

**Solomon and Hiram.**

While Hiram was sending cedars and marbles and skilled workmen to David and Solomon, he did not neglect the adornment of his own island city. He was a great builder on his own account, and did more than any other prince to give to Tyre that "perfection of beauty" of which the prophet Ezekiel speaks.

He rebuilt with very great magnificence the temple of Baal at Melcarth, and made it what it was when Herodotus visited it; he constructed an artificial mole to connect the islet, where the temple stood, with the rock of Tyre, and surrounded the whole with the massive walls that enabled the city to withstand so many sieges. He also built a very magnificent palace for himself within the city walls.

We may form some idea of what Hiram's palace was like by reading the description in the second book of Kings, and in Josephus' Antiquities of Solomon's "house of the forest of Lebanon," which, being the work of artists sent to Jerusalem by Hiram, was probably constructed after Tyrian models. Josephus tells us that Solomon's palace was a very spacious building, constructed to contain a great multitude. It was surrounded by open courts, and was approached through porches of great beauty—"the porch of pillars and the porch of judgement," covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other. The roof was supported by cedar pillars, and the walls built of precious marble arranged in rows; the fourth row being adorned with sculptures, "whereby were represented trees and all sorts of plants, with the shades that arose from their branches and leaves that hung down from them. Those trees and plants covered the stone that was beneath them, and their leaves were wrought so prodigiously thin and subtle that you would think they were in motion, but the other part up to the roof was plastered over, and, as it were, embroidered with color or pictures."

Hiram's affections for David descended to his son Solomon. As soon as he heard of Solomon's accession to the throne, he sent an embassy to congratulate him and take part in the ceremony of his coronation. The Jewish king acknowledged the attention by sending a letter in his own hand-writing to his brother monarch.

This letter, and a copy of Hiram's reply to it, were kept among the Tyrian records for several hundred years, and were still in existence at Tyre in Josephus' time, who gives a somewhat longer version of them than is found in the Book of Kings.

**SOLOMON TO KING HIRAM.**

"Know thou that my father would have built a temple to God, but was hindered by wars and continual expeditions, for he did not leave off to overthrow his enemies till they were all subject to tribute; but I give thanks to God for the peace I at present enjoy: and on that account I am at leisure, and design to build a house to God; for God foretold to my father that such a house should be built by me. Wherefore I desire thee to send some of thy subjects with mine to Lebanon, to cut down timber, for the Sidonians are more skillful than our people in cutting of wood. As for wages to the hevers of wood, I shall pay whatsoever price thou shalt demand."

**HIRAM TO KING SOLOMON.**

"It is fit to bless God when He hath committed thy father's government to thee, who art a wise man and endowed with all virtues. As for me, I rejoice in the condition thou art in, and will be subservient to thee in all that thou send

est to me about; for when by my subjects I have cut down many and large trees of cedar and cypress wood, I will send them to sea, and order my subjects to make floats of them, and to sail to what place soever of thy country thou shalt desire, and leave them there, after which thy subjects may carry them to Jerusalem; but do thou take care to procure us corn for this timber, which we stand in need of, because we inhabit an island."

In accordance with this proposition, Solomon fixed on the sea-port of Joppa, which was seventy four miles to Tyre and thirty-two from Jerusalem, as the spot to which the Tyrian sailors were to bring the floats and deliver them into the hands of his subjects. Strabo says it was reported in his time that the towers of Jerusalem could be seen from the high hill on which Joppa stood. It is hardly probable that the towers could actually be seen, yet that such an idea should exist enables us to realize the shortness of the distance between Jerusalem and Joppa, and the ease with which communication between Tyre and Solomon's capital might be carried on. Ancient writers tell us that, after the first exchange of letters, a very constant intercourse existed between the two kings. Solomon is said to have paid Hiram a visit at Tyre, and to have worshipped in the great temple of Baal at Melcarth—curious, no doubt, to compare the works which Hiram was carrying on there with his own temple and the cedar house then growing up at Jerusalem under the hands of Tyrian artists. When the two kings were apart they kept up their friendship by a frequent interchange of letters containing riddles and dark sayings, each king having promised to pay a forfeit for every riddle he could not solve. For a long time the victory was uniformly on Solomon's side; neither Hiram nor any of his sages could fathom the problems he sent, while Solomon never failed to return ready answers to all of theirs. At length Hiram found a very clever Syrian youth called Abdemon, who not only furnished the right replies to Solomon's questions, but occasionally supplied him with queries which puzzled the Jewish sage himself.

Arabian writers have preserved many riddles and dark sayings attributed to Solomon, some of which, no doubt, have a strong likeness to the questions that Hiram and the Tyrian wise men pondered over. There are some questions with which, according to Arab tradition, Solomon puzzled the sages of various nations while he was himself still a young man "Tell me what is everything, and what is nothing? Who is something, and who is less than nothing?" Solomon supplied the answers when the wise men, after pondering over them from morn to evening, confessed their inability to reply. "God, the Creator, is everything, but the world, the creation, is nothing; the believer is something, but the hypocrite is less than nothing." On another occasion he asked, "Which is the vilest thing and which is the most beautiful? What is the most certain, and what is the most uncertain?" and again he was called on for the solution of the enigmas. The vilest thing is a believer who apostatizes, the most beautiful a sinner who repents; the most certain thing is death and the last judgement; the most uncertain, life and the fate of the soul at the resurrection.—*Freemason.*

A Detroit citizen notifies the Common Council that his ancestors have all been dug up by the city, and he wants pecuniary compensation. *Dust for dust* is the way he renders it, and he makes no bones about it either.

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