

Yet, as Glueck began his excavation he was forced to entertain renewed doubts as to the wisdom of Solomon. There were two reasons for this.

The first reason was the water situation. The work could not be carried on without a good water supply. The mound was not far from the Gulf of Aqabah, but that was salt water, not usable for human consumption. A well was dug, and the well produced salt water. Only by going a considerable distance to the east was it possible to dig wells that would provide a large flow of fresh water. Why did Solomon not have the city built at a spot more accessible to a good water supply?

The second reason was the position of the mound, directly south of the Arabah. A strong hot wind blew down this valley several hours a day. The diggers found the sand getting into their eyes and mouths. Sometimes the wind was so strong that it lifted great quantities of loose soil and carried it out to sea. Watching it, the excavators could think of nothing but the pillar of cloud that led the Israelites as they came out of Egypt! Yet if the city had been built a comparatively short distance to the east or to the west, it would have been completely out of the path of this disagreeable wind. Why would Solomon have built his city at this precise location?

Was it possible that Solomon possessed great power but little wisdom? Did he sit as an arbitrary despot in an office in Jerusalem, point to a spot on the map, and order that the city be built at that spot, regardless of the convenience or comfort of its builders or inhabitants? This might fit with the Biblical picture of Solomon's power and glory, but hardly with its description of his wisdom. What was the answer? Let us dig a little further and see if we can hear the voice of the stones.

Eventually the answer to the problem became clear. It was found that the principal feature of the city was a large complex of factories. These factories were so arranged as to be directly in the path of the steady wind from the north. The walls that faced in that direction contained apertures that could be partly closed or opened, so as to regulate the amount of wind that would come in. Flues and air passages ran along inside the walls, so as to carry the draft into the various rooms, and to direct it into furnaces for smelting of copper and iron. It became apparent that this was a great refinery. Solomon's men would dig copper and iron at the mines some distance to the north. There they would roughly smelt it so as to get rid of a large part of the slag. What remained would be carried down to Ezion-geber. There it would be thoroughly refined, so as to get rid of all the slag and to shape it into forms desirable for shipment and sale. The use of the forced draft from the wind that blew so steadily at this particular spot made it possible to raise the heat greatly at the particular points desired. In other words, Solomon utilized the principle of the modern blast furnace, a principle which is the foundation of our modern steel industry. Here for the first time we find evidence that this principle was known in ancient days, and precisely at the time of Solomon.

Thus the problems about Solomon's power and also about his wisdom were settled. It became evident that Solomon had a knowledge and understanding going far beyond anything that can be paralleled in ancient times. The Biblical picture is entirely right, and these discoveries give us an understanding of it far beyond what we would have gained from the Biblical record alone. When Jesus spoke of the glory of King Solomon, he was indeed using a most striking figure. When Jesus 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," He was using as apt a figure of comparison as could possibly have been found. Thus the words of Jesus and also the statements of the Old Testament are shown by the archaeological evidence to be true and reliable. They do not tell us the whole story, but everything they tell us is entirely true. New understandings of the details and background have come to light, but the biblical statements can stand unaltered. The voice of the stones is insistent in our days.

Today there is widespread denial of the Word of God. On every hand there are sneers at revealed religion. It is declared that the Bible is an old-fashioned book that must be reinterpreted to fit a modern day. But behind it all, soft but insistent, moderate but widespread, is the voice of the stones. "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." In these days when so many leaders of the Christian church, who should be proclaiming the truth of the Bible and the deity of Christ, are forsaking their proper task and becoming mere leaders of human projects, the stones are crying out and giving testimony that God's Word is true and dependable.