

## NV Grand Lodge Short Lecture Series

# THE TRAGEDY OF HIRAM ABIFF

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During the ceremony of the Third Degree, which is so well named the Sublime Degree, you can hardly fail to have been deeply impressed by the tragedy of Hiram Abiff. To understand it, and to appreciate to the full its profound richness of meaning, is something that will remain with you as long as you live.

It is first of all important to understand that the drama of Hiram Abiff is a ritualistic drama. We all know what a drama is. It is a conflict between a man and other men or between a man and other forces, resulting in a crisis in which his fate or fortune lies at stake. The crisis, or problem, is followed by a solution or resolution. By drama, I do not refer a play as acted on the stage, but refers to dramas within our own lives, to every one of us, and in our daily experience. Mimicking the events, conflicts, and struggles man faces in real life.

The ceremony of Hiram Abiff is not only a drama, it is a ritualistic drama, and the major emphasis should be placed on the word "ritualistic." What is a ritual? It is a set of fixed ceremonies which address themselves to the human spirit solely through the imagination. A play in the theatre may be built round some historical figure or some historical event, as in the case of Shakespeare's plays about the English kings and about Macbeth or Hamlet. And if the figures and events are not actually historical, they are supposed to be, so that the facts of time, place and individual identity are of some importance to it.

A ritualistic drama, on the other hand, does not pay any heed to historical individuals, times or places. It moves wholly in the realms of the spirit, where time, space and particular individuals are ignored. The clash of forces, and crises and fates of the human spirit alone enter into it, and they hold true of all men, everywhere, regardless of who they are, or where and when they are.

Since the drama of Hiram Abiff is ritualistic, it is a mistake to accept it as history. There was a Hiram Abiff in history according to 1 Kings 7:13-14 was fetched out of Tyre by King Hiram, to help King Solomon build the temple. In Masonic ritual, Hiram Abiff is a symbol of the human soul. If, therefore, you have been troubled with the thought that some of the events of this drama could not possibly have ever happened you can cease to be troubled. It is not meant that they ever happened in ancient history, but that they are symbols of what is happening in the life of every man.

Hiram Abiff is the acted symbol of the human soul, yours, mine, any man's. The work he was engaged to supervise is the symbol of the work you and I have in the supervision, organization, and direction of our lives from birth to death. The enemies he met are none other than the symbols of those lusts and passions which in our own breasts, or in the breasts of others, make war on our characters and our lives. His fate is the same fate that befalls every man who becomes a victim to those enemies, to be interrupted in one's work, to be made outcast from the mastership over one's own self, and, at the end, to become buried under all manner of rubbish--which means defeat, disgrace, misery and scorn.

Do not be confused, the manner in which he was raised from that dead level to that living perpendicular again is the same manner by which any man, if it happens at all, rises from self-defeat to self-mastery. And the Sovereign Great Architect, by the power of whose word Hiram Abiff was raised, is that same God in whose arms we ourselves forever lie, and whose mighty help we also need to raise us out of the graves of defeat, or evil, and death itself.

## References

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