

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

The Enemy of Success

Why Comparison Is the Enemy of Success

We are obsessed with the "if only" game.

If only I had started saving earlier for retirement. If only I had chosen a different career path.

If only I had bought that house in the suburbs back in the '70s. It's amazing how much time we spend imagining alternate versions of ourselves, convinced that these hypothetical choices would somehow unlock the success we're chasing.

I see this mindset everywhere. At community gatherings, people humble-brag about their pension plans while others wish they had made similar choices. On Facebook, where grandchildren share their achievements, comments overflow with people lamenting their own life paths. It's as if we've collectively decided that decisions made decades ago predetermine success.

But here's what fascinates me: some of the most successful people I know didn't follow the traditional path. Take Betty, a friend who started a thriving antique restoration business at 55 despite having no formal training. Or Frank, who became a celebrated local restaurateur after taking a risk and leaving his accounting job of 30 years. They succeeded not because they had perfect cards, but because they learned to play their hands skillfully.

This phenomenon calls to mind the ancient wisdom found in the story from the seventh chapter of the Book of Numbers. When the Israelites built the holy Tabernacle in the desert — where G-d communicated directly with Aaron and his descendants, filled with Divine and extravagant artifacts — their tribal leaders donated exactly six wagons to transport everything — just six. No extras, no backup plans. Modern scholars have determined that these wagons were filled to absolute capacity, leaving no room for even a matchstick more.

At first glance, this seems like terrible planning. Wouldn't you want some wiggle room? A backup wagon in case something breaks down? But there's a profound lesson here: what looks like scarcity to us might actually be perfectly sufficient for our purpose.

In modern terms, we often assume we need every new gadget, another workshop, or a younger person's energy to succeed. We're constantly adding more wagons, convinced that we're somehow under-equipped for life's journey. But what if we already have exactly what we need?

Look at Harland Sanders, who started Kentucky Fried Chicken at age 65 with just his Social Security check and a chicken recipe. Or Laura Ingalls Wilder, who published her first "Little House" book at age 65. These aren't stories about people with abundant resources; they're stories about people who maximized what they had.

The key isn't wishing for different circumstances — it's mastering the ones you've got. Instead of lamenting what you lack, try this exercise: list everything you do have. Include the obvious stuff like your life experience or skills, but don't forget the less tangible assets. Maybe you're exceptionally patient because of raising children. Perhaps you have a unique perspective because of living through significant historical changes. These aren't consolation prizes; they're your competitive advantages.

I recently talked to a retiree who initially felt disadvantaged because she didn't have computer programming skills like younger entrepreneurs. However, she realized her 40 years of experience in customer service gave her insights into people's needs that her more tech-savvy competitors missed. She turned what felt like a limitation into the foundation of her successful senior care consulting business.

The truth is that we each possess a unique combination of traits, experiences, and capabilities that no one else possesses. The challenge isn't to become someone else — it's to become the fullest version of ourselves. Success doesn't come from having the best cards; it comes from playing your cards best.

So, stop the next time you catch yourself playing the "if only" game. Instead of imagining what you could do with someone else's hand, ask yourself if you're making the most of your own. Are you fully utilizing your decades of experience and wisdom? Are you spending more time wishing for youth's energy or maximizing the patience and perspective that come with age?

Because here's the thing: your "limitations" might actually be pointing you toward your purpose. What looks like a disadvantage today could become your signature strength tomorrow. The only way to find out is to stop comparing your cards to everyone else's and start playing your hand like you mean to win.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports communities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at y@tasteof Torah.org.

Guest Columns

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great 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
P.O. 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.



Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger



Fun with Frozen Things

By the time you read this, it's just possible that the massive block of ice created by shoveling snow from our walkway will have melted. I'm not taking any bets. Our personal glacier has been here for two weeks so far. The rain didn't melt it. It remained defiant during those two hours when the temperature actually got above freezing. Sunshine only strengthens its resolve as it stubbornly reflects heat away from the permafrost underneath. I'm beginning to suspect that the albedo effect somehow contributed to the Great Florida Blizzard of 2025.

There is plenty to do during these extended cold snaps, and the fun with frozen things has been almost nonstop around here. Not only is there plenty to keep anyone suffering from cabin fever busy, but the unexpected variety of activities only adds to the delight. That's not all. The festival of freezing also contributes to our list of things to do in the spring, alleviating any concerns about being idle or having extra money to spend after the great thaw.

For example, it's remarkable how utterly immobile a metal window becomes when the excess moisture allowed by a broken seal freezes around the perimeter as the temperature outside dips into the single digits. On a positive note, the ice effectively blocks any warm air from escaping the bathroom. They stopped making this model window at least 15 years ago, and we look forward to being able to buy something for three times the cost that will last a third as long.

Also unexpected was the surprise puddle in the basement. The culprit was a dehumidifier that normally drains to the outside through a hose that has never frozen before. Note to self: Be sure to clean the slime out of the drain hose before an extended cold spell. That probably goes double for the HVAC drain pipe.

Cold weather is instructive for anyone collecting bits of wisdom for the "stitch in time saves nine" file. Go ahead and fix that ding on the windshield of the truck, even though it's so tiny that it's hardly noticeable. You will notice the crack that forms when the ice on the windshield elbows out as the temperature drops to single digits. Of course, this is only a cautionary tale since it's so rare for a truck hauling gravel in our county to violate Georgia Code Title 40, Motor Vehicles and Traffic § 40-8-75 and 40-6-248.1, and rumble down the highway uncovered.

Overall, we were well prepared for winter this year. Weather stripping and door seals were generally in good shape, that one window notwithstanding. All the proper clothes were rotated forward in the closets, and our heavy coats were ready for those excruciatingly slow morning constitutionals with the pups. Antifreeze levels in the vehicles were good. The chicken house windows were insulated (eggs are worth their weight in gold now).

If you have cats, we strongly recommend stocking up on litter before a freeze. Apparently, the cat door in Tracey's shop stops functioning when the temperature drops below 20 degrees outside, and our two second-hand lionesses become simultaneously hungrier and less mobile every winter. Extra litter is also great for covering those slick spots on the walkway, but you'll probably want to resist the urge to recycle and use fresh litter.

Checking our morning correspondence as the sun peeking over the ridge reflects off of the glacier, I see that my FedEx package, which is only 8 days late, is out for delivery for the fourth time today. Suddenly, it occurs to me that the driver is probably waiting for our glacier to melt. It's better to be safe than sorry. Someone should inform our Amazon driver, who came twice through the snow in her 2WD sedan to deliver on time.

Now here is a headline that you don't see very often: Sydney Lanier Bridge closed because of falling ice. A friend near Savannah sent me snow pictures, and people from there to New Orleans are having fun with frozen things while once-in-a-lifetime snowmen guard the shores of the Gulf of America. Winter has been anything but dull this year, and it's not even February!

We leave you with a cup of gratitude while I enjoy a second cup of coffee. I'm grateful for my warm company sleeping late in our warm bed in a warm house. Today the President will visit some families in North Carolina who are wondering whether they will wake up in a warm place tomorrow morning. As the English Reformer, John Bradford, observed in 1555, "there but for the grace of God go I."

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Raised Beds

This week I would like to talk about raised beds. There are many different ways to make raised beds. So I'll go through different types of materials that you can use and some basic principles to use when building your raised beds. I'll also talk about situations where I like raised beds over growing in the soil and vice versa.

Raised beds are a great tool to use if you have don't have a lot of sunlight in your yard. Plants grown in raised beds will still need full sun, but if you only have a small area of your yard that has full sun, a raised bed is a good way to maximize that spot. If you have slopes that are too steep to plant, leveling out a small area and putting in a raised bed in that spot is another good idea. Oftentimes, the best soil in Towns and Union is found in river bottoms. If you don't the good fortune of putting your garden in one of those places, growing in raised bed will also be much easier than fighting with heavy clay soils. Raised beds are also going to have fewer weed issues, and less soil compaction. You can build elevated raised beds to that you don't need to do as much bending down.

Dimensions for a raised bed depend on the materials that you are using. Generally, I like raised beds that aren't more than 4 feet across. If you have really long arms you can make them wider. I also like beds that are about 8 feet long. If you make long beds, it's just more difficult to walk around them, especially if you've put a bunch of raised beds next to each other. 10 inches height will be enough depth for most vegetables. Root crops like potatoes and carrots will need more depth. The deeper you make the raised bed the more material you will need to fill it. Soil to fill raised beds costs money, so don't make them needlessly deep. If you have tall crops planted in your raised beds they can shade out other crops, so orient them in a north-south direction. You want the raised bed to be completely level. To do this you may need to dig out the place where you're putting it.

Let's move on to materials that you can use. There are several different types of lumber. Cedar is very good, because it does not rot quickly. However, it is very expensive. Cypress is often easier to get than cedar. Oak and other hardwoods can be difficult to find in sufficient quantities, and are only a little more rot resistant than pine. Pine is the most readily available and cheapest lumber. It will rot, but I've seen where you can get several years of use out of pine. An alternative to lumber is cement blocks, brick, concrete, or stone. If you are going to build the wall high, you would need some mortar to keep the walls from falling.

The research that is available says that pressure treated wood is safe to use for food production. Arsenic is no longer used to pressure treat wood, and has not been used since 2005. Wood treated with creosote should not be used. Railroad ties and utility poles are treated with creosote.

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

Letters to the Editor

Who's Our Neighbor?

Dear Editor,

Jesus spent approximately 33 years on earth, with His last three years dedicated to ministry.

He gave us many examples of how to live and how to treat others. There was no DEI in place back then. Diversity, equity and inclusion had not found its way into the vocabulary. Following the example that Jesus displayed during His last three years on earth, completely does away with even having to address such things as DEI. The color of one's skin, their gender or their religious leanings had no place in the mind of Jesus. He saw their pain, their hurt and troubles, and acted accordingly in response to their needs. The Samaritan woman at the well, those without sight, the cleansing of the lepers, raising the dead to life and the feeding of those who were hungry... Skin color, ethnicity, or position in life were never involved in the decisions Jesus made before helping someone with their problems. The parable of the Good Samaritan is another example for us to consider.

It's easy to love and help family and friends, but what about those who are difficult to love and get along with? What about those who do things we do not approve of or have political leanings different from ours? We don't have to like someone's ways or their positions on things we may not approve of.

But, we do have to love them in spite of those differences. Loving your neighbor as you love yourself is not always an easy thing to do. But, as Christians, it's not optional. In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul. This is the first and greatest commandment. And, the second is like it, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Using a phrase from today, loving our neighbors is a "gotta do," and according to the words of Jesus, it's not optional. Through prayer, all things are possible.

Gene Vickers

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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