

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## G-D Is Not Just In The Sky

By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

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



Picture the scene: Less than 50 days after being freed from centuries of slavery in Egypt, the Jewish people were gathered around the foot of Mt. Sinai, waiting to accept the word of G-d and become His people. They had arrived at the location six days earlier and had spent the last three days immersed in holiness, preparing for this moment. Now it was dawn, and the sky roared with the sound of lightning and thunder. Heavy clouds hung low over the mountain, and smoke filled the air. Their ears rang from the sound of the Shofar horn blowing, and everyone gathered there felt the enormity of the moment. Soon, they would become the first nation in recorded history to accept a monotheistic G-d upon themselves, and He would accept them back.

The dramatic scenes on Earth were a reflection of the tense and stormy debate taking place Above. The Talmud tells us that when Moses ascended Mt. Sinai, the angels pushed back on G-d's decision to share the holy Torah with mere mortals and begged Him to leave the Torah with them to "honor and cherish." G-d allowed Moses to answer back on behalf of the entire human race, and the great advocate of his people took the angels to task.

Moses went through the Ten Commandments and demonstrated how they only applied to humans. The angels were never slaves in Egypt and could therefore never remember how G-d redeemed them. Angels don't have parents to honor, nor struggle and prevail against an evil inclination bent on satisfying their base desires.

Yes, Moses agreed, humans are weak and perhaps undeserving of the holiness of the Torah, but the Torah was not created to be treated as a museum artifact, studied but never practiced. Instead, G-d intends Torah to be a blueprint with His express will for us to uplift ourselves and the world around us.

Clearly, G-d agreed with Moses because this week, we mark the holiday of Shavuot, 3,336 years since the Torah was shared with the Jewish people and, by extension, the world.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, author of the seminal mystical work *The Tanya*, taught that G-d created the physical world for us to make a dwelling place for Him in the midst of our lowly world. Our mission is to uplift our surroundings and infuse everything in this physical world with spirituality and holiness, ensuring we are doing our part to make it a fitting home for G-d.

The Torah's teachings transcend time and space, offering wisdom, guidance, and a path to fulfillment for all who embrace its principles. It is a testament to the enduring relationship between G-d and humanity, one that calls upon us to bring holiness into our everyday lives, not just to keep it in the sky, but to bring it down to Earth, where it can transform us and the world around us.

In a famous Talmudic debate between the sages, Rabbi Eliezer was frustrated that his colleagues didn't agree with his interpretation and ruling on a matter of practical Jewish law. Seeking affirmation, he said that if he was right, a series of supernatural signs should prove it. And indeed, miraculous things occurred: a tree uprooted itself and flew hundreds of cubits, a stream began flowing in the wrong direction, the walls of the study hall caved in, and a heavenly voice thundered from the skies that Rabbi Eliezer's opinion was correct.

Despite all that, the sages still ruled by consensus against him, saying that G-d took the Torah out of the domain of the heavens at Sinai, and now it was up to humans on earth to interpret it, live with it, and be guided by it.

The giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai was not just a historical event; it was a defining moment that continues to shape the moral and spiritual fabric of our world. As we commemorate this monumental occasion, we are reminded that G-d is not confined to the heavens but is present in our actions, our decisions, and our pursuit of fulfillment and happiness. The Torah's teachings remain as relevant today as they were millennia ago, calling upon us to live with purpose, compassion, and righteousness.

This universal message of the Torah transcends religious boundaries and resonates with people of all faiths and backgrounds. The teachings of the Torah encourage us to see the divine spark within every human being and to strive for a world where peace, kindness, and understanding prevail. The call to uplift ourselves and our surroundings is not limited to any one group but extends to all of humanity, inviting each of us to contribute to the betterment of our world.

Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher are rabbis and writers serving communities across the regional South.



## Japanese Beetles

The Japanese beetles will soon be out in full force. They are a huge pest as they munch their way through your yard. Controlling them can be challenging because they are such voracious eaters. Let's talk about some strategies for lessening their impact.

UGA extension  
Watching and Working  
Jacob Williams



Japanese beetles arrived in the U.S. 1916. They have spread to much of the East coast and across the Mississippi River. They will feed on a wide range of ornamentals, fruit trees, vegetables, and shade trees. Feeding on such a wide range of plants means that your yard may look like an all you can eat buffet to them. They have a metallic green color on their abdomen. They look similar to June beetles. June beetles are typically about 1.5 to twice as large as Japanese beetles. Japanese beetles also have a row of five white dots along the side of the abdomen that can be used to differentiate them from other beetles. The damage that you see from them looks like skeletonizing of the leaves. They'll eat everything between the leaf vein, but leave the veins.

Thankfully, Japanese beetles only have a single generation each year. Usually the adults, which are the beetles that we see flying around eating leaves, will begin to appear in May - June. They live four to six weeks. The females will lay eggs for most of their adult life. The eggs are laid in the soil. They hatch in about two weeks. After hatching, the beetles live in the soil until they come back out as adults in May.

There are three times a year that are most ideal for controlling Japanese beetles. The most obvious is when they are adults and are out feeding on leaves. You can use carbaryl, which is the active ingredient in Sevin to control adults. Sevin comes as a liquid or in dust form. If you don't have a heavy infestation you can also use a cup with soapy water in it. Knock Japanese beetles off plants into the cup and they will drown. The second time to control Japanese beetles is in September. By that time of year all the Japanese beetles are grubs living in the soil. Even as grubs they can do damage to turf by feeding on the roots. Milky spore is an organic product that can be used to kill grubs in the ground. It's a bacterium that feeds on Japanese beetle grubs after they ingest it. September is the optimal time to make a milky spore application. The third time to control Japanese beetles would be in the spring with another milky spore application. Soil temperatures need to be over 65 for milky spore to be effective. The grubs must ingest the milky spore for it to be work. It only works on grubs, so applying it while the beetles are out eating leaves won't kill any Japanese beetles.

Using milky spore to kill the grubs doesn't mean that you won't have any Japanese beetles the following year, but you can significantly reduce the population that is present in your area. Some people will use traps to kill Japanese beetles. I try to discourage people from this practice because traps with pheromone lures will bring beetles in from five miles away, meaning that you have more beetles.

If you have questions about Japanese beetles contact your county Extension Office or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu).

## Letters to the Editor

### Grace Works

Dear Editor,

We would like to share a blessing we received. In the early morning of May 26th we were awakened by the sounds of shrill and ferocious wind. On investigation we found several trees in our yard had been uprooted or broken in the storm, one landing on my car. We were so thankful that we had not been injured and that our home was not damaged. Our tree trimmer, Dillion Barrett, expeditiously came that morning to remove the tree from the car and unblock driveways. We were then left with the cleanup of stumps, leaves, debris and ruts. It was a formidable task for senior citizens. Our friend contacted Grace Works. This is a community program based at McConnell Baptist church. The program leader immediately reached out to us. We submitted a form describing our need, and then the blessings flowed in to us.

On Monday, June 3rd, 15 people from the church showed up to help us with cleanup and debris removal. The reason they came: to show the love of Jesus to others. They certainly succeeded! From the first prayer together until the last grass seed was sown, everyone was so upbeat and incredibly helpful. All these people volunteered their time and talents because they care for others and want to know them and build relationships with them. As it says in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." They are doing that for sure!

Vanda Edmiston

### Best Town Ever

To the wonderful, caring town of Hiawassee:

First and foremost, Police Chief Jeremy Parker went beyond the call of duty in my eyes on May 24. While attending the Hiawassee Pro Rodeo (that was so much fun) at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, I thought I locked my keys in the car. I went to the front gate and told Duane (TYTYTY) my dilemma. He said don't worry, let me call someone that will help you. Turns out he called Jeremy, and he was my knight in shining armor.

He had to leave the rodeo and retrieve the device to get in my vehicle. Much to our dismay, my keys were nowhere to be found. Oh no. Had already checked my purse so many times! Did I drop them inside the rodeo? Shout out to everyone that helped me look. Y'all know who you are, police, rodeo people, vendors and fellow Hiawasseeans. We back-tracked my steps numerous times ALL over the fairgrounds to no avail. My heart was so warmed how everyone came to my rescue but was getting concerned what my next plan was. But I was not freaking out because I had given it to God and knew He would guide me.

After a good hour we all gathered at the golf cart bewildered, and I decided to look in my purse one more time, and guess what happened? Yep, found them in a small pocket that is never used. A huge sigh of relief from myself and everyone! My nerves settled and my heart grew bigtime! I'm so grateful to all y'all and continue to keep you in my thought and prayers. Thank You from the bottom of my heart.

So ladies, just remember to check all the little pockets in your purse. And if you ever need the townsfolk to help - they WILL! Hiawassee, Georgia, is the best town ever!

Deborah Massie  
Melrose, Florida

## How Green Is My Valley

The 1941 classic movie, "How Green Was My Valley," is the story of a past which can no longer be accessed except through memory. Today, we're thinking of a different film, but our valley is most definitely green.

Do you remember the 1982 Stephen King movie, "Creepshow," where Jordy Verrill, played by King, and everything around him became covered with a green, alien fuzz that looked like algae? Does our recent weather remind you of that? Have you looked at your deck railing lately?

Thank God for the rain... and the ability to pay the electric bill which results from running the heat pump to lower the humidity to keep the green alien fuzz from growing on Tracey's leather shoes.

We've always been blessed with rain in this area. In fact, Towns County is part of an area officially designated by researchers and ecologists as a temperate rainforest. If you want to know what it's like to live in parts of western Washington, just go outside (although it's considerably hotter here on average).

It wasn't always like this. The rainfall, yes; the humidity, not so much. At the risk of dating myself, when our house was first built, we had one seldom-used window unit for air conditioning. It usually stayed in the basement until late July or early August. A box fan in a north-facing window and another in the south for cross-ventilation were more than sufficient for cooling the house. (Curiously, that window unit got progressively heavier to carry each year, which led me to suspect that gravity was growing stronger. Perhaps that's why retailers, aware of this phenomenon, are putting less stuff in the same-sized packages?)

Today, the heat pump runs and the electric meter spins, and we have an additional crawl space dehumidifier to help keep the humidity down at a healthy level. I just finished cleaning the alien green out of the dehumidifier's drain pipe and inner workings. It's similar to the green stuff on the deck, the driveway, the side of the house, and any of the vehicles if they go for more than a week without a good wash. The pressure washer now has a permanent home in a corner of Tracey's shop when not too many years ago it lived most of the year in the basement.

My grandparents never had an air conditioner at all, and their house, artfully placed to allow for maximum airflow, was never hot, even on the hottest days of summer. What has changed?

Glenn Burns says the climate has changed, and though as a man of science he resisted the ideology and hyperbole surrounding the topic, it was the overwhelming evidence of the numbers that convinced him that the planet has indeed warmed.

Of course, we could argue perpetually about whether that warming is caused by humans, solar cycles, or some combination of factors, or whether anything we do matters at all since the extra coal China is burning to manufacture our solar panels more than offsets any reduction of carbon. What matters is that the planet is warmer, and the weather is more volatile and harder to predict.

Consider that less than a year ago we were complaining about how every rain event seemed to be followed by days of wind and very low humidity.

Today, the sky is a deep, endless, beautiful blue, and the humidity has dropped to a comfortable 60%. That's tolerable, and with the humidity at this level, I can pressure wash the deck again, possibly keeping the green alien fuzz at bay for another week. Alternatively, the desert winds might return, and we'll find ourselves grumbling about the need to water the plants again. Indeed, the weather is as volatile as human nature, yet our penchant for complaining remains steadfast and persistent.

## Letters To The Editor

### Towns County Road Department

Dear Editor,

A note of thanks to the hard-working men of the Towns County Road Department. On many occasions I have called for their help to clear trees blocking roads during and after a storm.

They always respond timely, get the job done often in difficult weather and at any hour. Thanks to them and the leadership of Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

John & Jill Seymour

### 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](mailto: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.*

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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	6 pm	
YH City Council... YH City Hall	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	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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