



Education Monthly

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During our recent festive season we frequently heard the expression “Good will towards all men”, or something similar to it. Nothing could be closer to our Masonic life. Bro Neil Hagerman of Edinburgh Lodge 736 recently presented a paper entitled “Loving Kindness and Your Light”, which amplifies this and shows its meaning and how we transmit its message symbolically. Interestingly the Shepherds’ field in Bethlehem is said to be the site not only where the Angels appeared to the Shepherds on the night of the Nativity but also the place where Ruth and Boaz became united.

I wish everyone a happy and successful New Year.

John Forster, Chairman of Masonic Education.

Loving Kindness and Your Light

Condensed from a paper by Bro. Neil C. Hagerman, Edinburgh Lodge No. 736

Introduction

In this Grand Jurisdiction, the Volume of the Sacred Law is opened and the Square and Compasses laid upon the *Book of Ruth*, Chapter 4 verse 7, when the Lodge is open in the first Degree. Often, this verse is symbolically referred as ‘the slipshod heel verse’. The following is an exploration of a symbolical action of Ruth and Boaz that facilitated the possibility for this verse coming into being and the exemplification of this symbolical action in the First Degree. A deeper understanding of this action as a Mason should awaken one’s own consciousness in furthering his development and as a brother to all humankind when outside the Lodge.

In Hebrew, there is a concept called *khesed* (chesed); its English translation connotes “loyalty, reliability, kindness, compassion”¹ and mercy. By the same token, it is that ‘warm, kind, loyal and compassionate feeling we ought to have for one another’². In the Jewish faith, the word *khesed* is synonymous with the virtues associated in repairing the world through the well-being of others. For the remainder of this paper the Hebrew word *khesed* will embrace its English equivalent “loving kindness”.

Setting for Ruth and Boaz. The legend of Ruth and Boaz begins with a famine spread throughout all Israel, while the Judges ruled and governed Israel. It was a time when everyone did what was right in their own eyes³. A symbolical interpretation of this event would be that there was a hunger for wise dispensation, or kindness, from the Divine and the nonexistence of “loving kindness” among the Israelite people towards each other. The Book of Ruth testifies of the Divine’s “loving kindness” towards Israel, but more importantly, the necessity for human beings blessing “loving kindness” on one other⁴.

Ruth, Boaz’s and the Divine’s “Loving Kindness”. In the three passages that Ruth displays “loving kindness” she unwaveringly demonstrates:

- Spontaneity and selflessness in staying with her mother-in-law Naomi, for whom she has developed deep affection, by going with her to Israel,

1. Hubbard JR., Robert L. *The Book of Ruth*, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 2nd edition, 1989, p. 104
2. Cundall, Arthur E and Morris, Leon L, *Judges and Ruth*, IVP Academic, 1968, p. 254
3. *ESV*, Judges 21:25
4. C.f. Hubbard JR., p.65

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- Exhausting and humbling work by gleaning in the fields (Lev. 23:22) to provide for Naomi who is being reduced to the lowest depths of poverty and distress upon her return to Israel, and
- Companionship to Boaz, who is aging daily, by requesting him to be her husband thus ensuring that Naomi is taken care off in her old age.

In all three instances Naomi and Boaz are recipients of Ruth’s “loving kindness”, illustrating their own human nature transcended to an awareness of the Divine who blesses those who further the wellness of others, that is, the virtue of Charity.

By the time of Chapter 4, verse 7, Ruth, a foreigner and a Moab, has acquired the “loving kindness” of the town’s elders for her actions towards Naomi and Boaz. This in turn, enables Boaz to confer once more “loving kindness” on Ruth by taking her as his wife and allowing his descendants to live through Elimelech’s family – the very same responsibility negated by the nearest kinsman. At the same time, the Divine bestows “loving kindness” on Ruth and Boaz for the “loving kindness” they have shown by immortalizing them into Israel’s history, and on Israel by providing a future king who would rule and govern Israel under Divine providence.

In furthering the exploration of this symbolical action within our ceremony, the newly initiated brother is instructed in the practice of “loving kindness” via

- Awakening and calling upon his consciousness as an active participant in eliminating injurious actions towards others, and in repairing their well-being, by such actions as:
- Settling his differences amicably with a Brother with whom he is at a variance or to whom he may entertain feelings of animosity,
- Being informed that ‘Mercy blesses him who gives as well as him whom receives’,
- Practicing the virtue of Charity, if ‘he is to meet a Brother in circumstances of distress who claims his assistance’,
- Developing the distinguishing characteristics of every Mason, which are Virtue, Honour and Mercy, and
- Providing every kind office to his neighbour which justice or mercy may require.

(This paper was presented at the Masonic Education Conference in Ottawa in June 2011)

All of these monthly newsletters and much else are available on the Grand Lodge web site. From my correspondence I find that many people are unable to access this. And others as yet have not tried. The information that is available on the web site is growing steadily and will continue to do so.

Instructions for accessing the web site members’ section are below. Please use the web site often. It is becoming a very important mode of communication.

Web Site Member Area Access: <http://www.grandlodge.on.ca/> >> **Login**
Username: your 6 digit Grand Lodge Certificate number [from your actual Certificate, Lodge Secretary, or Email webmaster@grandlodge.on.ca]
Password: Initial password = your 6 digit Grand Lodge Certificate number. [change on first access and provide your Email address, to be used if you ever require a password reset]