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OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

We Must Stand Strong

As War Against Israel Expands, We Must Stand Strong
By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher



Echos from Sinai "Torah for Everyone" Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger

After nine months of exhaustive coverage of Israel's existential battle against Hamas, it's understandable to wish for an end to it all. This distant conflict has exposed uncomfortably deep divisions within our country and society, and some may be tempted to call for a ceasefire that results in a stalemate, ending the war without a clear victor.

We cannot let this mentality of compromise prevail, especially as Israel, our strongest ally, faces an even more significant battle in the coming months. The need for a decisive resolution to this conflict is crucial not only for Israel, but for the stability and security of the entire region, and by extension, the world.

Last October 7th, Hamas invaded Israel and committed atrocities, including massacres, rapes, tortures, and kidnappings of innocent civilians in a barbaric medieval attack we thought the world would never see again. Incredibly, one of the most sophisticated and technologically advanced nations in the world was surprised and overrun by a rag-tag militia of marauding terrorists, who have shown how intransigence and guerilla warfare can drag out a war for months.

But this war is only a preview of what is set to unfold in the coming months, when Israel will finally be forced to confront a much larger, stronger, and better equipped enemy on their northern border with Lebanon: Hezbollah. Since October 7th, 2023, there have been multiple daily attacks by Hezbollah against Israel, including the firing of more than 5,000 rockets at Israel's north. This has forced up to 90,000 Israelis to be evacuated from their homes, living in temporary lodging for the last nine months. The frequency and intensity of attacks by Hezbollah has been escalating in recent weeks. Israel is obligated to its citizens to change the security situation in the north to allow the residents to return safely and with a sense of security.

Like Hamas, Hezbollah is a terror organization funded by Iran that wishes to wipe Israel off the map, and like Hamas they have managed to hijack the government of the region in which they operate to effectively run the military and state policy. But unlike Hamas, Hezbollah is a far more sophisticated threat that must be confronted immediately without delay, because Hezbollah's reach and capabilities pose a far greater threat to Israel and to her allies, including the United States.

On top of provoking Israel for years with constant rockets, kidnappings and terror attacks, Hezbollah has been a thorn in the side of the free world for decades. In 1983, Hezbollah was responsible for the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 240 American servicemen. This marked one of the deadliest attacks on American forces in the region, and as recently as 2020, Hezbollah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah stated that America's rightful place is that of "the primary enemy, the Greatest Satan." In 1994, Hezbollah carried out a devastating attack on the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, killing 85 people and injuring hundreds. Hezbollah has also been linked to bombings in Madrid and London, showcasing their global reach and relentless pursuit of terror.

In Lebanon which serves as Hezbollah's homebase, Christians face an existential crisis, as their country increasingly has come under the thumb of Hezbollah terrorists who answer to Iran, prompting a mass exodus of Christians. In addition to multiple terror attacks perpetrated by Hezbollah against Lebanese Christians, they also face a rapidly declining proportion in relation to Muslims in the country. Over recent years, a Christian majority of 53% of the overall population of Lebanon has dwindled to just 39%.

Hezbollah also has a history of subjugating, murdering, and brutally treating Palestinians in Lebanese refugee camps, undermining their claimed solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Hezbollah's involvement in international drug trafficking, particularly heroin, funds its operations and spreads its malevolent influence.

Unlike Hamas, which claims to be primarily concerned with Palestinian statehood, Hezbollah is a Shia Muslim organization ideologically aligned with Iran. This alignment makes Hezbollah not only a regional threat but a significant player in Iran's broader geopolitical strategies. Iran uses Hezbollah as a proxy to exert its influence across the Middle East, destabilizing countries and perpetuating conflicts that serve its interests. Hezbollah's conflict with Israel and the West is not rooted in territorial disputes but in a broader ideological and religious enmity. This is not a fight over borders or sovereignty; it is a fight against a radical ideology that seeks to undermine the very existence of Israel and the Western values it proudly holds.

Israel's fight against Hamas and Hezbollah is not just a local or regional issue; it is a battle with global implications. The rise of radical Islamist groups threatens the stability of the Middle East and, by extension, global security. Israel's resilience in the face of these threats serve as a bulwark against the spread of radicalism. The country's efforts to defend itself are not merely acts of self-preservation but a crucial component of the broader fight against terrorism and extremism. A weakened Israel would embolden these groups and their backers, leading to more instability and violence as they seek to spread the hateful ideology around the world.

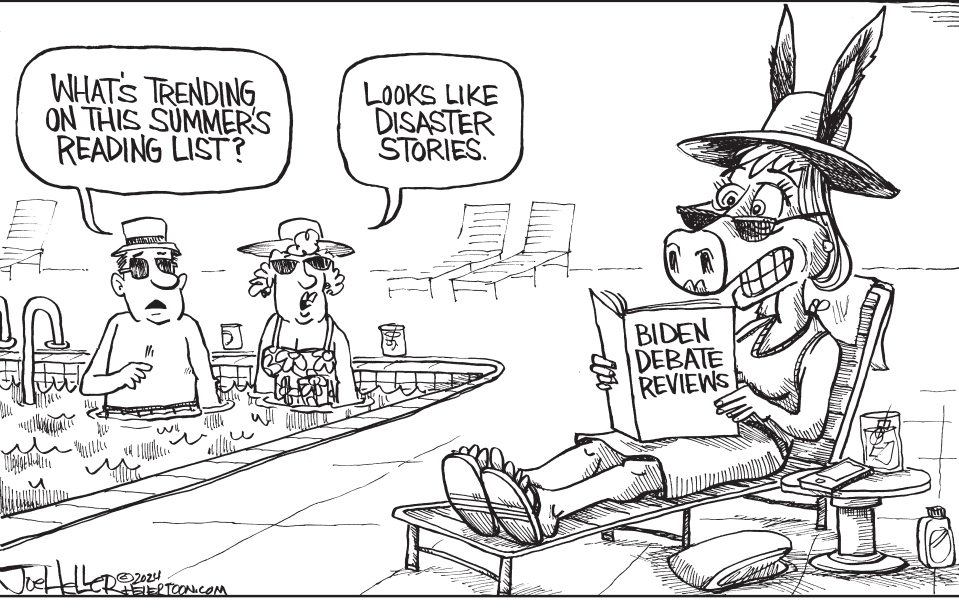
The international community must recognize this and support Israel unequivocally.

The U.S. has a moral imperative to stand by Israel, not just because of our shared democratic values but because of the strategic importance of a stable and secure Middle East. Israel's success in its struggle against Hamas and Hezbollah is directly linked to the security interests of the United States. A strong and secure Israel is a critical counterbalance to Iranian influence and the spread of radicalism in the region.

Calls for a ceasefire and a return to the status quo would only serve to embolden those who seek to destroy Israel. We stand firm in our support for Israel; let them cleanse the world of these evil actors and work towards a resolution that ensures its security and the enduring stability of the region.

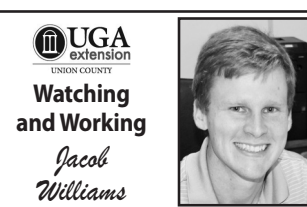
We would love to hear from you. Please share your comments and questions with us at y@tasteoftorah.org.

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



Seed Saving

Seed saving is an old practice that has become less common in recent years. Before World War II seed catalogues that offered varieties of seeds from all over were not common, so if you planted a garden you would have to save your own seed each year to be able to plant again next year. Very recently, seed saving has risen in popularity again as a way to become more self-sufficient or to preserve old varieties of plants that otherwise would go extinct. It's also a great way to save some money on buying plants for next year. Let's talk some of the basics of seed saving today.



Watching and Working Jacob Williams

To save quality seed is a bit more complicated than simply picking seeds from the garden.

Plants have a couple of different mechanisms of pollination that they might use. Some are cross pollinated which means the pollen has to move from the anther of one plant to the stigma of a different plant. Apples are an example. Self-pollinated means that the pollen travels from the anther of a plant to the stigma on the same plant. Tomatoes are an example. Plants that can cross pollinate are more difficult to save seed. This is because they could have cross pollinated with a different variety that was also planted nearby. The resulting seed from this cross would not have the same characteristics as its parents. Self-pollinated plants like tomatoes and beans are a good place to start for beginner seed savers. As you master easy plants you can move onto more difficult plants like cucumber, squash, or carrots.

You want to harvest seed when the fruit has reached physiological maturity. To reach physiological maturity plants have to be allowed to grow beyond the stage where you would normally harvest them. Reaching physiological maturity means that the seeds will have better germination and vigor. Wet-seeded crops have seeds that are embedded in the fruit. Think tomato or squash. Wet-seeds need to be scooped out, washed, and dried. Some wet-seeds need to go through a fermentation process. Place the seeds into a jar and add an equal amount of water. Place the jar out of sunlight for 4 to 5 days, stirring daily. Viable seeds will sink to the bottom. Bad seeds will float on the top. Let the good seeds dry out for a week before storing. Dry-seeded crops have seeds in husks or pods on the plant. Think corn, beans, or broccoli. Dry-seeds can be separated from the plant and brought indoors to dry before storing.

Storage of seeds is very important to maintain good germination rates and seed longevity. Seeds should be stored in a cool, dark place. Storing seeds in a refrigerator can add several years to how long a seed lasts. Seeds that have been dried down to 5-7% moisture and are frozen will give the best viability. Minimize temperature and moisture fluctuations as much as possible. Pests like rodents and insects will also feed on seeds if they are able. The oldest seed to germinate is a date palm from Israel that was about 2,000 years old! You should not expect your saved seed to last anywhere near that long. Plant your saved seed the following season for best germination.

If you have questions about saving seed contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. There is also a seed saving starter guide on the UGA Extension website that has a lot of great information.

Supreme Victories

During the final days of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2023-2024 term, our nation received several key rulings that represent huge wins for the U.S. Constitution, the American people, and the future of our country. Given the significance of three decisions, I wanted to share my thoughts with you on these major judicial victories.



United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde

Defeating Administrative State: On Friday, the Supreme Court overturned a decades-old legal doctrine, known as Chevron, which required courts to defer to the legal interpretations of unelected bureaucrats. As you may know, the ruling was in favor of a group of fishermen who challenged the administrative state's overreach. In short, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a rule requiring the fishermen to pay \$700 a day for an "at-sea monitor." Yet this burdensome requirement wasn't authorized by Congress. In other words, the Executive Branch abused the Chevron doctrine to mandate costly regulations.

The Supreme Court's decision to quash Chevron is a major win for the U.S. Constitution and a massive blow to the administrative state. After all, Congress makes laws - not unelected bureaucrats. This marks a tremendous step toward upholding the separation of powers by ensuring the Executive Branch does not exceed its constitutional authorities.

Curbing Weaponized Justice System: In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court also ruled in favor of Joseph Fischer - one of more than 300 people charged by the Department of Justice with "obstruction of an official proceeding" for participating in events at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th, 2021. The Court's majority correctly decided the government overstepped in charging Fischer and others with a federal "obstruction" crime. Folks, this proves what we've known all along: President Biden's DOJ weaponized the law to politically persecute President Trump and his supporters.

This incredible ruling represents an exciting victory for 16 prisoners and a well-deserved defeat to the corrupt DOJ. While we cannot restore the time unfairly taken from these Americans, I pray that we can deliver them the justice they deserve.

Countering Left's Lawfare: Last week, the Supreme Court dropped a blockbuster decision that rightfully rebukes the Left's unprecedented lawfare against President Trump. In a 6-3 ruling, the Court ruled that the President of the United States is immune from criminal prosecution for official acts committed while in office, but not for unofficial acts. In other words, the President cannot be prosecuted for exercising his constitutional powers. As Chief Justice John Roberts explained, "The President is not above the law. But Congress may not criminalize the President's conduct in carrying out the responsibilities of the Executive Branch under the Constitution. And the system of separated powers designed by the Framers has always demanded an energetic, independent Executive." Justice Thomas went on to say, "In this case, there has been much discussion about ensuring that a President 'is not above the law.' But, as the Court explains, the President's immunity from prosecution for his official acts is the law."

This ruling stems from Special Counsel Jack Smith's sham 16 case against President Trump. While a lower court must now determine whether Trump's actions on January 6th were official duties, the Supreme Court's decision will have profound impacts on presidential power for years to come. Simply put, no president should fear imprisonment for utilizing their constitutional authorities. Thankfully, this monumental decision delivers a win to President Trump, reins in the DOJ's lawfare, and protects the separation of powers.

I applaud the Supreme Court for issuing these victorious opinions, and I thank President Donald Trump for making these major judicial accomplishments possible. Trump's historic impact on the Supreme Court cannot be overstated, as these pivotal decisions will undoubtedly impact our country for generations to come.

Towns County Community Calendar

Table with 3 columns: Day, Event, Time. Includes items like School Board, Storytime for Children, City Council, Board of Elections, Planning Commission, etc.

Letters To The Editor

Emergency Vet Care

Dear Editor, After a recent personal crisis, I found out that our area is without emergency veterinary care. The Mountain Emergency Animal Center in Blue Ridge has been unable to keep a vet on staff and therefore has had to close its doors. I have needed and used this center many times in the past, since my vet doesn't have late or weekend hours.

We were told that our "options" for emergency care were either in Knoxville, Tennessee, or Cumming. Can you imagine your pet surviving a "true emergency" after driving all the way to either of those destinations? Imagine if your pet is elderly or has any health problems?

I believe this is a real problem for pet owners in our area, and I would love for someone to help me come up with a solution to this problem. Paula Ferrell

Presidential Immunity

Dear Editor, I am amazed at the angst on the Left over the immunity ruling from SCOTUS. They don't seem to recognize that this means President Biden cannot be prosecuted for the consequences of his policies regarding the flawed withdrawal from Afghanistan, which resulted in the death of 13 American servicemen, not to mention many Afghans, not to mention leaving millions of dollars' worth of military equipment behind for those who would do us ill.

Nor for his failure to enforce American law regarding immigration, which resulted in millions of unvetted people being turned loose in the U.S., too many of them bringing cultures of murder, rape, drugs, and overloading our education, medical, and housing facilities.

Nor for his thumbing his nose at the Supreme Court by continuing to exercise a "loan-forgiveness" program, the authority for which the Constitution gives to the Legislature, not the Executive.

The Democrats should be rejoicing over this SCOTUS decision! Carol McKechnie

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Towns County Herald

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Publication No: 635540 Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m. Towns County (1 Year) \$30. Out of County (1 Year) \$40. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. Postmaster: Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 3 "The Mall", Hiawassee Phone: (706) 896-4454 Fax: (706) 896-1745 Email: tcherald@windstream.net Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546