

MIZPAH BULLETIN

February 2020



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

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From the East

I am writing this trestle before our February business meeting and right before Grand Lodge's annual communication for 2020. We're only a month in to this year and already things are moving forward for this year to be one of the best.

January 4th's installation ceremony was very fun, and thank you to everyone on my installation team and all the brethren that assisted in making it one of the best events I've ever seen at Mizpah. A special thank you to my partner Amanda for being able to coordinate the food, lighting, and dinner reservations.

Online?

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 Mizpah Lodge #302

Several things happened at our monthly business meeting, it was pleasant to see everyone and we received all our reports in on time for the printed materials that Worshipful brother Ben Zaayer has prepared for each meeting. One thing we went over were the amendments that are up for a vote this year at Grand Communication, there are a few that I feel very strongly about and would love to discuss them in person.

This entry is meant to be a personal message to everyone reading it in the simplest terms, I love you and thank you for supporting our work.

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

Stated communication on the first
Wednesday of every month

Mizpah Benediction

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

-Genesis 31:49-

May the Lord Watch
MIZPAH
302
Between Me and Thee

Sincerely and Fraternally,
Tom Gibbs
Worshipful Master



Calendar

Wednesday February 5

Potluck Dinner 6:30pm

Business Meeting 7:00pm

Education: The Entered Apprentice
Mason

T.J. Brumfield III

Wednesday February 12

Valentine's Dinner 6:30pm

Detail To Follow

Wednesday February 19

Officer / Committee Meeting

All members welcome to attend

Wednesday February 26

EA Practice

JW Dalton Kock In Charge

Saturday February 29

Mizpah Cleanup Day

10:00 AM

Wednesday March 4

Potluck Dinner 6:30pm

Business Meeting 7:00pm

Education: Three Great Tenets

Benjamin R. Zaayer

The Entered Apprentice Mason

By T.J. Brumfield III

The presentation I will be giving during our February Stated Meeting is esoteric in nature and I can't properly print it or discuss it in this Trestle.

We have had a tradition this past year of running either our education piece in full in the Trestle, or something closely related. When we offer up the same material both in the Trestle and in lodge, we are arguably providing a service to each of our brothers who can't make it to lodge to share with them the same Masonic education. But perhaps it is a disservice if we're not creating incentive to show up to lodge.

So I will make it my goal (at least for the months where I am submitting the education piece for the Trestle, though I will encourage it for others as well) to offer something unique in both the Trestle and lodge. Ideally, they will be related and build upon each other.

While I cannot get into the full details of my presentation for the lodge, I will say that it covers a familiar symbol of the Entered Apprentice degree. We're also experimenting a bit with exploring one larger topic over several months.

In February I will discuss "A Point Within a Circle". In March Ben Zaayer will cover "Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth". Ryan LeGrande and Mike Tomasiewicz will further explore the EA degree in April and May.

At a glance it may seem odd to focus so much on the first degree of Masonry. After all, we define ourselves specifically as Master Masons. We've advanced past the Entered Apprentice degree, so one might assume that means we've mastered the lessons contained within.

I know I still spend a lot of time thinking about the 24-inch gauge, and I would hope that we continue to utilize the common gavel symbolically for the remainder of our days. We should not simply pass these lessons by and forget them.

It is possible for some of these that we were encouraged to advance as quickly as possible. Some Masons have literally been raised in a single day, with little to no time left to reflect upon the Entered Apprentice degree before they're thrust into the Fellow Craft degree and then the Master Mason degree after that. When I've received multiple degrees in a day (with York Rite Festivals and Scottish Rite Reunions) I've found it all a blur. Some of the elements blend into each other and it is difficult to retain much of anything I've seen in that format.

In Nebraska we've recently moved past one day conferrals now that we have long-form proficiency. A newly minted Entered Apprentice Mason will spend more time in that role before advancing. But even for those of us who've been in the fraternity for years or decades, perhaps we should be looking back and asking ourselves if we are still Entered Apprentice Masons ourselves in several ways.

The degree is meant to symbolically represent a period of life, but also a role within the craft. I'm 41 years old and I've also been a Master Mason for a decade. That's not as long as some, but I've labored for some time in the craft. In many ways I see myself perhaps as a Fellow Craft. But I also am still today becoming more aware of lessons I did not fully comprehend in the Entered Apprentice degree until recently.

And even for other lessons I thought I had a basic understanding of, I may not have applied those lessons in my life as well as I should have.

When we decided to explore one degree at length, I had to stop and ask myself what lessons of the degree jumped out at me (more than just rote memorization of the words themselves). What Entered Apprentice lesson did I feel I had such a strong knowledge of that I could speak with authority before the lodge?

That mental accounting was humbling. Was there any particular lesson from even our most basic degree that I felt I had mastered? Perhaps mastery is too high of a bar. We never fully reach the state of the perfect ashlar.

Ben Franklin documented his own attempts at perfection in Chapter 9 of his autobiography. He had a clever plan in which he documented his faults, as well as the virtues to which he should ascribe to remove his faults.

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He would initially focus on a singular virtue and attempt to practice it fully. Once he had instilled the necessary good habits from the first virtue, he would move onto the next. Before he knew it, he would have mastered all 13 virtues. While it is a bit of an aside, I think the list is interesting and worth contemplation not only in their own merit, but also how they compare to Masonic virtues and the specific order he felt them necessary to tackle:

1. Temperance — Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. Silence — Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. Order — Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. Resolution — Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
5. Frugality — Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.
6. Industry — Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. Sincerity — Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. Justice — Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
9. Moderation — Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. Cleanliness — Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloths, or habitation.
11. Tranquility — Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. Chastity
13. Humility — Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Unfortunately, the task was not so simple, and he found himself failing spectacularly. He described his revelation in the end with an analogy about grinding down an ax trying to remove all the imperfections. But as he wore down one layer, he found more/different faults under neath. He would grind and grind, until he realized he may be grinding forever never obtaining his goal, and what would be left of his ax? To which he stopped grinding and accepted himself with his imperfections stating, "I think I like a speckled ax best."

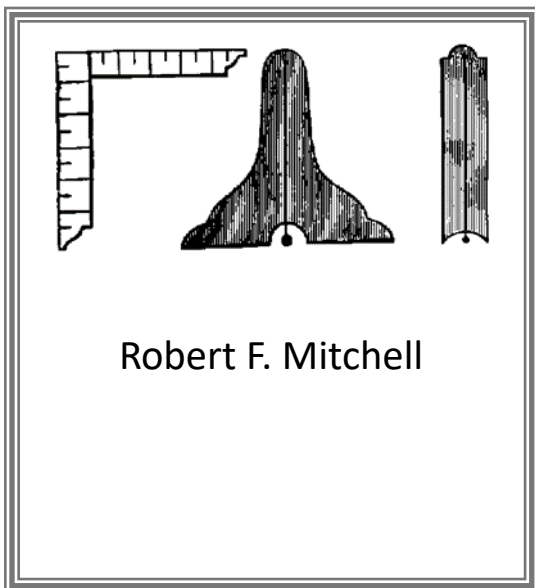
I think about this a great deal. Should we simply accept our faults as things we cannot ever truly remove? Should we not seek personal growth? Is that not being complacent? What are acceptable goals for growth?

Well, given that the Entered Apprentice degree is meant to represent a man in youth, I think about the lessons I try to teach my own children (and how sometimes I need to remind myself of the same).

In any given moment, we may find ourselves subject to a variety of passions. Obstacles will be in our path. In those moments it helps to stop and simply breathe. By allowing ourselves to pause, we can seek clarity of mind. When distracted, frustrated or otherwise emotional it is amazingly easy to forget that which we know. At times we really do need to reflect and ask ourselves even the simplest questions again of how we should approach a given situation and what we're hoping to accomplish.

Moses was selected by God to deliver the chosen people. He was picked as worthy to carry down the Ten Commandments. He led those people through the wilderness for 40 years. And even he forgot his way towards the end and lost sight of his faith.

I hope these next few months re-exploring some of our most basic lessons in the Craft will not only remind us of that which we may have forgotten, but also apply a new, wiser perspective to those lessons as well.



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From the Secretary's Table

Brethren,

Please note that dues were payable January 1, 2020. Many have paid their dues and I thank you kindly for being prompt. I know that the holidays can be a rough time to come up with one more payment, but please pay your dues as soon as possible so we can move on to bigger and better things this year. If you need assistance financially, please don't hesitate to reach out, we're happy to work with any brother who is having difficulty paying their dues.

If you have any questions, please call, email, or text and I will be happy to help.

Thanks!

Fraternally,
Ben Zaayer
Secretary