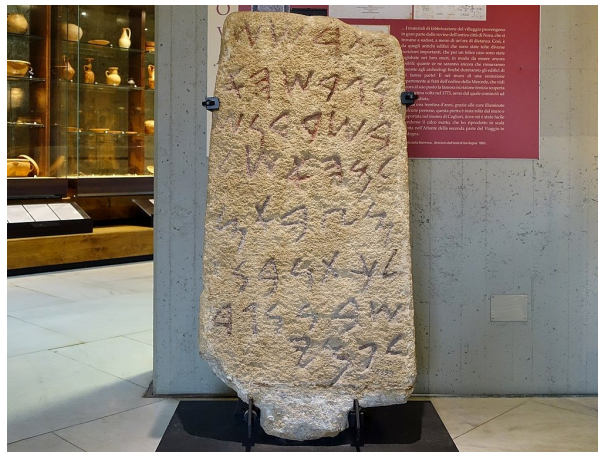


## Tarshish: The Origins of Solomon's Silver

In a joint venture, the Phoenician King Hiram and King Solomon go to Tarshish to bring back silver—the Levant has no silver deposits of its own. Where is Tarshish? Archaeological science, specifically, the ability to trace the chemical fingerprint of silver, and Phoenician inscriptions such as the Nora Stone, point us to the answer(s).

Dr. Tzilla Eshel



Nora Stone, a 9th cent. B.C.E. Phoenician inscription found in Sardinia. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Cagliari. Olaf Tausch, Wikimedia Commons

When Solomon constructs the Temple, he makes many of the implements out of gold (1 Kgs 7:48–50).<sup>[1]</sup> Although he does not use silver, he has plenty of it stored along with the surplus gold in the Temple treasury:

מלכים א ז:נא וְהַשְׁלֵם כָּל הַמְּלָאכָה  
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה בֵּית יְיָ הוּא  
וַיָּבֵא שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת קִדְשֵׁי דָוִד אָבִיו אֶת

1 Kgs 7:51 When all the work that King Solomon had done in the House of YHWH was completed, Solomon brought in the sacred donations of his father David—the

הַכֶּסֶף וְאֵת הַזָּהָב וְאֵת הַכֵּלִים נָתַן  
בְּאֵצְרוֹת בֵּית יְיָהוָה.

silver, the gold, and the vessels—and  
deposited them in the treasury of the  
House of YHWH.

Similarly, when Solomon builds his palace, we hear of only golden objects (1 Kgs 10:16–18).<sup>[2]</sup> The text explains that Solomon had so much silver, that it was barely considered precious:

מַלְכִּים אֵין כָּא וְכָל כֵּלִי מִשְׁקָה הַמֶּלֶךְ  
שֶׁלֹמֹה זָהָב וְכָל כֵּלִי בֵּית יַעֲרֵר הַלְבָנוֹן  
זָהָב סָגוֹר אֵין כֶּסֶף לֹא נִחְשָׁב בִּימֵי  
שֶׁלֹמֹה לְמֵאוֹמָה.

1 Kgs 10:21 All King Solomon's drinking  
vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of  
the House of the Forest of Lebanon were  
of pure gold; none were of silver—it was  
not considered as anything in the days of  
Solomon.<sup>[3]</sup>

Israel does not have silver or gold mines, so where does Solomon get this surplus of precious metals?

## Where Is all This Gold and Silver From?

The book of Kings notes several sources for Solomon's gold and silver:

**A. Gifts from foreign visitors**—When the Queen of Sheba comes, she brings gold with her, among other gifts (1 Kgs 10:10)<sup>[4]</sup>—and this is just one example of a more general phenomenon:

מַלְכִּים אֵין כָּד וְכָל הָאָרֶץ מְבַקְשִׁים  
אֶת פְּנֵי שֶׁלֹמֹה לְשִׁמְעַת אֶת חֻכָּמָתוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן אֱלֹהִים בְּלִבּוֹ. יִכָּה וְהִמָּה  
מִבְּאֵים אִישׁ מִנְחָתוֹ כֵּלִי כֶסֶף וְכֵלִי  
זָהָב וְשִׁלְמוֹת וְנִשְׁק וּבִשְׁמִים סוּסִים  
וּפָרָדִים דָּבָר שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה.

1 Kgs 10:24 All the world came to pay  
homage to Solomon and to listen to the  
wisdom with which God had endowed  
him; 10:25 and each one would bring his  
tribute—silver and gold objects, robes,  
weapons and spices, horses and mules—  
year after year.

This fits a well-known pattern of giving precious gifts between royal parties in the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern societies during the Late Bronze Age.<sup>[5]</sup>

**B. Tribute**—Subject peoples would pay taxes or tribute:

מַלְכִּים אֵין יִיד וְיָהִי מִשְׁקַל הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר  
בָּא לְשֶׁלֹמֹה בְּשָׁנָה אֶחָת שֶׁשׁ מֵאוֹת  
שָׁשִׁים וְשֶׁשׁ כִּכָּר זָהָב. יִטוּ לְבָד  
מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַתִּירִים וּמִסַּחֲרֵי הָרִכָּלִים וְכָל  
מִלְכֵי הָעָרִב וּפְחוֹת הָאָרֶץ.

1 Kgs 10:14 The weight of the gold which  
Solomon received every year was 666  
talents of gold, 10:15 besides what came  
from tradesmen, from the traffic of the  
merchants, and from all the kings of  
Arabia and the governors of the regions.

A classic example of this is the tribute Hezekiah pays to Sennacherib, mentioned both in the Bible (2 Kgs 18:13–16) and in Sennacherib's prism.

**C. Foreign Trade**—Solomon's ally, the Phoenician Hiram, king of Tyre (in modern Lebanon), imports gold from a place called Ophir, in Arabia or Africa, using a fleet of ships ostensibly embarking from Solomon's Etzion-geber port (near Eilat) in the Gulf of Aqaba/Red Sea:

מלכים א י"א וְגַם אֲנִי חִירָם אֲשֶׁר	1 Kgs 1:11 Moreover, Hiram's fleet, which
נָשָׂא זָהָב מֵאוֹפִיר הֵבִיא מֵאִפִּיר עֲצֵי	carried gold from Ophir, brought in from
אֲלֻמִּיָּם הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד וְאַבְנֵי יָקָרָה.	Ophir a huge quantity of almug wood and
	precious stones.

Later in the chapter, we hear of Solomon's own Tarshish fleet, bringing back gold and silver once every three years:

מלכים א י"ב בִּי אֲנִי תַרְשִׁישׁ לְמֶלֶךְ	1 Kgs 10:22 For the king had a Tarshish
בָּיִם עִם אֲנִי חִירָם אַחַת לְשָׁלֹשׁ	fleet on the sea, along with Hiram's fleet.
שָׁנִים תָּבוֹא אֲנִי תַרְשִׁישׁ נִשְׂאֵת זָהָב	Once every three years, the Tarshish fleet
וְכֶסֶף שְׁנֵהָבִים וְקָפִים וְתִכְיִים.	came in, bearing gold and silver, ivory,
	apes, and peacocks. <sup>[6]</sup>

The verse describes a joint venture between Solomon and Hiram working together to import precious metals along with other luxury goods to the Levant, in return for whatever these ships brought with them to export.<sup>[7]</sup> But what is the meaning of the term "Tarshish fleet"?

## A Tarshish Fleet?

William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971), the great American archaeologist, argued in a 1941 article<sup>[8]</sup> that the term Tarshish is not meant as a geographical marker, describing where the ships go, but is an adjective describing what kind of ships Solomon had.<sup>[9]</sup>

It is highly probable that Tarshish was a Phoenician word meaning "mine" or "smelting plant"<sup>[10]</sup>... The expression *ʾonî taršîš* "tarshish-fleet," is very interesting and may now be explained as meaning "refinery fleet," i.e., a fleet of ships which brought the smelted metal home from colonial mins.<sup>[11]</sup>

A similar approach, albeit with a different translation of the term, was put forward by Mordechai Cogan in his commentary on the passage, who argues that both texts about Hiram's expeditions are referring to the same fleet:

The designation "Tarshish Fleet" in no way implies that Solomon was involved in Tyre's Mediterranean trade. Most agree that in the present

context, the reference is to a type of ship, rather than to a particular destination—thus, a large oceangoing vessel. Influencing this judgement is the cargo of monkeys and peacocks, pointing in the direction of Africa rather than the Mediterranean.<sup>[12]</sup>

Further support of this view can be found in later in Kings:

מלכים א כב:מט יהושפט (עשר)	1 Kgs 22:49 Jehoshaphat constructed
[עשה] אניות תרשיש ללכת	Tarshish ships to sail to Ophir for gold.
אופירה לזהב ולא הלך כי	But he did not sail because the ships were
(נשברה) [נשברו] אניות בעציון	wrecked at Ezion-geber. <sup>22:50</sup> Then
גבר. כב:ג אז אמר אחזיהו בן	Ahaziah son of Ahab proposed to
אחזאב אל יהושפט ילכו עבדי עם	Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants sail on the
עבדיך באניות ולא אבה יהושפט.	ships with your servants"; but
	Jehoshaphat would not agree. <sup>[13]</sup>

One problem with translating *tarshish* as a type of vessel is that the book of Chronicles, in a retelling of Kings, clearly understands Tarshish as a toponym:

דברי הימים ב ט:כא כי אניות למלך	2 Chron 9:21 The king's fleet traveled to
הלכות תרשיש עם עבדי חורם	Tarshish with Hiram's servants. Once
אחת לשלוש שנים תבואנה אניות	every three years, the Tarshish fleet came
תרשיש ונשאות זהב וכסף שנהבים	in, bearing gold and silver, ivory, apes,
וקופים ותוכיים.	and peacocks.

The German Bible scholar Wilhelm Rudolph (1891–1987) argues that Chronicles misunderstood the term in Kings:

The original text (=1Kgs 10:22) says "the King had a Tarshish-Fleet on the sea," where "*tarshish*-ship" is a term of quality... it does not mean that the ship actually goes to Tarshish... as the Chronicler misunderstood here. The reference is surely to the trips to Ophir (compare the imported products).<sup>[14]</sup>

These scholars are trying to make the account of Solomon's Tarshish fleet work with the earlier description of a Red Sea fleet, and the mention of items of African origin. And yet, whether or not the Phoenicians had a Red Sea fleet, they certainly had one in the Mediterranean, which was their main source of income.

It seems more likely, therefore, that Tarshish is a toponym somewhere on the coast of the Mediterranean, as it is elsewhere in the Bible. This is how Chronicles as well as most interpreters throughout history have understood the term in this verse.

## What Do We Know about Biblical Tarshish?

The most famous biblical reference to Tarshish appears in the book of Jonah. After YHWH commands Jonah to go to Nineveh in Assyria to convince them to repent, Jonah decides he does not want to fulfill this mission, and so he runs away:

<p>יונה א:ג וַיֵּקֶם יוֹנָה לִבְרֹחַ תַּרְשִׁישׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּרֶד יָפוֹ וַיִּמְצָא אֲנִיָּה בָּאָה תַרְשִׁישׁ וַיִּתֵּן שָׂכָרָהּ וַיֵּרֶד בָּהּ לְבוֹא עִמָּהֶם תַּרְשִׁישׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה.</p>	<p>Jonah 1:3 Jonah, however, started out to flee to Tarshish from YHWH's service. He went down to Jaffa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to sail with the others to Tarshish, away from the service of YHWH.</p>
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The implication is that Jonah is sailing to a place that is as far away as he (or the reader) can imagine. This fits with what the account of Solomon's Tarshish fleet (1 Kgs 10:21) implies, that a round-trip merchant expedition to Tarshish took around three years. This also clearly implies access to Tarshish from the Mediterranean.

### A Source for Silver: Jeremiah

Jeremiah's taunt of idol worshippers, in which he mentions Tarshish as the source of silver (and perhaps gold), confirms that it was a place to acquire precious metals :

<p>ירמיה י:ט כֶּסֶף מִרְקָע מִתַּרְשִׁישׁ יֻבָּא וְזָהָב מֵאוּפָז מַעֲשֵׂה חָרָשׁ וַיְדִי צוּרָה...</p>	<p>Jer 10:9 Silver beaten flat, that is brought from Tarshish, and gold <i>meuphaz</i>, the work of a craftsman and the goldsmith's hands...</p>
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According to this verse, silver comes from Tarshish. The origin of the gold is less clear, and it depends on the meaning of the word *אוּפָז*, *meuphaz*:

**From Uphaz**—Reading the text as is, the gold comes from an unknown place called Uphaz.<sup>[15]</sup>

**Gold Plate**—Some emend the text to say *זָהָב מוּפָז*,<sup>[16]</sup> without the *aleph*, which would mean “gold plate,” though Shadal (Samuel David Luzzatto, 1800–1865) notes that it would be strange to have the gold worked before it arrived at the palace.<sup>[17]</sup>

**Hendiadys**—Others emend the text to read *זָהָב וּפָז*, a hendiadys meaning “gold and fine gold,” i.e., lots of gold,<sup>[18]</sup> though it is difficult to

understand why the two letters, *mem* and *aleph*, would have been added.

**From Ophir**—Targum Jonathan reads וְהָבָא מֵאֹפִיר and the Syriac Peshitta reads (ܡܕܡܬܐ ܡܢ ܐܦܝܪ) both meaning “gold from Ophir.”

If this latter reading is correct, it would fit with the dichotomy in 1 Kings mentioned above, that Ophir was famous for its gold and Tarshish for its silver.

## Phoenician Silver Trade: Ezekiel

From Ezekiel's “lament over Tyre,”<sup>[19]</sup> describing the greatness of Tyre before it was destroyed by the Babylonians, we learn that, at least in the decades before Ezekiel's time, the Phoenicians of Tyre imported silver to the Levant from Tarshish, with their Tarshish ships:

יְחֻזְקָאֵל כֹּזֵיב תַּרְשִׁישִׁי שְׁחָרְתָּךְ מֵרֶב כָּל הָזֶן בְּכֶסֶף בְּרִזָּל בְּדִיל וְעוֹפֶרֶת נָתַנוּ עֲזָבוֹנֶיךָ.... כֹּזֵיבָה אֲנִיּוֹת תַּרְשִׁישִׁי שְׁרוּתֶיךָ מֵעֶרְבֶיךָ וּתְמִלְאֵי וּתְכֶבֶדִּי מֵאֵד בְּלֵב יָמִים.	Ezek 27:12 Tarshish traded with you because of your wealth of all kinds of goods; they bartered silver, iron, tin, and lead for your wares.... <sup>27:25</sup> The Tarshish ships were in the service of your trade. So you were full and richly laden on the high seas.
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According to this, until Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Tyre, Phoenician ships would bring silver and other metals from Tarshish into the Levant. While Ezekiel is probably describing the reality in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., Tyre had likely been involved in this trade at least as far back as the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., perhaps even earlier.

## Tarshish in the Nora Stone

The trade connection between Tyre and Tarshish appears in “the Nora Stone,” a 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Phoenician stela engraved upon a 1.05-meter limestone slab (KAI 46).<sup>[20]</sup> The stela was found in 1773, near the archaeological site of Nora in Sardinia, in a secondary use context (i.e., as part of the building of another structure).

The letters are easy to read, but as there are no spaces or dividers marking words, the interpretation of this stone, especially its ending, is debated. Here is one possible reading with accompanying translation:

...בְּתַרְשִׁישׁ וְגֵרָשׁ הָא בְּשֶׁרְדֵּי שְׁלֹמֹה הָא שְׁלֹמֹה צָבָא מַלְכַת בְּנֵי שׁ בִּנְיָמִן <sup>[21]</sup> נִגְרַל לַפָּמִי.	...to Tarshish. And he was driven to Sardinia. He is safe. Safe is the crew (or army) of the Queen. <sup>[22]</sup> [This] structure
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that the official built is dedicated to  
Pumi.

This short text is likely a thanksgiving inscription put up by a Tyrian official in gratitude for the ship having survived some dangerous event<sup>[23]</sup>—note the use of the word *shalom* twice. The final word, לפני, could be a dedication to the Phoenician god Pumi, or may reflect the writing of the steal by an official of King Pumi.<sup>[24]</sup>

The final word of the otherwise missing opening line בחרשש “at/from Tarshish” seems to tell us either where they were headed or where they were coming from. They ended up in Sardinia, because they were driven out of somewhere, perhaps Tarshish, or perhaps some earlier port on the way to Tarshish. This confirms the biblical material that implies that Tarshish was part of the Phoenician trade circuit. But where more precisely is Tarshish was located?

Many places in the ancient Mediterranean had names that sound like Tarshish. Including: Tarsus in Anatolia, Thasos in the Aegean, Tharros in Sardinia and Tartessos in Iberia<sup>[25]</sup> Looking at silver deposits in the ancient Mediterranean world and comparing them to the silver caches from the Iron Age Levant helps us locate this Tarshish.

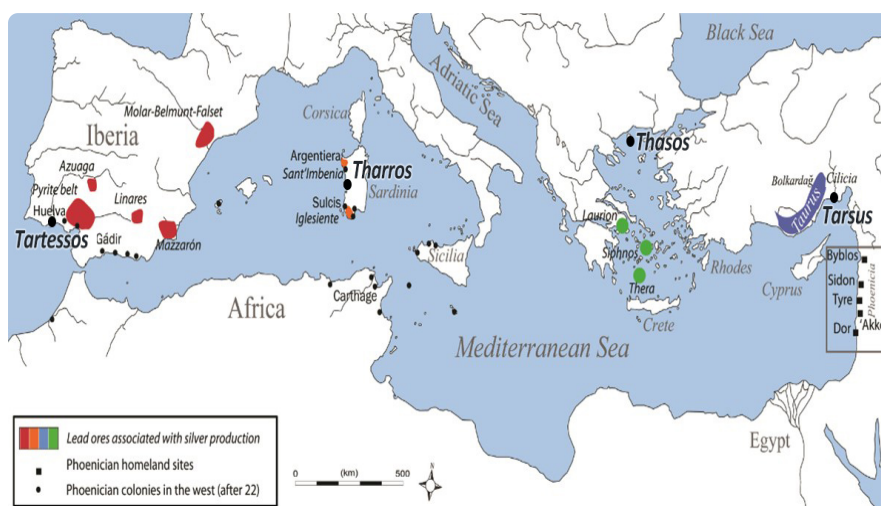
## Silver's Fingerprint

Silver is produced from silver-rich lead deposits. Extracting silver from the lead is a two-step process: First, the lead-silver alloy must be separated out from the ore deposit, and then the silver needs to be separated from the lead and other accompanying metals.<sup>[26]</sup>

The chemical makeup of each deposit is distinct. Since silver is a result of extracting the metal from lead ore, every piece of silver has a small percentage of lead that remains from the lead ore. Lead (Pb 82) has four stable isotopes, and the ratio of the various isotopes in any given lead deposit is like a fingerprint, telling us the age of the ore (namely when the ore was formed), and of the accompanying silver in the ore. Since the lead deposits formed at different times, the composition of each, and the ratio of isotopes differ in each ore.

Silver, in the form of rods, cut ingots, and scrap silver served as a means of currency and exchange in the southern Levant, since the Middle Bronze Age.<sup>[27]</sup> This is evidenced by a total of 40 different silver hoards, found in various locations in this region.<sup>[28]</sup> The Levant, however, has no lead deposits, and thus any silver found in archaeological hordes must have been

imported. The main silver-rich lead deposits in the Mediterranean and Near East were in Iran, Turkey, Aegean islands, Greece, Sardinia, and Spain.



### Silver-rich lead ore deposits in the Mediterranean. Illustrations by Svetlana Matskevich

When the Mycenaean Empire collapsed at the end of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1200 B.C.E.), the international trade network of the Mediterranean collapsed as well. This led to a shortage of silver in the southern Levant that lasted for two centuries.<sup>[29]</sup> Silver hoards from several contexts in the southern Levant (Megiddo, Beth Shean, Tel Keisan and Ashkelon) contained silver mixed with copper, evidence of this silver shortage. Pure silver in hoards is evident again only from the mid 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., implying that silver was again being imported into the Levant.

Isotopic analysis of the many silver objects that were found from this period (mid-10<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.E.) in the Land of Israel, in Dor and Akko, point to Turkey and Sardinia as the origin point of the silver.<sup>[30]</sup> This would suggest that Tarshish in Kings was either Tarsus in the Taurus mountains of Anatolia (modern Turkey) or perhaps Tharros on Sardinia.





The 'Ein Hofez Hoard: Isotope analysis shows that the silver originated in Spain. Image courtesy of the Collection of Israel Antiquities Authority by Warhaftig Venezian (photographer).

Silver hoards in the southern Levant, 10th–8th centuries BCE.  
Illustration by Svetlana Matskevich



In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the main source of silver for the Levant switched to Spain, and remained there for the next two centuries (9<sup>th</sup> –8<sup>th</sup> centuries). Among the silver objects that came from Spain were a silver hoard from 'Ein Hofez (near Yokneam), a hoard from Tel 'Arad, and the largest hoard ever discovered in the Near East, from Eshtemo'a, which included 23 kilograms of silver.<sup>[31]</sup>

Based on these findings, the Tarshish as the source of Phoenician silver in Jeremiah (10:9) and Ezekiel (27:12, 25), quoted above, refers to Tartessos on the Iberian Peninsula, as many scholars have suggested.

Notably, whereas Genesis 10:4 describes an Aegean Tarshish, which might imply Thasos as Tarshish, the silver from the southern Levant in the 10<sup>th</sup> –8<sup>th</sup> centuries does not come from there.

## How Many Tarshishes?

The story of Solomon and Hiram's joint ventures to Tarshish are set in the late tenth century, when the primary sources for silver in the southern Levant were Turkey and Sardinia. How does this fit with the references to silver from Tarshish in later biblical sources, which probably refer to Spain?

Many answers to this question are possible. We already mentioned above that *tarshish* could have been the name of the fleet, only later becoming the name of the site(s) from which silver was imported. Another possibility is that Tarshish in the Bible refers to multiple places. The Tarshish in the story of Solomon and Hiram refers either to Tarsus in Turkey or Tharros in Sardinia, while Jeremiah and Ezekiel are speaking of Tartessos in Spain. Perhaps the

Phoenicians brought the name with them to Spain when they began exploiting new silver ores.

Finally, it is also possible that a later scribe, writing the story of Solomon and Hiram's fleet travelling to get silver, projected the reality of his own time onto Solomon's. While in the tenth century, the Phoenicians were travelling to Turkey and Sardinia, this scribe assumed that they were travelling to Tartessos in Iberia, as they did in his day, and thus mistakenly called Solomon and Hiram's merchant ships the Tarshish fleet.

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## Footnotes

Published March 1, 2022 | Last Updated December 17, 2022

1. The text reads,

<p>מלכים א' ז:מח וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת כָּל הַכֵּלִים אֲשֶׁר בֵּית יְהוָה אֶת מִזְבֵּחַ הַזָּהָב וְאֶת הַשְּׁלֶחָן אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים וְהַבֹּמֶט וְאֶת הַמְּנֹרֹת חֲמֵשׁ מִיְּמִין וְחֲמֵשׁ מִשְּׂמָאל לִפְנֵי הַדְּבִיר וְהָב סֹגֹר וְהַפְּרָח וְהַנִּזְרָה וְהַמְּלָקָחִים וְהָב. י"ז וְהַסְּפֹת וְהַמְּזֻמְרוֹת וְהַמְּזֻרְקוֹת וְהַכַּפּוֹת וְהַמְּחֻתּוֹת וְהָב סֹגֹר וְהַפְּתוֹת לְדִלְתוֹת הַבַּיִת הַפְּנִמִּי לְקֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים לְדִלְתֵי הַבַּיִת לְהִיכָל וְהָב.</p>	<p>1 Kgs 7:48 And Solomon made all the furnishings that were in the House of YHWH: the altar, of gold; the table for the bread of display, of gold; 7:49 the lampstands—five on the right side and five on the left—in front of the Shrine, of solid gold; and the petals, lamps, and tongs, of gold; 7:50 the basins, snuffers, sprinkling bowls, ladles, and fire pans, of solid gold; and the hinge sockets for the doors of the innermost part of the House, the Holy of Holies, and for the doors of the Great Hall of the House, of gold.</p>
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2. The text reads:

<p>מלכים א' י"ט וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה מֵאֵתִים צָנָה וְהָב שְׁחוֹט שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת וְהָב יַעֲלֶה עַל הַצָּנָה הָאֶחָת. י"ח וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת מִגָּנִים וְהָב שְׁחוֹט שְׁלֹשׁ מִגָּם וְהָב יַעֲלֶה עַל הַמִּגָּן הָאֶחָת וַיִּתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּית יֵעַר הַלְבָנוֹן. י"ח וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּסֵּא שֵׁן גָּדוֹל וַיַּצְפֹּהוּ וְהָב מוֹפָז.</p>	<p>1 Kgs 10:16 King Solomon made 200 shields of beaten gold—600 shekels of gold to each shield— 10:17 and 300 bucklers of beaten gold —three minas of gold to each buckler. The king placed them in the Lebanon Forest House. 10:18 The king also made a large throne of ivory, and he overlaid it with refined gold.</p>
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3. Here I follow the NRSV translation, since the NJPS doesn't make the point that none of the vessels were made of silver clear enough.

## 4. The text reads:

מלכים א י"י ותתן למלך מאה ועשרים כפר  
 וזהב ובשמים הרבה מאד ואבן יקרה...  
 1 Kgs 10:10 She presented the king with one  
 hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a large  
 quantity of spices, and precious stones...

5. For some discussion, see Marian Feldman's "Materiality, Luxury Goods, and Diplomatic Gifts" (=ch. 5) in, Marian H. Feldman, *Diplomacy by Design: Luxury Arts and an "International Style" in the Ancient Near East, 1400–1200 BCE* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 105–114.

6. See the discussion of this verse and what it might mean historically in Barry J. Beitzel, "Was There a Joint Nautical Venture on the Mediterranean Sea by Tyrian Phoenicians and Early Israelites?" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 360 (2010): 37–66.

7. Perhaps they exported copper from Edom and spices from the Arabian Peninsula (among other things).

8. See William Foxwell Albright, "New Light on the Early History of Phoenician Colonization," *BASOR* 83 (1941): 14–22.

9. See also the use of this term in Psalm 48:8.

10. Albright specifically argues for a Mesopotamian origin of the word:

The writer would explain the word as ultimately a loan from Accadian (Babylonian) meaning "smelting plant, refinery."

In fn 31, he clarifies his suggestion:

I.e. Accad. \**taršīšu*, derived from *rašāšu*, "to melt, be smelted" and connected with Arab. *ršs*, "to trickle, etc., of a liquid."

11. Albright, "New Light on the Early History," 21–22.

12. Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings*, Anchor Bible, (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 319.

13. Note the adjusted reading in Chronicles, which replaces Ophir as the destination point with Tarshish.

דברי הימים ב כ"ו ואחר־כֵן אֶתְחַבֵּר יְהוֹשָפָט  
 מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה עִם אֶחָזִיָה מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא  
 הָרָשִׁיעַ לַעֲשׂוֹת. כ"ו וַיִּחְבְּרֵהוּ עִמּוֹ  
 לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲנִיּוֹת לָלֶכֶת תַּרְשִׁישׁ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֲנִיּוֹת  
 בְּעֶצְיוֹן גִּבֵּר.  
 2 Chron 20:35 Afterward, King Jehoshaphat of  
 Judah entered into a partnership with King  
 Ahaziah of Israel, thereby acting wickedly.  
 20:36 He joined with him in constructing ships  
 to go to Tarshish; the ships were constructed  
 in Ezion-geber.

(As we will see shortly, Chronicles elsewhere rewrites Tarshish fleet, as "fleet sailing to Tarshish.") According to this, the ships were made in Etzion-geber, but they sailed to Tarshish, ostensibly in the Mediterranean. The idea that the fleet could be built in one port but sail from another, requiring the ships to be transported by land, is the

basis for what might be the most elaborate attempt to interpret the term *tarshish* fleet as a reference to the Red Sea fleet. Yutaka Ikeda, emeritus professor of Bible in Japan's Tsukuba University, argues that the tarshish fleet in Kings refers to a fleet built by the Phoenicians, that sailed to King Solomon's Mediterranean port (likely in the area of Jaffa), which was then taken apart and transported to Etzion-gever, to be used in the Red Sea fleet. Yutaka Ikeda, "King Solomon and his Red Sea Trade," in *Near Eastern Studies: Dedicated to H.I.H. Prince Takahito Mikasa on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed., Masao Mori, Hideo Ogawa, and Mamoru Yoshikawa, Bulletin of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan (Wiesbaden, DE: Otto Harrassowitz, 1991), 113–132.

14. Die Vorlage lautet „eine Tarschisch-Flotte hatte der König auf der See“ dabei is „tarschisch-schiff“ ein Qualitätsbegriff... und bedeutet nicht, daß Schiff tatsächlich nach Tarschisch... fuhr, wie es hier der Chronist mißversteht, Gemeint sind gewiß die Ofirfahrten (vgl. die mitgebrachten Produkte). Wilhelm Rudolph *Chronikbücher*, Handbuch zum Alten Testament 21 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1955), 224.
15. The word אופי appears elsewhere only in MT Daniel 10:5, בְּכֶתֶם אוֹפִי “in Upaz gold.” Here too it is generally assumed to be a scribal error for ופּו or simply פּו. The former would be a hendiadys, בְּכֶתֶם וּפּו “with gold and pure gold,” the latter appears in Song of Songs 10:11 כֶּתֶם פּו “pure gold.” (This could reflect the Vorlage of the LXX, which reads φῶς (phos) “light,” perhaps transliterating an unfamiliar Hebrew term (paz) and rendering it into a similar sounding Greek one.)
16. This may have been the Vorlage of the LXX, which reads χρυσίον Μωφάζ, “Mophaz gold,” only the translator didn't understand the term, so he merely transliterated it.
17. The comment appears in MS Lutzki 675a, and it was crossed out (the text below is taken from the AlHaTorah website):

<p>ואין נ"ל לפרש כמשמעו שהכסף יובא מתרשיש כשהוא מרוקע, כי רחוק הדבר שיביאו הפחים מרוקעים מתרשיש, באופן שלא יהיה הכסף ההוא מוכשר לעשות בו שאר מלאכות, ואם יצטרך הצורך לעשות כלי מה יצטרך להתיד את הפחים ותהיה מלאכת הרקוע לבטלה.</p>	<p>It doesn't seem correct to me to explain this according to its simple meaning, that the silver (sic) was brought from Tarshish when it was already utilized as plate, for it makes little sense that they would have brought plated vessels from Tarshish in such a way that the silver (sic) would be unusable for other purposes, and that if a smelter wished to make a vessel, he would need to remove the plating such that the original plating work would have been in vain.</p>
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Shadal here talks about plated silver instead of plated gold, but this is likely just a slip of the pen.

18. Another example of this pairing can be found in Psalm 119:127.
19. This may be referring to Nebuchadnezzar's 13-year siege of the city which damaged it economically.
20. For discussion of the stela, see Albright, “New Light on the Early History of Phoenician Colonization”; Frank Moore Cross, “An Interpretation of the Nora Stone,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 208 (1972): 13–19; Brian Peckham, “The Nora Inscription,” *Orientalia* 41.4 (1972): 457–468; Edward Lipiński, *Itineraria*

*Phoenicia, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 127, Studia Phoenicia XVIII (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 234–247.*

21. This parsing follows Lipiński. Other scholars, such as Cross, divide the words differently here, and read it as a personal name with a patronymic מלכת בן שבנ, Malkatin son of Shovna.
22. Lipiński understands this as the name of the ship, though it could be an unnamed reference to a queen. As noted above, other scholars parse this differently and see it as part of the official's name, Malkatin.
23. Other scholars understand the text as thanksgiving for a successful military conquest of Sardinia (or this part of Sardinia).
24. Cross and others who read the previous words as the personal name Malkatin son of Shobna, read the last two words as a description of his position, the official of (king) Pummy, whom they identify with the well-known Phoenician king Pygmalion (831–785 B.C.E.).
25. These are just the most popular contenders; there are at least eight more. See discussion in Beitzel, "Was There a Joint Nautical Venture?"
26. This refining process, in which the ore is exposed to very high temperatures to separate the noble metal (silver in this case) from the base metal (lead) is called cupellation, from the medieval Latin term *cupella*, referring to the bowl in which the silver-lead alloy was placed. The process was known to humans as far back as the fourth millennium B.C.E. in Syria and Iran.
27. Tzila Eshel, Ayelet Gilboa, Ofir Tirosh, Yigal Erel, and Naama Yahalom-Mack, "The Earliest Silver Currency Hoards from the Middle Bronze Age Southern Levant: A Hyksos Initiative?" (forthcoming)
28. See Tzila Eshel, "[How Silver Was Used for Payment](#)," *TheTorah* (2018).
29. See Tzila Eshel, Ayelet Gilboa, Naama Yahalom-Mack, Ofir Tirosh, Yigal Erel, "Debasement of silver throughout the Late Bronze – Iron Age transition in the Southern Levant: analytical and cultural implications," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 125 (2021): 1–24.
30. See Tzila Eshel, Yigal Erel, Naama Yahalom-Mack, Ofir Tirosh, Ayelet Gilboa, "Lead Isotopes in Silver Reveal Earliest Phoenician Endeavors in the West," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116, (2019): 6007–6012.
31. See Tzila Eshel, Yigal Erel, Naama Yahalom-Mack, Ofir Tirosh, Ayelet Gilboa, "From Iberia to Laurion: Interpreting Changes in Silver Supply to the Levant in the late Iron Age Based on Pb-Isotope Analysis," (forthcoming).



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Last Updated February 28, 2022

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