



Good day Worthy Knights,
In this part 21, 2 of 2

(JSM Ward / AN Wilson / J Bundy / Wikipedia)

In the East: Who directed you hither? Hiram, the Widow's Son.



Isis and Osiris

There is much written about whether Hiram Abiff could be the Masonic interpretation of a much older legend, that of Osiris from Egypt. The most famous interpretation of the myth comes from Plutarch, the famous second century Greek writer.

The following synopsis of the myth of Osiris was abstracted from Glen Knappe's internet site on The Temple and the Word, specifically chapter 10.

Osiris was a complex Egyptian deity. The most familiar version of his myth is the most recent which Plutarch wrote long after the pyramid era, and closer to the period in which the Temple is set.

However, his version leaves out several important events, and misinterprets others. Thus, the following is a brief composite of several versions.

Seth, the evil brother of Osiris, tricked him into a chest. The chest was sealed with lead, thrown into the Nile, and floated downstream to the Mediterranean. It eventually washed-up on the shore of Lebanon, at Byblos, and a tree grew around it. The King of Byblos had the tree cut down and turned into the central column of his palace.

Isis the sister/wife of Osiris, found the column, recognized that her husband/brother lay within, and brought it back to Egypt. Seth discovered the chest, stole it, cuts Osiris' body into fourteen parts, and scattered the parts along the Nile shore.

Isis searched for the parts, found them, reassembled the body of Osiris, and attempted to raise it.

She failed, and her sister Nephthys tried. Nephthys failed, and their brother Thoth tried, using a special grip.

The third attempt worked, and Osiris rose up to heaven.

The mysteries of Isis and Osiris included a ladder, a pillar, a tree or sprig of Acacia and a casket in their symbolism, similar to those in Freemasonry. Both went to foreign lands to share their knowledge. Both have something that evil men wish to take, the word from Hiram, the kingdom from Osiris.

After a struggle both are murdered by their brothers, either biological or fraternal. Both men are hastily buried and Acacia identifies the body.

JSM Ward gives in his book "Who was Hiram Abiff" a detailed explanation as to why Hiram represents Adonis and not Osiris. See Chapter XXIV pages 237 – 240.

So, was Hiram Abiff developed by early Masons as an allegory for Christ, about Osiris, Adonis, Noah, Adam, or a son of Cain, or about a real Hiram Abiff ?

Does it matter? If one takes the story at face value, as exoteric teaching, then it is a beautiful drama about virtue, integrity, and brotherhood. These are so valuable to the fraternity that the legend has great meaning, regardless of the origin, or any hidden, esoteric meaning. We don't need a metaphysical explanation or spiritual mysticism to obtain the light we are looking for.

We see the underpinnings of modern ethical theories of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.

Esoteric teachings draw upon hidden or secret knowledge. These philosophies have been present for millennia and across all cultures and belief systems. In Masonry, the esoteric teachings from the Hiram legend would lead us towards a deeper understanding of man's actions and motivations, having the perseverance to continue to try to raise ourselves and fellow brothers out of earthly bondage towards freedom.

It is in the knowing that even when things that are truly important to us are forever lost, we can find a substitute that will allow us to continue a fulfilling life.

We are reminded that there are others outside our fraternity, and some from within, who may do us harm out of jealousy or other of their uncontrolled passions.

We, by understanding this legend and living through its example, can be a model to our leaders (represented by King Solomon and King Hiram) and other fellow citizens and brothers by our pure actions and goodness, despite repeated temptations.

If we so choose, it can be tied to our faith. We will be better humans, husbands, fathers, sons, and Freemasons by delving deep into our histories and values that have been so richly given to us by those masons who have come before.

(Virginia Royal Arch Research Chapter No. 1753 July 16th, 2016 Companion Joel Bundy)