

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Mythbusting

Mythbusting the Israel-Hamas War: Part 2

By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

Echos from Sinai  
"Torah for Everyone"  
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



After the popularity of our column "Mythbusting the Israel/Hamas War" several weeks back, where we discussed the prevailing narratives surrounding the history and fighting in the current conflict, we thought we'd come back with a Part 2. In this installment, we'll continue to address misinformation and reveal the realities on the ground, aiming to clarify and inform those uncertain about the intricacies of this war and the players involved in it. If you would like a reprint of Mythbusting Part 1, please email us at y@tasteoftorah.org.

Myth #6: Israel oppresses Christians and Muslims, while those same groups thrive in Arab states.

As part of a desperate attempt to find allies in the aftermath of October 7th and the carnage they wreaked on Gaza, many pro-Hamas advocates online began claiming Israel oppresses and harms their Christian and Muslim populations. These laughable talking points have been further trafficked into the mainstream by right-wing commentators on X, including Tucker Carlson and Candace Owens, as they embrace desperately anti-Jewish and anti-Israel positions.

In truth, all faiths thrive in Israel, which is a model example of a diverse and pluralistic society for all religions. As of 2019, Israel's population of roughly 8.4 million people was 75% Jewish, 18% Muslim, 2% Christian, and 1.6% Druze, while the remaining 4% included people identifying as Jewish, Samaritans, Karaites, Ahmadi Muslims, Baha'is and various small (in Israel) Christian churches and communities. All holy sites are open to all faiths, including The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jesus's tomb, the mosques on the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock. Millions of people, adherents of every faith under the sun, flock to Israel to visit the Holy Land, and find it to be a free, welcoming, and warm country.

By contrast, in the Palestinian territories, all Jewish people have been expelled at the threat of death. Even in the city of Hebron, which the Patriarch Abraham purchased 3,800 years ago as a burial ground for himself and his wife Sarah, Jews have access to only 3% of the city. In Jerusalem, Jews are not allowed to pray at their holiest site on the Temple Mount and have extremely limited rights to sites such as Joseph's Tomb and the Mount of Olives, where Jews must travel with armed protection.

Christians have faced significant challenges under Palestinian control. Prior to 1992, when Bethlehem was under Israeli control, Christians constituted 86% of the population, a figure that dramatically dropped to just 12% by 2016, following the city's transfer to Palestinian governance under the Oslo Accords. According to a 2020 survey by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) and the Philos Project, Christians now represent less than 1% of Palestine's population. Christians often feel marginalized, treated as second-class citizens, and find themselves caught in the ongoing conflict. Over 40% of Palestinian Christians report feeling unwelcome by Muslims, 44% face employment discrimination due to their faith, and nearly 30% have been pejoratively called "non-believers" or "crusaders" by Muslims. Moreover, violent attacks against Christians are not uncommon, as exemplified by Father Justinus, a monk who has survived 32 life-threatening assaults at his monastery near Nablus. The facts contrast sharply with the rosy tales of Christian-Jihadist cooperation told by people with malicious agendas who live far away.

Myth #7: Israel is committing genocide, and indiscriminately bombs Gaza.

In an age where words have become slogans, and are therefore rendered meaningless, the histrionic claim that Israel is committing genocide takes the cake.

Fighting a war against a terror organization that embeds itself in an urban environment is not a genocide.

Israel's incredible ratio of hitting its military targets while minimizing civilian casualties is historically unprecedented, while the steps the Israel Defense Forces take to warn its enemy before launching an attack has never been seen in the history of warfare. Forbes Magazine reported that as of December 2023, the Israeli army had made over 50,000 phone calls, left approximately 12 million voice messages and sent 14 million text messages, all to Palestinians in Gaza, warning them of impending military action in their area. These actions diminish Israel's chances of success and eliminate the element of surprise necessary in war, yet still Israel persists in their efforts to show care for an enemy population. Additionally, Israel facilitates the delivery of hundreds of trucks carrying aid into Gaza every day, despite knowing Hamas hijacks the vast majority of it and withholds it from the Palestinian people, killing those that object.

Despite the hysterical cries of college subversives and online loudmouths, these are not the actions of a genocidal and reckless invader, rather they are the painstaking efforts of a democratic and G-d fearing nation to eliminate a terrorist organization that abuses its own people and condemns them to misery and suffering.

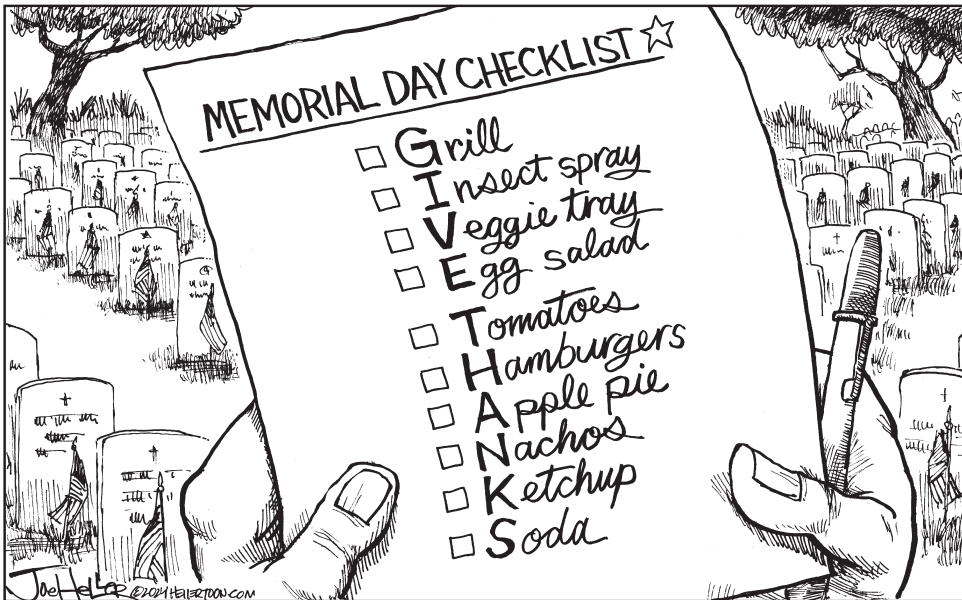
Myth #8: Israel's claim to the "most moral army in the world" is false. Antisemites and antizionists (but I repeat myself) like to say that Israeli soldiers are trigger-happy war criminals who abuse innocent Palestinians, and use a few isolated incidents, out of context examples, and lies to paint a sorry picture of the army of the world's only Jewish state.

On top of the last entry's evidence that laughs off those claims and proves its commitment to fighting morally and justifiably, the IDF's Code of Ethics lays out fidelity to those principles. Soldiers are called to protect dignity and human life, work with patriotism, professionalism, and discipline, and strive to be the best examples and representatives of Israel they can be. In a clause named "Purity of Arms," the army dictates that a "soldier will use his weapons and force only for the mission, only to the extent necessary, and will maintain human dignity even in combat. The soldier will not use his weapons and power to harm non-combatants and prisoners and will do everything in his power to prevent harm to their lives, bodies, honor, and property."

Israel's history of embracing these core principles, exemplified by their efforts to minimize unnecessary deaths in battle, warning the enemy of upcoming action, and protecting all civilians under its purview regardless of race or faith, proves that the IDF is the most moral army in the world.

What questions or commonly held "truths" about this war would you like to see us address? Feel free to send questions and feedback to y@tasteoftorah.org!

Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher are rabbis serving rural communities throughout the regional South.



## Drive Through Restaurants

The Federation of Drive Through Restaurants - We shop the outside aisles at the grocery store. It's healthier, and it's cheaper if you plan for it. It's also apparent in a number of studies that the ultra-processed foods we eat are shortening our lives while they enrich the sick-people business.

There are times when time itself is the adversary of healthy eating. This life we have designed for ourselves, or allowed to be designed for us, is geared toward driving places to make money and spend it. When we are finally at home, the chores and distractions conspire to idle most of that expensive remodeled kitchen in favor of the microwave.

Tracey and I don't own a microwave. Questions about what it did to our food were a part of the decision, but the science is not definitive except where plastic is involved. The biggest concern was the kind of food we would buy to cook in it: Tiny portions of expensive, chemical-laden factory food.

We don't miss the microwave. The kettle boils water almost as fast, and reheating food is a something delicious out of the kitchen quickly and easily so I can get back to my chores and distractions.

Sometimes, however, the belly button starts to rub against the backbone when you're far from home and there's not a Chick Fil A in sight. An American entitled to immediate gratification can't wait to drive 20 miles home to eat when his hunger pangs have escalated to ravenousness and the emptiness of desire.

And so it was that we decided to pull into the drive-through and order the things that looked best in the pictures. The chicken club I ordered looked huge on the menu, to match my huge appetite, and it came with tater tots and a high-fructose corn syrup beverage, which I declined but they charged me for anyway.

What I received fit into the palm of my hand, and I mean with hand leftover around the entire circumference of the greasy little ball. They used to call such a thing a "slider," but in the ongoing upgrades to our language, it's now sold as a sandwich, and priced accordingly. There was surely enough grease for it to slide, but the little slab of leather was more of a choker than a slider.

How many chickens does it take, one wonders, to make chicken leather? Quite a few, I would imagine, but not so many when you add meat extract, emulsifiers, hydrolyzed protein, FD&C Yellow, beaks, lips, toenails and trade secrets. I wasn't quite able to bite through a portion to chew, and the entire little doorstop slid out of the bun to hang over my lip while I was driving.

The whole meal, or as much of it as I was able to choke down, tasted of despair, from the desiccated poultry byproduct to the cold, greasy little fried potato extracts. It was the same despair I saw in the eyes of the workers at the drive-through window, beyond caring in their sweaty uniforms stepping on fries that littered the floor as they milled around. We were the only customer. The restaurant has only been open a couple of months.

It's one of the reasons I avoid processed foods. The despair at the drive-through was easy to see, but you can't see it in the entire food chain from the factory farm to the processing plant. It's the despair of people working long hours in uncomfortable jobs for shrinking dollars with just enough time and money leftover to feed their families chicken leather from a drive-through window.

The food supply chain is not the only place where despair has settled. You can see it in the quality of goods and services everywhere, and in the struggle of working people to make ends meet.

Despair is the issue on the ticket this November. Politics is just the pictures on the menu. The real contest is economic, and the choice is not between Democrats and Republicans; it's between globalists and nationalists.

The globalists have had the upper hand for some time, and their numbers have included Democrat and Republican administrations, though the Republicans preferred a global empire with an American brand. Both parties are ineffective, out of touch, corrupt, but until recently their underlying goals have been similar.

Then came Trump, the black swan event. For all his faults, and there are many, Trump is a nationalist. He is a symptom, rather than a primary cause of despair. If you take a look around the world without the filters of politics, you can see Trumps popping up in many places as the failures of globalism, of concentrated, centralized power have raised despair to actionable levels.

Globalism is multinational corporations and the erasure of national boundaries, redistribution of wealth and centralization of power. It is drive-through windows and microwaved meals in plastic boxes. Globalism is war with Asia over who gets to be in charge of the Federation. Nationalism, for all its potential jingoism and regional conflicts, is home-cooked with local farm products from family farms, mom-and-pop stores, and distributed power.

In my view from the drive-through, globalists grew up watching Star Trek and dreamed of a planet-wide "Federation" where the problems of hunger, poverty and inequality have all been vanquished. They forgot that the essential ingredient for the Star Trek utopia was the free and unlimited energy which made it all possible - free and unlimited energy which we do not have.

I think they would have benefited more, perhaps from watching Soylent Green. I wonder if that sandwich really was chicken...

Outside The Box  
By: Don Perry  
worldoutsidethebox.com

## Watering Plants

All plants, but especially annuals (such as veggies) and freshly planted perennials, are affected by dry soil, because their root systems are not yet large enough to support the plant and do not yet efficiently collect water from surrounding soils. There is a fine balance to be observed when irrigating plants, though too much water will wash nutrients away from young roots and may cause rot, while too little or shallow watering will either allow the plant to dehydrate or bring the roots too close to the hot surface of the soil.

In general, vegetable plants would rather have more thorough and less frequent watering. When the entire topsoil layer is saturated at least twice a week, the roots of a vegetable plant will tend to grow downward, towards the damper and cooler soil beneath them. Not only will the root system collect water more efficiently, it will also draw the roots away from the drier and hotter surface of the soil. This promotes a healthier plant growth pattern, reducing the need for external watering when there is a rain and lowering the chances of the root system being attacked by unwanted fungi.

In the case of other young transplants, such as fruit trees, bushes and shrubs, flowering perennials and other ornamental plants, the amount of water will usually vary due to the soil it was planted in, the size of the original root ball and plant, and the type of plant being watered. For example, a young apple tree from a 3-gallon pot transplanted in clay-based soil will require less frequent watering than a group of raspberry starts in the same soil, due to the higher amount of water loss through the leaves (transpiration) in the raspberry starts. It is always best to check the sticker or plant tag that came with the plant for advice first, but as a general rule of thumb, water trees and ornamental shrubs enough to keep the soil 4 to 6" around the root ball (including below it) moist, but not soggy, every other day that it does not rain. Continue this until they are established. For starts such as blueberries, raspberry and blackberries, hydrangeas, and vining flowers and fruits (like clematis), water 4-6" around the root ball every day it does not rain until they are established in the soil.

Common sense applies in this process as well: if the soil around the plant is still about as moist as it should be at day 2, then hold off on watering until it begins to dry again. A good "quick-n-dirty" test for soil moisture is to grab a handful, squeeze it in your hand, and let go. Optimal moisture content is when most of the soil is still in a ball in your hand, but when you touch it, it begins to break apart again.

In vegetables, it usually takes until the first fruit is set and ripening on the plant for the roots to be fully developed. This typically (of course, depending on the kind of plant) takes anywhere between 3 and 6 weeks from the date of transplant. For trees and shrubs (and blue, black and raspberries, etc.) usually takes most of a growing season to accomplish. For example, if a blueberry bush were set out in early May, it would need this kind of watering until the end of August, and maybe longer depending on the timing of rain or heat.

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

UGA extension  
Watching and Working  
Jacob Williams



## Letters To The Editor

### Biden's Hypocrisy

Dear Editor,

Last week the WNBA champs visited Biden at the White House. However, the timing of the visit couldn't have been more hypocritical, because the administration has been busy dismantling the very thing the team was there to celebrate: women.

Biden has been trying to disable 52 years of women's progress. It was his idea to turn Title IX into a transgender rights issue. Most folks clearly understand what this president wants to do to women's sports. Biden wants to expand women's sports by allowing men who identify as women to play. Forcing women to accept men in their locker rooms is not supporting women. The simplest way to support women's sports is to keep men out of them.

President Donald Trump recently stated that upon taking office in 2025 he would eliminate Biden's extreme new Title IX immediately through an executive order. Yet another reason to vote President Trump back into office.

Tim Groza

The Towns County Herald is an independent and non-partisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

## Towns County Community Calendar

<b>First Monday of each month:</b>	School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
<b>Every Tuesday:</b>	Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
<b>First Tuesday of each month:</b>	Hiaw. City Council... City Hall	6 pm
	YH City Council... YH City Hall	6:30 pm
<b>Second Wednesday of each month:</b>	Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
<b>Third Monday of each month:</b>	Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b>	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

## Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

Kenneth West  
Owner/Publisher

Derek Richards  
Advertising Director

Shawn Jarrard  
General Manager/Editor

Jordan Hyatt  
Office Manager

Todd Forrest  
Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson  
Photographer

Publication No: 635540

Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.

Towns County (1 Year) \$30. Out of County (1 Year) \$40. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawasse, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. Postmaster: Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawasse, GA 30546.

Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 3 "The Mall", Hiawasse  
Phone: (706) 896-4454 Fax: (706) 896-1745 Email: tcherald@windstream.net  
Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawasse, GA 30546