

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letting Go...

Letting Go and Embracing Faith

By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



The book of Leviticus in the Pentateuch can be a dense read for the uninitiated.

Having told the story of the creation of the world, the birth of the Jewish people and their miraculous escape from slavery in Egypt, the Torah now spends chapter after chapter laying out G-d's expectations and commandments. Through Moses, we learn about what the daily services should look like, the laws of marriage, kosher, and charity. We go into the minutiae of the sale and ownership of lands, how disputes are to be mediated and the prohibition against fraud and cheating.

But amongst all these laws, there's one in last week's Torah portion that catches the eye for its seemingly extreme nature.

Every seven years, from the time they arrived back in Israel, the Jewish people were told to mark the Shemittah (Sabbatical year), a designated Year of Rest. For 12 months, they were forbidden to work on or benefit from the land. They were told to lay down their tools, reconnect with spirituality, and everything growing on their property was free to all who wanted to take from any of the produce.

But why did G-d command such a difficult and seemingly irresponsible mitzvah (commandment)? Surely, He understands that in this world He created, there is a need for people to earn a livelihood and earn money in order to survive!

The answer is that of course G-d understands the nature of the world He designed, and therefore made it clear the Jewish people must prepare before the seventh year begins. G-d promised that the sixth year of the cycle would be bountiful and plentiful, to allow people to stock up and preserve supplies for the year ahead, in fact promising that the crop of the year before Shemittah (Sabbatical year) would be so strong, it would last and feed them for three years; year six, year seven, and year one of the new seven-year cycle.

For those who followed these directions and observed Shemittah, they were richly rewarded. Not only in the material sense, with comfort and food security during a year off from actively working, but more so spiritually. They had a year to truly reconnect with their families, friends, and communities, in a truly meaningful way. No longer was their work in the fields dominating their time, attention and conversations; instead, it was replaced by talk of families, studies and spiritual advancement, knowing that they had put their faith in G-d and He would provide, because they'd done their part first.

The lessons we can draw from Shemittah today are obvious.

Too often, we use our mundane jobs and careers as a way to connect with people. How often have you been asked "what do you do" when meeting someone new? How often do you find yourself describing your job as your primary pursuit?

Living in a way where elusive financial freedom is the number one goal is meaningless and shallow, particularly when coupled with our off-time hours primarily occupied by scrolling a never-ending screen. Most Americans today feel lonely and isolated, and it's not hard to see why.

To counter that, G-d commanded the Jewish people to observe Shemittah, a mitzvah practiced to this day in Israel. You have a job and have set yourself up nicely, now put your faith in G-d to provide for you.

Reconnect with what is truly important and recharge, because from there, all blessings and inner peace flows.

We love to hear from you! 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.

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.

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



Buddy

One morning late last winter, there was a ruckus on the back porch. Dogs and cats were sounding their discontent. Our furballs grew up together but like any siblings, they sometimes disagree. We've learned not to be alarmed by their arguments, but we always investigate.

Peaches is half Australian cattle dog, and her herding instincts are strong. Georgia is a miniature lioness, independent and aloof until she wants her chin rubbed. Peach Pit is fascinated by Georgia. "Are you getting up? I'm getting up too. Are you going over there? I'm going with you!" They really do love each other, but sometimes that affection is bracketed by hissing and spitting. Blood has been drawn, but there is frequent sniffing and nose touching. One's pack is the other's pride.

On this particular morning there was caterwauling and then excited barking followed by hiss and spit. We assumed that Georgia and Georgia Peach were having a disagreement on what needed to be done. When Tracey arrived on the scene, she found that Peaches was holding a small bird gently in her mouth.

Peaches is not a bird dog. She herds our chickens and watches out for them. She is ambivalent about the songbirds that visit the feeders during the months the bear is holed up for the winter. Georgia, however, is an occasional bird murderer, so Tracey deduced that Peaches had taken Georgia's prey away from her and Georgia was registering her disapproval.

If Georgia and Samantha didn't love me so much, I wouldn't have a cat. Generations of cats have been the last I intended to have, but I mean it this time. These are absolutely the last cats I'm ever going to have until the next ones come along. Cats are murderers. They are highly destructive to the ecosystem. They torture their victims and if they don't kill them, leave them horribly wounded and in pain. They scratch the furniture and leave cat sausages behind the sofa in retribution for obscure offenses adjudicated secretly in cat court.

No more cats. Every time I open the shop door in the morning they perform their Oliver Twist act. "Please sir, I want some more. We're so hungry. We've never had a square meal in all our lives. Why are you so cruel?" It has been many moons since either caught a mouse. I should get rid of both of them...except Samantha thinks she is a dog and follows me everywhere, watches me work, waits at the various petting stations she has identified around the farm. And Georgia...well, everything is out to get her and she's afraid of her shadow. She wouldn't last a day on the mean streets. Besides, Peaches would be heartbroken.

Back to the bird. A small brown house wren trembled in Tracey's hands. It was cold and in shock, and a little bit slobber-slimy having passed from a cat's claws to a dog's jaws. She brought the little bird inside, held it gently and warmed it up. And it seemed to calm down, she took it back outside and had me open the lid of the gas tank where there is always a nest, safe from cats, leftover from the previous spring. She put the little bird in the nest, said a prayer for it and closed the lid. I love that woman.

The next morning the little fellow was gone and we hoped he had been strong enough to fly away. Later that day, he appeared on the window ledge while we were having lunch. He just sat there for a while looking at Tracey and then hopped away to do bird things.

During the next couple of weeks, Tracey's little buddy visited that window and others around the house many times. He would just sit there on the ledge or cling to the screen, look inside until he was satisfied and then fly away. During meals he would visit several times, and always at the window where Tracey was sitting.

As spring approached I put up several bird houses around the property, including one at the end of the eave over the deck. One morning sitting at my desk, I saw "Buddy" hop onto the railing with a twig in his mouth and then he flew up to the birdhouse with it. Buddy had decided to make his home with us.

We were elated, but also concerned, remembering how Buddy had come to make our acquaintance. During the nest building phase when he was making frequent hops onto the railing of the deck with his building materials, we kept the cats inside during the day. At the end of the deck under the nest, Tracey arranged some of her plants to make a kind of buffer zone. Buddy seems very "cat-wise" now, and some of the things he has said to them from the safety of the persimmon tree at the end of the deck, I can't repeat in polite company.

There is a small statue of an angel on the corner of the deck. Buddy likes to perch there and survey his domain. The nest is complete now, and yesterday as the sun descended behind the mountain, he stood there and sang his song. It was some of the most beautiful music I have ever heard.

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.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes are probably one of the most common garden plants. They are great to have in your garden because there are so many different varieties. Tomatoes are usually pretty low maintenance, but let's talk about a couple of things to be on the lookout for to make sure you have the best tomatoes that you can.

By now most people have their tomatoes in the ground already. Even so, I want to talk about spacing plants a little bit because if plants are well spaced, it will help reduce the problems that you have later on. Plants should have 2 feet between them in the row, and 4 to 6 feet between the rows. Proper spacing will reduce the amount of disease that you have later on. If plants are touching there is less airflow between them. This creates a situation that is ripe for disease.

Except for wildlife, disease is going to be one of the main issues when growing tomatoes. It is almost impossible to keep tomato plants disease free for an entire season. Once we get to the end of the season plants will inevitably start to decline. What you want to do is keep them healthy enough for long enough to make you some good tomatoes.

There are several different leaf spot diseases that tomatoes can get. Septoria and Alternaria are some examples. Septoria is a fungal disease that creates small round spots on the leaves. Alternaria is also called early blight. These spots are more angular. Phytophthora, also called late blight, is another disease that tomatoes can get. This one tends to be more common for us because it likes cool nights and warm days with high humidity. Late blight will make large lesions on the leaves and the fruit. Late blight is commonly known for causing the Irish potato famine in the 1840s (You are welcome to impress your trivia friends with this tidbit).

There are also a few wilts that can damage plants. At the end of July, in the heat of the day it is not uncommon to see some wilting. However, if plants are wilting in the morning while it's still cool and they have plenty of water, you might have a wilt problem. Fusarium wilt affects the vascular system of a plant. If you have had fusarium wilt in the past it is best to plant resistant varieties in that spot. Bacterial wilt will also cause the tomato plant to wilt. Cut the stem and place it in a clear cup of water. After a few minutes you will be able to see the bacteria oozing out of the stem that is milky colored. If you see that don't plant tomato, pepper, potato, or eggplant in that spot for at least 4 years. Southern blight causes a white mold at the soil line that will infect the plant. If you have had southern blight in the past you can wrap the bottom 3 inches of the plant with aluminum foil to reduce infection.

If you have questions about what might be affecting your tomatoes during the growing season, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

UGA extension
UNION COUNTY
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Letters To The Editor

No Changes Allowed

Dear Editor,

My wife and I, while on vacation, stopped at this huge working farm to take their grand farm tour. The guide was very informative and friendly, and had actually worked on the farm for over 20 years.

We visited the entire operation, and he introduced us to some of the animals and fowl near the main farm house. You could tell the cows, horses, chickens and ducks were used to having visitors. As we were standing by a large Holstein bull, I thought I heard him trying to cluck like a chicken. It actually startled my wife, because it was obvious that the bull was doing his best to emulate the sound we all associate with chickens. The tour guide smiled, but before he could reply, the horse in the corral started making noises that definitely didn't sound like a horse. It was like the horse was trying to imitate the bleating sound of sheep. "What on earth is happening here," I quickly asked.

"We're living in crazy times," the tour guide responded. "This is something new that has recently happened on the farm, and I think the farm animals are picking up things they see in some of their visitors. They can pretend all they want to be something other than what God has made them, but that bull will always be a bull and that horse will always be a horse. End of story," he said.

We thanked our tour guide for the tour and left in amazement at what we had just witnessed. "The tour guide was absolutely right," I told my wife. "No matter what kind of foolishness we, or in this case, the farm animals can dream up, we will never be anything other than what God made us to be. End of story."

Gene Vickers

Fallen Heroes

Dear Editor,

Another Memorial day has come and gone, with families across our beloved nation paying tribute to those brave men and women and service dogs who paid the price for our freedoms so we can enjoy the day with family grilling out at home or going to the local park. But let us never forget those who have died as we drive through out little town of Blairsville and see all the wooden crosses bearing each name and what war they fought in. Our hearts are heavy towards all the families who have had a dad, a mother, a son or daughter, and other kinfolk who sacrificed their lives to allow us to be free from all the wars that rage around us.

Sadly, wars are a part of our fallen world because nations thrive on overpowering other nations to attain more territory, more resources, and the people's freedoms which we all enjoy. In 1945, U.S. president Harry Truman said: "Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifice." Army veteran Edwin Martinez said: "What greater gift can one man or woman sacrifice to keep the U.S. free and maintain our way of life."

Sadly, our government doesn't do enough for all our armed forces across the globe who need support not only on the frontlines, but at home where families have lost the main breadwinner, and this matter needs dire attention. But as usual, the military and other administrative agencies are at the mercy of our defunct government that have their own agenda.

I know that millions of red-blooded Americans pay their respect to the fallen as they gather at the grave site of their beloved family member and lay flowers or wreaths and weep in remembrance. We cannot afford to forget those who paved the way with their own lives so that their families could be proud of all the men and women who gave their all. God bless them and their extended families. Amen.

Frank F. Combs

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 Hiawassee, 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, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

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

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

Kenneth West
Owner/Publisher

Shawn Jarrard
General Manager/Editor

Todd Forrest
Staff Writer

Derek Richards
Advertising Director

Jordan Hyatt
Office Manager

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer