

# Ashlar Lodge No. 98 Free and Accepted Masons

St. Augustine, FL

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

904-826-4086



October, 2021



## STATED COMMUNICATIONS

Masonic Temple  
4 Martin Luther King Blvd.

St. Augustine, FL  
1<sup>ST</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup> Thursdays

Meal – 6:30 p.m.

Stated Communication — 7:30 p.m.

## DEGREE WORK AND PRACTICE

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays

## CHARITY OF THE QUARTER

Betty Griffin House

virtue” and a respite  
from all the assaults of  
the profane.

See you in Lodge.

David Pierucci  
Worshipful Master

## From the East

There is an ancient  
Chinese curse “May  
you live in interesting  
times”

We are living in such  
times.

Remember, your  
Lodge is a “sacred re-  
treat of friendship and

## Fraternal Notice

WRITTEN nominations for Officers for 2022  
are due on the Secretary’s desk BEFORE  
opening the first Stated Communication in  
November, 2021. Contact the Secretary for  
the proper form.

W.: George Maultsby  
Secretary

# October 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4 OES	5	6 RAIN-BOW 7 PM Dist. Inst. Lake No. 72	7 STATED COMM 6:30 PM	8	9
10	11	12 SHRINE CLUB 7:00 pm	13	14 FC DE- GREE 6:30 PM	15	16
17	18 OES	19 YORK RITE CHAP- TER/ COUNCIL 6:30 PM	20 RAIN- BOW 7 PM	21 STAT- ED COMM 6:30 PM	22 Fried Chicken Shrine Club 5 pm	23
24/31	25	26 YORK RITE COMMAND- ERY 6:30 PM	27 District Association Middleburg No. 107 6:30 pm	28 Lodge Practice TBD	29	30 Open Books Pine- land No. 86 9:00-noon

## From the West

October 2021

My Brothers,

Today and for some time to come we will mourn the loss of our Chaplain and dear friend Bill Roberts.

Having had the privilege of spending a generous amount of time with him over the past six years, and listening to many stories about his life and experiences, I came to know him well. I can say with absolute certainty, that he died doing what he loved best.

At sometime in the near future we will honor our Brother with Masonic services. It is always a good idea, particularly for our newer Brothers, to review the general instructions for funerals. (page 170 blue book).

Brother Jim

# November 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 OES	2	3 RAIN-BOW 7:00 PM	4 STATED COMM. 6:30 PM	5	6
7	8	9 Shrine Club 7:00 pm	10 District Inst. Pine- land No. 86 6:30 pm	11	12	13
14	15 OES	16 York Rite Chapter/ Council 6:30 pm	17 Rainbow 7:00 pm Dist. Assn. Cabul 116 6:30 pm	18 STAT- ED COMM. 6:30 PM	19	20
21	22	23 York Rite Command- ery 6:30 pm		25 THANKS- GIVING DAY	26 Fried Chicken Shrine Club	27
28	29	30				

## From The South

First of all, I would like to thank all the Brothers who have offered their support, guidance and words of encouragement. I have only been a Master Mason for 5 years as of January 23, 2021, so I am still new to the Craft. I know I still have a lot to learn and a long way to go as I travel my own personal road to seek further light in Masonry as we say. What I do know is I became a Mason, so I could be a part of something that has had meaning for centuries, and its ideas, principles, and teachings continue to be relevant to this day.

When I was learning about Masonry prior to joining, I was intrigued and glad to know that as the oldest fraternity, it was made up of men who leave politics and religion outside the lodge room, and it was focused on making good men better while teaching us about charity for all, but especially a brother Mason among other things. Before joining, I wanted to know that this group of “brothers” would be there for each other through thick and thin.

While we all know we do not think or feel the same way about politics and religion, As Masons, we are still able to be civil and have friendships that span our differences. That to me is what “Makes America Great”. The fact that we can take different positions and have differing opinions yet agree to disagree and find common ground on which to come together as brothers to support and protect each other.

In my opinion, we need to continue to bridge the gap and embrace our differences. As the Entered Apprentice Degree’s lecture points out in the section about our tenets:

“By the exercise of Brotherly Love, we are taught to regard the whole human race as one family, the high, the low, the rich, the poor, who, being created by one Almighty Parent, and inhabitants of the same planet, ought to aid, support and protect one another. On this principle, Masonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.”

Thank you all for being you and for being Masons!  
Fraternally,  
Brother Tom Torretta

## The Ammonites, the Ephraimites and Jephthah, Judge Over Israel

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."

**LODGE OFFICERS 2021**

**Worshipful Master**  
David Pierucci 904-460-9477  
Senior Warden  
James Carrick 904-501-4348  
Junior Warden  
Thomas Torretta 602-881-3206  
Secretary  
George Maulsby 703-956-0228  
Treasurer  
Oscar Patterson III 904-955-9175  
Tyler  
Mickey Cunningham 904-794-5762

**FRATERNAL NOTICES AND DATES**

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

**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