

Ashlar Lodge No. 98 Free and Accepted Masons

St. Augustine, FL

Chartered January 18, A.D. 1888, A.L. 5888



June, 2024



STATED COMMUNICATIONS

Masonic Temple
4 Martin Luther King Blvd.
St. Augustine, FL
1ST & 3RD Thursdays
Meal – 6:30 p.m.
Stated Communication — 7:30 p.m.

DEGREE WORK AND PRACTICE

2nd & 4th Thursdays

CHARITY OF THE MONTH

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of St. Johns
County

there in support and encouragement for these Brothers that will That will be doing this degree and for the candidates being made Fellow Crafts.

And I would also like to thank every Brother for their continued support and encouragement to me this year. It is a great honor to be Worshipful Master of Ashlar Lodge No. 98.

Fraternally, yours,

Terrell W. Jones, Sr.

FROM THE EAST

As we are entering the month of June which means we are almost to the halfway point of this Masonic year and is also the time of year that our line officers will be stepping up in the chairs for our degree work, we will be doing a Fellow Craft degree on June 27 and all will be moving up two places for this degree. I hope that many of our Brothers will be

June 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 OES	4	5	6 STATED COMM 6:30 PM	7	8
9	10	11 Shrine Club 7:00 PM	12 District Inst. Cabul No. 116 6:30 pm	13 FC De- gree Practice 6:00 pm DeMolay Palatka No 34 7:00 PM	14	15
16	17 OES	18 YORK RITE CHAP- TER/ COUNCIL 6:30 PM	19 RAIN- BOW 7 pm	20 DARK VISIT TO PINELAND No. 86, 6:30 pm	21	22
23/30	24	25 YORK RITE COM- MANDERY 6:30 PM	26 District Association Lake No. 72 6:30 PM	27 FC De- gree 6:30 PM DeMolay Palatka No 34 7:00 PM	28 Fried Chicken Shrine Club	29 Open Books Pineland No. 86 9:00 am—noon

FROM THE WEST

George Maultsby, S.W.

DRESS

Shall a Lodge require of its Officers that they wear formal dress? The wisdom of so doing depends entirely upon circumstances and is a point which it is the prerogative of each constituent Lodge to decide, though much may be said in favor of formal dress C “cutaway coat,” tuxedo, or full evening dress, since it is a mark of respect to the Fraternity.

In any event, one thing is certain: if any of the Officers are required to wear formal attire all the Officers should wear it without exception; and if he and his colleagues wear it, the Worshipful Master should use a hat to correspond not a soft hat, straw hat, or a cap. The members will dress according to private taste and it is proper that they enter the Lodge Room with apron properly arranged beforehand, and any other regalia, jewels, etc., in due order.

The custom prevails in some Lodges of having the Worshipful Master wear one type of dress (clothing) while the other Officers wear different styles of dress. The harmony of good taste will be better served if all dress alike.

There is a philosophy in dress as in so many other things, and the dress proper to Masonic occasion is no exception. Its principle is good taste; its practice is to wear such attire as shows respect to the Brotherhood and expresses the dignity of Masonry. **GL-208 p.5**

July 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 OES	2	3 RAIN-BOW 7:00 PM	4 Dark for 4th of July	5	6
7	8	9 Shrine Club 7:00 PM	10 District Instruction Hastings No.183 6:30	11 Ashlar TBD DeMolay, Palatka No34 7 pm	12	13
14	15 OES	16 York Rite Chapter/Council 6:30 pm	17 RAIN-BOW 7:00 PM	18 STAT-ED COMM 6:30	19	20
21	22	23 YORK RITE COMMANDERY 6:30 PM	24 District Assn. Pineland No. 86 6:30 p.m.	25 Lodge Instruction TBD DeMolay Palatka No. 34 7 pm	26 Fried Chicken, Shrine Club	27 Open Books Pineland No. 86 9-noon
28	29	30	31			

FROM THE SOUTH Mark Williams, J.W.

Welcome to summer Brothers. This is a time families get to travel and have fun, and I hope everyone has a good time. As part of the Masonic family I hope you can come and have a good time with the rest of us. We have an opportunity to travel on June 20 to visit our Brothers at Pineland Lodge in Palatka.

The Lodge is doing great, with new Brothers advancing and new candidates in line to join with us. It is good to have men interested in joining our fraternity because it shows that there is still good men out there that wish to associate with other good men.

Those Brothers assisting the new guys with mentoring, instructing, and doing degree work show a genuine sense of pride in our fraternity, and I couldn't be more proud of them. Any Brother that wishes to be part of the advancement of new brothers please ask to join in. If you can't be active in degree work that's okay, but please come out to the degrees and support these new brothers. It really means a lot when we have a full house on degree night. Be safe in your travels.

The Robert D. Trump Chapter, Order of DeMolay, meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month at Palatka Lodge No. 34 at 7:00 PM. Mater Masons are welcome at all Chapter meetings.

LODGE OFFICERS 2022

Worshipful Master	Terrell Jones	904-669-5249
Senior Warden	George Maultsby	703-956-0228
Junior Warden	Mark Williams	904-669-9694
Secretary	Russell Sellers	512-801-7831
Treasurer	Oscar Patterson III	904-955-9175
Senior Deacon	Darrell Lindsey	904-814-7158
Junior Deacon	Kevin Stees	803-406-0005
Senior Steward	Chris Lucero	904-226-5007
Junior Steward	Tom Street	301-300-3031
Chaplain	Robert Harry, Jr.	904-806-1255
Marshall	Tom Torretta	602-881-3206
Tyler	James Carrick	904-501-4348

**OTHER 11th MASONIC
DISTRICT LODGES**

- Palatka No. 34**
Palatka—2nd & 4th Mondays
- Lake No. 72**
Crescent City—1st & 3rd Mondays
- Pineland No. 86**
Peniel—1st & 3rd Thursdays
- Melrose No 89**
Keystone Heights—2nd & 4th Tuesdays
- Middleburg No. 107**
Middleburg—1st & 3rd Tuesdays
- Cabul No. 116**
Green Cove Springs—2nd & 4th Thursdays
- Hastings No. 183**
Hastings—2nd & 4th Tuesdays
- Bunnell No. 200**
Bunnell—1st and 3rd Tuesdays

FRATERNAL NOTICES AND DATES

- O.E.S. Chapter #12.....1st & 3rd
Mondays
- Rainbow Assembly #42.....1st & 3rd Wednesdays
- York Rite Bodies.....3rd & 4th
Tuesdays

The Ammonites, the Ephraimites and Jephthah, Judge Over Israel

The 2nd or Fellow Craft Degree in Freemasonry includes the story of Jephthah and a password. Who was Jephthah?

The story of Jephthah as recounted in the book of Judges is one of the most complex and troubling accounts found in *The Bible*. It has been the subject of art and literature, and is the only instance in which human sacrifice, condemned so frequently in *The Bible*, is condoned. Many scholars suggest that this illustrates that in the ancient biblical tradition, extraordinary sanctity was given to a vow, especially when made to God and allowed no choice, others suggest differently.

Masonically, the story of Jephthah is significant because it includes the only biblical account of the use of a password. The word *shibboleth*, which originally meant “stream” or “flood”, was used as a test of tribal affiliation because the “sh” sound was obviously pronounced quite differently by the two tribes. Outside *The Bible* there are virtually no references to passwords. The phrase “open sesame” is found in the tale of Ali Baba and the forty thieves in *One Thousand and One Nights* and “swordfish” gains the Marx brothers’ entry into a speakeasy in “Horse Feathers.” But the story of Jephthah is much more problematical than the use of a password and has much to teach Masons about the human experience.

To understand the story of Jephthah and the Ephraimites, we must consider the history of Israel as well as that a vow was considered to be a transaction between a person and a deity where the former devotes something valuable to the deity's use. The vow was an oath, with the deity being both the witness and recipient of the promise. The religious nature of the vow indicated that the petitioner's piety and spiritual attitude outweigh all other considerations.

The Ammonites and the Ephraimites

Ammon was an ancient nation noted in the Old Testament that was located east of the Jordan River. The Ammonites were the descendants of the incestuous union between Lot and his youngest daughter (traditionally named “Aggadah”) thus making them related to the Israelites but with no tribal affiliation. In Deuteronomy 2:19, the Israelites are commanded to avoid conflict with them, yet, throughout *The Bible*, the Ammonites and the Israelites are described as mutually antagonistic. Jephthah lived among the Ammonites when he was expelled from Gilead (Israel).

The descendants of Joseph formed two of the tribes of Israel, Ephraim and Manasseh (Jephthah's home tribe). The Tribe of Ephraim was part of the loose union of Israelite tribes which was led in times of crisis and war by *ad hoc* leaders known as Judges who remained in tentative control until the time of the first Israelite king, Saul. When Rehoboam, the grandson of David, ascended the throne in about 930 B.C.E., the northern tribes split from the House of David to form a new Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam with Rehoboam remaining king over Judah in the south composed of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria in 723 B.C.E. and the southern kingdom, Judah, fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E.

Jephthah, Judge Over Israel

Jephthah was a member of the tribe of Gilead which was a subgroup of the northern tribe of Manasseh. The Old Testament describes him as a “mighty warrior” and further notes that he was “the son of a harlot” (Judges 11:1). He was driven out of the tribe by his half-brothers and went to the east of the Jordan River in the land of Ammon (as in Ammonites) where “worthless [also translated as ‘empty’] fellows collected round Jephthah, and went riding with him” (Judges 11:3).

When the Ammonites made war on Israel, the elders of Gilead (the tribe of Manasseh) “went to bring” Jephthah to be their leader. Jephthah held out for a more stable position and the elders, who had earlier driven him out of the land, agreed that, when he defeated the Ammonites, his position would become permanent. On behalf of Israel as a whole and relying upon the might of God, Jephthah challenges the Ammonites vowing: “If thou wilt give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the Lord's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering” (Judges 11:30).

Jephthah defeats the Ammonites and upon his return is met first by his daughter, his only child, but he is bound by his vow to God: “For I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot take back my vow” (Judges 11:35). The daughter then says, “Let this thing be done for me; let me alone two months, that I may go and wander . . . and bewail my virginity.” When two months had elapsed “she returned to her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had made” (Judges 11:39).

At this point in the account, the men of Ephraim come to Jephthah and demand to know why they were not included in the battle and threaten to “burn your house over with fire” (Judges 12:1). Jephthah responds by noting to the Ephraimites that they were the ones who did not answer the summons noting that “I took my life in my hand and crossed over against the Ammonites” (Judges 12:3). He then gathered the men of Gilead and fought with those of Ephraim taking control of the fords across the river Jordan. Thus, preventing them from escaping and utilizing the word *shibboleth* to confirm tribal affiliation.

The Rest of the Story

Many biblical scholars as well as the rabbinic tradition note that the death of Jephthah's daughter is in direct violation of God's law and that this story is meant to illustrate the terrible tragedy of human sacrifice. Others note the complete lack of censure by God in the biblical account. The victory over the Ephraimites comes after the death of Jephthah's daughter and “Jephthah judges Israel six years” (Judges 12:7). Sacrifice of the first born is referenced in Exodus 22:27-29 and there appears to be a possible reference to it in Ezekiel 20:25-26. James Kugel, chair of the Institute for the History of the Jewish Bible at [Bar Ilan University](#) in [Israel](#) and the Harry M. Starr Professor Emeritus of Classical and Modern Hebrew Literature at [Harvard University](#), suggests that such sacrifice was done among the early Israelites otherwise the later admonitions against the practice would not have been necessary.

Other scholars have expressed several alternative views and more poetic interpretations of this sacrifice. One suggests that Jephthah's vow was in some way modified and that the daughter's fate was perpetual virginity or solitary confinement. This is not supported by the biblical text. Another cites the semantics of the vow noting the word “and” (“shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up”) suggesting that this is a mistranslation and should be properly rendered as “or.” A third reiterates the perpetual virginity explanation and suggests that the daughter was committed to the service of God (much like Catholic nuns) rather than physically sacrificed.

These interpretations are in dispute with many scholars noting that the Israelites were, at the time, a decidedly barbarous people and that there are, within *The Bible*, several other examples of rash vows with similarly terrible results such as Saul's vow in I Samuel 14, Solomon's in I Kings 2, and Herod's to Salome in Mark 6. It is worthy of note, as well, that the biblical narrator also tells in the story of Joshua and Gibeon, which indicates that vows were, at times, broken, and in the previously referenced Ezekiel 20:5, it may be interpreted to mean that previously issued statutes were misplaced: "Wherefore I gave them also statutes *that were* not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." But scholars also note that nowhere in the Biblical text are there any negative comments associated with Jephthah's vow and sacrifice. Be that as it may, the lesson to be learned from Jephthah's ordeal is not about child sacrifice but about constraint and much more.

Lessons for Masons

Considering the complexity of the story of Jephthah and the Ephraimites, it is easy to lose the lessons offered in the horror of human sacrifice. This story has much to teach us as Masons. It speaks to equality, oaths, background, and the necessity of being ever watchful and thoughtful in what we say, think, and do. Jephthah was the illegitimate son of a prostitute and from a subtribe—a minority--Gilead. He was "thrust out," disinherited, and forced to flee to a foreign nation by his half-siblings. And, though surrounded by "worthless fellows," Jephthah creates a reputation such that when threatened by the Ammonites, the elders of Israel seek him out and bring him back be their leader. He was, again, equal with the leaders of the confederation and, subsequently, the leader of the confederated tribes. This teaches us that we are not bound by birth to a particular place or level of society, but that we have within us the God-given ability to overcome even the most appalling circumstances and achieve by our own merits.

Second, this story teaches us that we are capable of overcoming poor associations and are not bound to follow the paths of our fellows when they adhere to ruinous causes and come to debased ends. We may be marked by those with whom we associate—until we disassociate ourselves from them, but we are not bound to follow their lead. Not only are we capable of achieving beyond our birth, we are capable of refusing to allow peer pressure to govern our lives and form our destiny.

Third, the story of Jephthah reminds us of the power of an oath or vow—our word, especially when made to the Deity. The power of the oath is in how Jephthah construes its meaning and his commitment to his faith. We can easily break a vow or oath if we assume it has no meaning and, when the Deity is included, that it (the oath) has no power and is not binding. For Jephthah, his spirituality appears to have outweighed all other concerns and so it is with Masons.

Fourth and directly related to number three, is our own tendency to speak before well considering our words; to think in narrow ways; and to act in a manner that is not pleasing to God or man. We are rash creatures. Let prudence and temperance govern our passions, our words, and our vows. The following story is told of Brother Harry Truman during his time as President of the United States. During his White House years, his daughter, Margaret, made her professional singing debut. Her performance was panned. Truman immediately wrote a scathing letter to the critic and the critic's editor. Truman, who had a strong temper, had assumed the habit of placing such heated missives in a desk drawer until several days had passed when, if he still felt as strongly about the topic, he would reword the letters and send them. In this case, the letter to the critic left the White House immediately. When the story broke in papers, Truman was criticized for intemperate comments and poor judgment.

As Masons, we are taught to subdue our passions, to reflect upon our thoughts and words, and to take action only after careful consideration. We are also taught that, once taken, an oath is for an indefinite period and covers all situations, even when such an oath or obligation covers what may appear to be trivial things. Had Jephthah more wisely considered his words, he may not have been forced to exclaim: "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you have become a cause of great trouble to me."

References

Book of Judges, Chapters 11 and 12
Hebrews, Chapter 11, verse 32
"Jephthah", *Jewish Encyclopedia*.