

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Passion Without Purpose...

Passion Without Purpose Is Pointless

By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



The whole world has spent the last month up in arms over the dangerous and surreal scenes occurring on American college campuses.

Keffiyeh-wearing mobs have torn down American flags and built sophisticated tent encampments on the hallowed grounds of our most distinguished institutions in seemingly "grass-roots" campaigns, yet in actuality perpetrated by well-organized, sinister forces. Jewish students have been harassed and threatened in their own schools and blocked from accessing their own classrooms and public spaces. Explicitly pro-terror rallies, along with chants and signs reverberate around our most prestigious colleges, and are echoed by the mindless drones that attend them.

Almost as shocking as those perpetuating these hateful events are how those in positions of power are handling them. Instead of standing up for the rights of their student body – regardless of faith or political persuasion – who just want to attend classes and use the library to study for finals, university faculty, as well as a vocal minority in Congress have entertained and facilitated the demands of these deranged protestors and rioters. Those schools which actually possess the moral clarity to object to the blatant unlawfulness and Jew hatred, find no support or protection.

Those who should know better claim that the pro-Hamas protestors have their hearts in the right place, and their passion for political activism should be embraced and encouraged.

This whole premise is flawed.

Just because someone is passionate about a cause doesn't make it just or right, and those advocating false and dangerous ideologies should be disabused of their ignorance instead of being treated with kid gloves.

Adrift and lost in the age of record levels of purposelessness and disconnection, the youth of today are desperate for a cause and mission. Embracing the radical DEI and oppression culture running rampant on college campuses, these lost young-adults have decided that Palestinian terror organizations are the victims of European Colonialism and white supremacy and have launched unhinged and violent campaigns on their behalf.

They are wrong, and those tacitly endorsing their efforts by not decisively shutting them down, are wrong as well.

With all this as a backdrop, the recent weekly Torah portion read by Jewish people, tells a story with interesting parallels to the events unfolding now.

During the time the Jews wandered in the desert on their way back to their G-d given homeland of Israel, the two eldest sons of Aaron, the High Priest, and nephews of Moses, enjoyed a privileged closeness to the divine. Yet, one day the pair were overcome with the desire to connect even more intimately. In a state of spiritual ecstasy and religious passion, the brothers marched into the Tabernacle with an unsanctioned offering on the altar. Rather than consuming it, the flames leapt off the offering and fatally consumed the brothers, as punishment for their sin.

When asked how G-d could punish the sons of Aaron for something they did in a genuine attempt to get closer to Him, the commentators answer that while the passion they felt was admirable, it was misplaced and wrongheaded. And for that, they were penalized.

Granted these sons of Aaron were pious and righteous with the best of intentions, while the frenzied mobs on campus fit none of these descriptors, but the lesson from this Biblical story is still apt. Passion is pointless unless it is directed to something positive and productive. The riotous mobs on campus, and their handlers are playing with fire, and it would serve them well to cease their destructive activities and to get on the right side of history.

As always, we welcome your comments at y@tasteoftorah.org.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

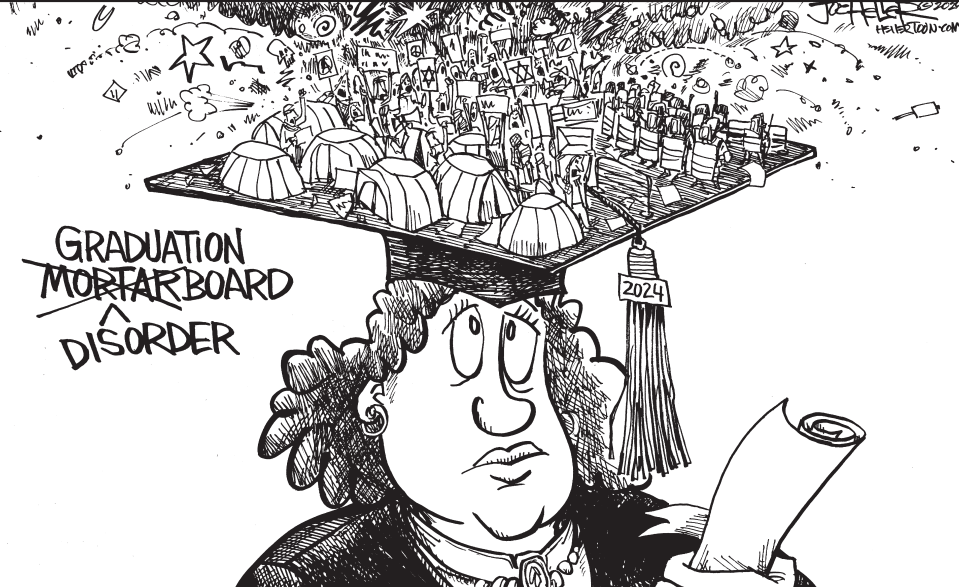
Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
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Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse 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



Of Luddites and Lard

One of my favorite haunts as a child was a large stand of white pines on our grandparents' farm. The trees were probably 30 years old at the time, and they formed a dense canopy which shaded the ground underneath. In the hot summer months, it was always cool under those trees, and quiet. The mass of needles blocked all the sounds which echoed across the valley and replaced them with a whisper on the wind, and where they fell to the ground, a thick, soft mat formed that was perfect for taking a nap, building a fort, or just sitting alone and beyond the scrutiny of adults.

The trees had been planted as a crop to be harvested, but to a child, they were a magical forest, dark and mysterious and inviting, and as we both grew up, my love of them grew even stronger. Adults also need places where they can escape the noise of the world and its scrutiny, even if that place exists only in imagination or memory.

There was some discord in the family after the grandparents had passed, and our dad decided to harvest the trees. Our mom thought they were beautiful, and nobody wishes to see a childhood dreamscape razed to the ground. In the end, it was decided to leave some of the grandest sentinels on the point for the sake of beauty and to reseed the next generation.

Dad was correct in harvesting those trees. The southern pine beetles were devastating pine forests all across the Southeast. White pines were more resistant to the beetle, but they were also beginning to fall, and when the beetles hatched from larvae infesting a sickened tree, the direction the wind was blowing that day determined where they would strike next. Ironically, it was the monoculture planting of stands of trees for harvest which accelerated the rapid spread of the pest.

I'm continually amazed at Nature's resiliency. A forest now stands where that crop once did. It now contains a large variety of trees, including some healthy white pines and many other forms of plant life as well. It is home to an astounding variety of creatures, much more than once lived there. As I watched this new forest grow, I observed something else happening which underlines our struggle to understand the interconnectedness of the natural world.

When I was a child playing in the pines, a pileated woodpecker was a rare sight on our mountain. However, the pine beetles and other insects which thrived on the dead and dying trees were a feast for the once threatened species. Today we hear their calls and the tapping of their beaks almost daily.

I also saw those dead pines rescue a watershed. Some years ago, an impatient would-be developer built a road on a mountain where a road should never have been built, and in a ham-fisted way that was guaranteed to cause the soil to erode. At the bottom of his hill, enough silt washed down to cover a 3 ft. hogwire fence. He made no effort to mitigate the damage, but Nature took its course.

Almost all the big pines on his hillside died, and when a storm system blew through one spring, many of them fell. It was an incredible mess, at least in the eyes of the amateur developer, and beyond his ability to "fix." This was a lucky break for the watershed, for within two years the rotting logs did what no amount of human effort could have accomplished. The logs formed natural dams for the silt. New plant life sprang up in the now sunny spaces once occupied by the trees. The erosion stopped, and the mountainside stabilized.

The mention of that hogwire fence brings to mind another story of ham-fisted humanity. Hogs have a long history in our mountains. Many families would have starved in the lean years of the pioneers without the dependable source of protein from domestic pigs that foraged on the abundant chestnuts that fell from the once mighty stands of the American variety which covered the Appalachians. Every part of the animal was used, and the rendered lard made soap, softened leather, and baked biscuits.

In the early 1900s, someone thought it would be a good idea to bring Russian boars to the southern highlands for sport and keep them on hunting preserves. Of course they escaped. Pigs are highly intelligent and resourceful. Once free, they continued to spread, and they bred with domestic pigs that foraged in the same hills.

The phenomenon is now known as "hybrid vigor," or "heterosis." Sometimes hybrid species can exhibit enhanced traits, and such is the case with the hybrid pigs which now plague many a gardener and grass mower in the Southern Appalachians. The aggressive foraging of Russian boars has combined with the rapid reproductive traits of domestic pigs. The result is a highly successful hybrid: intelligent, adaptable, and unconcerned with the symmetry of your lawn or hayfield. The once abundant chestnuts which kept the pigs in the highlands and out of your garden are long gone.

In our valley, neighbors combine efforts to control the hogs. When the population of the herd grows large, they can plow several acres of land in a single day. Currently, our itinerant troublemakers are at a manageable level, but just yesterday I found where a pair had plowed a small wetlands at the head of our creek some time ago.

To the western eye which tends to define beauty with symmetry, the marks of a rooting pig, like dead logs rotting on the ground, would first appear to be ugly and undesirable. Yet in each pool formed in the soggy ground by our foraging foes, I saw thousands upon thousands of tadpoles. The frogs are celebrating the passage of our porcine pilgrims.

Nature takes whatever we throw at it and adapts. What we call "Nature" is systemic, symbiotic, and synchronistic in ways we still struggle to understand. In my experience, we do much better as stewards of Nature than we do as managers. As managers, we just can't seem to fully comprehend all the subtlety and interconnectivity of the environment in which we live, and that understanding is often clouded or completely obscured by our desire for profit and our need to control.

Incalculable damage has been done by the passage of humans, not unlike rooting pigs in our understanding of the consequences of our actions. Now in our impatience at that lack of understanding of and inability to cooperate with Nature, we seek to control it instead, to alter it at the most fundamental levels, and, stepping into the role of the Creator, bend it to our own wills. Every time I read a GMO label, the Luddite in me takes note.

"Luddite" has inherited a derogatory meaning from the industries that movement sought to question, but the Luddites were not against technology. They were against technology for its own sake without consideration of the social, cultural, and economic consequences – the unintended consequences.

Nothing rolls with the punches and adapts to unintended consequences better than Nature itself. If you ask the frogs in our wetland, they will tell you that Nature will even work with a hog, so surely there is room for improvement in allowing it to work with us as well.

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

BearWise

Black bears are active again. While people enjoy having them around, it's important to remember that these animals are wild. Sometimes, when you see the bear time and again you may feel a personal connection to that bear. That feeling is probably not reciprocated. Interactions with bears are inevitable to a certain level, so let's talk about what to do if you see a bear and the steps that you can take to make sure that your home doesn't become a playground for bears and that we allow these creatures to remain wild.



Firstly, it's important to remember that we live in an area with copious amounts of national forest. That means black bears are out there. Hopefully, though if you encounter one you'll know what to do or how to make your space less attractive to them. Bears will typically live 8 to 15 years. The females can weigh up to 300 pounds and the males over 500 pounds. The females will give birth in their den in late January. Those cubs will stay with the mother until the following spring when she kicks them out.

Bears are omnivores meaning that they eat whatever is easily available depending on the time of year. Their natural diet is berries, fruits, acorns, grasses, insects, and even mammals. Bears can be attracted by the smell of human food if there is not much natural food available for them. Bears are naturally afraid of humans. However, bears that have been feeding on human food lose their natural fear of people, and become a danger. Bears will usually remain in an area where food is readily available, so the best way to make sure that bears don't move into your backyard is to remove the sources of food.

Never feed bears either intentionally or unintentionally. They will learn where food is available and become a nuisance for you and your neighbors. Make sure that your garbage is in a place that they can't reach. That means leaving it inside the garage or if you're out camping hoisting your trash in the air or putting it in a bear proof trashcan. Bird feeders can attract bears because of the high calorie content in bird feed. Bring your bird feeders in when bears are natural. Usually, by the time bears are active there is plenty of natural food available for birds. Don't leave pet food out. Just give your outdoor pets enough food for one feeding. If you have a grill, clean and store it after use. Bears will be attracted by the smell of your grill so keep it out of reach for them. And finally, let your neighbors know if you see a bear so that they can take precautions too.

Most bears are not aggressive, unless they have been fed by humans before. Bear relocation is usually not an effective control option. Bears that are relocated might be moved to an area that another bear has already claimed, leading to territory fights, or the bear may try to return to its home and be struck by a vehicle. Relocation is a last resort.

If you do encounter a bear in the open make yourself look big and wave your arms and shout while backing away slowly. Do not get between a mother bear and her cubs. If you are attacked fight back aggressively with anything you can get your hands on. Bears can be dangerous but know that there are no recorded fatalities in Georgia.

If you have questions about bears in our area contact your local Extension office for more information or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters To The Editor

Tax Dollars for Endless Wars

Dear Editor,
Judging by last week's letter to the editor, it appears one can be a fine purveyor of English prose, a Ph.D. in English, a recognized college English professor (retired), and still be dead wrong on the subject being argued. The writer of the letter titled "Ukraine" is a case in point, when the author says \$61 billion of American's hard-earned tax dollars are well spent, according to the writer, on the U.S. proxy war against Russia being waged in Ukraine. To repeat, the writer may be an accomplished English wordsmith, but still be wrong on America's endless war policy.

His premise assumes one very important, but flatly erroneous belief that somehow the corrupt state of Ukraine, lead by elements of neo-Nazis, will win a war of attrition against Russia. The U.S. launched Ukraine regime change operation in 2014 led by the U.S. Russophobes in the Biden administration and a bi-partisan Congress. But it is delusional to think Ukraine will prevail against Russia's superior forces in a proxy war on Russia. It is delusional to think that Russia will give up its right to self defense and that NATO and the West will win against Russia by stationing missiles on Russia's border with Ukraine.

The Kyiv government, with U.S. support, launched a civil war on the mostly Russian speaking and Moscow supporting citizens living in eastern Ukraine, killing some 14,000 people. This illegal aggression supported by NATO and the West against the Russian people and military was met by Russian military invasion. And yet, the U.S. and UK have consistently refused to allow Ukraine to hold peace talks with Russia. Recall, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson forbade a negotiated cease-fire at the Istanbul conference in 2022. It's so easy for U.S. leaders and duped followers to flush American tax dollars down the drain of endless war, especially when all the war dead are Ukrainians and Russians.

Here's the bottom line with regards to what Russia considers an existential threat to its national security: No country or alliance of nations has the right to station lethal weapons on Russia's border. This was made clear for years before Russia was confronted by Ukraine's threat to join NATO. Americans need to look in the mirror and ask if we're right-on with spreading death and destruction in Ukraine, as well as committing genocide in Gaza with our tax dollars.

Lance G. Jobson

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.

Towns County Herald

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