

Twenty years ago, it could be said that more than half the gold of the world was buried in Kentucky. Was this because the nations of the world so loved the United States that they sent over their gold, so that it could be buried in Kentucky? No! American goods were sent in exchange for this gold. It is easy to imagine that gold might be brought from Ophir to Ezion-Geber and then carried on the long trip overland through the difficult mountainous country up to Jerusalem. Gold is very expensive in proportion to its weight. But it is hardly thinkable that the people of Ophir would send these great amounts of gold to Solomon simply because of their desire to show friendship for him. Something must have been sent in exchange for the gold. The most natural supposition would be that he sent them the very valuable textiles that were then produced in Judah. But to ship this material overland to the place here described as the site of Ezion-Geber would be a very expensive undertaking. Dr. Glueck conducted an exploration party down to the Gulf of Aqabah. It was necessary to drop from Jerusalem down to the level of the Dead Sea, three quarters of a mile below. Then it was necessary to get around the Dead Sea, fifty miles in length, and mainly surrounded by rough mountainous country. South of the Dead Sea is a long depression known as the Arabah, hot and disagreeable, and in places infested with poisonous serpents. It took thirteen days for Dr. Glueck's party, traveling on camels, to go from the southern end of the Dead Sea to the northern end of the Gulf of Aqabah. So from Jerusalem to Ezion-Geber was a long and expensive trip. It would be far cheaper simply to take the textiles the short distance from Jerusalem down to the Mediterranean Sea, and then to transport them by water from Joppa to Suez, where a short portage would bring them to the northern end of the Suez branch of the Red Sea. If a navy of ships were built at that place, the textiles could be floated down to Ophir, which corresponds to Ethiopia on one side and South Arabia on the other. There they could be exchanged for gold, and the gold brought back in the same way.

When I participated in college debates I found it interesting to observe the great difference in cost between water transportation and land transportation. I was told that at that time material could be put on a boat a thousand miles up the Yangtze River in China. It could then be carried down to the Pacific and clear across the Pacific Ocean to California. At San Pedro in California it could be taken from the ship and carried twenty miles by train to Los Angeles, and the transportation by train for twenty miles cost more than the entire sea voyage down the Yangtze River and across the ocean. I was also told that when the Interstate Commerce Commission began trying to equalize freight rates in the United States it found that the freight rate from New York to Winnemucca, Nevada was five times as great as the freight rate to San Francisco, five hundred miles further, and going through Winnemucca. On being asked for the reason for such a difference, the answer was given that the rate to San Francisco had to compete with the cost of shipment by sea, which at that time, prior to the digging of the Panama Canal, would have to go from New York clear around the southern end of South America. Thus this trip, many thousands of miles by water to San Francisco, was so much cheaper in expense than a trip overland that the railroad thought it necessary, in order to get this business, to carry it for one fifth of what the railroad considered a proper rate to Winnemucca, Nevada, a distance only five-sixths as great. Since water transportation is so much cheaper and simpler than land transportation, why would Solomon, if he were so wise, build his navy of ships at Ezion-Geber.

As Glueck traveled southward through the Arabah, and particularly as he approached the northern end of the Aqabah branch of the Red Sea, he discovered a surprising answer to this problem. He found tunnels dug into the side of the cliffs. At the mouth of these tunnels he found evidence of ancient burning, and bits of metal, and pottery evidence that dated them to the time of Solomon. Careful examination showed that these were copper and iron mines. Transportation of the copper overland from much of this region to Jerusalem would cost more than the copper would be worth. But by simply carrying it down to Ezion-Geber, there putting it on ships and floating it down to Ophir, and in Ophir trading it for gold, it could be changed into something that would be well worth the overland trip from Ezion-Geber to Jerusalem. Thus it became clear that Solomon's building his navy