind of occult roach motel designed to draw all the most knowledgeable and unscrupulous operators in the magica world into a trap? Old enemies may have to work together against their unknown foe, with constant betrayals and shifts in allegiance the order of the day.

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