

## The Master Mason Degree and the LEGEND of H.A.B.

The dictionary defines the word legend as 'an unauthenticated story from earlier times preserved by tradition and popularly thought to be historical.'<sup>2</sup> This brings us to the Legend of H.A.B. and the third degree. The legend may well go back to the 14 or 1500's, however, it does appear after the formation of the Premiere Grand Lodge of England in 1717. Researchers feel that man dislikes change and innovation so much that the third degree was formed by dissecting the first and second degrees and was not an overnight innovation. The identity of H.A.B., if he is the biblical Hiram, must be derived from a few short paragraphs found in the books of Kings and Chronicals. According to the account in the first book of Kings he arrived after the temple structure was erected. His job was to produce the metal objects. He was a skilled metal worker, as was his father, as well as a gold smith. The second book of Chronicles relates a different story, however, it is suppose to be an account of the same event by another writer at a different point in time. Chronicles tells of Hiram coming to Jerusalem before the temple was built. Chronicles also states that Hiram is the son of a woman of the tribe of Dan. Some have tried to solve the inconsistency of the mother by supposing she was of the tribe of Dan prior to her first marriage, while others state a possible second marriage which had changed her ties from one tribe to another. Neither book describes Hiram as a mason or architect. To claim him as Solomon's principal architect is an innovation of Masonry, apparently not introduced until about 1700. Most of the circumstances related in the narrative of H.A.B. are mythical rather than historical. They are inventions conveying philosophical truth rather than records of historical fact. They are important to us, not for any information they may provide, but for the lessons of life and death which we may learn from them. According to the Masonic version of the story, when S.K.I. was about to erect a temple. to the Glory of God, he requested the assistance of H.K.T. Besides materials, he needed the services of an expert craftsman to superintend the project. A skilful workman named Hiram. was selected and brought to Jerusalem. He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali and a man especially skilled in the decorative arts. He was welcomed by Solomon and entrusted with the responsibility of superintending the workmen and charged with all the architectural decorations and interior embellishments of the building. In the execution of his duties H.A.B. displayed great skill, and in all his relations with the workmen he was eminently fair. It was the duty of H.A.B. to superintend the workmen and the reports of his officers were always examined with the most scrupulous exactness. At the opening of the day, when the sun was rising in the east, it was his constant custom, before the commencement of labour to go into the Temple and offer up his prayers to Jehovah for a blessing on the work. When the sun was setting in the west and after the labours of the day were closed and the workmen had left the Temple, he returned his thanks to the G.A.O.T.U. for the harmonious protection of the day. According to the legend, H.A.B. laboured faithfully for seven years and when the Temple was almost completed he was brutally murdered. The tolling of the bell reminds the candidate of the time, high twelve and of the event that took place at high noon, and of the inevitability of his own death. As a point of interest there were no bells at the time of King Solomon. Bells were not invented until the fifth century.. As a footnote we wish to point out that there was only one entrance to the

Temple and not three as stated in the degree. This entrance faced east. We also learned that Tub..c..n denotes W...P... and is recorded in the Book of Genesis. T C was the son of Lamech and a descendent of Cain. The V.O.T.S.L. states that he was <sup>3</sup>the forger of all cutting instruments.of bronze and iron.<sup>2</sup> While it is agreed that King Solomon did have a Master Architect his name is unrecorded. Masonic ritual has attached the name of Hiram to this person. Hiram the metal worker completed his work for King Solomon and when the temple was finished went home. The Acacia tree is known in the bible as the Shittim tree. It attains a great height and produces a hardwood. It is considered a sacred wood among the Hebrews. It is a very tenacious tree, growing under severe conditions. Thus early Masons appropriated this plant to represent the immortality of the soul. In ancient times mourners at a funeral would carry a piece of evergreen, generally cedar or cypress and deposit it in the grave. Apparently the Hebrews in early times always planted a sprig of acacia at the head of the grave of a departed friend. The point within the circle perhaps needs a little explanation. It reaches back to the Egyptian civilization. In the ancient religions the point in the center represented the phallus or male generative organ. The worship of the Phallus was very nearly universal. Even the Jews in their many defections into idolatry readily worshiped this symbol. Druid temples such as that found at Stonehenge are a circle of stones with a higher stone situated in the centre. Among the Scandinavians, the hall of Odin consisted of twelve seats in a circle for the principle gods and an elevated seat in the centre for Odin. Today the Hindus still worship the phallus in the temples dedicated to Shiva who represents reproduction and destruction in the Hindu triad. But male cannot be complete without the female component and this is represented by the circle. To the ancient sun worshippers and astronomers the point in the centre represented the sun surrounded by the earth. The sun being the generator and the earth as the producer. Masonic symbolism could be that as the Master and Wardens represent the sun in different positions, they are then designated as the point, while the circle represents the universal lodge. Today the point within a circle can be found on artifacts in most museums throughout the world. The circle having neither beginning nor end is a symbol of the Deity and eternity. It has been credited with magical powers and has been thought to protect everything enclosed within it from external evil. There exists the possibility that the point within the circle was brought into Freemasonry by the alchemists to whom the symbol represented the sun, with which they always associated gold.

This information may be freely given to Masons, however the following recognition is requested . The information contained in this educational

paper was taken from the following books:

Beyond the Pillars

>From the many papers put forth by Quatuor Coronati Lodge

The FreeMason's Guide and Compendium by Bernard Jones

The Old Testament

Coil's and Mackey's Masonic Encyclopedias

It was compiled and edited by Bro. Barry D. Thom P.M., Lodge Mackay #1129. 10 min

