

Thus was found incontrovertible evidence of the greatness and power of the king who reigned in Israel at this period.

The Bible tells not only about Solomon's greatness and power, but also about his wisdom. Jesus Christ said, "The queen of the south... came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; And behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

I was dismayed to pick up the first edition of the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, and to find that its article on Solomon contained such statements as the following: "The wisdom for which Solomon is so celebrated was not of a very high order," and "The wisdom and understanding...for which Solomon was famous would consist largely in stories about beasts and trees like the well-known Fables of Pilpai." Was this all that Solomon's wisdom amounted to? Or was he indeed, as our Lord Jesus Christ said, one so wise, as well as so powerful, that he could properly be made a subject of comparison for the very Lord of Glory?

Shortly after my first visit to Palestine, Dr. Glueck, who is now President of the Hebrew Union Collgge in Cincinnati, became Director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. Dr. Glueck was greatly intrigued by the statements about Solomon in I Kings 9:26 through 28: "And King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon."

Dr. Glueck wondered why Solomon would build a navy of ships at the place described in this chapter. Let us visualize for a moment the shape of the Red Sea. At its northern end it divides into two branches like a "Y." The easternmost of these branches ends at a place called Aqabah, which is a long distance south of the Dead Sea. The western branch reaches to Suez, where the Suez canal has now been cut through. Dr. Glueck wondered why Solomon would have built his navy of ships in Ezion-Geber, which is described as being on the eastern branch of the Red Sea.

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-beber 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 easily 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