

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

G-d on Trial

When he was 15 years old and a prisoner in Auschwitz, Eli Wiesel watched as three Jewish scholars put G-d on trial for cruelty and betrayal of the Jewish people. They could find no excuse for G-d, no extenuating circumstances, so they found Him guilty. After the verdict, Wiesel said there was silence, and then they all sat down to evening prayers. The boy himself would survive the Holocaust and go on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature and become known as the conscience of the post-Holocaust world.

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



In this story lies the key to navigating the pain of seeming injustices and unfairness in our own lives, in the lives of those we care for, and in the world at large – those times that beg the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Moses asks this question to G-d, straight up in the book of Exodus (5:22-23), "Why have You done evil to this people? Why have You sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done worse to this nation; and You have not saved Your people!" G-d proceeds to assure Moses that it will all turn out well for the Children of Israel, but He doesn't answer the "why" question.

Whereas some Biblical commentators suggest that questioning G-d was a failing on Moses' part, others, including the Lubavitcher Rebbe, say Moses' questioning was an act of faith of the highest order. The Rebbe said that crying out, "Why have You done evil?" can only come from the mouth of a true believer. A non-believer can only shrug his shoulders at the universe.

The lesson for us is that there are times we should confront G-d and ask why there is evil and suffering in the world. But we must understand that the question is more valuable than the answer. For if G-d were to make you understand why innocent people suffer, you might come to terms with it and then be unfazed by other people's pain. After all, it would now make sense.

So, the real answer is to keep asking the question – why bad things happen to good people – but with no expectation of an explanation. Instead redirect your passion to the plight of afflicted people.

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement of Judaism, said there are times when trusting in G-d is forbidden. He explained that while trust is a great virtue in one's own life, relying on it in matters concerning other people's lives is a sin. If you hear about someone in need and just say "G-d will provide," you're neglecting your responsibility towards your fellow human beings.

But how should we cope if, G-d forbid, the suffering is up close and personal? The Bible dedicates 41 chapters to the archetypal righteous man of suffering, Job, presenting various intriguing explanations only to debunk them all. The ultimate conclusion is that finite humans cannot comprehend the ways of God.

Perhaps we can find solace in a parable related by the late Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski about a mother who takes her toddler to the doctor. The doctor prepares to give the child an injection. The kid doesn't make it easy for the doctor, squirming and trying to get away until the mom has to hold the child down while the doctor administers the injection. All throughout, the kid is screaming and shouting. Not a minute later the child buries his face in mom's arms, desperately seeking solace in her embrace. But why? Wasn't mom an accomplice when she held him down while the doctor attacked him? Why does this child suddenly find comfort in her arms?

Inherent in every child is the certainty that his or her mother holds the deepest love for them, desiring only their best. Even after brief periods of uncertainty, the profound loving connection between mother and child is promptly restored.

Our Heavenly Father's relationship with us mirrors this dynamic. At times, we might experience fear or frustration and ask why He permits dreadful misfortunes. Nonetheless, we remain aware that His love for us is genuine and unwavering. After all, we're His children. Like the solace a child finds in his or her mother's embrace, we too find consolation in acknowledging and believing that G-d loves us unconditionally.

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 Hamburger

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 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

AND THE WINNER OF THE SCARIEST PUMPKIN CONTEST IS...



Del Keller

A Hard Nut To Crack

"It sounds like we're under attack again," Tracey said, marking the on-going change of seasons. Walnuts hitting the metal roof of the barn sound like small arms fire. I've heard that sound from the very first year we built the house. The barn and the walnut trees were here first, so even the deer who graze the meadow are not frightened, having heard that sound for generations. Humans are more easily startled, however, along with any chickens who might live under a metal roof surrounded by black walnut trees.

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

The relationship between black walnuts and erstwhile gardeners like me is complex. The trees are beautiful, and their shade is unparalleled on a hot summer day. Nothing tastes better in cakes and cookies than the sweet and earthy walnut, and as a kid on my grandparents' farm, I spent many hours pursuing a prize that does not yield to casual efforts.

I've never found a device designed by man for cracking walnuts as effective as one special rock embedded in the ground beneath the tree that still stands where my grandfather's corn crib once stood. The tree gripped the bank of the dirt road that ran next to the crib and dropped its fruit under the wheels of an occasional traveler which would effectively remove the thick, staining husks of the walnuts, saving us time and green fingers.

The rock had an ideal indentation for holding the nut steady, and there were plenty of fieldstones from which to choose just the right striker: Too heavy, and the walnut was smashed into paste; too small, and you were more likely to crack your knuckles than the nut. The strikers were soon forgotten, but we always returned to that perfect rock anvil.

I briefly considered moving the rock to my own walnut grove, but it is held tightly by the roots of the tree, and I don't have the heart to disturb an old friend. The image of those roots, however, brings me back to the "complex" considerations of a gardener who loves black walnuts. Those roots are the bane of most fruits and vegetables and many trees as well.

Every part of a black walnut contains juglone, which is a very effective growth inhibitor. It is a survival mechanism that allows the tree to limit competition for light and nutrients in a thick forest canopy. You can forget growing cucumbers or tomatoes near a black walnut tree.

For as many years as I have gardened in black walnut country, I have fought those roots. I've seen them run 30 feet or more into the loose, rich soil of a garden (can't blame them for that) to curse the tomatoes growing over them. I've pulled and ripped and plowed and trenched, but walnuts are relentless, and it was always a losing battle.

It's a wonderful thing how the wisdom of our ancestors, deposited into the preoccupied and shallow consciousness of our younger selves, can survive intact like the seeds of a redwood tree, waiting many years for the proper conditions to germinate. "Listen to what Nature is trying to tell you. Work with it instead of against it." Those are the words of my father and grandfather, passed on from generations past.

So I listened, finally. The upper garden is now surrounded by black walnut trees that feed many squirrels and flavor a cake or two. Inside the circle, onions and garlic grow quite happily, along with a couple of pecan trees and Concord grapes. Partridge pea is happy to grow under the walnuts, much to the delight of one fat whitetail doe and countless thousands of pollinators who go there for nectar and pollen. The tomatoes live elsewhere, far from the walnuts.

Nature, my ancestors, and I are currently in conversation with Creeping Charlie. Charlie likes to travel, and he's not picky about where he grows. He's a fast worker too, and can quickly crowd out anything else that wants to live at ground level.

Charlie is considered an invasive species, though he has lived here since the 1600s. He came over with some of the Europeans who were also considered invasive species by the people who lived here at the time.

I've dug, pulled, plowed, and torched Creeping Charlie to keep him under control. This fall, during the dry weather and the days of high fire danger, I decided to work with him on a limited basis instead and allowed him to grow along part of a firebreak above the house. While grass withered and leaves crunched, the bands of green occupied by Charlie stayed moist. I let him run between a few tomatoes as well, and those grew faster and required less watering than the others.

The trick was in the management. Too much, and the tomatoes suffered. Too little, and the ground became parched without mulching. Charlie kept my string trimmer busy throughout our dry September, but the tomato sandwiches kept coming.

It's unfortunate that our species, in seeking solutions to problems of our own creation, is usually blind to the wisdom of nature. Nature competes, but it also cooperates. We seek to dominate where we should manage instead. When we find out we can't push the river, we dam it up. Then we are surprised and offended when our lake fills up with silt, sewage, and parrot feather.

We are in a time of transition. Or you might say it's Friday. Every day is a day of transition. But our collective consciousness is focused in such a narrow frame that every change seems "unprecedented." Everywhere we are told to look, we even consider each other invasive species. It's a hard nut to crack.

And in some cases, we are. This, too, is part of nature. Nature is dynamic, and as much as we imagine otherwise, we are part of it. Sadly, we have lost much of the wisdom that might help us better navigate these times. We have too few farmers and too many dominators and developers.

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Erosion Control

Georgia, along with much of the Southeastern U.S., doesn't have a positive past with erosion. Repetitive cropping of cotton in the Piedmont resulted in seven inches of topsoil being washed away into the ocean. Soil takes hundreds of years to create, meaning that loss of soil is something that is felt for generations. By the 1950s, new policies and programs began to change Georgia from endless cotton fields to forestland and other uses that are less susceptible to erosion. In the mountains, there is always a threat of erosion if we aren't proactive with protecting our landscape. Let's talk about why we should care about erosion and some things that you can do to make sure that your land isn't eroded away.

Erosion can also lead to water quality issues. Not only does the topsoil muddy up our lakes and rivers, but also the nutrients that the topsoil is carrying can create algal blooms leading to decreased aquatic life. That is bad news for our lakes and the fish that inhabit them. Erosion can also create a hard pan that will repel water and increases surface runoff. Once top soil has eroded away it is much more difficult to grow in the remaining subsoil.

So, what you can do to reduce erosion? First, construction makes soil very susceptible to erosion. Removing all the vegetation from the top of the soil leaves it open to the rainfall. In construction, surround the project site with hay bales and silt fences, preserve the already existing vegetation, and keep any piles of loose vegetation or gravel covered. Whenever you're clearing land try to leave as much of the existing vegetation as possible. This means you won't need to plant as much back once your project is finished.

Planting permanent vegetation is the long-term goal for erosion control. Mulch can also be used temporarily while you are establishing vegetation. Trees are going to be the best for long term protection from erosion. The deep roots that they have means that they do a better job of holding soil in place than grass does. Grasses can help intercept runoff and infiltrate it back into the soil. Shrubs are good at creating cover and habitat for wildlife, and trees are best at blocking noise.

A lot of our soil in the mountains is most likely going to need lime and fertilizer before you can replant it with vegetation. A soil test is a great place to start to learn how much lime and fertilizer you need to add. The lime will raise the pH into the range for plant growth. Ground that has been cleared for new construction is most likely going to be very poor quality, even if top soil has been put back. In these cases, the addition of lime, fertilizer, and compost is best practice.

Minimizing impermeable surfaces such as the driveway or walkway on your property will also reduce erosion. Obviously, you will need some impermeable surfaces at your property, such as a roof for your house. For cases like that, it's important to design pathways for the water from those impermeable surfaces to travel so that they can be deposited in a place where they can soak back into the ground. Rain gardens collect water to infiltrate back into the soil instead of having it run downhill. Usually they have plants that are adapted to living in damp soils. Impermeable surfaces don't slow water down, and that velocity allows water to do more erosion damage.

If you have any questions about erosion or what you can do to prevent erosion at your property please contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Letters To The Editor

Joint Development Solution

Dear Editor,

Let me first admit we are newer members of the community. There are two things that don't make sense. First is the rigmarole over the police doing their job. What's the deal? Are they not real police officers, or is it some silly jealousy deal?

Then in the Oct. 18 newspaper, our Sole Commissioner decided to quit the Joint Development Authority. He sent a very nice letter to both cities, but it was a terrible move. Now, the county can grow and develop without any concerns of the impact on the cities or input.

I think it's a bad idea, but there is a cure. Both cities can start to annex land adjoining their boundaries, thus, taking control of growth. This will eventually create a county police force relegating the sheriff to the jail and courts, and then the cities can grow as jointly as the citizens allow, solving power plays and jealousies.
Bob and Dotti Bala

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

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
P.O. Box 365, Hiawasse, GA 30546
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.

Towns County Herald

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