



“Psalm 133”

Lodge Presentation:

*The following short article is written with the intention to be read within an open Lodge, or in fellowship, to all the members in attendance. This article is appropriate to be presented to **all Masons**. **Entered Apprentice** and **Fellowcraft** Masons should be invited to attend the meeting where this is presented. Following this article is a list of discussion questions which should be presented immediately following the presentation of the article.*

Psalm 133

“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 forevermore.”

Psalm 133 is one of the most recognizable passages from the Holy Writings in our ritual. It is recited in its entirety during the circumambulation of the Entered Apprentice degree and in the public opening that we often use for our installations. It is often recited without consideration to its meaning or its significance to the lessons taught within the degree.

This Psalm was written after the Jews had returned from their captivity in Babylon. Prior to their captivity, they lived close to the place they were born as possible which resulted in a closeness and a deep sense of loyalty to their family and their tribe. As a result of their captivity, this closeness had deteriorated and many of the Jews that returned had been born in Babylon and had no ties to their homeland. The first line, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” serves as a reminder of the times prior to their captivity. It also demonstrates the need to rebuild those ties and to again to draw close to each other for national strength, religious ties and a strict observance to the laws of God.

The second line: “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” refers to an old Jewish custom. Precious ointment refers to a perfumed oil that a host would anoint his guests with. It refreshed the body after being in the desert for several days. The historical reference to Aaron refers to the older brother of Moses who was a high priest. In that time, the robes of the high priest were long and flowing. Aaron was anointed for his office in a beautiful ceremony before the people.

The third line: “As the dew of Hermon. And as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.” alludes to the heavy and refreshing nature of the dew common to the region. There is little rain in the summer months and the dew was essential for sustaining life in the region. This



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dew is referred to in scripture as the dews of divine grace and when it did not come it was thought of as a judgement. The “dews of Hermon”, often mispronounced as Herman, refers to Mount Hermon, a mountain on the northern boundary of Israel and is visible throughout Palestine. The “mountains of Zion” refers to one of the hills of Jerusalem where King Solomon built his temple.

In the final line, “For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.” the writer is telling us that when unity is established and the spirit of brotherhood prevails, the Lord will give his blessing.

With this understanding of Psalm 133, it can be interpreted as reminding us that unity and closeness to our fellow man refreshes our bodies, our hearts and our souls as a sweet-smelling perfume or a heavy rain would refresh us after being in the desert for days and that Lord wishes this upon us in abundance. Though how this psalm came to be connected to Freemasonry may never be known, why it is connected with us seems easy to understand. The whole passage is a glorification of the beauty of brotherly love, which is why it is a part of the Entered Apprentice Degree, where that principle tenet is first introduced to the candidate and in the public opening which may be the first or only exposure to our fraternity a guest may see. Brother Valdir Fernandes, in the October 1999 edition of the “Trowel” magazine said of psalm 133 that “it is an eloquent description of the beauty of the fraternal love, and for this reason, much more appropriate to illustrate a society whose existence depends on those noble principles.”

As Masons, brotherly love is much more than caring for our Brethren. It is also striving for that unity of purpose which among a Masonic Lodge and among its members is an essential characteristic that enables us to do our good work. It helps us to achieve that harmony which we are taught “is the strength and support of all institutions, more especially this of ours.”

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Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Wisconsin



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Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions are written to be presented immediately following the presentation of the topic above. There is no right or wrong answers to these questions, they are designed to promote thought and engage all the members that are present in conversation. Take care that the presentation of the topic and the discussion questions does not exceed 30 minutes. The presenter can present any part of the questions below, or any additional questions, he feels is appropriate.

- What other examples of the importance of brotherly love can be found within the Entered Apprentice degree?
- How did you interpret psalm 133 when you first heard it?
- Does the interpretation of psalm 133 any different for Masons who do not use the Holy Bible as their Volume of Sacred Law?
- Brotherly love is a principal that is not unique to Freemasonry, why do you think it is so heavily reinforced within the fraternity?
- Harmony is important to us as Freemasons. Why do you think that is?
- How has the importance of brotherly love impacted your life as a man and as a Freemason?