



## Hiram, King of Tyre

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But, who was he?

## **HIRAM KING OF TYRE**

Plenty has been written about the life of the great King Solomon, and much has been told and speculated about the elusiveness of Hiram Abiff, but Hiram, King of Tyre occupies very little space in the minds of most Freemasons today. Mentioned by name only in Masonic folklore, the King of Tyre disappears as quickly as he is mentioned in our ceremonies. Not only was he a great character who played a significant role in the building of Solomon's Temple, but he also ruled over one of the most wealthiest and influential kingdoms in the Middle East. His many years of friendship with King Solomon and his father King David proved that he was worthy of our order placing him in the position of second Grand Master, symbolic of the Doric Column in that he was a true, generous, practical friend, represented by a plain and stocky strength.

Scholars believe that his name or variations of it meant "Exalted One", which in and around his lifetime (which would have approx 1000BC) was probably a fitting name for someone who was held in such high regard by his people. Unfortunately more is known about his kingdom than of the man himself, but from the knowledge we have, it is possible to determine that a great deal of wealth, stature and power surrounded him.

His kingdom consisted, for the most part, two islands, one being the tiny island of Melkart and the other Tyre. Although Tyre was the larger of the two, it, in itself measured only approx one mile long by three quarters of a mile wide, with both lying less than a mile of the shores of Lebanon, and due to them being virtually impregnable, they remained resistant to assaults and sieges for more than a thousand years.

Although his name is known to Freemasons as the King of Tyre, he was in fact the King of the Phoenicians whose ships spread their culture, knowledge and wealth far throughout the ancient world and established cities such as Carthage and Utica on the north coast of Africa. There are even stories of the

Phoenicians sailing to England and extracting tin (a component of bronze), from various places including Cornwall. With the Phoenicians being skilled in the art of metal working, woven products, woodworking, stone working and various other trades, it stands to reason that Solomon would choose such a king and his people to help him in achieving his goal of building a temple to the lord god of the Hebrew nation.

Hiram's association with King David and his son Solomon was believed to be dictated by mutual need. Both the kings of Israel required skilled workmen and materials. David for his palace and Solomon for the temple to house the Ark of the Covenant, while Hiram required food, such as corn, wheat and oil for his people, therefore it seems logical that a deal was struck in order to exchange help from one another. The term of the agreement with King Solomon and his father can be found in the book of Chronicles. Solomon paid Hiram 20,000 cors of crushed wheat, 20,000 cors of barley, 20,000 baths of wine and 20,000 baths of oil each year. Although today it is difficult to explain just how much was given to Hiram it is generally believed that it was in the region of between 880,000 and 1,720,000 gallons of wine and oil and about the same number of bushels of wheat and barley.

As time went on during the building of the temple Hiram lent Solomon vast amounts of money due to the increasing costs of the building work, and in exchange Solomon gave Hiram 20 cities in the Province of Galilee. Unfortunately when Hiram took a look at the cities that he was given he was not a very happy man. 1st Kings 9:10-14 states that Hiram quizzed Solomon "what kind of cities are these which you have given me my brother."

Perhaps Hiram had a right to complain as he did in fact lend Solomon 120 talents of gold which in today's monetary value is roughly between 12 and 25 million pounds. Probably the greatest assistance that Hiram gave Solomon was in fact the

numerous skilled workmen who built the temple and especially the famous Masonic master craftsman Hiram Abiff.

Many people today believe that the King of Tyre and the slain master are one and the same, while some believe that they are father and son and others that they are in fact two completely different people.

Nothing more is known about the Great king except that his kingdom was to grow, flourish and influence other nations for about another 6 to 7 hundred years until it was invaded by Alexander the Great in about 400 B.C. Needless to say that if it was not for the assistance and aid given by the king of Tyre to King Solomon then the King of Israel may not have been as important as he was.