

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Antisemitism

The Importance of Defining Antisemitism
By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



In December, the entire world witnessed the disastrous hearing on Capitol Hill investigating the massive surge of antisemitism and pro-Hamas extremism on elite campuses, where three leading "academics" debased and twisted themselves into knots to say calls for the genocide of Jews and the Jewish state wouldn't be punished under their school guidelines unless it was accompanied by action (which would be the genocide of Jews...?). The trio were roundly condemned. One was first to step down immediately after the hearing, another resigned from her post after her callous performance led to an investigation into her crooked history of plagiarism, while another remains in her role.

This story is perhaps the most recent example of what Jews have known for a long time: Jews are not allowed to define antisemitism and Jew-hatred. Rather, Jews are told what counts as hate and what is allowed to remain in the public discourse, while every other group rightly gets to determine what is offensive and hurtful to them, all by themselves. These academics only got called out because their performance was so shambolic and brazen that it couldn't be ignored, despite the fact that the sentiments are expressed and believed by a terrifyingly growing number of people around the world.

It's part of what has been defined as "wokeism" and the "pyramid of oppression." Leaders in politics and entertainment work overtime to ensure they "correctly" serve and respect the many diverse communities under their purview in the way they appreciate being treated, but because Jews are seen as having been able to overcome their historic oppression, status as a tiny nation in the world, and have been able to create and lead many valuable public facing institutions – Jews don't count.

Since October 7's Hamas massacre on Israel, this difference in treatment has never been starker.

Somehow, despite seeing 1,200 of its citizens brutally murdered, tortured, beheaded, burnt alive, kidnapped, and raped by roving bands of pillaging terrorists and civilians committing acts of medieval barbarism, it is Israel who is demonized for its response.

World leaders have called for restraint and for Israel to scale back its response to Hamas, saying it cannot be dismantled because it's not a group but an idea, and would only radicalize future generations. No one would reasonably argue today that the Allies were wrong to sack Europe in their successful campaign to crush the Nazis despite the death and destruction inflicted on civilians. No one would reasonably argue today that the U.S. Military was wrong to invade territory occupied by ISIS and Al-Qaeda in order to degrade and eradicate these menaces who threatened the free world. One cannot allow themselves to be held hostage and forced to negotiate with and accept terrorists who intentionally lodge themselves within civilian areas, hoping to exploit the blood of innocents in the world press. The innocents' blood is in fact on the terrorists' hands. Rather, Democracies are compelled to fight to uproot terrorists who threaten their citizens and sovereignty.

Less restrained commentators hysterically claim Israel is perpetuating a genocide on Gaza, despite Israel's ratio of innocent victims to terrorists – despite the tragic loss of every human life – is better than any war in history. They offensively paint Israel as Nazis, the purveyors of the largest genocide of Jews in history, seeking to connect Jews with their own oppressors in a despicable attempt to convince the world of their false claims.

And this is why I support the efforts of the Faith and Freedom Coalition to pass the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism into Georgia law.

This is the IHRA working definition: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

The IHRA provides examples of antisemitic behavior, such as unfairly singling out Israel, the Jewish state, for criticism while neglecting similar global issues. It mentions the denial or diminishment of the Holocaust, including its scope, mechanisms, and the Nazis' intentions, and highlights inappropriate comparisons of modern Israeli policies to those of the Nazis. It also discusses the unjust collective blaming of all Jews for the actions of Israel, and unfounded allegations against Jews or Israel regarding the Holocaust, pointing out the problematic accusation that Jewish citizens prioritize Israel or Jewish global interests over their own nation's interests. Furthermore, it addresses the denial of Jewish self-determination by labeling Israel's existence as racist.

Predictably, antisemites and Jihadist extremists don't like this definition, saying it exists to muzzle critics of Israel, despite the fact it explicitly says, "criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic." They've even sought to create and disseminate their own tortured descriptions of antisemitism that allow for the continued demonization of Jews, but mercifully they haven't got traction in their cynical efforts to mainstream Jew hatred.

It's time the world recognized the Jews' right to define what counts as hatred and antisemitism for themselves, particularly as all the antisemitic tropes defined as explicit Jew-hatred are seen more and more online and in the real world.

The Georgia legislature should take up and pass House Bill 30, and show the broader community that here, we don't tolerate hatred, intolerance and demonization.

Please urge your elected officials to pass House Bill 30 by calling or emailing today. You will find your State Senator here: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/members/senate>. Together we will make a difference!

Yonatan Hamburger is an Atlanta-based rabbi with Chabad of Rural Georgia, while Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer currently residing in New York.



A Walk In The Rain

While the big rain fell last Tuesday I stood in the creek and felt the current pulling at my boots. Our little stream is usually a low talker with a soothing voice that invites you to stretch a hammock between two saplings and rest in the shade, but today it was singing a bawdy sea shanty on its way to the Gulf of Mexico.

It's a perennial task, this wading in the creek during a deluge, looking for a hole as deep as the top of my boots, checking the spillway by the frog pond to make sure it isn't blocked by debris. This is serious business if anyone asks, but the truth is closer to a kid playing in the water, and I look forward to it like a schoolboy hoping for a snow day.

There are other jobs for a big kid in a big rain. The raised beds hosting my winter greens must be properly drained. Not wintergreen – we grow that too – but turnip greens thriving in the milder winter and unconcerned about climate predictions. The drainage ditch around the back of the house must also be maintained for a proper flow to carry water from the downspouts, away from the foundation and into the blueberry patch.

My father dug that ditch by hand when the house was built, 150 feet long, expertly graded with a practiced eye and not even a hand level to check his work. He was almost 70 when he moved enough earth with a shovel and a hoe to stymie most modern men half that age. Tracey helps maintain that flow now in her own private ceremony to remember Floyd, and she has decorated his memory with lilies and liriopie.

Once upon a time the list of rainy day chores was longer. Before the road was paved, a healthy dose of manual labor drained the puddles and maintained a proper crown. The county helped by scraping the unpaved roads periodically, but occasionally an inexperienced operator would leave a mess that had to be repaired by hand. I didn't mind. It was another good excuse to play in the rain.

Before the great paving, a big rain often rewarded the agile and the determined with an unexpected treasure. The creek crossed the road twice on our property. Bedrock of granite, gneiss, and amphibolite kept the roadbed from washing away, and in the nooks and crannies a sharp eye could sometimes glimpse a garnet or amethyst tumbled downstream by the flood. I miss finding those treasures, the satisfying splash of tires crossing the water, and the amusement of watching strangers and loafers slow down in fear of the crossing.

Alas, some of our land was squeezed through the grasping hands of developers on its way to resting in our care. The gravel road was paved, the washes dug out and replaced with culverts. Progress requires acceleration, and the travelers of today speed along oblivious to the histories and other treasures beneath the asphalt.

Far from the road and beyond the fears, fashions, and foibles of modernity, the recent rains have built a waterpark for anyone willing to get their boots dirty. Bold springs, as the old-timers named them, bubble and boil, jubilant, gleeful, and wet-weather springs appear wherever gravity invites them to flow. The sound of moving water fills the air. There is a sweetness in that air, freshly washed, and without any prompting your lungs reach for it like a fish out of water, to take it deep and hold it tightly, purging all thoughts of progress, pavement, even pixels.

You emerge from the impromptu rainforest cleansed, invigorated. Oxygen sings in your blood and there is a spring, a wet-weather spring, in your step. Soon enough it will be time to hit the road again, but cushioned by memories of water flowing, the pavement doesn't seem quite so harsh.

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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 Tuesday of each month:	Conventions & Visitors Board... Civic Center	8:30 am
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

Crape Myrtle Pruning

Crape myrtles are a very common tree that many people like to plant in their home landscape or you may see them lining roads in towns. There are couple of reasons why crape myrtles make great landscape trees. The first is that they are very disease and insect resistant, as there are not too many pests that will bother them. Powdery mildew is the most serious disease issue that crape myrtles will usually have, and it rarely kills the tree. Ambrosia beetles will attack crape myrtles, but generally they only attack trees that are already dead, dying, or stressed. Crape myrtles also come with a variety of flower colors, making them very attractive. Finally, crape myrtles come in a variety of sizes. Varieties range from dwarf to semi-dwarf to full size, meaning mature tree heights range from 3 to 30 feet tall.

UGA Extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Pruning is important for crape myrtles, because the blooms only form on new growth. Even more important is selecting the right sized variety for your location. If you select a variety that will grow to a good height for the spot where you're putting it, the pruning will not be difficult, because you won't be as concerned with managing the plant's size.

Now is a good time of year to prune your crape myrtles. Excessive pruning can lead to problems with disease and insects, because the tree is stressed. Bad pruning practices are called CRAPE MURDER. Crape Murder generally involves topping the tree, or cutting back all the branches to 3 to 4 feet above the ground. This will result in an oddly shaped tree that produces a lot of suckers.

To properly prune a crape myrtle start at the base of the tree and work your way up. You're looking for suckers, if you find them prune those off. Once you get to where the branches are, remove crossing branches. Crossing branches will rub against each other when the wind blows and create sites where disease and insects can get in. As the tree grows you can remove branches from the lower third of the tree. Removing those branches will expose the trunk character. Some people like to prune off the old seedheads. I think they're an attractive feature. With new growth in the spring the old seedheads will fall off. On some varieties of crape myrtles you can prune in the summer after the blooms are spent to create another flush of flowers. A second bloom is difficult to force on varieties that bloom after mid-July.

A common misconception is that crape myrtles have to be pruned to produce flowers. This is not true. Pruning allows you to shape the tree. If you have a spot where the tree can grow and does not need shaping for space concerns, pruning is not necessary. I encourage everyone to do some research on finding the variety that will fit in the space that they have, because that will solve a lot of pruning issues before they arise. Pruning crape myrtles properly allows accentuates the natural beauty that they have.

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

Letters To The Editor

New Opportunities

Dear Editor,

The new year is here and our town and county would greatly benefit if each of us would look back to last year and evaluate our missed opportunities. What did we do last year that we could improve on in 2024?

Perhaps someone cut you off on the highway, or in your opinion, took the parking place that had your name written all over it. A family member may have had your name different from yours, hurt your feelings, and you allowed it to significantly damage the relationship. Perhaps you were passed over for a promotion that you assumed was rightfully yours. Maybe someone at church failed to speak to you as they walked by. How we react to the above and similar incidences affects each of us more than we realize, causing hurt feelings, broken relationships and unnecessary stress in our lives.

The Bible tells us to do good to those who hurt us or take advantage of us. Good will always triumph over adverse situations that occur in our lives. Nothing we can ever experience, individually or collectively, will ever come close to what our Savior experienced on the Cross. How did He respond? "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

Let's go into 2024, not expecting to be wronged by anyone, but seeking opportunities to do good to everyone.

Gene Vickers

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.

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

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

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.

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