

This information may be freely given to Masons. - Author Unknown (4 mins.)

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HIRAM KING OF TYRE

Our Masonic ritual, which is a mixture of fact and fiction, tells us that our Craft had three original Grand Masters. The first of these, Solomon, King of Israel, figures prominently in our Masonic story. The third of this trio, Hiram Abif, is the center and source of our deepest teaching and to him, all Masons are bound by a unique tie. The second of our Grand Masters, Hiram King of Tyre, has only a passing reference in our ritual.

In history, Hiram King of Tyre was a monarch who ruled over a powerful kingdom at the peak of its greatness. Today this area is called Lebanon. The Kingdom of Tyre, or Phoenicia, as it was more generally known, was located on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, north of Palestine. Its principal city was the seaport of Tyre, which because of its geographical location became a converging point on the great trade routes. Tyre became one of the foremost commercial centers of the ancient world and grew rich and powerful. Phoenicia has two claims to its achievements.

In the first place, the Phoenicians were among the first known sailors of the world. It is said that they were the first to navigate upon the open sea and to chart their course by means of the stars. Thus, to the men of Tyre goes the distinction of being the fathers of modern navigation. They must indeed have been an alert and venturesome race. It is known that Phoenician sailors travelled all over the Mediterranean, sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar, up to England as well as down the coast of Africa. As the Phoenicians went about the Mediterranean, they founded colonies in various places, the most famous of which was Carthage on the northern coast of Africa. Carthage flourished, and as Tyre began to decline, Carthage carried on the Phoenician tradition. Carthage came into conflict with the rising power of Rome. Hamilcar Barca fought the first Punic War against Rome. The second Punic war saw his son, Hannibal, one of the greatest military commanders of all time, take an army across North Africa, through Spain and southern France. Then in the middle of winter, he crossed over the Alps with his army, that included war elephants and into present-day Italy. Hannibal occupied part of the country for 15 years until Rome counterattacked and destroyed Carthage. It is interesting to speculate that if Carthage had conquered Rome, the people of Hiram King of Tyre might instead have influenced our civilization.

In the second place, the Phoenicians may claim a high place in the history of mankind because they were the inventors of one of the first known alphabets. We take the alphabet so much for granted that it is hard for us to conceive of the time when it did not exist. Hiram's people were certainly possessed of intellectual curiosity and skill to

formulate a way whereby the words of men could be recorded by other than oral means. The Phoenician alphabet influenced the Greek, and the Greek the Roman. Any lacking skills that the Hebrews needed to build King Solomon's Temple were provided by Hiram King of Tyre, along with the vast amount of cedar wood.

The Cedars of Lebanon

An article by VW Bro. Barry D. Thom [with references from the Old Testament](#)

The Cedars are located in a range of mountains in olden day, Phoenicia. Today this area extends the length of modern-day Lebanon and is adjacent to the northern boundary of Israel. The area was well known for the cedars which it produced, many of which are from fifty to eighty feet in height. Today there are three stands left and protected against cutting by law. Articles of wood, such as a gavel etc. may be made, if the tree has died, been struck by lightning or branches broken off by the wind. In 1967, I visited a stand of cedars, inland from the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli and up 6,000 ft.

Florence and I were married in 1970. In 1973 we visited Lebanon together and returned to the same stand of trees. This time we purchased several items made of cedar. Two of the items were gavels. (I used mine, as Master of St. Clair Lodge in 1979 and again in 1989. Florence used hers as Worthy Matron of an Eastern Star Chapter and again as Worthy High Priestess, in the White Shrine of Jerusalem). We continued on through Syria and into Jordan stopping at a southern resort on the Gulf of Aqaba. On Yom Kippur we saw the Egyptian Migs flying north and low, to be under the radar. As we had previously applied and had the necessary papers to visit the West Bank, we proceeded in that direction. I was sure that because of the war they would revoke the papers at the border but I have found that there are different levels of intelligence in the Arab countries. I base this on my six months travelling in nine Arab countries back in 1967.

I/we were in Aman, Jordan on the first day of the Arab/Israeli war, in 1967. We watched the Israeli jets fire rockets into the airport fuel storage supply. At that time I was travelling with two men from Japan (we were all in our mid-20's). They had a Volkswagon and I shared expenses. The next day we got a Visa for Iraq and left. The road to Bagdad is through the desert. Late in the day we were stopped by the military and taken to their post. They went through the vehicle and removed everything. It looked as if we were going to lose our cameras and for me, all my undeveloped film from the past 6 months. What really intrigued the military was a small plastic recording device that was held to the dash by a magnet. You manually changed the numbered wheels by hand.

Volkswagens at that time had no fuel gauge, but there was a reservoir lever that when turned down released a gallon of gas. The two Japanese did not know about this until I told them. So when they filled the tank they set the dial numbers to when they should next fill the tank. The Iraqi military wanted to take the car dash apart to figure out what made this thing stick to the dash and what it controlled. They seemed sure that it controlled or measured something. After about 20 minutes of trying to explain that it measured nothing they confiscated it and let us go. They gave us back everything, cameras and all. The war was still on when we left Iraq. The Japanese had a Visa for two weeks, mine said in Transit Only. I bought a bottle of bleach and removed that part. I did a poor job and it stuck out like a sore thumb. From Bagdad, we travelled south to the Kuwait border but crossed into Iran. At the border, you must get an exit stamp. I sent my friends to the post with my Passport and the story that I was sick to my stomach and might throw up. They came out laughing saying, "No problem, they marked down your nationality as Ottawa".

You must remember that Arabs read from right to left, thus they open a western passport from back to front.

The higher level of intelligence can be found at International airports etc. As illustrated above, the lower level at checkpoints not normally used by the average tourists. On entering the 'West Bank', the first question that the Israelis asked was, "Did we see any troop movements along the road from Aman, Jordan?" "None, I replied but we did see training with Russians Migs in the Syrian area of Palmyra". And that is why the Jordanians should never have let us pass. We stayed in Israel for the duration of the war. Everybody thought that we were Jewish, as any tourist with any common sense, had left as soon as the war started! I promised the Israelis that I would not return, thus hopefully averting another major war so far so good. Now to continue with the educational part.

As Israel did not have the massive trees needed for the construction of King Solomon's Temple, Hiram, King of Tyre allowed King Solomon to take the trees needed, but they were not free. I forget exactly what the trade was, wheat and land that contained several cities seems to ring a bell?

It made sense to choose the nearest forest to fell the trees from, that being Tyre, the most southern city in Phoenicia. The trees were brought to the ocean, tied into rafts and floated to Joppa. From here they made their way to Jerusalem.

In the Old Testament, we read the following: Adoniram, son of Abda, was in charge of forced labour. On a rotational basis, 10,000 men were sent to cut timber in Tyre. They went to Tyre for one month and came home for two. Adoniram was also the tax collector for King David, King Solomon, and Solomon's son King Rehoboam. Adoniram held this position over a period of 40 years until it ended

when the people of Israel stoned him to death. The reason being that they were tired of being overtaxed and also, they felt that the levy of forced labour was too high.

Some of you may wonder that because King Solomon's Temple was very small 105 ft in length, 30 ft in width and 30 ft high (not counting the treasure chamber on the roof and the side chambers on three sides) why did it take years of cutting timber? The temple was a small part of a very large complex that took 21 years to build. (re-read the whole story, STB - F.C. section paper #2