

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

We Make Our Own Luck...

We Make Our Own Luck (...Mostly)
By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher



There is the classic joke rabbis just love to tell from the pulpit: Jim is running late for an interview at his dream job, and swings into the parking lot only to find there are no spots available. He drives around and around, and in desperation calls out to G-d: "If you give me a parking spot right now, I will make a large donation to charity!" No sooner have the words left his lips when someone hurries out of the building and speeds away in their car. Breathing a sigh of relief, Jim says: "Never mind G-d, I found a spot!" Sure, it's funny, but there is a deeper message in this joke.

Have you ever felt taken for granted in a relationship? That people only know you when they need you, and ignore you the moment after their use for you is over? And those same people you'd drop everything for, you can't count on to do the same? Well, you're in good company. In this week's Torah portion – Bechukotai in Leviticus – G-d himself cautions us to not look upon our good fortune as something random, or attributable exclusively to our own efforts.

A theme we've discussed time and time again in this column is the virtue of doing your very best to improve your own circumstances, and then believing in G-d that He will do what is best for you. In classic Chassidic terminology, we are told to make a Keli (vessel or container) for G-d's blessings, and after we do our part, watch the blessings overwhelm us.

But the danger is when we forget the source of our good fortune.

Too often, success can get to our heads. We grow egos, we believe our own hype, and start believing that our achievements are solely the result of our own efforts. We don't properly appreciate or credit G-d for delivering our good fortune, and send a message that we don't need Him: we're all good on our own.

This kind of mindset becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, wherein G-d abides by our desire for distance (G-d forbid) and fulfills our wish to be governed by the laws of cause and effect, rather than by His personal providence. And then when we (realize we) need G-d's help once again, the cycle we despise when people do it to us, repeats: You need me, I help you, you move on without thanks or appreciation, and then you'll call the next time you need me.

So how can we show G-d thanks for all the blessings in our life?

We must see every green light, as well as every bump in the road, as a custom-sent message from G-d. But just as your phone must be turned on to receive a text message, your spiritual sensitivity must be turned on to receive G-d's messages.

Take a few minutes right now and review everything that occurred to you today and contemplate the messages that G-d has sent you. Think of the everyday miracles we take for granted – our families, homes, and our health – and how fortunate you are for your own good fortune. Make efforts every day to deepen your relationship with your Creator and express your gratitude proactively.

This is strengthened through learning Torah (the Bible) and fulfilling His precepts. Rather than attributing things to "coincidence" (which is just an eleven-letter name for G-d), recognize we experience divine providence in all aspects of our life.

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, was an early advocate of this approach. He taught the concept of hashgacha pratit (Divine Providence), which teaches that G-d is intimately involved in every detail of our lives, from the grandest events to the smallest occurrences. Nothing happens by chance; every moment is part of G-d's purposeful plan. This perspective encourages us to recognize and reflect on G-d's presence in our daily experiences, deepening our connection through Torah study, good deeds, and gratitude. By viewing life through the lens of hashgacha pratit, we see every experience as an opportunity for spiritual growth, fostering humility and trust in G-d's benevolent guidance. The Baal Shem Tov also used to encourage people to respond "Thank G-d" when he asked how they were, as another way to actively express our appreciation for G-d many times throughout the course of our day.

With this mindset, paired with a hearty work ethic and trust in G-d, we will never go wrong.
Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher are rabbis serving 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.

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.



QUESTION: HOW WOULD YOU VOTE IF THE ELECTION WAS HELD TODAY?
DO YOU WANT THE ANSWER THAT DOESN'T MATTER OR THE ANSWER THAT WILL GET YOU THE MOST HITS FOR YOUR PUBLICATION?

Of Bears and Bananas

"Turning and turning in a widening gyre, the falcon cannot hear the falconer. Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold... The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity." – "The Second Coming" by William Butler Yeats, 1919

Outside The Box
By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Yeats' poem was written soon after the end of WWI and it speaks of uncertainty in a troubled world. In the last line of the poem he asks the haunting question, "What rough beast slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Here in the cove and far from Bethlehem, the dogs barked in the wee hours of the morning and I heard the sound of things falling on the deck. From within the fog of sleep, I remembered the groceries left on the front deck that didn't make it inside yesterday. "I wonder if Ursula is paying us another visit," said my self to myself as I drifted back to sleep.

We don't think of Ursula as a rough beast at all, and she is much too agile to slouch. As is, in fact, quite healthy and beautiful, and as bears go, as polite and unassuming as they come. But she is a beast, after all.

As for Yeats, if you are a consumer of mainstream corporate media, you may be asking yourself the same question he did, even if you prefer, like our readers do, to look outside the confines of the box constructed for us, beyond the falling sky pearl clutching permanent breaking news emergency. There is plenty of cause for concern there as well.

Much of that concern lies within our own borders, and don't expect it to diminish between now and November. The court verdict from New York yesterday was the shot fired to start the race in earnest. The left celebrated while so many presidential campaign contributions flooded into the right, that the website crashed.

It is an interesting time for the student of history who knows that the politically motivated prosecution we just witnessed is nothing new for either Democrats or Republicans. For a little perspective on the matter I would refer you to the Debs Sedition Case, The Smith Act Cases, The Coffin-Spock Prosecution, The Trial of the Chicago Seven, The Siegelman Prosecution – the list is long. The observer of history knows that such things are not confined to "banana republics."

In fact, perhaps it is time that we look in the mirror when we use the term. Let's run down the list of the characteristics of a banana republic: Socioeconomic stratification, check. Political instability, check. Lack of sovereignty (where citizens have limited control over the state), check.

During the 2016 election campaign I heard a self-described Democrat say that he doubted whether he could be friends with anyone who voted for a Republican. I heard the same in 2020 and yesterday I heard a Republican say the same for Democrats. Shame on all of them. This is precisely how the center that Yeats wrote about falls apart. And on a personal note, if you can't be friends with someone based on how they vote, don't bother to tell me about your Christianity or your faith.

It's a reflection on us all that we have allowed our choice of leadership to be reduced, herded, corralled into a choice between two old grifters, and we react as if criticism of either is as personally offensive as an insult to our mothers.

For the sake of my own peace of mind, I recoil once again from the sound and fury of the pixel universe and turn in gratitude towards the sanctuary the Creator has given us in this quiet cove away from the noise. As we witness human behavior becoming more bestial, perhaps there is some understanding to be gleaned from the actions of the creatures living around us here, creatures that were actually designed to behave like animals.

Somewhere on the farm this morning a 26-ounce jar of Smuckers Natural Peanut butter is missing in action. In the closest possible proximity to that missing jar, there is a bear, probably with circles under her eyes if bears are subject to such things, who has been up all night trying to get the lid off.

Several years ago when Sneaky Pete lived here, I picked a lot of wet garbage out of the mountain laurel thicket while we learned about bear behavior. Then came the day when I threw away an empty glass jar of peanut butter and Pete, having carried the entire garbage can into the woods, neglected to shred the garbage bags because he was so intent on getting the lid off that jar.

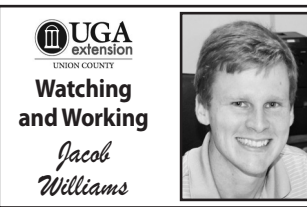
Pete was so focused on getting into that jar that, like the trolls of Tolkien's "Hobbit," he was caught out when the sun came up the next morning, and I surprised him in his labors. He left the other bags intact, and from then on, we kept anything organic or with food residue inside.

How like that bear we are, so intent on the aroma of drama we have picked out of the garbage that we have lost all perspective, and without a center for balance, all control over what happens next.

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Fire Ants

Fire ants are very common throughout Georgia. Thankfully, we don't have as many in the mountains as they do south of us. However, once you experience a fire ant bite, you won't ever forget it. Another problem with fire ants is that you rarely get just one bite. Fire ants were first reported in Georgia in the 1950s. They've been found all the way from North Carolina to Texas, and down to Florida. Let's talk about fire ants and things that you can do to control them so that they don't take over your lawn or pasture.



If you can manage to get an up-close look without being bitten and stung, you'll see that fire ants have two nodes between their abdomen at the end of their body and the thorax in the middle of their body. Fire ants generally like to stay in open grassy areas.

Fire ants are most active when temperatures are between 70 and 85. In the fall fire ants are active because they are foraging for food. This makes fall the best time to treat them. Treatment during the spring and summer is also possible, but effective population control will be less likely. When it's really hot during the summer time fire ants will burrow deeper into the ground, making them more difficult to treat. Treatments in the summer are best done in the morning or evening when it's cooler.

Using a bait will be the most effective way of controlling fire ants. Amdro is the main ant bait that is used for fire ants. Broadcast the bait in a circle around each mound. It's important to know that Amdro is not labeled for use in vegetable gardens. It has to be used in scenarios where the plants growing there are not going to be eaten, like your lawn. If a few mounds remain after seven to ten days, a follow up application of Orthene will be effective against those problematic mounds. Take a long stick and quickly put a hole in the center of the mound. Then fill the hole with insecticide to eliminate those mounds. When applying pesticides always make sure to read and follow the label.

I have also seen people using orange oil mixed with soap and other ingredients. This treatment is effective because it eats away the ant's skin. However, it will also kill any other insects, grubs, or worms that are in its path. It could also strip away the outer layer of any roots that it meets.

There are not many biological controls for fire ants in the United States because they are an invasive species. Fire ants are native to South America and have many natural enemies there. Researchers have to be very careful about introducing a natural predator, because the effects of that introduced species are unknown on our ecosystem.

If you have any questions about fire ants and fire ant control, contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters To The Editor

Thank You from ARFS

Dear Editor,
Animal Rescue Financial Support, Inc. (ARFS) salutes the Georgia Mountain Pickleball community for its very generous donation of \$1,000 to help needy animals in Towns County.
ARFS funnels financial support donated by the community to impoverished pet owners and animal caretakers to pay for any need for any animal. ARFS is saving the lives of dogs and cats that would otherwise suffer or die by paying vet expenses for those who cannot afford medical care, and ARFS is feeding animals that would otherwise be hungry or starving by donating 90 bags of dog and cat food to the Towns County Food Pantry every month.
Thank you, Georgia Mountain Pickleball community, for helping ARFS fulfill its mission of "Aid for Animals."
Sue Scott
Animal Rescue Financial Support, Inc.

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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Let the Herald work for you!
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Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 4 PM

Towns County Herald

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