

A Day at the work site, with Hiram Abif...

Come; take a trip with me....to a place you've been before in your Masonic travels. If you will, picture in your mind a massive construction site....it will be finished soon...lots of beautiful columns, and marble work...gorgeous woodwork for the interior rooms...a well appointed 'holy of holies'....a very nice temple indeed!



This kind of work site requires lots of supplies, and lots of workmen to put it all together; 153,300 of them to be exact. This has been an active work site for nearly 7 years now, and for the most part the work has gone well, but sometimes the sheer workload is a real headache...and dealing with the 'union workers' isn't easy, either!

They're getting close to the end of the project, and this is a particularly busy morning. The site manager is sitting at a large table covered with architect's plans and drawings. He is looking closely at the drawings, and wondering if it will all come together in time. He's on a deadline, and he's inundated with construction site problems. From somewhere on his desk, buried under mounds of paper, a telephone rings. He tries to ignore it, frowns, and grumbles a bit. The phone rings again. Exasperated, he finally picks up the receiver and finds a friend at the other end of the line.....let's listen in on the conversation.



Hello! Solomon's Temple, Architect's office....No, no...this is not his Majesty! This is Hiram Abif speaking! The King is up in the hills, where it's nice and cool. In fact, I haven't seen him on site during the heat of the day lately at all....Who's calling?...Adoniram! Great to hear from you! Where are you? What are you up to, my brother?

Ah, working the forests in Lebanon! You lucky son of a camel! And in charge of the sawmill operation too! That's great! No wonder we're getting all the wood products built to specification! Wish I could say the same about the stuff coming from the quarry. No labor problems I hope?

How many thousand, you say? Wow...that many? I heard there's a policy of full employment in Lebanon, but that's just ridiculous! What are you doing with them all? Oh?...one working...and ten looking on? Well that system isn't unique, you know...and I bet it'll catch on at other work sites.

We're moving along all right, I suppose, but I am getting a lot of flack over the rationing. I said from the start that giving these young fellows a weekly allowance of corn, wine and oil would never work. We even gave them little hand mills for the corn, and field ovens to bake it in--but they just wouldn't use them. As soon as they get their ration each week, they trade the corn for more wine, with predictable results. Boy, I'll tell you...we've had some really funny looking ashlar up here! But, things are getting better. Now, we do our own baking and issue the rations already cooked-- but there is still a lot of fiddling going on.

I tell ya, I'm worried, really worried. We have this deadline for the temple opening, but it'll be a miracle if everything's ready in time for the dedication. The trouble is that YOU KNOW WHO can't make up his mind about details. He's constantly changing the plans. Just when I thought we had everything under control, he has this brilliant idea about adding Memorial Pillars. Can you believe it???...MEMORIAL PILLARS! You know the kind with Fire, and Clouds, and everything! Well, it was too late to incorporate them into the actual building, so they'll have to be placed outside on the porch, or possibly near the main entrance...but he can't make up his mind.

And, listen to this...his idea is to make them out of METAL....'Cast 'em in brass', he says... as if stone wasn't good enough. The plan says 35 cubits each, but then he wants them topped off with globes, and surrounded by lily work and network, and some kind of fruit...probably pomegranates...they're everywhere, ya know.....these things will be 40 cubits high when we're done! There's only one place I know of to cast something that big, and that's down there between Succoth and Zeredatha; you know, in the clay grounds on the bottom land of the Jordan. Getting them back here to the work site will be a nightmare, uphill all the way; and just one jolt on the wagons, and the things could crack in two.

No, I don't have a clue who he thinks he's going to get to supervise the casting...he hasn't announced that yet. Oh, man, don't even go there...I don't want that job on top of all I have to do here! I forgot to mention that he wants the pillars to be hollow, with only a hand's breadth of material. Now I've got to rework the drawings....and...of all things, he wants to put archives in them...Yes, archives; everything written on scrolls of vellum and parchment. He says he wants all of the records of the Craft to be stored inside....can you imagine keeping files in there? Why???...don't know...'safe repository' he says...something about insurance against fire and flood damage. Of course, once all those clerks and secretaries get in there and start messing about, they'll be in there all day! It will take forever to load all those documents!

Oh, and I've tried getting the names for the twin pillars out of him, so we could include them in the casting, but he'll only give us the name of one. That's to be named after his great, great, grandfather. But he's being very coy about the other one. We'll probably end up honoring one of the officials who'll take part in the dedication ceremony. You know how he is. It's always the fellow who can do a good piece of ritual that gets the honor, not the one who's been doing all the behind-the-scenes work. Gosh, I hate politics!

With all the other stuff going on, my biggest headache is the overseers...some of 'em can't even spell 'blueprint', let alone read one! You know...every morning at 6, when I get into the office, there's a line of overseers, asking me to explain details that should be obvious to anyone who is competent. I spend half my time doing work that should be done by the overseers. I would love to take a day off and hide somewhere...If they couldn't find me I'm convinced the whole project would be plunged into utter confusion...no designs on the tracing board, no one to tell the workers what to do next! What a hoot!! And on top of that the overseers are not capable of carrying out the trade testing. That means that a lot of workmen who should be getting a higher pay rate pay aren't receiving any differential—and that's causing bad feelings within the ranks. When the work ends here, and they move on to other jobs, they won't have any evidence of their qualifications or grade.

I haven't even told the boss about this yet, but I had three workmen from the Temple barge into my office several days ago, quite upset about the delay in getting certified for their grade.... and this is on the square now...the three were brothers, I think they're from Tyre, and I'll admit, they frightened me a little. They were demanding to be certified and given the 'word' so they could go work someplace else and be able to take care of their families. They weren't happy when they left here...in fact they said they'd be back, so I promised them faithfully that I would carry out their test today, after the high twelve break. So, I guess we'll just have to see about that!

Hey, I don't want to appear rude, my brother, but it's almost time for the noon whistle and I like to make an inspection of the work during the lunch break. Phase one is complete now, you know, and it's cool, peaceful, and quiet in there; great view over the valley from the gateways. Not a soul in sight and it gives me a chance to collect my thoughts. Probably the only moment of quiet I'll have all day! After a few minutes there, I'll have a bit of bread and cheese, and maybe a pomegranate or some grapes, and then I'm all set for the afternoon.

Oh, yeah, I'm okay! It's just the constant pressure. It gets to me! I feel I don't have much time. But it'll soon be over with! Then maybe I'll take a vacation. I heard that they have some nice cruises out of Joppa that are pretty cheap.....some going as far as Ethiopia, you know...now there's a real destination for you! Well, it's been nice talking to you Adoniram! We must get together when you're in town...call me next week. Take care now! Good bye, my brother!



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