

LEGEND OF THE TEMPLE

Ancestry of Hiram Abiff: Solomon having determined on the erection of the temple, collected artificers, divided them into companies, and put them under the command of Adoniram or Hiram Abiff, the architect sent to him by his friend and ally Hiram, king of Pyre. According to mythical tradition, the ancestry, of the builders of the mystical temple was as follows: One of the Elohim, or primitive genii, married Eve and had a son called Cain ; whilst Jehovah or Adonai, another of the Elohim, created Adam and united him with Eve to bring forth the family of Abel, to whom were subjected the sons of Cain, as a punishment for the transgression of Eve. Cain, though industriously cultivating the soil, yet derived little produce from it, whilst Abel leisurely tended his flocks. Adonai rejected the gifts and sacrifices of Cain, and stirred up strife between the sons of the Elohim, generated out of fire, and the sons formed out of the earth only. Cain killed Abel, and Adonai, pursuing his sons, subjected to the sons of Abel the noble family that invented the arts and diffused science. Enoch, a son of Cain, taught men to hew stones, construct edifices, and form civil societies. Irad and Mehujael, his son and grandson, set boundaries to the waters and fashioned cedars into beams. Methnsael, another of his descendants, invented the sacred characters, the books of Tan and the symbolic T, by which the workers descended from the genii of fire recognised each other. Lamech, whose prophecies are inexplicable to the profane, was the father of Jabal, who first taught men how to dress camels' skins; of Jubal, who discovered the harp; of Naamah, who discovered the arts of spinning and weaving; of Tubal-Cain, who first constructed a furnace, worked in metals, and dug subterranean caves in the mountains to save his race during the Deluge; but it perished nevertheless, and only Tubal-Cain and his son, the sole survivors of the glorious and gigantic family, came out alive. The wife of Ham, second son of Noah, thought the son of Tubal-Cain, handsomer than the sons of men, and he became progenitor of Nimrod, who taught his brethren the art of hunting and founded Babylon. Adoniram, the descendant of TubalCain, seemed called by God to lead the militia of the free men, connecting the sons of fire with the sons of thought, progress, and truth.

Hiram, Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba. By Hiram was erected a marvelous building, the Temple of Solomon. He raised the golden throne of Solomon, most beautifully wrought, and built many other glorious edifices. But, melancholy amidst all his greatness, he lived alone, understood and loved by few, hated by many, and among others, by Solomon, envious of his genius and glory. Now the fame of the wisdom of

Solomon spread to the remotest ends of the earth; and Balkis, the Queen of Sheba, came to Jerusalem to greet the great king and behold the marvels of his reign. She found Solomon seated on a throne of gilt cedar wood, arrayed in cloth of gold, so that at first she seemed to behold a statue of gold with bands of ivory. Solomon received her with every kind of festive preparation, and led her to behold his palace and then the grand works of the temple, and the queen was lost in admiration. The king was captivated by her beauty, and in a short time offered her his hand, which the queen, pleased at having conquered this proud heart, accepted. But on again visiting the temple, she repeatedly desired to see the architect who had wrought such wondrous things. Solomon delayed as long as possible presenting Hiram Abiff to the queen, but at last he was obliged to do so. The mysterious artificer was brought before her, and cast on the queen a look that penetrated her very heart. Having recovered her composure, she questioned and defended him against the ill-will and rising jealousy of the king. When she wished to see the countless host of workmen that wrought at the temple, Solomon protested the impossibility of assembling them all at once; but Hiram, leaping on a stone to be better seen, with his right hand described in the air the symbolical Tau, and immediately the men hastened from all parts of the works into the presence of their master. At this the queen wondered greatly, and secretly repented of the promise she had given the king, for she felt herself in love with the mighty architect. Solomon set himself to destroy this affection, and to prepare his rival's humiliation and ruin. For this purpose he employed three fellow-crafts, envious of Hiram, because he had refused to raise them to the degree of masters on account of their want of knowledge and their idleness. They were Fanor, a Syrian and a mason; Amru, a Phoenician and a carpenter; and Metnsael, a Hebrew and a miner. The black envy of these three projected that the casting of the brazen sea, which was to raise the glory of Hiram to its utmost height, should turn out a failure. A young workman, Benoni, discovered the plot and revealed it to Solomon, thinking that sufficient. The day for the casting arrived, and Balkis was present. The doors that restrained the molten metal were opened, and torrents of liquid fire poured into the vast mould wherein the brazen sea was to assume its form. But the burning mass ran over the edges of the mould, and flowed like lava over the adjacent places. The terrified crowd fled from the advancing stream of fire. Hiram, calm, like a god, endeavoured to arrest its advance with ponderous columns of water, but without success. The water and the fire mixed, and the struggle was terrible; the water rose in dense steam and fell down in the shape of fiery rain, spreading terror and death. The dishonoured artificer needed the sympathy of a faithful heart; he sought Benoni, but in vain: the proud youth perished in endeavouring to prevent the horrible catastrophe when he found that Solomon

had done nothing to hinder it.

Hiram could not withdraw himself from the scene of his discomfiture. Oppressed with grief, he heeded not the danger, he remembered not that this ocean of fire might speedily engulf him; he thought of the Queen of Sheba, who came to admire and congratulate him on a great triumph, and who saw nothing but a terrible disaster. Suddenly he heard a strange voice coming from above, and crying, "Hiram, Hiram, Hiram!" He raised his eyes and beheld a gigantic human figure. The apparition continued, "Come, my son, be without fear, I have rendered thee incombustible; cast thyself into the flames." Hiram threw himself into the furnace, and where others would have found death, he tasted ineffable delights; nor could he, drawn by an irresistible force, leave it, and asked him that drew him into the abyss, "Whither do you take me" ? " Into the center of the earth, into the soul of the world, into the kingdom of great Cain, where liberty reigns with him. There the tyrannous envy of Adonai ceases; there can we, despising his anger, taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge; there is the home of thy fathers." " Who then am I, and who art thou ? " " I am the father of thy fathers, I am the son of Lamech, I am Tubal-Cain."

Tubal-Cain introduced Hiram into the sanctuary of fire, where he expounded to him the weakness of Adonai and the base passions of that god, the enemy of his own creature whom he condemned to the inexorable law of death, to avenge the benefits the genii of fire had bestowed on him. Hiram was led into the presence of the author of his race, Cain. The angel of light that begot Cain was reflected in the beauty of this son of love, whose noble and generous mind roused the envy of Adonai. Cain related to Hiram his experiences, sufferings, and misfortunes, brought upon him by the implacable Adonai. Presently he heard the voice of him who was the offspring of Tubal-Cain and his sister Naamah : " A son shall be born unto thee whom thou shalt indeed not see, but whose numerous descendants shall perpetuate thy race, which, superior to that of Adam, shall acquire the empire of the world; for many centuries they shall consecrate their courage and genius to the service of the ever-ungrateful race of Adam, but at last the best shall become the strongest, and restore on the earth the worship of fire. Thy sons, invincible in thy name, shall destroy the power of kings, the ministers of the Adonais' tyranny. Go, my son, the genii of fire are with thee! " Hiram was restored to the earth. Tubal-Cain before quitting him gave him the hammer with which he himself had wrought great things, and said to him: "Thanks to this hammer and the help of the genii of fire, thou shalt speedily accomplish the work left unfinished through man's stupidity and malignity." Hiram did not hesitate to test the wonderful efficacy of the precious instrument, and

the dawn saw the great mass of bronze cast. The artist felt the most lively joy, the queen exulted. The people came running up, astounded at this secret power which in one night had repaired everything.

Murder of Hiram: One day the queen, accompanied by her maids, went beyond Jerusalem, and there encountered Hiram, alone and thoughtful. The encounter was decisive, they mutually confessed their love. Had-Had, the bird who filled with the queen the office of messenger of the genii of fire, seeing Hiram in the air make the sign of the mystic T, flew around his head and settled on his wrist. At this Sarahil, the nurse of the queen, exclaimed: "The oracle is fulfilled. Had-Had recognizes the husband which the genii of fire destined for Balkis, whose love alone she dare accept! " They hesitated no longer, but mutually pledged their vows, and deliberated how Balkis could retract the promise given to the king. Hiram was to be the first to quit Jerusalem; the queen, impatient to rejoin him in Arabia, was to elude the vigilance of the king, which she accomplished by withdrawing from his finger, while he was overcome with wine, the ring wherewith she had plighted her troth to him. Solomon hinted to the fellow-crafts that the removal of his rival, who refused to give them the master's word, would be acceptable unto himself; so when the architect came into the temple he was assailed and slain by them. Before his death, however, he had time to throw the golden triangle which he wore round his neck, and on which was engraven the master's word, into a deep well. They wrapped up his body, carried it to a solitary hill and buried it, planting over the grave a sprig of acacia.

Hiram not having made his appearance for seven days, Solomon, against his inclination, but to satisfy the clamour of the people, was forced to have him searched for. The body was found by three masters, and they, suspecting that he had been slain by the three fellow-crafts for refusing them the master's word, determined nevertheless for greater security to change the word, and that the first word accidentally uttered on raising the body should thenceforth be the word. In the act of raising it, the akin came off the body, so that one of the masters exclaimed "Macbenach!" ("the flesh is off the bones," or the "brother is smitten") and this word became the sacred word of the masters' degree. The three fellow-crafts were traced, but rather than fall into the hands of their pursuers, they committed suicide, and their heads were brought to Solomon. The triangle not having been found on the body of Hiram, it was sought for and at last discovered in the well into which the architect had cast it. The king caused it to be placed on a triangular altar erected in a secret vault, built under the most retired part of the temple. The triangle was further concealed by a cubical stone, on which had been inscribed the sacred law. The vault, the existence of which was only known to the twenty seven elect, was then

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