

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

We Are All Lamplighters

By Yonatan
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**Echos
from Sinai**
"Torah for
Everyone"
Rabbi
Yonatan
Hambourger



In days gone by, long before electricity, towns and villages throughout Eastern Europe would light up at night by hiring the services of a lamplighter. Every night, the lamplighter would traverse the town, street by street and manually light each lamp. By performing this simple but essential service, this humble role ensured the town could remain functioning after nightfall.

The Torah teaches us to find the spiritual meaning in the mundane, and Rabbi Sholom Ber Schneerson of Chabad-Lubavitch took immense inspiration from the lamplighter. He said that our job is "to be a lamplighter. The lamplighter walks the streets carrying a flame at the end of a pole. He knows that the flame is not his. And he goes from lamp to lamp to set them alight."

In classic Jewish thought, G-d is described as an infinite source of light, whose brightness and intensity our human brains cannot comprehend. But within every person, G-d places a tiny spark of that G-dly flame to be our life source. It is our obligation to fan the flame of the soul within ourselves to deepen our connection and sensitivity to spirituality, and through the analogy of the lamplighter, the Rebbe was saying that we must all harness the Divine Light that lives in each of us and share it with others. We all have a shared responsibility for each other, to lift up one another and grow together.

It's a lesson we find in last week's Torah portion, where Aaron the High Priest is instructed to go into the Tabernacle and light the seven flames of the iconic, seven-branched menorah (menorah).

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the most influential rabbi in modern history, explained the verse to mean that Aaron was given the responsibility of bringing Divine light into this physical world. He kindled the menorah, the light of which represents the essence of every one of us. The Torah points out that even a non-priest is technically allowed to light the menorah, which teaches us that everyone has the ability, and therefore the obligation, to light up the soul within our friends.

The act of lighting a lamp may seem small and insignificant, but it has the power to transform darkness into light. This principle applies to our daily lives as well. Small acts of kindness, a smile, a helping hand, or even a word of encouragement can illuminate someone's day and bring warmth to their hearts. Just like the lamplighter who lit each lamp with care, we too can make a significant impact on the lives of others through our actions, no matter how small they may seem. Every positive action contributes to a brighter and more compassionate world.

In times of darkness and uncertainty, the role of the lamplighter becomes even more critical. It is during these moments that we need to step up and be a source of hope and positivity for those around us. The lamplighter's unwavering dedication to lighting every lamp, regardless of the circumstances, teaches us the importance of perseverance and resilience. We must strive to be beacons of light in our communities, spreading hope and positivity, and inspiring others to do the same. By doing so, we can collectively overcome challenges and create a brighter future for all.

Some people may think that they are far from living a spiritually infused lifestyle, and therefore don't have the initial flame with which to inspire and light others. But the verse tells us that even a non-priest can light the menorah is there to specifically remind us that it doesn't matter how far from priesthood one is, they always have that spark within themselves to share with others. Sure, they would do well to nurture it and grow more in tune with G-dliness, but we all have that spark to affect change within others.

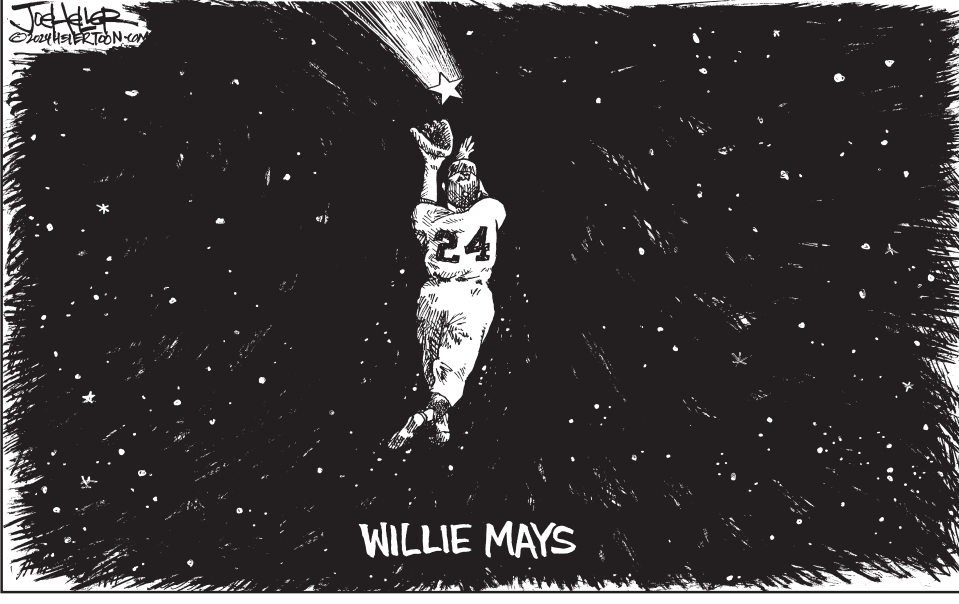
The metaphor of the lamplighter transcends time and place, reminding us that each of us holds the power to ignite light in the world. Whether through our actions, words, or simply by being present for one another, we have the ability to dispel darkness and bring about positive change. Let us all embrace the role of the lamplighter, carrying our flames high and illuminating the path for others. In doing so, we not only fulfill a spiritual calling but also build a more compassionate and united world.

As always, we welcome your comments and questions. You can reach us at y@tasteoftorah.org.
Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher are Rabbis and writers serving communities throughout the rural South.

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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



WILLIE MAYS

The Rock On The Stump

In the woods beyond the kitchen window there is a stump which lost its tree soon after the house was built. We intended minimal clearing of the land but in the new light of the opened space, this tree and a few others revealed more menace in their lean than a body likes to sleep under. Sometimes you can't see the trees for the forest.

The stump is a survivor. All the others which gave up their crowns for safety and firewood have long since returned to the soil, but this one is crowned with a flat rock. I vaguely remember putting the rock there, composed of quartz and probably possessed of a shape or sparkle that caught my eye. Left there and forgotten, it became a hedge against the elements, and now the old stump and its metamorphic crown remind me of the mesas and balanced rocks of the American west, where erosion has removed softer sediment from around that which is under the harder caprock.

It strikes me as a fitting metaphor for this land that sustains us, which we in turn have labored to preserve for future generations. I have been asked many times why we didn't develop our property, choosing instead to establish a conservation easement. "You could have made a lot of money." The answer, as I have come to understand it, is because we are that rock, not by a long shot the Greek Petros or Aramaic Kefa upon which Christ built his church. Not the foundation upon which the wise person builds their house. Not even the celebrity wrestler-turned-actor (whose movies I do enjoy). Rather, we are the rock that preserves the wood.

It's something of a family tradition. Like many families who have deep roots here, ours had a tendency to be "land poor." They were not often flush with cash, but managed to accumulate land when it was cheap and abundant, and they held on to it. The stumps survived despite the pressures of erosion around them.

Those pressures were considerable. As far back as our family history is remembered, greedy hands coveted the land, first for its resources, and later for division and digestion. That history includes stolen timber, disappearing deeds and boundary markers, deception and legal sleight-of-hand. One rogue who had ingress and egress over my grandfather's private road even hired a bulldozer to widen it because he thought Pa was too old to stop him. (He was mistaken.)

As early as the 1970's my grandfather would say, "One day rich men will fight each other over these mountaintops, but don't begrudge them that fight, because that's as close to heaven as most of them will ever get." He saw the future, and knowing that some of the land would likely be sold to pay for the needs of his wife of 70 years, he carefully drew up the plats to minimize development potential, the rock covering the stump.

You can carry the metaphor even farther if you seek to understand the nature of some of the most annoying of the things that divide people, even in a nation like ours where the vast majority share a great deal of the same cultural heritage and life experience, yet seem so often as divided as left and right. Succinctly stated, the conservative impulse is the rock; the liberal is the weathering.

Don't get trapped by the words. No one wants a forest of preserved stumps. Conversely, no one wants the weather to wash away all the topsoil. When it comes to the land, conservatives, having a number of developers in their ranks, rather than conserving it have an annoying habit of causing more erosion. Liberals often want to conserve it so well that even people can't use it. Both viewpoints are representative of natural processes. Life itself requires taking a stand, so to speak. At the most fundamental level of our living bodies, a cell requires a cell wall. But life is dynamic, constantly changing. A tree begins to die when it stops growing.

So in reality, I am not just the rock, but the rock AND the stump. My existence is limited by, but also sustained by the boundaries within which it is contained. Go ahead and tell me that you're a conservative or a liberal. You're actually both, or you wouldn't be alive to enjoy the luxury of an opinion. To think otherwise is to think, shall we say, like a box of rocks. Let us forget, we're here to think outside that box.

A purely conservative species of humans would still be living in caves, and a purely liberal species would have died out long ago, eaten by cave bears trying to feed their cubs. None of this is intended to move your opinion in any direction whatsoever. Whichever way you lean, nature leans the same way, in its own time and for its own purposes. Perhaps in realizing this fundamental aspect of creation, from the photon which is both a "solid" particle and a changing wave, to the super massive black hole that distroys stars while it creates new ones, we might lose the need to be offended when someone leans in a different direction than we lean.

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

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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.

Common Vegetable Diseases

It is getting closer to prime time for the vegetable harvest for gardeners and farmers alike in North Georgia. However, if you venture out to the garden one cool dewy morning and notice that your plants have not fared as well as you expected, here are a few common ailments that may be causing trouble.

In tomatoes, two of the most common reported ailments are blossom end rot and late blight. Blossom end rot is not actually a disease, rather it is a nutrient deficiency common in tomatoes. It occurs when the tomato fruit does not get enough calcium to aid its growth. The fruit becomes soft at the blossom end, and is then susceptible to a secondary infection, causing loss of the fruit. The best way to fix this problem is to add calcium to the soil, using products like lime or gypsum prior to planting, or by calcium nitrate fertilizer after the problem is noticed. If you have blossom end rot, a soil test before applying fertilizer is a good idea to see how much calcium should be added to the soil.

Late blight will also begin to affect tomatoes this time of year as the growing season is at its warmest. It is caused by the Phytophthora fungus. Signs of late blight are yellowing to brown dead spots on the leaves, stems and fruit of tomatoes. Plants that are treated earlier in the progression of this disease are likely to survive it, although they may not produce as well. The best treatment for late blight is to remove plants that have excessive damage (and be sure to burn them or tie them in a trash bag and throw them away) and spray the rest of them with a fungicide listed for late blight on tomatoes, such as Daconil or Bravo (chlorothalonil is the active ingredient).

On vegetables like squash, cucumbers, gourds, zucchini, beans and peas, mildew is a common disease that slows production and makes the plant less healthy. There are two common types in North Georgia: Powdery and Downy mildew. Powdery mildew is identified by large gray-white patches on the upper side of the leaves, whereas downy mildew causes many smaller light green to yellow patches on the leaves. The treatment for both diseases is the same: Remove heavily damaged plants to the burn pile or garbage, and spray with Daconil or Bravo (chlorothalonil is the active ingredient).

Before using, any pesticide always read the label and follow its instructions fully. The label is the law.

Another problem during extended wet periods of the growing season is root rot. This disease can affect most plants, but there are different groups of fungi that cause it depending on the plant. Common symptoms include an unhealthy-looking plant, combined with gummy, black roots, and a stem that is easily broken from the ground at the base. The reason the infection begins is usually due to excess moisture in the soil, or inadequate drainage of the soil. For the vegetable garden, the most effective way to control it is to prevent it. If you planted something there last year that got it, plant that thing in a drier area of the garden next year. If you use mulch, while it has many benefits, it may be holding too much moisture in the soil. When you water plants, remember to water deeply and less frequently, and let the soil surface become dry for a day or two before watering again.

If you suspect any of these ailments to be troubling your garden, or have any other questions or concerns related to agriculture, landscape or natural resources, please feel free to contact your County Extension office or email Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters to the Editor

Deathbed Experience

Dear Editor,

Ever been to a funeral home where a non-believer has died? I have, and it is not a pleasant sight indeed. Yes, the body is in the coffin, and as many folks would say, "He looks good, doesn't he." Whoever is doing the service, whether a pastor or a lay person or even a family member, what words of comfort can they say in times like these? What encouragement could you give them as they grieve for their loved ones? I know no one wants to hear about dying, but we must somehow acknowledge that the percent of folks who die is 100%, and where they go afterwards is a major concern for God. Sadly, we all have loved ones who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, and sadly again, a lot of folks could care less. But listen closely to the words of God, your Creator, whether you believe it or so. There is more said about hell in the Bible than heaven. Why? Because Jesus Christ wanted to make sure that everyone was warned and warned over and over that hell is a real place, but that heaven is where God wants you to be.

As spelled out in Billy Graham's devotional book called "Day by Day," "Lord Chesterton once said: 'I believe in bedside repentance, but I do not want to depend on it.' But during a serious illness, a person's mind does not function normally. Getting right with God is something one should do in the bloom of health. However, as far as the Lord is concerned, 'His ear is not heavy that He cannot hear, nor His arm shortened that He cannot save' (Isaiah 59:1) God loves us equally in sickness or good health, while we are living or while we are dying. I have not known too many people who found Christ on their deathbed. When we come to Christ in our youth, a life is saved. When we come of age, a soul is salvaged and life eternal is assured, but the opportunity to live a life for Christ has been lost."

This article is not being printed to make you depressed or upset, but to let you know how much the Lord God loves you and wants the best possible eternal life with you in heaven. The Bible has all the answers to your undying questions if you will just come to Jesus and accept His free gift of salvation. The penalty for your sin and mine was paid in full on the cross. All you have to do is believe upon the Name of Jesus Christ and you will be saved and headed to heaven after you depart this old world into a perfect world full of joy and contentment for eternity.

Frank F. Combs

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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