

Chapter 10

Hiram Abiff

Who is the Grand Master?

There was no such person as “Hiram Abiff.” He does not appear in the bible, or in any historical source. The “Master of Works” exists only in the Temple Legend, as a character in that great allegory.

Hiram Abiff is, in part, a composite of three biblical figures, Bezaleel, Adoniram, and Hiram Abi. According to the Bible:

- Bezaleel (God is protection) was placed in charge of constructing the Tabernacle, including the foundation stones, the wood beams, and the gold, silver, and brass works.¹
- Adoniram (my Lord is high) was in charge of the levy of thirty thousand unskilled workers assigned by Solomon to the Temple building project.²
- Hiram/Huram Abi (noble, free father) was a brass smith, who made the brass furnishings and ritual tools of the Temple.³

Of these three biblical characters, only Bezaleel is described as working with stone.

Thus, the figure of Hiram Abiff combines the wisdom of Bezaleel and the supervising skills of Adoniram with the metal working skills of Hiram Abi, and adds those of a Master Mason. However, the question remains, who is he really?

¹ Exodus 31.1-11; 37.1; 38.22

² I Kings 6.13-14

³ I Kings 7.13-40; II Chronicles 2.13-14, 5.11-16

Although he was not a historical person, he remains a powerful allegory. A symbolic character whose meaning we must discover if we are to understand the Legend.

Our first step in finding the symbolic meaning of the Grand Master is to examine the names of Adoniram and Hiram Abi.

Analysis of their names

“Adoniram” is a Hebrew name, meaning “my Lord is most high; Lord of might and elevation.”

“Adoni” means “Lord” and comes from the same root as “Adonis”, the god of vegetation who was sacrificed by the goddess. We will examine Adonis more closely later. At the moment, it is enough to note that Adoni is an honorific that is suitable for a god.

“Iram” is a Hebrew name meaning “the effusion of them; a high heap”.

Thus, from Adoniram we get “The Lord who is the effusion in the high place.”

“Hiram” is “from the Hebrew, meaning ‘noble born’ or ‘exalted brother.’”⁴ Another given meaning is “Hiram, exaltation of life; a destroyer”

“Abiff” is from the Hebrew word for “father.” Some have suggested that Hiram Abiff was the “father” (literal or spiritual) of King Hiram of Tyre. This is symbolically correct, but only when one understand who King Hiram represents (a subject we will discuss in a later chapter).

Thus, Hiram Abiff is a nobly-born, exalted brother, who has the title of “father.”

This raises the following questions:

⁴ Dictionary of First Names, by Alfred J. Kolatch, Perigree Books, NY, p. 137

- Effusion of what?
- What high place?
- In what way was he exalted or nobly born?
- To whom was he the “father?”
- To whom was he the “brother?”

In order to understand these questions, we need to place them in the context of the time and place, or setting, of the Temple Legend

The Setting

During the period in question, Palestine sat on trade routes from the east, south and north. The peoples of Israel and Judea encountered, and were influenced by, religions in Egypt, Babylon, Phoenicia (including Tyre), Syria, etc. Some of the mystery tales of those regions were quite similar to the Legend of Hiram Abiff. They were similar because they were allegories of the same process of spiritual growth and development. They were different because they were described by and for a different people and culture.

If we examine several regional legends, and look for similarities with the Legend of Hiram, then those similarities will provide an outline of the process hidden within the common symbols.

The Allegory of Osiris

Osiris was a complex Egyptian deity. The most familiar version of his myth (by the Greek writer Plutarch) is the most recent. Plutarch wrote long after the pyramid era, and closer to the period in which the Temple is set. However, his version

leaves out several important events, and misinterprets others. Thus, the following is a brief composite of several versions.

Seth, the evil brother of Osiris, tricked him into a chest. The chest was sealed with lead, thrown into the Nile, and floated downstream to the Mediterranean. It eventually washed-up on the shore of Lebanon, at Byblos, and a tree grew around it. The king of Byblos had the tree cut down and turned into the central column of his palace.

Isis the sister/wife of Osiris, found the column, recognized that her husband/brother lay within, and brought it back to Egypt. Seth discovered the chest, stole it, cut Osiris' body into fourteen parts, and scattered the parts along the Nile shore.⁵

Isis searched for the parts, found them, reassembled the body of Osiris, and attempted to raise it. She failed, and her sister Nephthys tried. Nephthys failed, and their brother Thoth tried, using a special grip. The third attempt worked, and Osiris rose up to heaven.

Parallels

The parallels between the legends of Osiris and Hiram include death, internment, search, and raising on the third attempt.

However, the polarity of Osiris does not quite seem to fit. Isis is obviously the negative pole, the Divine Mother or Substance. Osiris, her brother/husband, is just as obviously the positive pole, the Divine Father or Spirit. As we will see, Hiram Abiff does not appear to be the positive pole, which appears to create a problem.

⁵ The number of parts varies. Some versions indicate twelve, others fourteen.

Fortunately, this problem disappears when we recall the nature of the Second Aspect or consciousness, and look at the religious identities of the pharaohs.

The Second Aspect is that self or identity born of the relationship between Spirit and Substance. It can identify as either Substance (“I create”), itself (“I am”), or Spirit (“I will to be”). Thus, the Second Aspect can take on the identity of any of the Three Aspects.

This flexible identity of the Soul is illustrated in the spiritual identity of an Egyptian Pharaoh. A living pharaoh was “Horus” (the son of Isis and Osiris) during life, and became Osiris after death.

Thus, the Allegory of Osiris really does fit that of Hiram Abiff.

The mysteries of Isis and Osiris included a ladder, a pillar, a tree, and a casket in their symbolism, similar to those in Freemasonry.

These parallels are so obvious that some have maintained that Freemasonry must have grown out of the Egyptian Mysteries. Others cite similar parallels in other traditions, and suggest that Freemasonry must have arisen out of them. These views do not take into consideration the reality of the Ancient Mysteries.

The Ancient Mysteries are not collections of empty stories and meaningless rituals. Their legends are symbolic portrayals of the real process of spiritual growth and development. The rituals of the mysteries were and are an actual part of the sacred path. The hidden rites refine the persona and unfold the consciousness, preparing the candidate for the true path of spiritual initiation. Thus, the various versions of the Ancient Mysteries made the process of spiritual growth available to humanity

in every time and place.

Freemasonry is an expression of this process, designed for modern humanity. It includes symbols and allegories similar to those of the ancient mysteries because it continues the tradition of translating the spiritual quest into secret rituals and popular myths.

The Rites of Tammuz / Adonis

This version of the mysteries also has a number of similarities with the Legend of Hiram. It even appears that the rites of Tammuz were (for a time) practiced in the Temple of Solomon, for the prophet Ezekiel complains about it. In Ezekiel 8:14 we find:

“Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD; and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.”

Worshipped by the Babylonians and Syrians as Tammuz, and by the Greeks as Adonis⁶, the following is based on the Babylonian version of his myth.

Tammuz, the handsome god of vegetation, was the brother and spouse of the great goddess Ishtar. Tammuz died every year (in mid summer) and Ishtar journeyed to the house of darkness, the land of death, in search of him.

During her descent, she passed through seven gates, and at each gate was forced to give up an item of clothing, beginning with her crown, and including her earrings, necklace, breast pins, belt, wrist and ankle bangles, and then her gown.

During the absence of Ishtar, all creation ceased. Men and beasts stopped repro-

⁶ *Adon*, a title of honor by which his worshipers addressed him, is Semitic for “Lord”. The Greeks apparently mistook his title for his name. “Christos” (Greek for “the anointed one”) is a similar example of a title that has been converted to a proper name.

ducing, and all life was threatened with destruction. Ishtar found Tammuz, resurrected him with the Water of Life, and they returned to the world.

Parallels

The Babylonian version of the myth of Tammuz is fragmentary, and interpretations vary, but this version is consistent with the Legend of Hiram. The Greek tradition includes the internment of Adonis in a box. Thus, parallels between Tammuz/Adonis, Osiris, and Hiram include death, internment, search, and raising.

Ishtar's seven items of clothing (most obviously associated with one of the seven major centers), parallels the fourteen pieces of Osiris.

The fact that the Temple of Solomon includes the Pillar of Life, the Djed Pillar of Osiris represents the Tree of Life, and Ishtar is raised by the Water of Life, is quite interesting. It suggests that the Life or Spirit Aspect plays an important role in the Allegory, but is not the central character.

If we combine this with our earlier list of questions, we get something like:

The Grand Master Hiram Abiff represents a noble effusion that dies, is interned (in a shroud or box), found by searching, and then raised.

We know that Hiram is not the Great Mother, for She is the sister/spouse who is searching for him.

We know that Hiram is not the Father, for Hiram is raised by the word/water of life, which is associated with the Father Aspect.

Who, then, is Hiram Abiff?

By Their Works You Shall Know Them

Our earlier examination of the three temples provides a final clue. We identified the Tabernacle as the three-fold persona instrument, the Temple of Solomon as the Light Body of the Soul, and the Temple of Ezekiel as the Sheath of the Spirit. In the process, we indicated that the Greater Builders built the Temple of Solomon, under the direction of the Spiritual Soul. We also identified the Tabernacle or persona as the box into which the Soul moved, and in which it died to its self.

In this perspective, Hiram Abiff is the Spiritual Soul, the Second Aspect of Divinity, born of the polar relationship between Spirit (the First Aspect), and Substance (the Third Aspect).

If we put all of this together, then we find that the Legend of Hiram is an allegory of the life of the Soul.

The Spiritual Soul, directing the Greater Builders, creates a body for itself on the buddhic plane. It moves into the three lower worlds, creates a persona instrument, and “dies” to itself as it moves into and identifies with the body, emotions, and mind.

In this condition, the Soul is the infant Child of God. Born of the relation between the Father and Mother, it shares their Divine Characteristics, but those capacities are slumbering, waiting for the awakening word.

Through the long, slow process of spiritual growth, encompassing many incarnations, the three-fold persona is purified and the consciousness is redeemed.

The Soul regains awareness of its self, and becomes the brother/husband of Sub-

stance.

Gross matter is transformed into light and uplifts the incarnate Soul. The divine couple (Substance and Soul, sister/wife and brother/husband) rise to heaven together.

When the ascension is complete, the Soul becomes the Adult Son. His awareness is at-one with the entire planetary life, and His Mind includes the whole of the planetary mind.

Christ

One of the common criticisms of Freemasonry is that nowhere in its rites and rituals is the name of “Christ” mentioned. This criticism dissolves if one looks for the identity of Christ rather than the name.

Christ is the Adult Child of God, who has risen to realize His/Her identity as the child of the Father and the Mother, the Spiritual Soul at-one with Spirit and Substance, with Divine Will and Divine Intelligence.

This is who and what Hiram Abiff becomes after he is raised, the Risen Child of God or “Christ”. Any true initiate of the ancient mysteries recognizes Him, by whatever name, for we know ourselves to be children of the One Divine Parent. We are all brother/sisters growing into awareness of our selves and at-one-ment with the Divine.

The next question we need to ask is, “Who commanded Hiram to build the Temple?”

The Descent of YHWH

Our previous exercise integrated the heart and intellect, and pierced the veil between the realm of the persona and the realm of spirit. In this technique, we move into the Holy of Holies.

- ◆ Opening alignment:
 - Sit in a comfortable chair and place *The Temple and The Word* in your lap.
 - Close your eyes and relax your physical body, finishing with your consciousness focused in your head.
- ◆ Review your progress thus far: Imagine yourself in the shadow of the wall, before the gate.
- Knock, step into the courtyard, gaze into the Laver and calm your emotions.
 - Remove your raiment and rub your body with salt.
 - Pour water over your head and shoulders.
 - Pick up your raiment and lurch over to the Altar.
 - Light the altar, burn your raiment, and clarify and focus your mind by concentrating on the flames.
 - Burn your old raiment, and climb to the eleventh step.
 - Don your new raiment, including the robe, sandal, and knotted cord.
 - Step onto the porch and stride up to the central door.
 - Knock on the door and step forward.
 - Silently cry out for delivery.
 - Three sparks of light spring to life, illumining the altar in the great hall.

- Rise from your knees, walk up to the altar, and bow.
 - Get the shewbread and incense, light the incense, and hold the bread in the smoke.
 - Imagine a blue-white light, illumining the shewbread with Divine Love.
 - Consume the loaf of bread, and direct love forward through the Ark to the source of love.
 - Bow to the altar and walk east, toward the far side of the middle chamber.
 - Wipe the tracing board clear, and step up to the veil of the Holy of Holies.
 - The fifth candle flickers alight.
 - You try to pass the veil three times, and fail each time.
 - Focus your mind and heart on the Soul, and step through the veil.
 - Walk up to the Ark, place your hands on the cherubim, and invoke your purpose, place, and function.
- ◆ Opening your eyes, you find yourself standing immediately before the Ark. The Shekinah has faded, leaving behind a heightened awareness of your relationship with the Divine and your purpose in the One Life.
- Having thus achieved your goal, it is time to return to the world and put your newfound awareness to work in service to Humanity.
- Turn and face the two large cherubim, and the veil between them.
 - Imagine closing your eyes, and, maintaining your awareness of your purpose, place, and function, aspire to serve the One Life through your thoughts, feelings, and actions.

- ◆ When your focused aspiration to serve has reached its height, audibly state the seed-thought:

“As the Soul, a Child of God, I dedicate my mind, emotions, and brain to the service of the One Life.”

Hold this thought, without thinking about it, for at least three minutes.

- Maintaining your dedication to the One Life, imagine opening your eyes, and stepping toward the veil between the cherubim.
- Take a deep breath, drop the image, and open your eyes.

Continue to the next chapter.

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