

THE ECONOMIES OF KING SOLOMON'S KINGDOM.

(1. Samuel 13 19 v 20 is quoted on page References 1."Kings 4 v 10.26.

1 Kings 6 23 & 22 9. 18.21 and 26-28; 10. 14.28 & 29.

2 Chron. 9 (Queen of Sheba)

To any student of history and political economy seen at first sight (unless he believes it took place by direct intervention of an omnipotent Jehovah) impossible that the utter ruin of the Kingdom of Israel at the time of the abject defeat of King Saul and his 3 sons on Mount Gilboa could be changed in about 40 years into the magnificence and splendour of King Solomon. The time of 40 years included the whole of King Davids and part of King Solomon's reign. Yet that is what we are told in the Bible actually happened. It is true of course that the destruction of war in those days - nearly 1000 years B.C was nothing like that in the 20th cent. but neither of course was the house of reconstruction I repeat that at first sight it is almost impossible to believe that this transformation resembling that from the Kitchen of Baron Hurdup to the magnificent ballroom scene in Cinderella could take place. Modern research and Scholarship have however made it perfectly intelligible and action 1. As we know from the bible, David continued the war against the Philistines and from that utter defeat after 7 years snatched complete victory. The Philistines confederation of 5 cities had to submit to him. Later David conquered territory to the N.E (Syria.) to the South and to the West and to the South East. Thus his country and Solomon's was about 3 times the size of modern Israel, with no great salient (foreign) West of the Jordan, as exists at present, was roughly oval or reniform (concavity to the West.) with Jerusalem just South of the centre. (Map) From South of Gaza on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea his boundary ran to the Gulf of Akabah through the middle of the modern Kingdom of Jordan, enclosed the Damascus area and returned to the coast South of Tyre and the other Phoenician cities. The greatest distance from North to South was about 400 miles. It was comparatively easy to defend as he had the advantage of interior lines. As we know from the Story of the Rebellion of Absalom he incorporated the Philistines in his standing army rather like we did the Highlanders after the 1745. Later David - sprung from the rebellious - and Saka Solomon all his reign had peace. They were ruled by external circumstances in that there was no great power anxious to conquer them in Tenth century B.C. in Egypt and Asia Minor, Mesopotamia or elsewhere to interfere with the growing strength of Israel.

In 1937 a wealth of excavational finds by two American expeditions produced overwhelming evidence of the truth of the Biblical story The leader of the first was Nelson Gluck who took with him all the latest equipment for such work, modern drills etc as well as spades picks etc and included in his team a geologist a historian, an architect and of course a photographer. They went South Jerusalem through the Green Valley into the Wadi-el-Akabah, viz Valley of the Desert. This is the South part of that mighty fissure in the earth's surface which extends from Asia Minor passing through the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah; part of the Red Sea. Along the whole length of the Wadi (valley) they found deposits of iron-ore and copper ore, wherever they did so, they found the remains of galleries let into the rock, all that survived of mines long forgotten. Their main concern was a lovely mount. Tel-el-Keleifeh, near the shore of the Gulf of Akabah. Their earliest excavations produced fish hooks made of copper, then tiles and remnants of walls and their coarse green lumps of Malachite, a copper compound, which proved to be the slag from copper mines. Later they found at several points wall foundations at the same level. The rivetted walls of the quays of Ezion Geber the great Red Sea Port of King Solomon's day when the Gulf came a little further in (North) than it does at present. The work of excavation furnished temporarily in 1940 but by then a great square building had been unearthed which, from its green discolouration left no doubt, that it had been a blast furnace for copper. The mud brick walls had two rows of openings. They were flues with a skilful arrangement of air passages connected them. The flues and chimneys lay about along the N-S axis so that the prevailing winds of the Wadi could take on the role of bellows. These were built 3000 years ago (King Solomon's reign extended from 965 to 926 B.C) and now I would like to digress and quote to you from an article in the Times of 23 rd June 1962 on "Settling the New Cities of The Negevi BeerSheva the administrative centre (it is about 50 miles S.S.W from Jerusalem and is thousands of years old.) has developed from a bleak frontier town to a city of 50,000 the 4th largest city in Modern Israel. The area to the S which comprises more than half of Israel's territory is inhabited only by 25,000 Jews 15,000 Bedouins less than 2% of the population of the country. The Governments aim is to settle 75,000 more Jews there during the next six years A basis for their livelihood exists. The Dead Sea is an immensely rich reservoir of potash and other materials. Natural gas has been struck and there are deposits of phosphates in various places. This makes the Negev a major source of fertiliser for the over-populated areas of Asia. Copper, gypsum,

granite glass-sand, clay and other materials have been found.... At the Southern end of the Negev, Bilah in the sterile trench wedged the saw toothed mountains of Egypt and Jordan, has been growing rapidly since 1956 when the Arab blockade of the part was broken by the ejection of the Egyptians from the strong holds at the mouth of the Gulf of Akabah. Special incentives have been offered by the Government to hardy people willing and able to work in the blazing heat handling cargo at the port or at the expanding Timna copper mine nearby.

But to return to the days of King Solomon; we do not know the exact method by which the copper was refined in those days. Some of the smelting pots have the remarkable capacity of 14 cubic feet, that is a cube of sides rather less than 2½ feet. This was then Ezion-Gebes besides Elath (the modern Bilah) the centre of a large copper industry as well as a great port at the time. Nowhere else in the Middle East have such furnaces been found. Ezion Geber produced the copper required for the Brass for the ritual furnishings of the Temple at Jerusalem - for the "Alter of Brass" for the "Sea as the great basin was called, the ten vases of brass, the pots, shovels and basin and for the two great pillars at the porchway or entrance to the Temple. This porch (or ulam) was a kind of entrance hall or narthex either projecting from or flush with the temple building. It was entered through double doors and was about 20 cubits wide, 10 cubits across, but the height of the porchway is not definitely known. The shafts of the pillars were 18 cubits high and surmounted by chapiters or capitals 5 cubits high and of elaborate design as we read in 1 Kings 7 v 21, 22 and other places each had a name, that on the Right was called Jehoiachin and that on the left or North-Bez. The exact meaning of these words is discussed in André Parrot's book "The Temple of Jerusalem on Page 27. But to return again to our main theme research on other sites has proved complementary to the discoveries in the Wadi-el-Akaba South of the old Philistine city of Gaza, which is of course on the Mediterranean Sea coast, 150 miles to the N.W of Ezion-Geber, Henders-Petrie dug up iron smelting installations. The furnaces were like those of Ezion-Geber but smaller. As part of the price of their defeat David extracted the knowledge of iron-smelting from the Philistines. Prior to this the Israelites had to go to the Philistines for arms and farm implements and to have these repaired as we read in 1 Samuel 13 v 19 and 20. Now there was no smith found, throughout all the people of Israel, for the Philistines said "Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears" But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his sword, his coulter, his axe and his mattock. Thus iron and copper ores were mined and melted on a large scale under King David's sons. The prophecy "For the Lord God bringeth thee into a good land - a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills, those mayest dig brass (Isaiah 64 v 7-9) was literally fulfilled. Now King Solomon was as every schoolboy knows an exceedingly wise man. Among his many gifts, he had a flair for exploiting foreign brains, and foreign skills and ~~transforming~~ turning them to the advantage of his Kingdom. He entered into agreements with Hiram King of Tyre, away to the N.W of his own Kingdom and by one of them was loaned the services of Hiram Abif, a distinguished craftsman of Tyre who was entrusted with the making of the Temple Furnishings (1 Kings 7 v 13 & 12). He was the son of a widow, a man of the tribe of Naphtali and his father was a man of Tyre a worker in brass. He was filled with wisdom understanding and cunning to work all works in brass and he came to King Solomon and wrought all his work. Now the Israelites had never been sailors and knew nothing about ship building. The people of Tyre however and its neighbours the Phoenicians, had been sailors for centuries and had all the knowledge of ship building which the Israelites lacked. King Hiram too, like K.S. was a wise man. He saw all the advantages of peaceful co-operation with his powerful neighbours to the S. The Phoenician priest, Sanchuniathon, thus describes the course of negotiations and events, Hiram, King of Tyre offered to deliver to the King of Israel building materials for a new palace if he would concede him a port on the Ethiopian Sea (Gulf of Akabah, part of the Red Sea). The King of Israel gave him the town and port of Eloth (modern Eilat) alongside Ezion-Geber, K.S. built himself a palace the famous "House of the Forest of Lebanon" so called after the source of the timber (see 1 Kings 7 v 1-19). Then Sanchuniathon supplements our Biblical knowledge by the following interesting passage "Although there were great palm forests in the neighbourhood of Ezion-Geber and Eloth there was no timber suitable for ship-building purposes, so Hiram had to transport the timber there on 2000 camels. A fleet of 10 ships was built from it" Thus K.S. had 3 mighty projects on hand the building of the Temple, his palace and a fleet and King Hiram could only supply the finished and highly skilled labour and so K.S. had to find himself the enormous amount of semi-skilled labour that was required. Thus we read (1 Kings 5 v 15-16. R.V. slightly modernised) and K.S. raised a levy out of all Israel, 30,000 men and he sent them to Lebanon, 10,000 a month by courses (in turn) a month in Lebanon and two months at home and Adoniram was over the levy, and K.S. had 3 score and 10 thousand that bore burdens and 4 score thousand that were hewers in the mountains, besides K.S.'s chief officers who were over the work. 3,300 which bore rule over the people that wrought in the work. Now that is 30,000 plus 70,000 and 80,000 equals 180,000 and 3,600 officers, a terrible burden on the resources of his country. (it had its repercussions when his son Rehoboam came to the throne later) They must of course have been ~~conscripted~~ conscripted

and rebellion must often have been very near. The mortality rate must also have been very high especially for gastro-intestinal epidemics. The conscripts, who were given their wages in kind, corn, wine and oil, were presumably drawn from the descendants of the original Canaanites and less fortunate of the Hebrews, but to return to the fleet - the names of the 3 senior captains are given by Sanshuniathon as Kedarus, Jaminus and Kotilus. Ezion-Geber was a well equipped and strongly defended port for this new foreign trade to Ophir and other distant and unfamiliar shores. Many believe that Ophir is another form of the Latin word-Africa, and that it was applied to some part of E Africa, perhaps modern Somaliland (? Zuinbalwo, of King Solomon's mines) others believe Aphir was in the Persian Gulf, possibly the modern Oman. In 1.Kings 10 v 22 and 11 Chron 9 v 21 we read "once in every 3 years came the navy etc. Possibly the merchant navy sailed from Ezion-Geber in Nov or Dec one year and returned in the May or June, 18 months later. In this way the scorching heat of the Summer would have to be endured only once each voyage. Perhaps the 3 senior captains took over the duty of commodore in turn, a day on and two off during the expeditions. "Certainly the men of Israel and any Tyrians still there must have stood in wonder on the quayside at Ezion-Geber when the fleet returned and discharged its cargo of Sandalwood, precious stones, gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks, 1.Kings 10 v 22 and 11 Chron 9 v 21. Now in 1930 the Americans bought a mound called Tell-el-Mubessellum at the site of the ancient Megiddo in the plain of Jezreel, well to the N of Jerusalem. This they carefully excavated and found it divided itself into 4 strata. The first Babylonian and Babylonian the second Assyrian and the 3rd and 4th (deepest) Israelite. This last was a large, flat, stone surface studded with stone stumps, ranged one behind the other and square in cross section. On either side of the stone stumps were roomy stalls 10 feet wide and these were probably part of K.S.s cavalry stables. Many still had feeding & watering troughs & when the whole was uncovered these were found to be stalls for 450 horses and 150 hard standing chariots. Megiddo was a garrison city where K.S. chariot corps, the tank corps of those days was stationed centrally in the Kingdom. Another garrison was stationed under the high walls of Jerusalem & the Crusaders under Godipor de Bouillon tethered their horses there after their conquest of the city, 2000 years after K. S time & now a few words about the Queen of Sheba's country. This was called Arabia-Felix, fort of Arabia. Writing in A.D 90 Dionysius the Greek says "You can always smell the sweet perfume of nardiveous spices, incense and myrrh. Its inhabitants have great flocks of sheep in the meadows & birds fly in from distant lands bringing leaves of unguine. Sheba was the S portion of Arabia the land mass between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Although naturally desert, it was irrigated from a great reservoir formed by the damming of the R Adhamah. Remains of this engineering marvel on the slope of walls over 60 feet high are still present among the sand dunes of the desert. Thus for 1500 years Arabia was accounted happy because it grew spices. In 542 B.C however the dam burst & has never been renewed. The capital was Meib. Just as the K.S.S (and K.Hiram ships made voyages to Ophir, so camels the ships of the desert" made voyages N along the E side of the Red Sea to Ezion-Geber & beyond, along a route that was called the "Incense route". Thence some of the costly merchandise went on into Israel for the improvement of the standard of life there some went on to the N the caravans keeping to the E of the River Jordan & so to Asia-Minor & turning E to Mesopotamia & some, turning to the N.W (At Ezion-Geber) sailed to the Mediterranean seaboard & so N to Phoenicia, the land of Hiram K of Tyre. Thus the picture of K.S.s reign clarifies & rationalises itself. It was a time of marvellous economic expansion & prosperity. No longer need the most sceptical of us pierce "Fairy-tale". The wealth of that time is amply proved by modern archaeological research & the descriptions of the Temple & its furnishings & of the King's house & other wonders are made intelligible no doubt the Queen had a number of things to do with the incense caravans talk over & her visit would nowadays be regarded as a combination of a state visit to a friendly neighbouring monarch & trade mission.

In conclusion we can understand more clearly how the transformation from a simple agricultural economy - as in the early part of "K Davids reign - to that of K.Solomon's occurred. We must remember that he was aided by fortunate external & internal circumstances) great warlike power among his neighbours & no rebellious within his realm, such as troubled his fathers reign. He had a strong well-equipped, swift-moving & ever ready army centrally placed, prepared to repel any attack from outside or suppress any revolt within his realm. It was however never in action. He had the rich iron & copper deposits & the secrets of employing those, he had a large forced labour corps, he had the wealth brought by the rich entrepot trade between Sheba, Egypt, Asia Minor & Mesopotamia & above all the supreme wisdom to co-operate with neighbouring countries & not to fight. Who shall say this it not a lesson for the countries of the West to-day. Thus it was that in the space of 40 years, Israel rose from the misery & poverty of a departed nation - the time of Davids lament after Gilboa - to the prestige, pomp and splendour of an Eastern Empire.