

Who Was Hiram Abiff?
By Jim Pullins, Pleasant Valley #531

Hiram Abiff, we know, was a widow's son. He was the son of a man of Tyre, but his mother was an Israelite, said in one record to have been of the tribe of Naphtal, and in another, of the "daughters of Dan."

His mother was indeed a native of the tribe of Dan, but her first husband was of the tribe of Naphtali, to whom Hiram was probably born. After the death of the first husband, she then married a man of Tyre, and her son was brought up as a Tyrian and fully educated and trained in the arts of that land. Tyre was one of the principal seats of the Dionysiac fraternity of artificers, a Society engaged exclusively in the construction of edifices and united in a secret organization, subsequently imitated by the Operative Masons of the Temple. Hiram Abiff was quite probably a member of this organization, and learned much from this privilege. In assuming his work at Jerusalem, he introduced among the workmen the same exact system of discipline that he had found so advantageous in the Dionysiac Secret Society. From this secret society of operative masons there was evolved the Order of Speculative Masons, of which Hiram Abiff was the first Grand Master.

His mother, being a Daughter of Dan, the fifth son of Jacob, endowed Hiram with characteristics of this tribe. This tribe was said to be bold, courageous, daring and cunning. The banner of Dan was blue. This may be an origin for the choice of blue as a Masonic color.

In Chronicles, Chapter 2, verses 13 & 14, Hiram King of Tyre tells Solomon about the man he has sent to oversee the work of the Temple:

"And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my father's, the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre, skillful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device in which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father."

Obviously a good man to supervise the construction of a building containing all those materials and to manage all the workers.

It appears that Naphtali was also the fifth son of Jacob. The Lord, in Deuteronomy 33:23, says "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord, Possess thou the west and the south." In the same Chapter, the Lord refers to Dan as "a lion's whelp."

All of this together, shows us that our character Hiram Abiff, is a wrapping of many Masonic symbols and characteristics. He inherits possession of the west and south,

descended from the tribe that possessed the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (a symbolic reference to Christ) and possesses skills critical to the mastery of his craft. The mystery of who he is still remains, for while there are references to Hiram in his character as a craftsman, there is no Biblical reference to the name Abiff which is uniquely Masonic.