

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Politics Can't Replace Religion

By Yonatan Hamburger
and Tzali Reicher

Well before the recent presidential election, it was clear that many Americans were filling the gap once occupied by faith and spirituality with politics, dictating what is happening far away in Washington, dictate their moods, personal relationships, and how they see the world.

This is not an issue exclusive to one side of the political aisle.

Some conservatives have been swept up in a populist wave, replacing some of their core values with an inflexible and unwelcoming maximalist position. Meanwhile, the Left has increasingly placed its faith in government and ideology, treating them as sacred entities capable of delivering salvation. But politics cannot replace religion, and when this misguided faith inevitably falters, the emotional fallout is profound.

Secular humanism has morphed into its own quasi-religion. This worldview reveres the power of human institutions to fix every injustice and create a perfect society. The government is treated as the ultimate arbiter of morality and progress, with its leaders and policies imbued with a sense of infallibility. Yet, these human constructs repeatedly fail to deliver, leading to frustration, outrage, and despair.

Governments fail, leaders disappoint, and ideologies clash. When these human constructs crumble, those who place their hope in them are cast adrift without anchor.

Contrast this with the monotheistic worldview that has guided countless generations. For example, look at King David's observation in Psalm 20, "These trust in chariots and these in horses, but we— we mention the name of the Lord our G-d. They kneel and fall, but we rise and gain strength." Monotheism acknowledges human limitations and places ultimate trust in a Creator who transcends those limitations. It teaches that we are all created in G-d's image, giving life profound meaning and purpose while also reminding us that life's uncertainties are part of a divine plan. This belief system equips its adherents to endure setbacks with grace, humility, and hope.

For those who believe the state can and should solve all of life's problems, failure is catastrophic. When government programs falter, when leaders betray ideals, or when progress seems out of reach, the emotional fallout is devastating. Politics isn't meant to be our moral guide to understanding the world; it is a tool to affect change and to share our Judeo-Christian values. If the state is your G-d, then its failures are existential crises.

This phenomenon helps explain today's increasingly volatile reactions to political and social challenges. The outrage, the vitriol, and the refusal to tolerate dissent are not signs of ideological strength but symptoms of a worldview collapsing under its own weight. Secular humanism cannot prepare its adherents for the inevitability of human fallibility. Rather, it creates a fragile moral framework that shatters when the systems it idolizes fail to meet expectations.

Believers in G-d, on the other hand, possess an inner resilience that transcends worldly disappointments. Faith in a loving Creator fosters a perspective that recognizes human limitations while placing trust in something eternal and unshakable. This duality—human dignity coupled with divine sovereignty—provides the strength to weather life's storms without falling into despair.

Psalm 20 offers a strikingly relevant and timely message for our time. Trusting in "chariots and horses"—in earthly power and human constructs—leads to disappointment. But those who "mention the name of the Lord" rise and gain strength. This isn't just a theological concept; it's a practical guide to living with resilience in an unpredictable world.

The emotional crisis that so many of our fellow citizens are facing is a symptom of a deeper problem: the spiritual void created when faith is replaced with ideology. Without G-d, there is no ultimate source of hope or meaning. Every failure feels permanent; every loss is catastrophic, and every setback irredeemable. But with G-d, disappointment is reframed. Challenges become growth opportunities, and hope persists even in the face of hardship.

As our society grapples with polarization and despair, it is time to reconsider the role of faith—not as a divisive force but as a unifying and stabilizing one. The answer to today's emotional turmoil isn't more government programs or ideological purges; it's a return to the belief in something higher, something eternal. Only then can we rise above the chaos, find peace amid life's uncertainties, and gain the strength to move forward with dignity and purpose.

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Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



Armadillo

Armadillos are moving further and further north, and have started showing up in the mountains. I've seen them walking through the woods while hiking here. Let's talk about armadillos, and the damage that they can cause.

In Georgia, we only have one species of armadillo. That's the nine-banded armadillo. In Central and South America, there are 20 species of armadillo, including the giant armadillo that can weigh up to 130 pounds. The ones that we have are about the size of an opossum and weigh 8 to 17 pounds. They are brownish colored with sparse hair. The unique thing about them is the 'shell' that covers them. This shell is made up of bony plates covered by a tough skin layer. The plates overlap giving the armadillo some freedom of movement. Armadillos don't like cold temperatures, which is why they have been slow to establish populations in the mountains.

They will dig burrows or use burrows dug by other animals to sleep in. When it's hot outside, they will limit activity to nighttime. However, when it gets cold, they become more active during the day. They don't hibernate, because they aren't capable of storing body reserves of fat. Therefore, they must forage at least every few days. The burrows usually have an entrance that's about a foot wide and 4 feet long.

They have poor eyesight, but rely on their sense of smell to find food. Their diet is made up of insects and plant litter. Sometimes, you can see parts of what they've eaten in their droppings. Their droppings are round and about the same size as marbles. Most armadillo foraging is done by digging in the ground. When digging they are looking for grubs. They will eat fire ants, and don't mind fire ant bites.

Armadillos can carry disease, but transmission of disease to humans is very rare. They can carry leprosy, but the only two reported cases of it transmitting to people was in Texas when some people ate some undercooked armadillo. In some cultures, armadillo is considered a delicacy.

The main issue with armadillos is the damage that they cause while foraging or digging burrows. They can tear up a yard looking for grubs. Typically, the holes that they dig are a couple of inches deep so they can stick their snout in it.

Armadillos are not protected Georgia wildlife regulations. This means that they may be trapped or hunted year-round with no limit. Shooting them is a practical way to get rid of them. Trapping and removal can be effective too. If you are going to trap them, a live trap that opens on both ends is most effective. Place boards at the opening of the trap to create wings that direct armadillos into the trap. Armadillos can be difficult to trap. And there are no baits that have been shown to improve trapping results. This means that when you're trapping you just have to hope that the armadillo stumbles into the trap.

If you have questions about armadillos contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters to the Editor

Why Complain?

Dear Editor,

According to most Christians interpretations, while expressing concerns or hardships to God is not inherently sinful, complaining to God in a way that shows a lack of trust, ingratitude, or a refusal to accept His plan can be considered a sin. The Bible often portrays complaining as a form of murmuring against God, which is seen as a serious offense. Philippians 2:14-15 states that believers should do all things without complaining, which can lead to becoming frustrated or even angry at God. When God delivered the Israelites from bondage from Pharaoh of Egypt, the Israelites started their seven-day journey to the promised land that God was going to give them, but because they complained about not having enough to drink and eat, God led them into the wilderness for 40 years because of their rebellious attitude of disobedience.

When one opposes God's perfect will and plan and decides to run the show themselves, then don't complain and raise your fist towards heaven in unbelief when consequences come your way. God will not be mocked. His purpose will be accomplished with you or without you. It is not healthy for a child of God to turn away from a loving God who wants the best for you. The good news is that God's open arms will welcome you back into the fold, if you confess your sin and repent with a sincere heart.

A pastor said it well when from the pulpit he proclaimed, "Why complain when you can pray?" This is God's prayer for all His children. He didn't die on a cross so you could complain, but to be grateful and thankful for the life He has given you to worship Him in spirit and truth.
Frank F. Combs

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

The Cranberry Salad

A few short years ago, when relentless time was beginning to overtake my parents, and the empty chairs around our Thanksgiving table were already noticeable, there came the last family gathering when all my mother's children sat down for a meal together under her roof. We didn't know it was the last. One rarely does.

I remember helping Mama in the kitchen, and her frustration at being unable to bring it all together like she had done for so many years. We stepped in to stir the pots, watch the timer, and fill in all the gaps, taking care not to make it seem like we were taking over because she couldn't, but she knew.

Eventually, and with a long sigh, she concentrated on making her special cranberry salad, a dish straight out of the 1950s Better Homes cookbook that helped feed her family for all the years she labored with love in that small kitchen. Her hands trembled long before she finished making the dish, but finish it she did. Later that day she wrote down the recipe and gave it to me with a smile, saying, "If you're nice to her, you might get Tracey to make this for you sometime."

The next several Thanksgiving visits included home health-care workers, took place in hospital rooms, or nursing homes. Mama was in a wheelchair for the last Thanksgiving we shared with her, unable to speak or to feed herself. A few days after that, Tracey and I got married at home so that she could be a part of the wedding. It was the last time she ever smiled, except for that brief moment when she opened her eyes one last time, alone with her beloved husband of 55 years, to say goodbye.

The Thanksgiving after that, Dad and I brought out all the old family Christmas decorations, and he told his favorite stories while we decorated the tree and listened to Mama's Christmas music collection. We didn't know it would be the last time we ever did that, but I made a couple of videos. One day I'll be able to watch them again.

During the years between that last family gathering and the day when my mom and dad were together again, there was much driving back and forth across the mountain. Some of the joy went out of the holidays for a while as they became reminders of what was lost as much as occasions for celebrating. But you have to eat somewhere, and on one hungry drive, we discovered a Chinese restaurant that was open on Thanksgiving.

The food was excellent, the service was friendly, and the atmosphere was relaxed. They were open on Christmas Day as well, so over the years, Tracey and I created a family tradition of our own, and on this most recent Thanksgiving Day, we were belatedly up to an outstanding buffet. No shopping required. No dishes to wash.

You might be surprised at the number and variety of people who gather at one of the only restaurants open on the holidays. There is the elderly couple whose kids didn't have time to visit. Over there is the young couple who couldn't stand the politics at the dinner table, and another for whom family gatherings are major causes of indigestion. There is another who just moved to the area. They wish they could be home for the holidays, but their families are too far away.

In the back of the restaurant is a large family who are all in on the "no shopping, no dishes" plan. The low rumble of laughter and conversation is a welcome relief from the gravity of all the memories that have descended upon many of the tables. It's just what the old man eating alone, wearing the Navy veteran hat, was hoping to hear, hoping also that someone would notice that hat, thank him for his service, and strike up a conversation. Speak to that man.

Tracey and I thoroughly enjoyed our feast this year and basked in the pleasure of each other's company, so grateful for memories that once filled the seats around our table, the love that has kept us together, and the grace that has kept us alive and healthy. We have our memories, like clouds that can gather for a storm, but now are lighter and decorate the sky more than they darken it.

On the drive back home, I was contemplating the blessing of extended family during these years of farewells. We are remarkably spread out around the globe this year. I have a brother on his way back from the Philippines, another in Philadelphia, and friends from Africa to Argentina. We have family from New York to Vancouver, Philadelphia to Florida, and close friends in between.

I'm reluctantly thankful for the pixel power that allows us to stay in contact, yet it often feels a bit empty. Pixels are no substitute for the warmth of gathering under one roof or sharing a meal at the same table. Many would concur, which is why we suffer the gauntlet of holiday travel for those precious hours of real companionship.

I spent many years traveling, and at times lived or fancied myself living in places far away from family and friends. I cherish many of those memories, but none are as precious as the memories that grew from roots. The strength of our nation was rooted in the soil and grew with families whose lifeblood branched into neighborhoods, villages, communities, and small towns.

Civilization, they say, began with and is defined by the city, but somewhere along the path to urbanization, we broke something. The culture that grew out of an economy consisting of shopping places that line the highways between sprawling masses of humanity, far from the sources of everything that sustains them, is missing something that no Hallmark movie can replace. It's good to travel, but in the end, trees make a better forest than tumbleweeds.

I'm grateful for all the years, all the holidays I was able to sit at a table with the family I grew up with, the grand and great-grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. I'm grateful for being able to travel far and wide, and even more grateful that I realized in time that I preferred trees to tumbleweeds. I'm grateful that my roots held, and I was home in time to receive that cranberry salad recipe, which I'm about to read again shortly. There seems to be something in my eyes at the moment.

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

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