

MIZPAH BULLETIN

August 2019



Mizpah Lodge #302
A.F. & A.M.
Omaha, Nebraska

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From the East


Brethren,

July is over and we continued our tradition of being proficient in opening, closing, and degree conferral. I wanted to thank the officers for their work in memorizing their parts and the other proficient brothers who filled in and helped with our success. Degree conferral is a lodge effort and not just a few members. Candidates enjoy seeing people on the sideline and helps them appreciate the experience of the degree.

The year is about over and I know the officers are continuing to work on plans to grow in the future based on the changes implemented this year. They are looking at expectations of officers and what the lodge membership wants out of the lodge.

Online?

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 Mizpah Lodge #302

Instituted November 12th, 1918
Chartered June 4th, 1919

Stated communication on the first
Wednesday of every month

An exciting change this year is CCOC has focused on providing money to local organizations that are not Masonic related. We voted on supporting the Hillside Little League, and a local public school. We also have had talks about helping Beals elementary school PTO with a couple items this fall. The purpose of CCOC was supposed to provide masonry in a positive light and help the surrounding community.

I plan on having our Senior Warden take a more active role, so he feels more confident in running the meetings next year. Also I have to start visiting local commandaries across the state in my capacity as Grand Commander and will be out of town on some of our meeting nights.

We should have an investigation committee report at our next meeting and a recommendation on the tuck pointing. The building appearance is important and is a way to express your pride in being a mason. Hope to see you in August.

Mizpah Benediction

“May the Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another”

-Genesis 31:49-

Sincerely and Fraternally,
Jeffrey Coleman
Worshipful Master

May the Lord Watch
MIZPAH
302
Between Me and Thee



Calendar

Wednesday August 7

Potluck Dinner 6:30pm

Business Meeting 7:00pm

Special Guest Presenter

MW Tom Hauder

Wednesday August 14

EA Degree

JW Jeremiah Jones in charge

Wednesday August 21

TBD

Wednesday August 28

TBD

Wednesday September 4

Potluck Dinner 6:30pm

Business Meeting 7:00pm

The Reverend Billy Graham tells me the story that early in his ministry when he arrived in a small town for a preaching engagement, he wanted to mail a letter and asked a young boy the way to the post office. When the boy told him, Dr. Graham thanked him and said, 'if you'll come to the Baptist church this evening, you can hear me tell everyone how to get to heaven.' I won't be there,' the boy said. "You don't even know your way to the post office."

We don't tell anyone how to get to heaven, in spite of what the preachers say on television. Freemasonry is not, in and of itself, a religious organization. We propose no method of salvation, and we have no religious doctrine to follow. Our Fraternity is, however, an organization of religious men and women. Our ritual and ceremonies are chock-full of references based on the Holy Scriptures. We borrow passages from the Bible and apply them to our ritual to emphasize different lessons of life. One of those passages is the 133rd Psalm.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments, As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

All Master Masons have heard the Master of the Lodge repeat that psalm, and they have heard it repeated in the degrees. Unfortunately, it is repeated over and over without giving much thought to its meaning. Almost any Past Master can catch even one word out of place while he appears to be sound asleep. In repeating it word for word, we tend to pay attention to the ritual part rather than its meaning.

A simple definition of "psalm" is a sacred song or hymn, sung with a stringed instrument or harp. There use of music and musical instruments were common all through the Old Testament. We find it first mentioned in Genesis 4:21 which says, "And his brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ." Music was employed in the crowning of kings, in the triumph of the nation, seasons of worship, at sacrificial offerings, in the worship of idols, in mirth and revelry, in mourning and funerals, Bridal processions, as they passed through the streets, were attended with music; and on special occasions minstrels and singers accompanied armies to battle.

In describing the book of Psalms, a Bible commentary gives this rendering: "No other book in the Bible more truly magnified God and the word of God; and no other book of the Old Testament sets forth, in greater range, the person and work of the Messiah. It portrays Him from his advent to His Resurrection and Ascension and describes in the most glorious manner His universal and gracious sovereignty over the whole earth."

We don't know why the 133rd Psalm was chosen for our Fraternity, but when we look up the definition of "degrees" in the Bible dictionary, we may find the answer, it defines degrees as a title of 15 psalms from Pss. 120 - 134. They are called "Songs of Degrees." It is the rendering of the Hebrew word denoting "ascents" or "going up," and there is a tradition to the effect that these were sung as they ascended 15 steps from the Court of the Women to the Court of the Men. The explanation of Genesis is that "They were so called because there is in their composition a certain progression." The view more generally held is that these were sung by pilgrims going up to Jerusalem, although we have no record of such.

We can get a better understanding of the Psalm by clarifying some of the words. The first statement conveys the general thought of the Psalm. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The first word is used throughout the Bible. "Behold" means to fix your eyes upon to contemplate, to look at with attention, to observe with care. It is as if a pair of hands reach out of the book and grab you by the lapels, as if to say "Listen carefully, I have something important to say."

The second statement says, "it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard." "Precious" means "of great price, value or worth, highly cherished." We are used to thinking of ointment as a salve used for medication, or a cut or abrasion. The Bible dictionary says, "it was used on the skin and hair. The 'balm of Gilead' was used in medicine. Perfumed olive oil was commonly used in Palestine. Ointments were used on dead bodies, preparing them for burial. On two or three occasions our Lord was anointed with oil." Then it says, "See Perfumery." Perfume consisted of various spices, cassia, aloes, myrrh, frankincense and cinnamon. The fragrance of the spice was brought out by being powdered and burned or enclosed in a bag. An extract was made and carried in bottles. In the service of the sanctuary it was used as incense and as an ointment. Garments and furniture were dusted with these spices.

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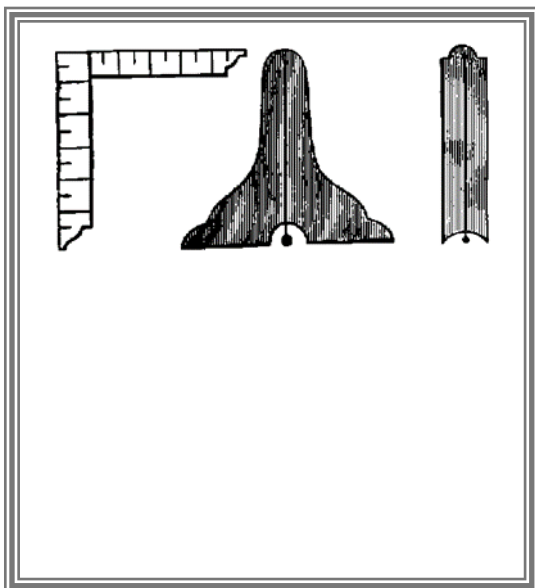
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We are familiar with the three wise men bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Frankincense and myrrh were perfumes of great value in use at that time. Frankincense is the gum of a tree, white in color. It was used in the oil by which the priests were dedicated and also in the meal offerings. It is a dry gum resin from a tree grown in Arabia. When used, it gives off a pleasant fragrance, Myrrh was also a pleasant gum resin used to perfume beds and clothing. It was used in the anointing oil of the priests. It was mixed with the wine and offered to Jesus on the cross and was used in anointing his body. It also came from a small tree that grew in Arabia. This was “the ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard.” The Jews gave much attention to the beard as expressing the dignity of manhood and regarded the neglect of it as indicative of weakness or infinity. In times of mourning, it was customary to cut it off. The Egyptians shaved the face and the head but allowed the beard to grow as a mark of mourning.

Then the Psalm refers to “Aaron’s beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments.” Aaron was the oldest son of Amram of the tribe of Levi. He was three years older than his brother Moses, but we know little else of his early life. He was younger than his sister Miriam, who watched over her baby brother Moses. He married El Sheba, a woman of the tribe of Judah by whom he had four sons.

The third statement says, “As the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.”

The dews of Palestine are very heavy, often having the appearance of a heavy rain. In taking down tents in Galilee, the water would run off as if there had been a heavy rain during the night. There being no rain in the summertime, the dew is most refreshing and essential for the ripening of the fruits. It is used figuratively in the Scriptures as the dews of divine grace; when it was withheld, it was regarded as a judgment.

The “dews of Hermon” refer to Mt. Hermon, a mountain on the northern boundary of Israel. It rises nearly 10,000 feet above the sea and is visible from most parts of Palestine. Snow may be seen at the summit during the entire year. “The mountains of Zion” refers to one of the hills of Jerusalem. It was taken from the Jebusites by David and was then called “the city of David.” Here he placed the Ark, which gave the hill a sacred distinction. When Solomon built the temple on Mt. Zion, the Ark was placed in the temple. The name “Zion” embraced the temple. It is frequently the designation of Jerusalem.

The last statement says, “For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore!” The word blessing: means a bestowal of divine favor and benefits, in this case to the people of Israel.

There is yet another way to define the 133rd Psalm and that is by analogy. The dictionary defines analogy as a likeness between things in some circumstances more effects, when the things are otherwise entirely different. In this Psalm there are four statements, each one appearing to be entirely different from the others, but there is a similarity running through all four. The similarity is likened to “something descending in abundance.”

In the first statement, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity,” is a quiet calm or desirable atmosphere descending in abundance upon the meeting room as labors begin.

In the second statement, “it is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments,” it is the ointment or perfume that descends in such abundance that it ran down to the skirts of his garments, refreshing the body after being out in the desert for days with very little or no water for bathing.

In the third statement, “As the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descends upon the mountains of Zion,” it was the extra heavy dew like a heavy rain, that descended in abundance over all of Israel, from the north to the south.

In the fourth statement, “For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” It was the divine favor descending in abundance upon the people of Israel.

All too often we apply our present day meaning to words that had an entirely different meaning back in Biblical times. In this Psalm, as in all others, it is best to search for the true meaning rather than depend on ritual or ceremony.

Frederick J. Morrow Grand Chaplain Royal Arch Magazine Fall 1999 Page 338

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From the Secretary's Table

Brethren,

As part of our communications, I am emailing this Newsletter monthly and generally send weekly updates about the goings on at Mizpah. If you'd like to be included in these emails, please let me know.

Fraternally,
Ben Zaayer
Secretary