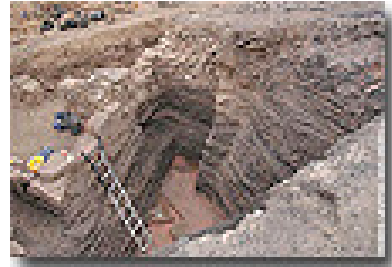


King Solomon's Mines 'Discovered'

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A copper mine found in the Middle East could be the site of the mythical King Solomon's mines, scientists believe.

The archeologists have excavated an ancient copper production centre during a dig in southern Jordan and after carbon dating found that it matches the time when the legendary King Solomon is said to have run a vast empire in the Middle East.



An industrial copper slag mound is being excavated at an ancient fortress known as Khirbat en-Nahas, which means "ruins of copper" in Arabic.

The building and layers above it date to the mid-9th century BC, while the slag deposits below the building date to the 10th century.

Even though King Solomon is mentioned in the Bible there is little physical evidence of his reign of the United Kingdom of Israel and Judah. However he was said to be born in 1,000BC and died in 931BC.

As the dominant force in the area at the time, he would have been responsible for any major industrial works, especially if it was on the edge of his empire.

Led by Thomas Levy of the University of San Diego, and reported in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the team believes the excavations back up the accounts in the Bible.

"We can't believe everything ancient writings tell us," Levy said. "But this research represents a confluence between the archaeological and scientific data and the Bible."

Future research at Khirbat en-Nahas, Levy said, will focus on who actually controlled the copper industry there - Kings David and Solomon or perhaps regional Edomite leaders (who had not been written about in the biblical texts) - and also on the environmental impacts of all the ancient smelting.

King Solomon's Mines entered popular culture in Victorian times when the writer adventurer Sir H Rider Haggard wrote a novel by the same name about the search for ancient excavations.