

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

The Battle Within Ourselves

We all know that feeling. You're standing in front of the fridge at midnight, knowing you shouldn't have that slice of cheesecake. Your rational mind says no, but something more primitive – that gut instinct – is already reaching for the plate. It's that eternal wrestling match between our higher and lower selves, a struggle as old as humanity itself.

This internal conflict shows up everywhere in our lives. Maybe it's the urge to gossip about a coworker even though we know it's wrong, or the temptation to cut corners on our taxes when we think no one's looking. We might even recognize it in those moments when we choose to binge-watch TV instead of calling our grandchildren or volunteering at the local food bank.

The truth is, we're all walking around with two distinct forces inside us. One pulls us toward immediate gratification – that voice saying, "treat yourself" or "take the easy way out." The other pushes us toward our better nature, toward doing what's right even when it's harder. It's like having both a rebellious teenager and a wise elder living in our heads, constantly competing for attention.

This duality is beautifully illustrated in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 25:19-28:9, which tells the story of twins Jacob and Esau. From the beginning, while fighting within their mother Rebecca's womb, these brothers couldn't have been more different. Esau emerged first – a hunter driven by impulse and immediate desires, often letting anger and unhealthy urges dictate his actions. Jacob, in contrast, emerged holding his brother's heel, embodying the need for guidance and restraint. This gesture symbolizes the imperative for our inner Jacob to steer our inner Esau. Remarkably, the Torah states that "the older shall serve the younger" – a divine decree that our primal instincts, though they emerge first, must ultimately submit to our higher nature.

Think of it like this: Esau is like that impulse to check Facebook instead of finishing our work, while Jacob represents our conscience reminding us about looming deadlines. Or imagine Esau as that voice urging us to spend our retirement savings on a flashy new car, while Jacob whispers about responsible financial planning.

The fascinating thing about this story isn't just the contrast between the brothers – it's what their relationship teaches us about managing our own internal conflicts. Just as Jacob's hand grasped Esau's heel, suggesting guidance rather than destruction, we're not meant to completely suppress our basic desires. Instead, we're supposed to channel them into something meaningful.

Remember those old commercials about a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other? While entertaining, they missed the point. Our more primitive side isn't inherently evil – it's actually essential for survival and success. That same drive that might lead us to overindulge at dinner also gives us the energy to play with our grandchildren or the motivation to start a new business in our retirement years.

The key is learning to let our higher self, guide our more basic instincts, much like an experienced rider guides a powerful horse. That horse's strength isn't the problem; it's all about who's holding the reins. Just as the Torah ordained that Esau would serve Jacob, our inner "adult" must take charge of our inner "animal," directing its considerable power toward G-dly purposes. This might mean channeling one's competitive drive into charitable fundraising or transforming a quick temper into passionate advocacy for justice.

In today's world, this struggle takes on new dimensions. Social media feeds our impulse for instant gratification. Online shopping makes it easier than ever to spend impulsively. Streaming services tempt us away from more meaningful activities. Yet these same technologies, when guided by our better judgment, can help us stay connected with family, learn Scripture, or contribute to worthy causes.

The wisdom of the Torah suggests that transformation doesn't come through harsh self-denial or brutal inner conflict. Instead, it happens naturally, like turning on a light in a dark room. When we focus on filling our lives with positive actions – whether it's volunteering at the local library, mentoring younger colleagues, or simply being present for our families – the destructive impulses naturally fade into the background.

This doesn't mean we'll never face internal struggles. Even in our golden years, we're still growing, still learning to balance our various impulses and inclinations. But understanding this dynamic can help us approach these challenges with wisdom rather than frustration. Every time we choose patience over anger, generosity over selfishness, or long-term satisfaction over momentary pleasure, we're not just winning a battle – we're gradually transforming ourselves.

The next time you find yourself in front of that midnight cheesecake, remember it's not about denying your desires completely. It's about letting your wisdom guide your choices. Maybe that means having a smaller slice or saving it for tomorrow when you can truly savor it. After all, the goal isn't to silence our Esau-like impulses, but to let our inner Jacob guide them toward something better.

Yonatan Hamburger 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.

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



Mummy Berry

I have talked to several people that sound like they had mummy berry on their blueberry bushes last year. Mummy berry is a fairly common disease on blueberries. It can be a pretty devastating disease to your harvest. By the time that you see the affects of it, the opportunity to treat has passed. Let's talk about mummy berry how it works, and what you can do to manage it.

UGA extension
UNION COUNTY
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Mummy berry is a fungal disease on blueberry bushes. It causes the blueberries to rot and fall off just as they are ripening to be ready to harvest. This can be very frustrating to you as it looks like you're going to have a lot of blueberries and then one by one they fall off the bush. Mummy berry is not too difficult to manage, but you have to follow a couple of steps to make sure that you get the best control of the disease possible.

Mummy berry infects the blueberry bush when it is in bloom. Those blooms will turn into fruit over the course of the season. Blooms that were infected carry the mummy berry pathogen with them, which causes them to rot and fall off. When they rot and hit the ground, the pathogen stays there over winter. In the early spring it forms apothecia, or tiny mushrooms. These release spores that infect the leaves of the plant. The infected leaves produce spores that are transmitted to the flowers by bees or wind, and thus the mummy berry life cycle continues on and on.

Because the infection of the fruit occurs at bloom it is most important to treat plants at that stage each year. Treatment at another time of year is not effective. Captan is a fungicide that is very effective at making sure that making sure that the blooms do not become infected. It's best to spray Captan every 7-10 days while plants are in bloom. There is an organic fungicide called Serenade that can be somewhat effective at controlling mummy berry if it is sprayed every 7 days. With Captan or Serenade it is important to get good coverage on the blooms of the plant. With any pesticide it is always important to read the label and follow it, as the label is the law.

A couple of other practices that can help to reduce the amount of mummy berry that you have are to remove dead berries after they fall. This will reduce the amount of pathogen that overwinters in the soil. To remove berries simply rake them out or use a leaf blower and then throw them into the trash or compost pile. Another practice is to mulch. Placing mulch 3-4 inches deep around the bush creates a physical barrier that is difficult for the mummy berry spores to move through. You don't want to place the mulch all the way up to the trunk of the bush. Pine straw, pine bark, or wood chips all work well for mulch. The best control of mummy berry is to use a combination of spraying, removing, and mulching.

Mummy berry is simple to control if you get the timing right. If you have questions about mummy berry contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters to the Editor

Helping Our Country

Dear Editor,

My maternal Grandmother died on April 20th, 1981. Grandpa rushed around to obtain a death certificate because he wanted to make sure that her measly Social Security check would not be directly deposited into his bank account on May 1st. What an honest man he was! I am glad for my heritage.

I have been amazed at the information that is coming out about the corruption, fraud and waste being perpetrated by our government. Not only is the bureaucracy not keeping watch, who are the people that continue to take money that they are not due? It grieves me that we might have this many dishonest people in this country!

By the way, when I worked for Towns County, everything I saw was honest and above board.

Proverbs 14:34, Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

Let's help our country by living right in the sight of God!

Kathy Norton

To the Towns County Humane Society

Board of Directors,

I am a resident of Hiawassee and Towns County. Myself and other Town County residents are seeking an Off Leash Dog Park. A petition was started requesting that Towns County consider building an Off Leash Dog Park. The county is considering building a dog-friendly walking trail on the property where the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center is. While this would be a positive development for the community, it is not an Off Leash Dog Park.

I, and some other signatories to the petition, visited the Humane Society Thrift Store in Towns County and contributed to a fund located there during the past few months via a jar on the counter collecting funds for a dog park. In addition, at one point the store was raffling off a rifle, again as part of a dog park fundraising effort. I personally purchased several tickets to support the building of a dog park in Towns County.

At this juncture, we are offering to support any effort by the Humane Society to go forward with building a dog park in Towns County. We feel it would benefit a wide range of Towns County residents who currently drive approximately 25 minutes – each way – to utilize the nearest dog park at the Farmers Market property in Blairsville. Among those who utilize the park include disabled people, such as myself, as well as veterans with service dogs, who cannot properly walk their dogs to exercise them. In addition, Senior Citizens in Towns County, who are also dog owners, would benefit from an Off Leash Dog Park.

Besides these concrete needs that could be met by a dog park in Towns County, there is also another benefit that dog parks bring to the community. They act as modern-day Town Squares where residents can meet and socialize.

Please advise if there is anything we can do to assist with this effort.

Thank you for the important work that the Humane Society does in terms of advocacy for our Best Friends.

Jerry Bilinski

Narrenbeschwörung

One of my earliest memories is a visit to my grandparents' house east of Hiawassee in winter. The potbellied stove warmed the house with a heat that no other technology would ever match, and the world outside the frosty window was a wilderness of bobcats and bears and stories that have slipped into the dreamtime of the Southern Appalachians.

I don't know what the year was or my age, but I was small enough to be bathed in a washbasin on the kitchen counter, probably because the pipes to the bathroom were frozen and the kitchen was the warmest room of the house. They say that memories earlier than 3 or 4 years are rare, but I remember that night clearly, possibly because I also learned that a quick way to get a blister is to touch the poker your grandfather just used to stoke the fire. I also learned that grandmothers can make any hurt go away.

In the centuries before indoor plumbing, when baths were rare and water was heated over open fires, families bathed in the same tub. The youngest bathed last, and by the time the baby was washed, the water could be quite dirty, hence the caution not to "throw out the baby with the bathwater." It's an old expression that can be traced back to Thomas Murner's 1512 book "Narrenbeschwörung." I'll let you look up the translation and then you can share in the inside joke, knowing that most people will not.

The old expression came to mind recently as I read some of the reactions to the ongoing work of the Department of Government Efficiency, affectionately or disdainfully known as "DOGE." It's like someone kicked over an anthill: Chaos and panic ensue as the ants scramble to respond. The alarm pheromones spread, quickly mobilizing the entire colony. Evacuation and rescue are attempted as the ants move eggs, larvae, and the queen to safer areas. The colony defense mechanisms are triggered as the ants bite, sting, and spray formic acid to repel attackers. Once the immediate threat is managed, the ants reorganize and attempt repair and reconstruction.

Regrettably for the anthill of the unelected Administrative State, the assault on the colony this time is not a casual kick but a meticulously planned and executed campaign. It is occurring so rapidly that the ants have little chance to reorganize and rebuild, and can do little more than bite and sting with lawsuits and injunctions while media ants spray formic acid. It is an unfortunate characteristic of the information age that alarm pheromones can spread so quickly, causing panic such as the one which has seized the bureaucratic class to spread outward. Among colony sympathizers, there is an understandable fear that in the process of eliminating the extensive corruption from the institutions that govern us, valuable elements will be discarded along with the undesirable ones. The bathwater is indeed foul, but alongside the billions of dollars wasted and stolen, there are surely aspects worth preserving. For example, the work done by USAID is being absorbed into the Department of State.

Attack pheromones have also been triggered among the supporters of DOGE, who, like the deep state Democrats and their followers who accuse the Republicans of tyranny, decry the "constitutional crisis" of activist judges interfering with the legitimate powers of the Executive Branch.

Both sides are right, and both are wrong. This process, my friends, is the sausage being made. It has always been this ugly, but only in recent times have we had a front-row seat on the factory floor. The government that the majority of Americans elected will undo some of the overreach of previous governments, including, in particular, the "Weekend at Bernie's" administration of the last four years. The courts, though not immune to partisan activism, will work to limit the powers of an imperial presidency, and some of the issues will not be resolved without the Supreme Court, which is as it should be.

Let's take another step back from the fray. Partisan politics has conditioned us, like ants, to respond to the particular pheromones (or "fearomones") broadcast by our chosen colonies. If you're fearful of what DOGE is attempting, consider that in 2023 the Government Accountability Office of the Biden Administration discovered at least \$243 billion in misallocated funds for that fiscal year, and they certainly were not trying to upend the Administrative State. In fact, according to the consensus of both Republican and Democrat administrations long before DOGE, a total of \$2.7 trillion has been lost or misspent since 2003.

The taste of the sausage we're making remains uncertain, and it is likely that not everyone will appreciate the flavor. However, both the flavor and the recipe will be distinctly American. I am confident that this will serve as further evidence that our system, despite its flaws, remains effective.

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

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

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

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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