

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Jump Right In

By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



The crashing waves of the Red Sea scared the Jewish people. Freshly liberated after centuries of slavery, they couldn't wrap their minds around what Moses was asking them to do as their Egyptian slave masters closed in on them from behind: to simply walk into the raging waters and let G-d do the rest. Sure, Moses had delivered on his promises to free them and performed miraculous miracles up to this point, but how could they risk their lives now, just like that?

The Jewish people passionately debated their options, until one leader took matters into his own hands. Nachshon, the bold leader of the tribe of Judah, confidently entered the choppy seas. The nation watched as the water reached his knees, naval and neck, with no apparent miracles occurring. And suddenly, as Nachshon's head almost disappeared under the waves, the sea roared to life. Along with every body of water in the world, the Red Sea parted in two where Nachshon stood, miraculously drying the seabed for the Jewish people to march into freedom, escape Egypt forever and march to Mount Sinai, and eventually return to their homeland, Israel.

Passover famously begins with the Seder, which this year was last Monday and Tuesday evenings, where Jewish families the world over gathered together for a 12-part meal and remembrance of their ancestors' exodus and deliverance from Egypt, which was a formative element in the founding story of the Jewish people.

Not as well-known as the beginning of the holiday are the last two days of Passover (Monday, April 29th, and Tuesday, April 30th), where we mark the conclusion of the weeklong festival, and commemorate the splitting of the Red Sea, when G-d performed unprecedented miracles that transcended the laws of nature. The celebration includes actively remembering what G-d did for the ancient Israelites by staying up the whole night to learn Torah, and having meals celebrating the Israelites' deliverance then, as well as the Messianic deliverance all of humanity will experience, speedily in our days.

But there are many miracles G-d performed in the Bible which don't include celebrations millennia later. Why is the miracle of the Red Sea still applicable in our times, that it warrants such commemoration?

There's an enduring message about faith that resonates even after many centuries from the miraculous events of the splitting of the Red Sea.

Despite witnessing G-d's miracles clearly for all to see, still the Jewish people weren't sure whether they should listen to His directives and walk into the sea. G-d had stood by them and proven Himself, and still they waffled. Yet one brave man took it upon himself to set the tone for the entire nation and triggered the chain of events that ushered in the miracle of the splitting of the sea, their enemies vanquished, and the road to redemption and to Mount Sinai opened up.

These days, it's easy to miss the miracles we experience every day. With wars raging around the world and domestic concerns at home, we can miss the everyday things we take for granted and never feel grateful for. While we see miracles happening around us, the incredible failure of Iran's attack on Israel and U.S. regional interests, being a notably recent one, miracles can seem few and far between, leaving room for doubt and despair to creep in and fill that void, leaving us to question G-d's plan for us and doubt whether we should follow His directives at all.

At these times, it's important to remember that G-d is always with us and has always been there. Every gift we have, be it our family, our job, or even the gift of being born a free American, is a miracle that we have been blessed with. When we experience moments of doubt, like Nachshon who jumped into the Red Sea, we need to push away the fear, and trust what we know is right, trusting G-d to be there for us like He always has been.

As always, we'd love to hear your thoughts on this subject, or any other. You can reach us at y@tasteoftorah.org.

Yonatan Hamburger is a rabbi with Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer based in Florida.

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

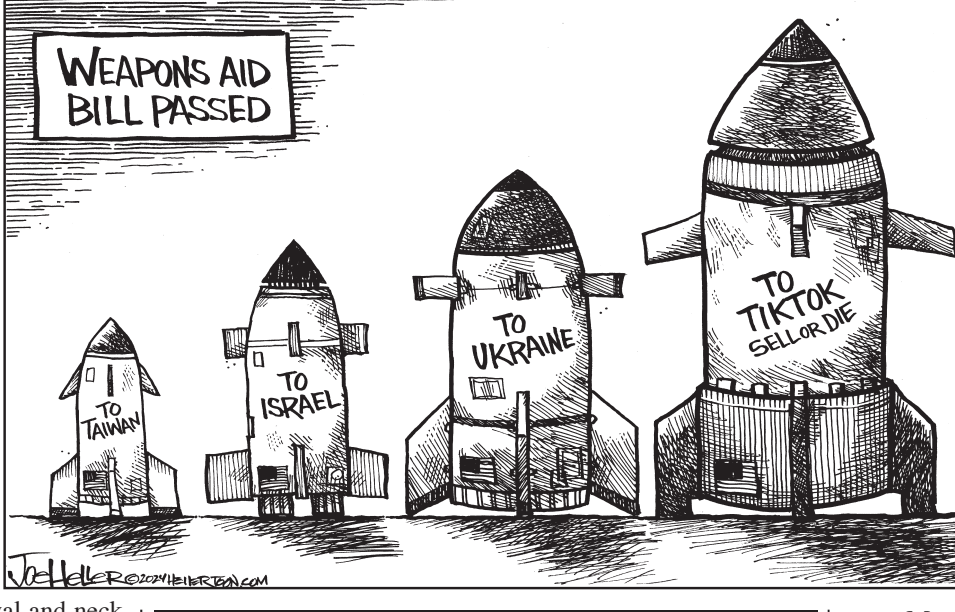
Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
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Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net

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 Community Calendar

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



Just a Chicken

Four years ago when there were no eggs to be found in the grocery stores, an impossibly small box containing an unlikely number of baby chicks arrived at our house. One poor traveler did not survive the trip, but the rest of the herd we divided into two camps housed in large pet carriers lined with plastic and bedded with pine shavings.

Heat lamps kept them warm in the shop. Two cats and two dogs kept them company, and they grew rapidly, surrounded by the sights and sounds of busy humans. When the weather allowed, we moved them all into a temporary outdoor "chicken shanty" while their permanent home was being built.

On my grandparents' farms, chickens were eggs and meat. Every care was given to keep them healthy because kindness was a life principle, but I never observed much affection for the livestock. The exception was Old Daisy, my grandpa's plow horse of 33 years who was so in tune with her friend and master that when Pa stumbled behind the plow, Daisy would immediately stop pulling and wait for him to regain his balance. They were both in their 80's, relative to equine and human lifespans, and Pa cried the day she left him to live out her remaining years with a younger man who could better see to her care. The love of a good horse may only appear once in a man's lifetime, if he is lucky.

Most of us feel immediate affection in the presence of a puppy or kitten, or even the infants of a number of other species. For many people a chicken is not high on the list of animals that inspire such affection. Baby chicks are cute. Chickens are dirty, destructive, thieving and murderous. And funny. And when you raise them from babies you learn that they each have distinct personalities.

C.S. Lewis wrote that affection begins subtly, often without our noticing it, and that it transcends barriers of age, sex, class and even species. If you keep chickens long enough, some of them will make you laugh. Some will follow you wherever you go, get excited when you show up, run to you for safety when they are afraid. If you plan on raising chickens for meat, don't give them names. I guarantee you won't eat a chicken you have cared enough to name.

Hazel was given a name because she was loud and wide, like the Hazel Burke of classic television. She came when I called, was glad to see me, hid behind my legs when she didn't feel like dancing with one of the roosters.

Philosophers and psychologists tell us that anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics to non-human entities. They tell us that cats and dogs, and chickens, are incapable of love and affection, that they are merely behaving instinctually in ways that mimic those emotions. I'm not entirely sure that many philosophers and psychologists aren't guessing in some way that mimic science, but I would venture a hunch that some of them were those kids at birthday parties who like to let the air out of the balloons.

I'm not in the mood for psychology today, but I am feeling philosophical. I buried Hazel this afternoon, at the end of the garlic patch where I know that nothing will disturb her remains. She came to us for help when she felt bad, leaving the flock and standing by the gate where we could see her. She was egg bound.

We did what we could; checked for obstructions, bathed her in an Epsom salt bath, massaged her, kept her in the shop, warm and quiet. She recovered for a while and even had a last meal of some earthworms I gathered. She hadn't eaten for days. Finally she just went to sleep and fell over softly as her spark of life returned to the Creator from whence it came.

Hazel was just a chicken, but she was one of our pandemic babies. She was a new start in the strange and often frightening new world this one has become. She was a signpost on the road back to healing, health and strength for our family after a debilitating illness. She survived the night of the bear attack on the chicken shanty, the flood of rain and hail that overflowed the ditch, the bombardment of the hawk, the stealthy coyote and the ravaging bobcat. She would stop by most afternoons and wait outside the shop for a special treat. She came to us for help, and we were unable to save her.

She was just a chicken, and I'm sad that her life was cut short. I don't know what the philosophers and psychologists would say, but I believe that when we grieve for the loss of a pet, or a person, or even a chicken, our sadness encompasses more than just the personality which has departed. Each entity we encounter is a placeholder for, or delineates a host of memories. Every loss ends a chapter, sometimes an entire book. It reminds us of the time that has passed in the making of that story. It reminds us of our own mortality.

Never mind the "sorry for your loss," that thing we say, worth it's weight in pixels, to people we don't know well. She was just a chicken, and we still have Rachael Ray, Bonnie Pointer, Gilligan and Mary Anne, and Miz Drysdale. The chicken legs at Aldi's will still taste just as good, but my, how the time does pass so quickly.

The Book tells us to "Love your neighbor as yourself." That's difficult, especially in this age of self-loathing disguised as self-love and wrapped in self-absorption, and some neighbors are harder to love than a chicken. I believe that's why the Creator gave us this myriad of creatures, our pets and all the others, to practice affection, to make sure our capacity for love does not atrophy. It is the only thing standing between us and oblivion.

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Pollinator Gardening

Let's talk about pollinator gardening, and some of the things to include in a good pollinator garden.

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Pollinators play a very important role in our food production and ecology. When we think about pollinators we often think of honeybees and butterflies. They are very important for pollination, but the truth is that there are also tons of other critters that are important pollinators. Bats, and hummingbirds, native bees, wasps, moths, and more all play an important role in pollination. Since we have such a diverse group of pollinators, it's important that we have a diverse habitat in our pollinator garden for them.

Most pollinator plants like full sun. Full sun is at least 8 hours of sun each day during the summer. If you don't have full sun in your spot then the plants that you choose will need to reflect that. Many pollinators like to spend some time basking in the sun with some protection from the wind. A soil test is also a good idea before starting a pollinator garden to see if you need to add any lime or fertilizer to the soil. A well-drained soil is also ideal.

Native plants are the best choice for your pollinator garden. They tend to be better adapted to our soils and our native pollinators. It's important to have a diversity of plants in your pollinator garden. Different flower shapes, flower colors, plant size, and plant shape are all important. It's important to have a diversity of plants so that you have blooms for Spring, Summer, and Fall.

There are a ton of different plants that you could put in a pollinator garden, so I can't mention them all here. It is important to make sure that the plants you choose are well suited to your site for sunlight, water drainage, and USDA zone. Here are some plants that I would recommend.

Some good spring blooming plants are wild indigo, Bee balm, lyre leaf sage, bearded tongue, tulip poplar, serviceberry, sweetshrub, eastern redbud, fringe tree, Carolina silverbell and bottlebrush buckeye. Many of these plants are more trees and shrubs. As I mentioned earlier you want a diversity of plant size too.

Summer blooming plants are easier to find than spring blooming. Cosmos, blackeyed Susan, coneflowers, coreopsis, St. John's wort, sweet pepperbush, milkweed, yarrow, passionflower, mountain mint, and sourwood. This list has a mixture of perennial and annual. Many pollinator plants are able to reseed themselves. For some, if you give them a little help dispersing the seed, they do even better.

Fall blooming plants are very important as pollinators try to store up that last bit of energy before the frost comes. Goldenrod, asters, joe-pye weed, and ironweed are all some important fall bloomers. Goldenrod, joe-pye weed, and ironweed have beautiful blooms and are often seen along the roadside. These have the misfortune that they are thought of as weeds by some people, but really, they are great pollinator plants.

One challenge with native pollinator plants can be finding seed to plant. Work with other plant lover neighbors to see if they have plants that you like and if they would be willing to share seed with you. If you have questions about a pollinator garden contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters To The Editor

Mountain Shelter

Dear Editor,

The Humane Society's Mountain Shelter has served Union and Towns Counties for almost 40 years, rescuing homeless cats and dogs. We are a charitable organization and appreciate all the support that we have received from the community over the years.

Like most organizations recently, we have been affected by inflation and rising costs. As local families suffer, we have also had more animals surrendered to us. Soaring veterinary costs and labor expense have forced us to reexamine our operations. These times are challenging but also exciting, as we change and grow to meet the future needs of our community.

As we transform our organization, changes can lead to unfounded complaints by former employees. We are happy to report that, in a recent surprise inspection by the Georgia Department of Agriculture, Mountain Shelter received a 100% rating and was praised for excellent animal care. While it is disappointing to know that unhappy people cause this type of trouble, we could not be more proud of our staff at the shelter.

We are blessed to be located in the North Georgia mountains and will continue to serve this community, keeping the welfare of animals as our top priority. Please stop by our shelter to see all the wonderful work that we do - lots of happy, furry friends would love to meet you. Mountain Shelter is a 501(c)(3) organization, located at 129 Bowling Gap Circle, Blairsville.

Rob Medwed
President, Humane Society's Mountain Shelter

Pray for Stan Gunter

Dear Editor,

Speaking to a crowd of 30 to 35 attendees at the Sundance Grill in Hiawassee, Georgia, on Friday, April 12, at the 8:00 a.m. scheduled meeting, District 8 State Rep. Stan Gunter announced he has stage 4 prostate cancer which has metastasized to his left shoulder.

Stan and his family are in need of our prayers as he struggles to prevail and continue as our State Representative District 8 for Union, Towns and White counties.

Jerry O'Connell

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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