

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Tripoli to Gaza

From the Shores of Tripoli to Gaza
By Yonatan
Hambourger and
Tzali Reicher



Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi
Yonatan
Hambourger

The contemptible practice of holding innocent people captive is nothing new. We see an ancient example in the book of Genesis where a group of neighboring kings take Abraham's nephew named Lot hostage. Rather than negotiate, Abraham defeated the captors in short order, and rescued his nephew.

More recently, in 1803, Pirates along the Barbary Coast imprisoned the crew members of the USS Philadelphia. These pirates based in the city of Tripoli in Libya didn't negotiate in good faith, causing the U.S. to attack and free its citizens. To this day, the U.S. Marine Corp Hymn includes the words, "from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli."

While not a new tactic, Islamic terrorists, and their sponsors, have turned the practice into a despicable "art form." They have managed to secure enormous benefits from Israel through hostage-taking, including the release of thousands of terrorist murderers serving life-sentences in exchange for body-parts of dead Jews because they know that the Jewish people put great value even on their people's corpses. Not to be outdone, the Islamic State of Iran recently negotiated a Six Billion Dollar payout by the Biden administration for the release of five American prisoners in Iran.

In Jewish law, the commandment of pidyon shvuyim – the redemption of unjustly held captives – holds a position of utmost importance, often taking precedence over other commandments. Jewish communities are required to free those who have been kidnapped or wrongfully imprisoned, whether through raising funds for their release or negotiating prisoner swaps. This commandment is held in such high esteem because Judaism places the sanctity and holiness of life above all other considerations.

This subject has taken on even greater significance in the past 10 months, following the horrific events of October 7, 2023. On that tragic day, Hamas unleashed a brutal assault on Israel, and saw bands of terrorists rape and massacre over 1,200 people, and then take over 200 innocent civilians captive, including Americans, 120 of whom are still being held hostage in Gaza, both dead and alive.

Hamas's actions were driven by the calculation that Israel would agree to a cease-fire and be compelled to empty its prisons of convicted Palestinian terrorists in exchange for the lives of its citizens. This strategy echoed the 2011 exchange between Israel and Hamas, where over 1,000 Palestinian prisoners – many convicted of serious and violent crimes – were released in return for one 19-year-old Israeli conscript named Gilad Shalit, kidnapped and held hostage in Gaza for five years.

One of the most notorious prisoners released in that exchange was Hamas's leader Yahya Sinwar, who orchestrated the October 7 massacre. While he was in Israeli custody, Sinwar received life-saving brain surgery, and a full set of dental implants, compliments of the State of Israel. Sinwar estimated that by raising the stakes – this time with over 200 hostages – he could pressure the Israeli government, through the emotional appeals of the victims' families, to yield to Hamas's demands once again. He aimed to secure the release of more terrorists, thereby enabling Hamas to continue its violent campaign against Israel and pursue its goal of the nation's destruction.

However, other principles in Judaism must also be considered, most notably pikuach nefesh – the imperative to preserve life. Pikuach nefesh refers to taking proactive measures to protect life when danger is imminent. While Jewish Law prioritizes the preservation of life, it also demands that actions taken in the name of protecting life do not result in greater harm in the future.

The Jewish book of Talmud discusses the concept of not paying excessive ransom for captives, to avoid encouraging future kidnappings and partly to protect the broader community from increased danger. This principle is directly relevant to the Sinwar deal of 2011, where the disproportionate exchange encouraged more hostage-taking, as terrorist organizations saw that such tactics could yield significant concessions. Many of those freed in 2011 returned to terrorism, including Sinwar himself.

Another critical aspect of the present ceasefire negotiation is the strategic importance of the Philadelphi Corridor, a narrow strip of land along the Egypt-Gaza border. It serves as a conduit for weapons smuggling into Gaza, fueling the ongoing conflict with Hamas. Retaining control of this corridor is essential not just for Israel's security but also for the broader goal of preventing violence and preserving life in the region. In this context, the failure to maintain control of the Philadelphi Corridor can be seen as a violation of the principle of pikuach nefesh (preserving life), as it directly endangers lives by enabling the flow of weapons to terrorist groups.

While the desire to save lives is noble and essential, it must be tempered by a realistic assessment of the potential for future harm. Only by adhering to the full scope of pikuach nefesh (taking proactive measures to protect life when danger is imminent) – both in its imperative to save life and its caution against causing future harm – can the U.S. and Israel hope to navigate the difficult moral landscape of international diplomacy in a way that truly honors the sanctity of life and realizes the hope for a safe and secure peaceful future for us all.

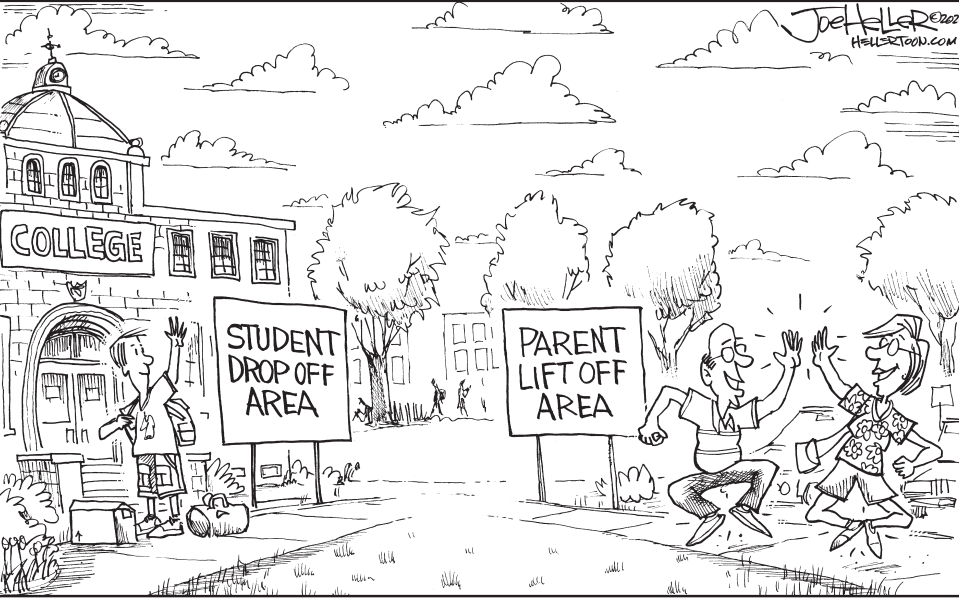
Yonatan Hambourger is a Rabbi and writer serving spiritual seekers of all persuasions on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a Rabbi and writer serving communities throughout the regional South. You can reach them at tasteoforah.org.

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

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546
Our email address: 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.



White After Labor Day

It's OK To Wear White After Labor Day

"You look like a ghost," remarked one of the kids in our hiking group. It was late August and we were on the Appalachian Trail between Deep Gap and Baseband Indian. Except for the base layer, all of the clothing in my pack was white or khaki. It was yellow jacket season again. Most of the hikers you see in the woods in late summer wear the popular colors sold by Patagonia, North Face, Columbia, and the other well-known brands. If you see someone wearing white, the other bet you've just met a beekeeper on the trail.

Honeybees and members of the wasp family generally perceive dark colors as more threatening. Bears are natural enemies of the wasp family because they destroy nests to eat the wasps and their larvae. You will never see a bear wearing white in the woods, especially after Labor Day.

Every hike we led was always preceded by "the talk," when we laid out the rules of engagement for the particular environment we would be traversing. In August and September, that talk always included snakes, bears, feral hogs, rabid animals, and yellow jackets. "If you see yellow jackets coming out of a hole, stay calm; don't make any sudden movements and slowly move away. If you get stung, your body is going to want to panic, but you can hike out with a sting, not so much with a sprained ankle."

Invariably, at least once during yellow jacket season, someone would disturb a nest, and I would find myself standing calmly in my ghost outfit in the midst of screaming and flailing hikers, trying to instill some calm in the group, med kit at the ready. The camouflage and calm were so effective I was never stung, and thankfully in ten years of leading expeditions, I only needed to use an EpiPen on a hiker once.

Through painful experience, we learned that the sting kits available in drugstores are not very effective. However, if you're fortunate enough to be stung near some jewelweed or plantain, a poultice made from these plants can quickly alleviate pain and swelling. Tobacco is even more effective, and a stale can of Prince Albert rone in my pack for years. For me, applying a slice of raw onion directly to the sting is most effective, but when backpacking, where every ounce grows heavier with every mile, carrying a bag of onions is unlikely. A few Benadryl tablets, however, can be worth their weight in gold.

It's funny how yellow jacket nests just seem to appear out of nowhere in late August when the colonies reach their peak population. Unfortunately, that's also the time when their food supplies start to diminish, and the scouts become interested in your sandwich and your open can of soda.

Mr. Bear and Mr. Skunk have graciously removed most of the yellow jacket nests from around our house, but there is one rather large colony at the perimeter of our trafficked area. It's just off the beaten path, so we'll probably leave them to their garbage collecting duties. Every element of nature is connected in an intricate network and we would be wise to tread lightly in territory we do not fully understand. Alas, wisdom is not endemic to our species.

Chances are there are more nests waiting to surprise us somewhere along the paths we take around the farm, and when I'm out piling brush or mowing, I will most certainly be wearing white, even after Labor Day.

Guest Columns

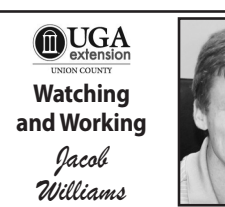
From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper.

If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

| Towns County 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 |

Fall Armyworms

Fall armyworms can be a menace to lawns, pastures, hayfields, and grass crops such as corn and sorghum. They arrive in the late summer or early fall. As far north as we are we don't get them every year, but this year they are here. So, let's look at what they are, how to spot them quickly, and what you can do for management of them.



UGA Extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

Fall armyworms have four life stages. They overwinter in Florida, as they can only survive a mild winter. Each successive generation moves northward, causing a lot of damage as they advance. The females will lay egg masses of up to 700 eggs at a time. After coming out of their eggs the larvae, the caterpillar stage, will be about one quarter to three quarters of an inch long. The larvae go through six stages of development.

Each stage eats more than the one before it. However, the final stage of larval development eats more than all the other stages combined. Armyworms take two to three weeks to reach the pupal stage, where they go into cocoons. After about a week in the cocoon the armyworm moth will emerge. These moths will travel further northward and lay eggs repeating the cycle.

Larval stage is when they will do damage to lawns, pastures, and grass crops. At this stage they can get up to 1.5 inches long. Their coloring can vary from light green to nearly black with dark stripes that stretch horizontally down the length of their body. Their most distinct characteristic and the best way to identify them is by the inverted Y shape on the head. The flocks of the Y is at the back of the head.

Signs to look for are flocks of birds in the morning and evening. That is when armyworms will do most of their feeding. During the heat of the day they will retreat to the thatch below. The armyworms will preferentially feed on tender green vegetation. Damage from armyworms can also look like thin brown patches. One method of checking for armyworms is to mix two tablespoons of lemon-scented dish soap with a gallon of water, and then pour that into a one square foot area. That will irritate the worms and make them crawl up so that they're more visible. The soapy water method works on all caterpillars, not just armyworms.

If you have a well-established lawn armyworms may feed on the grass but most likely will not kill the grass, however the damage is unsightly. The only effective way to control armyworms is through insecticides, and even then, control will be very difficult on full-grown caterpillars. Therefore, scouting early is essential. Sevin is an effective product that has been around for a while. Products containing Spinosad or Bacillus thuringiensis have organic options and good control of armyworms. Applying as late in the evening as possible is best because that's when armyworms will be the most active and pollinators the least active.

In pasture and hayfields use insecticides when you have over three armyworms per square foot. Products Lambda-cyhalothrin and zeta-cypermethrin are both effective but have a short residual. Dimilin or Intrepid will provide a longer residual but work best on smaller armyworms. However, they will cease to provide control after a rain. If armyworms are 1-1.5 inches then the window has passed for chemical control. Whenever using pesticides always read and follow the label before the application.

If you have questions about fall armyworms contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters To The Editor

Towns County Dog Park

Dear Editor,

I am writing to advocate for a dog park to be built in Towns County. My understanding is that there is currently a movement underway by the Towns County Humane Society to raise funds for this project. It's a great idea! We have a significant amount of dog lovers – and their fur babies – who live locally and who would benefit from such a community project.

Besides the socialization benefits for our four legged friends, dog parks also help to create a sense of community by bringing citizens together from all walks of life, who might otherwise not interact – but share a love of dogs.

Although we have an excellent dog park in Blairsville, the Farmers Barket Dog Park, it's still a distance from Hiawassee and Young Harris. Many of our residents are senior citizens, myself included – as well as dog lovers and owners, who would benefit from the convenience of having a local dog park. My understanding is that the Farmers Barket project came into fruition through a joint Eagle Scout, Union County, and community organization collaboration. Perhaps a similar arrangement can be made here as well.

A dog park in Towns County would be an improvement in terms of the overall quality of life for our four-legged friends, but also for their two-legged companions.

Sincerely,
Jerry Bilinski

Not All the Same

Dear Editor,

Logically, how can VP Harris favor those who say males should not be allowed to participate in females' decisions about their bodies and then turn around and disfavor those who say boys should not be allowed to participate in girls' sports? Look, we are all created equal, but we are not all the same.

Claudos G Spears

Our Nation in Decline

Dear Editor,

Politics and party affiliations aside, America is in crisis. Let's forget who's responsible, stop finger-pointing and focus on ways to resolve our country's problems while there's still something left to save.

Why are we \$35 trillion in debt? Why do we owe Japan \$1.13 trillion, China \$749 billion, the United Kingdom \$690 billion, and Canada \$328 billion? Where is fiscal responsibility within our elected officials? We certainly don't look like the leader of the free world when we owe everybody and their brother billions of dollars.

Individuals can't get away with spending what they don't have or can't repay indefinitely. Their credit will be ruined and their spending brought to a halt. How does a country get away with it? It seems like our elected representatives try and outspend each other, often getting bragging rights for what they got earmarked for their particular state. They want to get their share. Share of what? Money being appropriated, for whatever reason, is simply tacked on to the deficit which continues to spiral out of control.

Think about retirees who worked hard and were responsible, saving for their golden years. It's comforting for them to go to bed each night, knowing their savings are insured by the FDIC. We have to address this problem before it's too late. I have no idea how many generations it will take to pay off this enormous deficit. God bless America and God help America!

Gene Vickers

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Phone: (706) 896-4454 Fax: (706) 896-1745 Email: tcherald@windstream.net
Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546

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