

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## It Takes a Village...

*It Takes a Village to Make a Country*  
By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

**Echos from Sinai**  
"Torah for Everyone"  
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



Once a year, sometime in the mid-winter months, Jewish people have a unique ritual we perform during Sabbath services: We take out a second Torah scroll, in addition to the one already used for the regular weekly reading, and read out loud a five-verse excerpt from the book of Exodus (30:11-16) which discusses the contribution each Jewish person had to make to the Tabernacle as it was being assembled as a temporary divine dwelling for the 40 years the Jews were to remain in the desert. The Torah states that every person must give half a shekel to the collection, regardless of their station and net worth.

This ceremony was performed this past Shabbat, and immediately I was struck by a question: Why are we reading this additional portion with such aplomb? After all, a second Torah scroll is only used during services a select few times a year – why is reading about an ancient fundraising effort worthy of this unique honor?

The significance of this event and why it is still commemorated today can be found in the very text: "...a half shekel shall be the offering of G-d. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than, half a shekel."

In the eyes of G-d, we are all equal. There is no difference between the wealthy business tycoon whose influence spreads far and wide, and the humble day-laborer who works hard to scrape by and provide for his family. The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, the most influential rabbi in modern history, taught that while people differ in their intellect, character, abilities and sensitivities, all are equal in the very basis of their bond with G-d and in the relationship they share with all of us.

So, while every person has unique means and talents that they can (and should) harness to connect even more to G-d, when building the Tabernacle itself – a home for G-d and the place through which He would connect with the Jewish people – its through that to come from everyone equally, exactly how G-d created us.

This message is reinforced by the very specific amount of money everyone was asked to donate: half a shekel. This was to show that it takes a half to make a whole, and the half that the pauper donated made the same whole shekel when combined with the half of a rich person, as it would have been if the wealthier man had donated it himself.

This powerful lesson resonates today and applies to much more than just the building of an ancient structure.

Too often, we find ourselves untethered from our communities and peers by virtue of our unique circumstances and stand alone because we feel others can't relate to our personal situations. The elite can't relate to the working class, the partying bachelor can't connect with the mother of four toddlers, and the atheist may not be able to stand the spiritually-in-touch person. Feeling alienated, people tend to withdraw more into their own bubble, and lose touch with the people living around them.

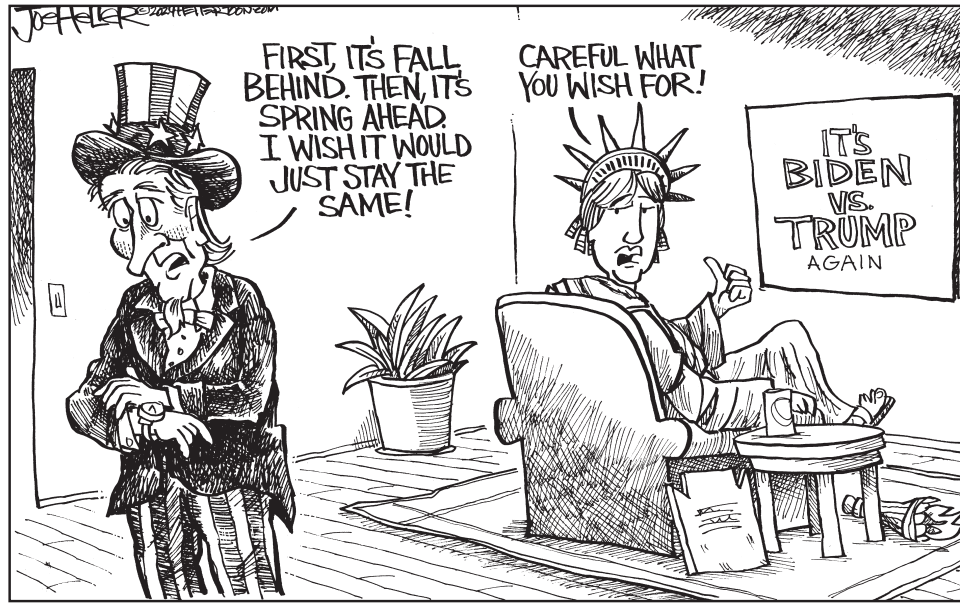
This phenomenon of division and separation has only deepened as the political and cultural divide has grown into a partisan chasm, and many have more militant positions on different topics we didn't think about or concern ourselves with just a decade ago. The religious conservative feels he has nothing in common with the secular liberal (and vice versa), and this cultural malaise and rot we're seeing rise from our young people up to older generations only festers as both sides become more and more intransigent and stuck in their inflexible positions.

In this moment, it's important to remind ourselves about what is important and what binds us together:

We are privileged to be living in the United States of America, a miraculous republic that has blossomed and thrived to become the most impressive country in human history in just 250 years, together. All of us, regardless of political persuasion or personal status, contribute and make up the foundation of this country, what makes America the America that millions around the world look up to in awe and envy.

It behooves us to remember we're equal in the eyes of G-d, and both sides of the red and blue debate represent only half of this great nation. Our founding fathers knew this and thus gave us the motto, "E Pluribus Unum," on July 4th, 1776! For only together do we achieve, "out of many, one," and get the United States of America.

*Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger is a rabbi with Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer currently living in Florida.*



## My Father's Son

I am my father's son. This is not to say that I do not cherish the many gifts and influences of my mother, but boys who are blessed to have a father in the home, one willing and able to provide the mentoring they desperately need, are bound to inherit some of his attributes and attitudes in spite of themselves.

Our father liked to tinker, and he despised waste. Though he could afford to replace anything that broke, patching and repairing were much more likely than purchasing when it came to keeping the household and farm running smoothly.

I think some of this tendency was a carryover from growing up during the Great Depression, when replacements for broken things were not always available, and often unaffordable when they were.

Dad's sister, my aunt Hersie, was a wealthy woman in her senior years. When land was cheap, she bought property with the money she made selling eggs; money she accumulated over many years and hid in mason jars squirreled away in the henhouse because women were not supposed to manage the family's finances or think about investments.

When Lake Chatuge was built, much of her land became lake-front, and she sold it when land was most assuredly not cheap, despite the efforts to relieve her of it by a few area businessmen, some in her own family, who thought they were smarter than she was.

She could have bought a house anywhere and lived like a celebrity, but the biggest purchase she made was to put a new roof on her house. She continued to garden like she always did, and hang her clothes out to dry on the clothesline. She sold tomatoes and squash at a little roadside stand in front of her house because she liked meeting and talking to people.

In fact, Zell Miller used to visit and buy her tomatoes, and when the highway department ignored her requests to fix the dropoff into her driveway, the one they created when they repaved the road, Zell told her he thought he might be able to do something about that. Within a week she came home from the Senior Center to find that a nice wide pull-off had been paved right in front of her produce stand.

Her thrifty nature never left Hersie. Tracey and I used to visit her when she had moved to assisted living, and once we took her a nice blanket to keep her feet warm. She gushed over the blanket, and then began to carefully put it back in the package. "Aren't you going to use that?" Tracey asked. "I thought I would save it," my aunt replied. When we left her that day she had to continue the long family tradition of giving us some kind of treat to take home, so she gathered some peppermints and reached into a drawer to retrieve a plastic bag from a collection saved from trips to the grocery store.

Today, we might come up with a new expression for thrift combined with the choice to fix and mend things instead of buying new ones. We could call it, "tinkerthrift." I'll wager that tinkerthrift is not just a learned behavior; it might also be epigenetic. My grandfather Ernest on my mother's side of the family also tinkered in pursuit of thrift. During WWII, gasoline was rationed. I still have ration tickets passed down in the family archives. Granddaddy's old 8 cylinder Studebaker was a gas hog, so he removed two pistons from each side of the motor and filled the cylinders with cement. Then he tinkered with the timing until the motor ran smoothly.

Both of my brothers are masters of tinkerthrift. I think Bob is never happier than when something breaks and he gets to research the problem, collect the pertinent how-to videos and then meticulously organize the work. There is definitely an air of triumph about him when the repair is complete.

William is an engineer who despises the waste our consumer society produces. When he finds a quality item that has been unnecessarily discarded or given to a thrift store, one that can be repaired with a simple diode or a thermal fuse, he reminds me of an angler celebrating a memorable catch. (All three of us brothers still grieve the demise of Radio Shack, which became extinct in large part because few consumers are interested in building or repairing.)

And now we come to the inspiration for this reflection on thrift and innovation. It began when I was replacing a locking hub on the front wheel of my old truck and decided to slow down the entropic demise of the steering linkage with a generous application of lithium grease to all the lubrication points. My grease gun was empty after about three pumps, and I could hear my dad chuckling because you're not supposed to put your tools down until they are ready to pick up again the next time.

Most shade tree mechanics would simply take out the empty grease cartridge, insert a new one and continue on with the task at hand. Not so, the practitioner of tinkerthrift. A bucket of grease is a fraction of the cost of the equivalent amount of grease cartridges.

Unfortunately, the thrifty tinkerer is confronted head-on by the laws of physics when he tries to put grease into a cylinder. Pascal, Bernoulli and Newton himself are lined up and waiting to contribute to an epic sticky mess if you're not careful, or if you are.

You can't put a baseball bat in a coke bottle and you can't force lithium grease into a closed cylinder. The cylinder has to be open on both ends for air to escape. This means that you have to disassemble the grease gun at both ends. You can discard the cylinder unless the gun requires the top of the cylinder to become part of the seal.

In any of these scenarios, you need a tool or device, tinkered or otherwise, to scoop grease out of the bucket and insert it into the tube or cylinder. Murphy's Law states that the tool you brought to the party is not the one you need, but your gloves are now covered with grease and the wind has blown the newspaper you spread out to contain the mess into the woods, so you soldier on. (Murphy's Law also requires that a glob of grease escapes your notice, falls, levitates or folds space to somehow attach itself to the bottom of your shoe to mark your passage and delight your wife at a later time.)

As I was soldiering on, scooping and splorking grease with the stick I had picked up to replace the ineffective 5-in-1 tool that was better at collecting than transferring grease, I heard my dad chuckling again. It occurred to me that the grease bucket I was using was one of his, salvaged from his old workshop.

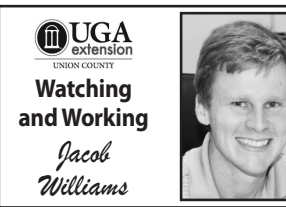
"I am my father's son," I said out loud. Just then my stick encountered a rigid object in the depths of the bucket: It was a table fork.

I could hear my mother clucking her resigned but amused disapproval at the disappearance of her cutlery, but the fork, left in the bucket by my father for future use some unknown years ago, was the perfect tool for the job. I quickly finished packing the grease gun and continued servicing the truck, and yes, The fork is still in the bucket.

**Outside The Box**  
By: Don Perry  
worldoutsidethebox.com

## Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Have you seen small white cottony balls on hemlock trees? If you have then that means those trees are infested with Hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). Let's look at why it's important to preserve hemlocks, what is the pest that is killing them, and what you can do to save them. We are getting to the time of year when they really start to come out.



Hemlocks are a native species that ranges from Maine to Northern Georgia. They are a keystone species that provides habitat for about 120 species of vertebrates and over 90 species of birds. Hemlocks are unique in their ability to thrive in shade. This attribute makes them common in ravines and along rivers and streams.

Their proximity to streams and rivers means that they are crucial in reducing erosion and watershed protection. Hemlocks can be identified by their needles. They have short flat needles with two distinctive pale white stripes on the underside. The needles are wider at the base and taper to a rounded tip, unlike firs that have parallel sides the whole way down.

HWA is a very small insect. The white cottony sacks on the hemlock trees are what the HWA wraps itself with for protection. They are an invasive species from Asia that doesn't have a natural predator here. HWA feeds on the sap inside of hemlock trees. Wind, birds, deer, or humans can spread the HWA. Once a tree has become infested, it will die within four to 10 years. Therefore, it is important to treat trees as after finding that they have been infested.

It is important to treat your own trees with cultural and chemical controls. Cultural controls include keeping hemlocks well mulched and watered. Hemlock trees don't have very deep roots and droughts can make them more susceptible to infection. Don't place any bird feeders or deer feeders near your trees. Birds and deer can carry the eggs for long distances. If you are hiking in an area that has HWA wash your clothes afterward because you may be carrying eggs. Be careful to not over-fertilize your trees as that could make them more enticing to HWA. Cultural controls may keep your trees healthy, but when they become infested, chemical controls are the only option. Chemical controls involves treating your tree with either Imidacloprid or Dinotefuran, and is the most common and effective method of control. An imidacloprid treatment will last four or five years. However, it may take one year before it is effective. Dinotefuran will last for two years in the tree and will take about four to six weeks to take effect. The ideal way to apply either of these insecticides is by soil drench. Putting the insecticide in the soil will mean quicker uptake by the plant and reduce the chance of off target drift. A soil drench does not require any special equipment. Soil injection can also be used, however, I only recommend using an injector if you are treating a large number of trees. Soil injection and soil drench are equally effective. You can also purchase imidacloprid in tablet form, so you don't have to mix with water. If the trees are near open water, a trunk injection of insecticide is necessary, which will require a professional. Whenever applying a pesticide follow the label.

The Union County Extension Office has a soil injector that is available to be checked out. Checking it out requires a \$250 dollar deposit that will be returned when the injector is brought back. If you would like instructions on how to treat hemlock trees contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. The organization Save Georgia's Hemlocks have a website that also has lots of information.

Contact your local Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu if you have any questions about HWA.

## Letters To The Editor

### Questions for Joe Biden

Dear Editor,

- 1) Do you realize that under the 1952 (!) Immigration and Nationality Act, you have long been authorized to suspend the entry of migrants, past, present and future?
- 2) Why are you, and have you been, more concerned with the murder of the Russian dissident Alexei Navalny than the murder of the Georgia co-ed Laken Riley (say her name!)?
- 3) Do you realize that the "slap on the wrist" justice system that you and your vice president have allowed (and she has recently praised) has resulted in Girl Scouts robbed, law enforcement personnel assaulted, home squatters, retail theft, kids shot in school and at parades, recidivism ad nauseum?
- 4) Do you realize that the world's top (four-year running) carmaker Toyota sold 11.2 million vehicles last year, but only 104,018 were fully EVs?
- And 5) Why should the USA, via your administration, expend tax-generated resources for the welfare of migrants when the basic needs of America's impoverished citizens are already not being met and the middle class has trouble making ends meet as a result of your Bidenomics, inflation and misguided spending?

Claudos G. Spears

### 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.

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*Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.*

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## 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 YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 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 City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall TC Water Authority Board Meeting	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

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Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546