

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Our Values Under Siege

As the revelations out of Israel regarding the atrocious butchering of more than 1,300 innocent Jews grow increasingly disturbing, one may rightly ask why this is happening to a nation the Bible calls a "light unto the nations?" Over the years, people have offered many complicated answers to this problem, but the truth is simple. Some "human beings" want to snuff out the light so that they can be free to perpetrate evil in the darkness.

Hitler summed up pretty well the fundamental motivation behind antisemitism. He said, "Conscience is a Jewish invention" and that he was "freeing man from the restraints of an intelligence that has taken charge. . . ." The Islamic terrorists who murdered whole families last week, who kidnapped, mutilated, and tortured Israelis, were rebelling against these same moral restraints.

Even more so, they were rebelling against the Word of G-d. It's no coincidence that last week Jews across the world were reading the opening lines of Genesis as part of a scheduled week-by-week reading of the Bible: "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth."

Rashi, the greatest commentator on the Torah asks, why does the Bible begin this way? He was puzzled because he knew G-d intended Scripture to offer moral guidelines, not a history lesson. Why then start with the story of Creation? His answer was that "if the nations of the world should say to Israel, 'You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations,' they will reply, 'The entire earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it . . . and gave it to whomever He deemed proper.'"

In other words, G-d begins the Bible the way He does because He wanted to make clear from the start that He created the world, and it was His to distribute as He liked, and He gave what became the Holy Land to the Jews, the people He chose to be a light unto the nations.

In the 20th century, first the British in the 1917 Balfour Declaration and then the United Nations in 1947 authorized a Jewish nation in Israel, but it was not in 1948 that Israel was truly founded. It was closer to 1,948 years after the Creation, when Abraham was born, that the Jews got their real charter.

When Abraham arrived in the land of Canaan, . . . the Lord appeared to him and said, "I will assign this land to your offspring." Ultimately, this is the Jew's true claim to the Land of Israel, one that is accepted by anyone who accepts the Bible, including billions of Christians, Muslims, and adherents of other religions.

But, again, it's not about territory. Throughout history people from the ancient Egyptians to the Amalekites, to the Romans, to the Crusaders, to Nazi Germany have attempted to destroy the Jewish people wherever they lived. Even now, Hamas, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Mullahs in Iran are calling for attacks on Jews not just in Israel but throughout the world. But every time, the Jewish people have endured and emerged victorious.

What has kept the Jews going? The answer is found in the Haggadah, the Passover prayerbook that contains the lines, "It is this (faith in G-d) that has stood by our ancestors and us. More than one enemy has risen up against us to destroy us. Rather, in every generation they rise against us to annihilate us. The Holy One, blessed be He, however, saves us from their hand."

Hamas doesn't just want to rid the Middle East of Jews, it doesn't just want to rid the world of the light of Judaism, but of the light of G-d, Himself. And if you read the accounts of the atrocities they committed, you will see what the result of a world without that light would be.

And don't be fooled. It's not just the Jews such people want to eradicate. They want to destroy anyone who stands in the way of their animalistic desires. For them, "in the beginning" means start with the Jews, but it doesn't end there. Like Hitler's war is not a war against the Jews per se but against Jewish and Christian values, the values upon which Western Culture was built. You can see that in their butchery of the 250 peace-loving young people attending a music festival celebrating idealistic, humanist values, in the Negev desert near Gaza.

How, then, can we, as G-d fearing and loving individuals respond? How can we combat the hate directed against the moral foundation of Western Culture?

Judaism maintains that the purpose of creation is to create a dwelling place for G-d in this physical world. The land of Israel, the place that G-d chose as the Holy Land, is the focal point of that dwelling place. It is the place from which light will grow—or darkness spread. So, we must support the defense of Israel.

But we should also cultivate spiritual light wherever we are by recommitting to G-d's blueprint, the Bible, by practicing the moral system it lays out for us. Live your life to the fullest, not by indulging the animal within, but by liberating your holiness within. Be kind. Be thoughtful. Create a dwelling place for G-d in your heart and in your home and share the light with others.

This article was co-authored by Thomas P. Balazs. I would love to hear your thoughts on this week's column. Please email me at yonatan@chabadruralgeorgia.com.

*Wishing you G-d's abundant blessings,
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger*

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.

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.

Echos from Sinai

"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi
Yonatan
Hambourger



Streambank Stabilization

We are very fortunate to live in a part of the country that has plenty of water. Water is important for a number of reasons. Obviously, we need water for drinking. Wildlife and livestock need water too. Plants need water to live. We also use water for a number of different purposes. Fishing, boating, and electricity generation are all uses of water. Because water is so important I think everyone generally recognizes the importance of taking care of water. Today I want to write on how individuals can protect water that flows through their property.

The biggest thing that property owners can do is to establish a buffer. On trout streams in north Georgia there are restrictions on building or clearing land within 50 feet. The purpose of this is to reduce the sediment that gets into the water. The bigger you can make your buffer the better it will do at trapping and filtering materials that would otherwise get into the water. Sediment getting into the water is very detrimental to the quality of the water. Sediment can carry all kinds of things from fertilizers to pesticides to litter. Anything that enters the water ends up downstream. Sediment will make the water cloudier and affect the availability of oxygen in the water. Cloudy streams with no rocks in the bottom do a very poor job of supporting the insects and bugs that live in the water. Fish rely on those critters as a food source.

So how do you create a buffer? At its best a buffer consists of trees and brush alongside the river. It's best if those plants are native plants and not invasive. Native plants do a much better job fitting into the ecosystem that surrounds and supports the stream. Some plants that make a for a good buffer are red maple, pawpaw, elderberry, river birch, and nine bark. You want to plant things that are well adapted to wet soils. Fall is a great time to plant these trees and shrubs. Planting in the fall and winter allows those plants to set their roots and get established before the summer. In the summer, the plant's root system will be taxed to draw up the water needed by the plant, so any lead time we can give plants to prepare for that will benefit them. Even in the mountains plant roots will still grow some during the winter, enabling them to become established.

There are some plants that can be live staked into stream banks. Nine bark and elderberry are some examples. To live stake, you just take cuttings in the fall that are 6-12 inches long and put them in wet banks. These plants have the ability to root and grow from a simple cutting. After they have grown for a couple of years you can take cuttings from them to spread around.

Grass does not work well as a buffer. It is better than nothing, but does not slow water to help with water infiltration near as well as trees and shrubs. Most grass roots are not deep enough to hold a bank in place. It also does not help nearly as much to support the ecology of the stream. In the same regard rocks or rip rap don't work as well because they don't slow water down or assist with infiltration.

If you have questions about protecting streams you can contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. Mountain True works in Towns and Union and are also a great resource to help protect streams.

Letters To The Editor

20 Months Later

Dear Editor,

20 months! That's how long it's been since Putin began his full-scale barbarous assault on Ukraine. The U.N. Commission of Human Rights has verified that as of September 2023 over 9,600 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and over 17,600 injured, many of them children, in unprovoked targeted Russian attacks in clear violation of international humanitarian law. Many more have lost their homes and are refugees. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers on both sides, all of whom have grieving families, have been killed or maimed in this needless war.

At the beginning of the invasion, Putin thought the war would be over in a matter of days. He underestimated the determination of the Ukrainian people who are willing to fight to regain their peaceful way of life under a democratically elected government. He also underestimated the strong bipartisan support of the United States and European allies in helping Ukraine defend itself from Russian aggression.

While the United States and its allies focus on defensive objectives, the emerging partnership of Russia, China, and North Korea seeks autocratic dominance of other countries. The threat to democracy from this emerging Russian/Chinese/North Korean alliance should be taken very seriously.

After 20 months of unrelenting fighting Putin is running low on ammunition and other military supplies and is courting ties with other countries with records of human rights violations, such as North Korea and China. This is a dangerous turn!

In September 2023, the North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un spent six days with Putin in secret talks and visiting Russian military sites and research labs. On live TV at one of Russia's largest Spaceports, Kim promised "full and unconditional support for all measures taken by the Russian government." Analysts fear arms transfer deals between the two countries in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions. Citing the "intensification of U.S. military threats," Kim is working to enlarge his arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Xi Jinping of China met with Putin at the Kremlin in March 2023, and Putin recently announced that he will meet with Xi in China in October. In April Putin met with the Chinese Defense Minister in Moscow where they discussed military cooperation and a "no limits" relationship. Economic and political ties between the two countries have strengthened during the past 20 months. Russia has become cash-strapped while China, the world's second largest economy, is providing Russians with goods such as helmets, drones, radios, and other items with potential military use. U.S. security analysts are deeply concerned about this alignment of China with Russia, two countries that have repeatedly committed crimes against humanity.

President Biden has firmly stated that the United States will stand with Ukraine and do whatever it takes to support the Ukrainian fight to maintain their independence. Let us continue working together in a bipartisan manner with our allies to stand up to Putin, not cozy up to him and his fellow brutal dictators!

Martha Miller

Bureau of Indian Affairs

This week I have been on a field trip with Firewise USA Liaison's from Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, me, and Aubrey from Georgia and the NFPA national Firewise USA program manager and the Firewise IT manager. The national Firewise folks wanted to come to the south to see all of the good work we are doing in our communities to make them safer from wildfire. The national folks are from Washington state and Denver, Colorado and are impressed with the south and our work. (we are the best!). They were impressed with Kudzu!

We visited the sites of the fires in Gatlinburg back in 2016 and talked to folks who lived through it and saw where 14 of their neighbors died in the fires. It is hard to imagine fire on that scale. We saw remnants of the fires and the rebuilding work.

We visited with the Fire management officer with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Cherokee North Carolina and saw some of the Firewise and prescribed burning they are doing on the reservation. We think our government throws hurdles at our work, but the Cherokee fire managers have to contend with all of the Elders of the community who all have a different opinion (not scientific either) of what should be done in the forest but the real powers in the community are the Elder women! Nobody disputes what they say. If the fire managers want to burn, they have to get all of the Elder's blessings, which isn't always easy.

About 200 years ago the Cherokee Indians were one tribe, or "Indian Nation" that lived in the southeast part of what is now the United States. During the 1830's and 1840's, the period covered by the Indian Removal Act, many Cherokees were moved west to a territory that is now the State of Oklahoma. A number remained in the southeast and gathered in North Carolina where they purchased land and continued to live. Others went into the Appalachian Mountains to escape being moved west and many of their descendants may still live there now.

The Cherokee reservation is managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs whose mission is to enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives. Since its inception in 1824, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has been both a witness to and a principal player in the relationship between the Federal Government and Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages.

The BIA has changed dramatically over the past 185 years, evolving as Federal policies designed to subjugate and assimilate American Indians and Alaska Natives have changed to policies that promote Indian self-determination. For almost 200 years, dating back to the role it played in negotiating treaty agreements between the United States and tribes in the late 18th and 19th centuries, the BIA has embodied the trust and government-to-government relationships between the U.S. and the Federally recognized tribes.

Over the years, the BIA has been involved in the implementation of Federal laws that have directly affected all Americans. The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 granted American Indians and Alaska Natives U.S. citizenship and the right to vote, and the New Deal and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 established modern tribal governments. Bureau of Indian Affairs (IA) currently provides services (directly or through contracts, grants, or compacts) to approximately 1.9 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. There are 574 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Native Villages in the United States.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues, communicates policy to and oversees the programs of the BIA and the BIE, provides leadership in consultations with tribes, and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter-departmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on Indian matters.

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is the oldest agency of the United States Department of the Interior. Established in 1824, it is responsible for the administration and management of 55 million surface acres and 57 million acres of subsurface minerals estates held in trust by the United States for American Indian, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives. Their missions is to: "... enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives."

Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) provides education services to approximately 42,000 Indian students. Their mission is to: "... provide quality education opportunities from early childhood through life in accordance with the tribes' needs to cultural and economic wellbeing in keeping with the wide diversity of Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages as distinct cultural and governmental entities. The Bureau considers the whole person (spiritual, mental, physical, and cultural aspects)."

For more information on Bureau of Indian affairs or the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians check out www.bia.gov or www.Chestchattcd.org.

Towns County Community Calendar

First Monday of each month:	
School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
Every Tuesday:	
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 Tuesday of each month:	
Conventions & Visitors Board... Civic Center	8:30 am
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

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

Towns County Herald

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