

Who was Hiram / Hiram in the Bible?

Three people in the Bible were named Hiram, and two of them were associated with Tyre, the ancient Phoenician city-state on the Mediterranean coast. In some cases, Hiram is a variant used for the name Hiram. Hiram in Hebrew and its variant Hiram both mean “brother of the exalted.”

The first Hiram was the king of Tyre who reigned during the time of King David and his son King Solomon. The earliest mention of King Hiram in the Bible is after David conquered Jerusalem and established his capital there. Hiram sent timber, carpenters, and other skilled laborers for David to employ in the building of his palace: “Now Hiram king of Tyre sent envoys to David, along with cedar logs and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David” (2 Samuel 5:11). In the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, he is called Hiram (1 Chronicles 14:1; 2 Chronicles 2:3).

During Hiram’s reign, Tyre grew into a dominant and thriving commercial center and the most important port city in the Mediterranean. Hiram engaged in extensive building projects and colonized several Mediterranean islands such as Cyprus and Sicily. He also pursued commercial maritime endeavors.

In the writings of the first-century historian Josephus, we learn that Hiram ruled in Tyre for 34 years and died at age 53. Throughout his lifetime, King Hiram remained David’s friend and ally. His long affection for David passed down to King Solomon, with whom he continued friendly relations: “Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram always loved David” (1 Kings 5:1, ESV).

When Solomon built the temple, Hiram sent timber, gold, and craftsmen to help with the construction and assemble the furnishings. In return, Solomon gave grain and oil to Hiram to supply his household. The two kings developed a commercial trading alliance. Solomon also gave Hiram twenty cities in the territory of Galilee, but, when King Hiram surveyed these cities, he was not pleased with them and called the area “the Land of Kabul,” which roughly translates into “the Good-for-nothing Land” (1 Kings 9:10-14; 26-28).

Another man named Hiram worked on Solomon’s temple as a metalsmith. He was from Tyre, as was his father, and his mother was from the tribe of Naphtali: “King Solomon sent to Tyre and brought Hiram, whose mother was a widow from the tribe of Naphtali and whose father was from Tyre and a skilled craftsman in bronze. Hiram was filled with wisdom, with understanding and with knowledge to do all kinds of bronze work. He came to King Solomon and did all the work assigned to him” (1 Kings 7:13-14).

Hiram the metalsmith is referred to as Hiram in 2 Chronicles 4:11 but called Hiram-abi in 2 Chronicles 2:13 and 4:16. Abi means “master.”

A third man mentioned in the Bible with the name Hiram was a grandson of Benjamin (1 Chronicles 8:3-5). Scholars believe he may have been the same as Hupham, the Benjamite listed in Numbers 26:39.