

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Charity Isn't About Them...

*Charity Isn't About Them - It's About You*

By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

Why does giving feel so good?

It's one of those universal truths we all experience: the joy of giving often outweighs the joy of receiving. There's a very human moment of pride that everyone feels when we see how we've helped someone, whether it's a spouse recognizing your efforts around the house or the gratitude expressed by someone in need, even when they receive just a dollar. In fact, the legendary Jewish scholar Maimonides taught that the highest level of charity is to give anonymously, allowing the giver to forgo the ego boost they receive from being recognized and thanked for their assistance.

Whether it's assisting a friend in need, contributing to charity, or volunteering, the act of giving fills us with a sense of purpose and connection. But why is this? Why does giving matter so much - not just to the receiver but to the giver?

It's tempting to view charity and kindness as one-way streets. Someone requires help; you step in to provide it. It certainly sounds simple enough, but if you look a little deeper, you'll find that the giver often walks away with something far more profound than the recipient. This dynamic lies at the core of a well-known teaching in the Talmud: "More than the calf needs to nurse, the cow needs to suckle."

This phrase isn't just about animals - it's about us. It reminds us that giving is not a burden; it's a necessity. The cow doesn't feed the calf out of obligation but from a deeper desire to nurture. Similarly, we are inclined to feel fulfilled when we give to others.

Consider the world around us. According to the U.N., we produce enough food to feed everyone on the planet, yet over 800 million people go hungry every day. It's not a problem of scarcity - it's a problem of distribution. You might wonder, why doesn't G-d bypass the middleman and ensure everyone has enough to eat? After all, if He can create the world, He can surely organize a more efficient system.

This leads us to a captivating lesson in the book of Exodus, where G-d instructs the Israelites to present Him with an offering. The verse says, "Take for me an offering...from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity."

Why does the Torah say, "Take for Me"? Shouldn't it say, "Give to Me"? Isn't the essence of charity about giving, not taking?

The wording here is intentional and conveys a profound message: when we give, we're not just giving - we're also receiving. G-d doesn't need our charity; He's giving us the opportunity to be part of something bigger. The act of giving refines us and adds meaning and purpose to our lives.

In a sense, we are G-d's middlemen. We're here to make the world a kinder, more compassionate place. Think of it like being part of a massive distribution network. The "products" we're distributing aren't just material goods like food or money - they're also love, empathy, and connection. By stepping into this role, we become active participants in the betterment of the world.

It's not just about meeting physical needs, either. Sure, a hungry person needs food, and a lonely person needs companionship. But on a deeper level, what we all crave - giver and receiver alike - is meaning. When we give, we tap into that need. It's not just about the recipient's gratitude but about fulfilling a purpose beyond ourselves.

That warm glow we feel after being charitable isn't just the satisfaction of helping - it's the realization that you've made a difference in someone's life. You've gained something intangible yet incredibly valuable in giving: a sense of purpose.

Conversely, think about how many opportunities we miss when we don't give. Every unopened email from a charity, every ignored chance to help a neighbor, is a missed opportunity - not just for them but us. We lose out on the chance to be part of something greater, to connect with others, and to fulfill our higher calling as humans.

G-d could have set up a perfect system where everyone's needs are met without our involvement. But that's not the point of creation. The world isn't just a place to live. It's a place to grow, connect, and improve through our actions. Giving is how we do that, and it's how we transform the world into a kinder, more compassionate place.

There are plenty of opportunities to practice this principle, even those not financially related. While writing a check is undoubtedly important, giving also happens in everyday moments. It's helping a co-worker with a challenging project, listening to a friend going through a rough time, or simply smiling at a stranger on the street. These acts of kindness ripple outward, creating a chain reaction of goodness that touches more lives than we can imagine.

By doing our part - whether big or small - we're not just helping others; we're helping ourselves. We're fulfilling the Talmudic truth that giving is a need, not a chore. We're stepping into our role as G-d's middlemen, distributing not only money but love, compassion, and meaning.

Ultimately, every act of giving brings us closer to a world of peace, kindness, and prosperity for all. And that's a vision worth working toward - one small act of generosity at a time.

*Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports communities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at y@tasteof Torah.org.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

**Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor**  
P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546  
Our email address: [tcherald@windstream.net](mailto:tcherald@windstream.net)

Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.\*

*Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.*

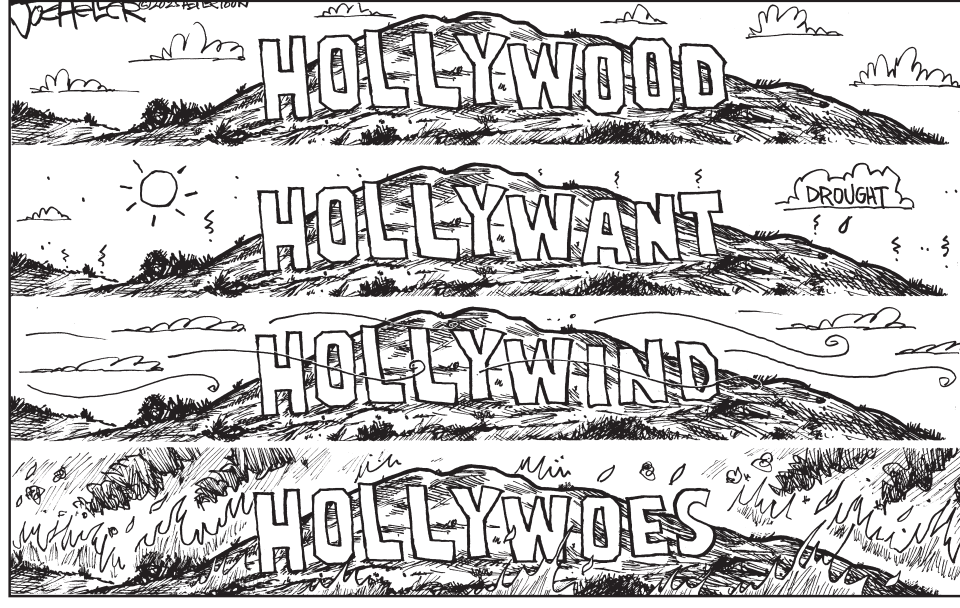
## Towns County Herald

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## After the Decimal Point

It was 9.5 degrees this morning, and even our meticulous canine researchers made a quick study of their morning business. The birds were not shy, urging me loudly to hurry up and restock the suet feeder, and like any guy who got clothes instead of toys for Christmas, I might have grumbled then, but I'm certainly grateful now for those Thinsulate gloves Tracey gave me.

I wonder if I would have felt any colder had the thermometer read 9.4 instead of 9.5 degrees. It's up to 11 now, and that seems to hurt my face just as much. Technology has been my business, but part of me longs for the days of the mercury thermometer and everything that implies about the changes that came after the decimal.

It's a balmy 14 degrees now - 14.0 to be precise. The sun shining through ice crystals creates a beauty that is as unique as it is ephemeral, but I'm glad I was watching my feet instead, to avoid stepping on that slick patch of ice.

Most of you will read this sometime after the impending snow and ice event which has captured the imaginations of local television stations and social media for weeks now. It doesn't snow in the South as often as it once did, and to us, snow is a novelty until the power goes out and we can't get off the Interstate. We used to call all this fuss "winter." My friend in Dayton, OH, taking a break from blowing snow off his parking lot before it turns to ice and becomes covered with more snow, is not impressed.

My grandparents would not be impressed either. To paraphrase something my dad used to say, the trouble with people today is that not enough of them ever took a bath in a washtub in water heated on a wood stove. Dad remembered walking as a child through the snow to the old Titus Post Office and seeing the thermometer which read minus 17 degrees. The cow still had to be milked no matter what the thermometer said, and the difference between staying warm and shivering was having the foresight to stock up enough firewood long before the first snowflake fell.

Winters were less challenging in the placid days of my own youth. Gainesville seemed to suffer at least one ice storm every winter, and many who grew up there remember the flash and explosion of transformers blowing up in the middle of the night, with one less unfortunate squirrel longing for spring.

Realizing that power outages were not uncommon there in the winter, the thought of "total electric" never entered my parents' minds. We lost the furnace when the power went out, but the folks would fire up the gas range and crack a few windows to heat that side of the house. We were all grateful for the gas water heater with the pilot light that kept burning, and some of my fondest memories include hot chocolate in the flickering light of my great-grandparents' pewter kerosene lamp, which Mother kept as a useful keepsake.

I imagine that a child born today will one day hark back to playing Minecraft on his phone in the gentle light of an LED flashlight, bundled up and hoping that the batteries don't give out before the power comes back on. After all, the burning of natural gas and propane in the US contributes a whopping 5% (5.25% to be precise) of the total global carbon footprint, so sacrifices have to be made. Gas water heaters in the US alone (all of them, not just the 40% to be temporarily banned) are responsible for .16% of global carbon. I'm confident you get the point.

It's 23.9 now, and I can ditch the top layer of my down coat on my way to the shop. This is almost shirtsleeve weather, but I'm still grateful for those nuclear power plants at Brown's Ferry and Watts Bar, and for the propane in the tank that will heat that hot chocolate later this afternoon. I'm praying for the guys who will be out in the snow and ice tomorrow to make sure the rest of us stay warm.

## Towns County Community Calendar

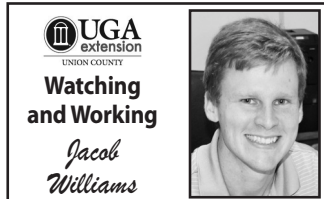
<b>First Monday of each month:</b>	School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
<b>Every Tuesday:</b>	Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
<b>First Tuesday of each month:</b>	Hiaw. City Council... City Hall	6 pm
	YH City Council... YH City Hall	6:30 pm
<b>Second Wednesday of each month:</b>	Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
<b>Third Monday of each month:</b>	Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b>	Commissioner's Mtg... Courthouse	5:30 pm
	City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall	5 pm
	TC Water Authority Board Meeting	6 pm

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## Blueberry Pruning

Blueberries grow pretty well in Georgia. Rabbiteye blueberries are native to the southeast, so they're well adapted to our climate. Let's talk specifically about pruning blueberries.



Watching and Working  
Jacob Williams

Blueberries don't need to be pruned every year to be fruitful. However, if you start doing some cane renewal pruning every year on a mature plant the bushes will be more fruitful and have more longevity. The ideal time to prune blueberries is late winter because the plants are dormant. February is late winter for us in the mountains. Plants in their dormant state are going to be less prone to infection or stress from the pruning.

Blueberry is a multi-stemmed bush. Each one of the stems that comes out of the ground is called a cane. Cane renewal pruning is removing old canes from the plant so that there is space for new canes to grow. Ideally, under cane renewal pruning you'll remove old canes each year so that in five years all the canes on the plant will be completely different. Each year go through the plant and cut out the oldest canes that you find. Also, remove any diseased or dead canes. Ideally, you don't want to remove more than 25% of the canes in a single year. If you have a blueberry bush that hasn't been pruned for a couple of years it may take a couple years to get it back into shape. If you have a blueberry bush that hasn't been pruned for many, many years cane renewal pruning probably isn't going get the plants back into shape. In that situation, I'd recommend something that may seem very drastic, but is better for the plants in the end. Mow the bushes down to the ground. Mature plants will be able to take this hit, and put up new suckers, that turn into canes. This is going to give you fresh growth, and a new healthier plant. You'll go without blueberries for a couple of years. Therefore, if you have several plants that need to be mowed, you could do a couple a year, until they are all back under control.

New plants should be pruned to have the healthiest plants. Prune back 2/3 of the top growth on bare root plants, and 1/2 of the top growth on potted plants. If the new plant has many canes prune out all but 1-3 of the best looking ones. You also don't want a first year plant to produce fruit, so pick off any flower buds. If you prune plants like this the first year, the second year won't need much pruning. In the second year pick off flower buds again, and remove any diseased canes. The third year, remove diseased canes, but you can leave the flower buds on vigorous shoots. The fourth year, the plant should be able to handle full crop, but if you have some weak looking canes, thin out the buds to prevent over fruiting, which can cause permanent bending of canes from the weight.

Each year after harvest is completed cut plants back so that they don't become too tall. Tall plants are more difficult to harvest for people; bears and birds probably won't have that same problem.

If you have questions about pruning blueberries, contact you County Extension Office or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu).

## Letters to the Editor

### How To Forgive

Dear Editor,

Most people in this sinful old world have been hurt in some way or another if they live long enough, and the first thought that comes to mind is how can I get even or get revenge for the harm they have done to me?

I know in my own case years ago I got hurt deeply and anger seemed to be my best friend. But getting even doesn't always solve the problem, so we let our anger fester to the point that we can't sleep or even work properly, and it eventually takes a toll on our body to the point of becoming sick over the whole ordeal.

This all happened before I met the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was in my quiet time with the Lord that He told me in His word, the Bible, that vengeance is mine, says God, I will repay - and when I read that a peace came over me and I got released from my anger after all of those wasted years.

This is one reason why Jesus Christ came and died on the cross, to set us free from our sinful ways and to be released from the guilt and be set free from all malice and bitterness, so that whatever issues come our way we can turn to the only source of help that lives in each believer's heart called the Holy Spirit that brings a calmness of peace that only comes from God. This sets us free to forgive others who have wronged us, so we can move on and not be stuck with a negative attitude, but one of gratitude and thankfulness to God that brings us healing and restores us back into God's family.

Please don't hold a grudge against anyone, because if you do, it will grow like cancer inside of you until you have no room for forgiveness.

God doesn't give us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and of a sound mind. Choose forgiveness and be set free forever.

Frank F. Combs

### Guest Columns

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper.

If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

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