

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Cleansing the World Hurts

Cleansing the World Hurts, But It's Necessary
By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

It's been a tumultuous year. In just 12 months, the Middle East has been shaken to its core following Hamas's brutal invasion, which resulted in the massacre and kidnapping of over 1,400 innocent people. After that horrific October 7, when the world questioned how Israel could possibly recover, the nation has responded with remarkable resilience. United and determined despite immense pressure and calls from Hamas sympathizers to simply endure, Israel has eliminated thousands of terrorists in Gaza and Lebanon. At the same time, the leaders of these death cults have been taken out decisively. Iran, the root of much of the region's turmoil, has lost its deniability and proxies, resembling a wounded serpent lashing out as it confronts Israel's strength for the first time – potentially leading to the end of its toxic influence in the world. Meanwhile, the Russia-Ukraine war drags on, while China escalates its preparations for a potential blockade of Taiwan. Domestically, an ailing economy and discontented public have forced the current U.S. president to withdraw from the presidential race, leaving the vice president to step into the fray just six weeks before the election, upending what appeared to be a straightforward race with a former president seeking a comeback.

Sometimes, it feels safer to stick with the status quo because it's more comfortable. Yes, Israel was surrounded by enemies for years, enduring terror attacks and rockets, but as long as the violence was contained, it seemed manageable. Russia and China have always harbored expansionist ambitions, but as long as we didn't confront them directly, their growing power felt less urgent. The ruling class knew the public was dissatisfied with their leadership but attempted to enforce the status quo until it became impossible to ignore.

In all these instances, the world moved along until outside influences forced action. But now, we have an opportunity to cleanse the world of these destructive elements and pave the way for a more prosperous and peaceful future.

With Iran and its weakened proxies pushing Israel's hand, it's crucial to allow Israel to continue its mission to dismantle the axis of evil threatening global stability and decisively curb Iran's capacity to harm the world. The U.S. should facilitate negotiations between Ukraine and Russia to end the bloodshed and confront China about its true intentions, dispelling the illusion of peaceful competition. Domestically, the upcoming election allows the American people to choose their vision for the country and the world. We are living in a whirlwind, but as events unfold, we can recognize the potential for transformative, positive outcomes.

We see the need for a cleansing to upend a negative status quo in the Biblical story of Noah and the Ark, which is read in synagogues around the world this week. Just generations after Adam and Eve, the world had sunk into corruption and evil. There was no morality, no justice, and no one inclined to change the world for the better. G-d tried to lead the people toward making the right decisions that could have saved their world, but the hedonists of the day refused to change their ways.

G-d determined that the only way to heal the world was by thoroughly cleansing it of all evil with a massive flood, instructing Noah – literally the only righteous man of his day – to build an Ark to save what would be used to rebuild humanity. He gave the evildoers one hundred and twenty years of warnings and encouragement to repent before the punishment was meted out. Still, they wouldn't relent, proving that drastic action was needed to redirect the world's course.

And so, it came to be the flood came and healed the world. It was violent and traumatic, even for G-d, who vowed never to do such a thing again. But the crucial thing is that it worked.

Events of the past several years have been painful, difficult, and unsettling. But now we pray that it has served as a springboard for positive and lasting change – one that leads us toward a safer, more just world for all.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer serving spiritual seekers of all persuasions on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer serving communities throughout the regional South. You can reach them at y@tasteofiorah.org.

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		6 pm
YH City Council... YH City Hall		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		5:30 pm
City of Young Harris Planning Commission...		
Meeting Room in City Hall		5 pm
TC Water Authority Board Meeting		6 pm

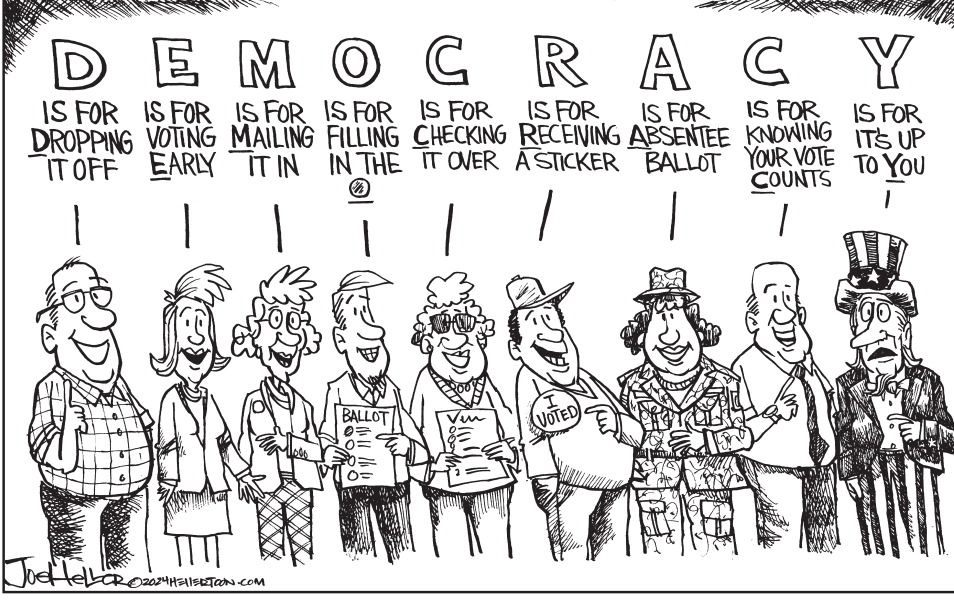
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It's About Time

Every year about this time, leaves gather and get relocated, then they regroup and conspire to come back with others, only to be relocated again. The roofs of our house and barn, are inspected and repaired as needed. Garden hoses are pulled, coiled, and stored away. Tomato plants are pulled up and replaced by broccoli, lettuce, and collards. The jackets and long-sleeve shirts come out of storage. The annual fall-back messing with our schedules allowed by the do-nothings in Washington once again mandates disrupted sleep patterns, increased depression, strokes, car accidents, and heart issues.

What also happens about this time, year after year, is that someone reminds me that the earth has made yet another trip around the sun since the annual ritual was performed. You know the one I mean. I read recently a theory that the "happy birthday" ritual is a holdover from ancient dark rites. Think about it: You gather in a circle – around a circle of fire – and chant an incantation that binds you to time and death, with balloons.

How old would you be if you didn't know? How old would you act? How old would you feel? I knew a woman who didn't take much stock in birthdays. She had a heart operation when she was almost 90, and two weeks later, we saw her carrying an aluminum ladder across a field to climb into a tree and pick cherries. She's still carrying ladders.

Bound to time, we are, as surely as the email birthday greeting from the bank and the real estate agent we talked to 10 years ago but didn't buy anything, and the insurance company we ditched but somehow remained on their mailing list, just in case. How do they even know my birthday? It's a conspiracy, I tell you.

Last year, I removed my date of birth from Facebook. This year, I didn't half miss the tiny doses of serotonin delivered by the little red notification numbers indicating that someone I once knew, or who knows someone I once knew, thought enough of me to click on the birthday reminder Facebook provides, which automatically generates a greeting for our virtual friends. You don't even have to type out that greeting anymore because who has the time? Now the people who do remember to bind me to time are on the small list of actual friends willing to sacrifice some of their own precious time to help speed me on my way to oblivion. God love them.

Mark my words, this cultural, institutional, international, civilizational, and personal hyper-awareness of time is making us age a lot faster than necessary. When teenagers have face-lifts to celebrate graduation from high school, we should know that something is amiss. It was bad enough in olden times when a home might have one wind-up clock, and watches were kept in pockets until they were needed. Now every pixelated device we have, which is most of our devices, reminds us constantly of the time and the date. The second hand is a tiny Balrog's whip against our all-too-fleeting bubbles of awareness.

It is impossible to escape time, but perhaps we can mitigate the damage. Personally, I prefer fewer clocks (and mirrors) in the house. I don't wear a watch. I am bound to technology, but I endeavor to use it rather than be used by it. It only takes a moment to set reminders, which then ping and sing me on my way to appointments, and that's so much nicer than constantly glancing at the clock.

I don't number the years of our furred friends. Cats, in particular, will live forever if you forget how old they are. Did you notice that? "How old" is the crumbling cornerstone of civilization itself. I am convinced that you will add to your longevity by remembering that the only correct answer to the question, "How old are you?" is "I'm not."

Here's another pro tip from the best examples we have of time defiers: Busy people. Albert Einstein demonstrated that time, or the experience of time, slows down the faster an object moves. Keep moving, and The Reaper will have to sprint to catch up.

Get outside more, into the elements that create life force and away from those that drain it. Get to know the names of the moons, and learn to respond to their pull rather than that of the arbitrary calendar, which is so inaccurate that it has to be adjusted every four years. Accept the seasons that the earth presents rather than the anxiety of failed predictions peddled by meteorology and the calendar.

Forget about birthdays, but remember to acknowledge the people we care about without being reminded. If you are glad they were born, let them know today, right now. It's about time.

Time, after all, is only God's way of making sure that everything doesn't happen at once.

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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Leave the Leaves

Leaves are falling from the trees. Soon they will be littered all over the ground. However, we shouldn't think of leaves as litter. They are a natural product that is beneficial in a lot of ways. Let's talk about some of the benefits that leaves provide, and why leaving them is good for the environment.

In the fall most, people will get out their rakes and leaf blowers to remove the leaves from their yards. The end result is a yard that looks very tidy and neat, but also a yard that has removed a crucial element of the nutrient cycle and disrupted the life cycle of many beneficial insects. I would argue that there are some places where you should remove the leaves. Like your driveway or walkways because they can create a hazard. I have also raked a small portion of my yard because my kids love a good leaf pile, and I'm not going to keep that happiness from them. But in the rest of the yard and the surrounding woods it's beneficial to leave those leaves in place.

Fallen leaves create organic matter for the soil. As the leaves break down they return the nutrients that they are holding back to the soil. This is an important part of the nutrient cycle. In the spring trees will withdraw nutrients from the ground and start to make those leaves. In the fall when the leaves drop, the leaves are still holding the nutrients. Each individual leaf may not have a lot of nutrients, but collectively their nutrient load is important. Allowing those leaves to return their nutrients to the soil completes the nutrient cycle. Leaving the leaves in plant beds around your house is a good thing for the plants. It will also help reduce weeds, since it serves as a mulch layer. A light layer of leaves over grass will benefit the grass too. On grass, if the leaves are too thick, it can damage the grass.

Another great benefit of leaving the leaves is that it helps beneficial insects. Lots of insects will lay their eggs in the leaves. Butterflies and moths will lay eggs in the leaves to emerge next year. Bumblebees, Luna moths, and swallowtail butterflies will over winter just under the soil line. A layer of leaf mulch protects these important pollinators.

Lots of animals rely on the leaves too. Turtles, toads, birds, salamanders, and small mammals use the leaves for food, shelter, and nesting material. All of these critters need a place to spend the winter.

If you have more leaves than you can handle consider putting the extra around trees, ornamental plants, and in garden beds as a natural mulch. It's better to not shred the leaves as this will destroy any insects or eggs that are in the leaves.

Grass for lawns is the largest irrigated 'crop' in the US at over 40 million acres. That's more than irrigated corn or soybean. If everyone made sure that their lawn was a welcome habitat for pollinators and other critters it would make a huge difference. If you have questions about your leaves, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters To The Editor

Russian Roulette

Dear Editor,

Russian roulette and having unprotected sex have a lot in common.

In today's society, they are both potentially deadly. Playing Russian roulette can only hurt the participant, who obviously made a foolish decision in the first place. Having unprotected sex, is also a foolish decision.

Unprotected sex can result in a woman becoming pregnant, and if she so chooses, she can abort the fetus without ever considering it a viable life. However, in some states, if a pregnant woman is murdered, the perpetrator can be charged with two counts of homicide. There seems to be a little discrepancy here.

Life begins at conception. Ronald Reagan said, "I never met a person yet, who was pro-abortion, that hadn't already been born." The falling away from spiritual values has a lot to do with the pathway we are traveling upon as a nation. At some point, those who believe in abortion on demand, should take a hard look at their lifestyle and at their value system, analyze it from a spiritual perspective and make appropriate changes so that unwanted pregnancies occur less, and therefore, the killing of the unborn also declines.

Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Jesus knew the value of children and reached out to them. He has to be very saddened at the number of babies that never have a chance to enjoy life on this earth. Saddened, and perhaps angry.
Gene Vickers

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

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

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