

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Israeli Arabs

Israeli Arabs Live Better Than Their Neighbors

By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



Jews understand what it's like to be mistreated in the countries they live in.

Charting their way through history, no other people has been displaced or expelled as much as the Jewish people. Time and time again, whenever it seemed that Jews had established a stable home where they could integrate and thrive, those foundations were ripped away from them, often through a combination of antisemitic policies and brutal violence.

The feeling of displacement has been baked into the Jewish peoples' DNA since Biblical times, and is still felt deeply today. As G-d was teaching the Jews how to govern Israel, with the memory of centuries of enslavement in Egypt fresh in the Jewish people's mind, the Torah commanded them to "not ill-treat a stranger [Gentile] or oppress him, for you were strangers in Egypt," and understood what it was like to feel unwanted in a foreign land. The Torah commanded the Jews to go to great lengths to make non-Jews feel welcome: not only must they be accommodated—they must be loved and treated as the native-born [Jew]! (Leviticus 19:33-34.)

This philosophy underpins the modern State of Israel's policy to its Arab citizens, despite what the world and social media tells you about the "discrimination" and "apartheid" Israeli Arabs experience.

As interviews with news outlets sympathetic to the Palestinian cause report on the Israel-Hamas war, Gazans are beginning to speak openly about the barbarity Hamas has unleashed against them in order to retain their iron grip in Gaza. While in Israel, a recent ICI poll found that 70% of Israeli Arabs said they felt solidarity with Israel against Hamas.

This raises a critical question: Why are Arabs in both Gaza and Israel acknowledging the role Hamas played in the destruction of Gaza, while some academics and college students in the Western world rally to support an organization responsible for harming its own citizens and those of its neighbor?

The answer lies in a simple but often overlooked fact: Arabs living in Israel enjoy a higher quality of life, and more civil liberties compared to their counterparts in the region. This reality has been a consistent thread since the State's founding when Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, urged Arabs to remain in the newly established state, despite the mass expulsion of Jews from Arab states in the aftermath of 1948.

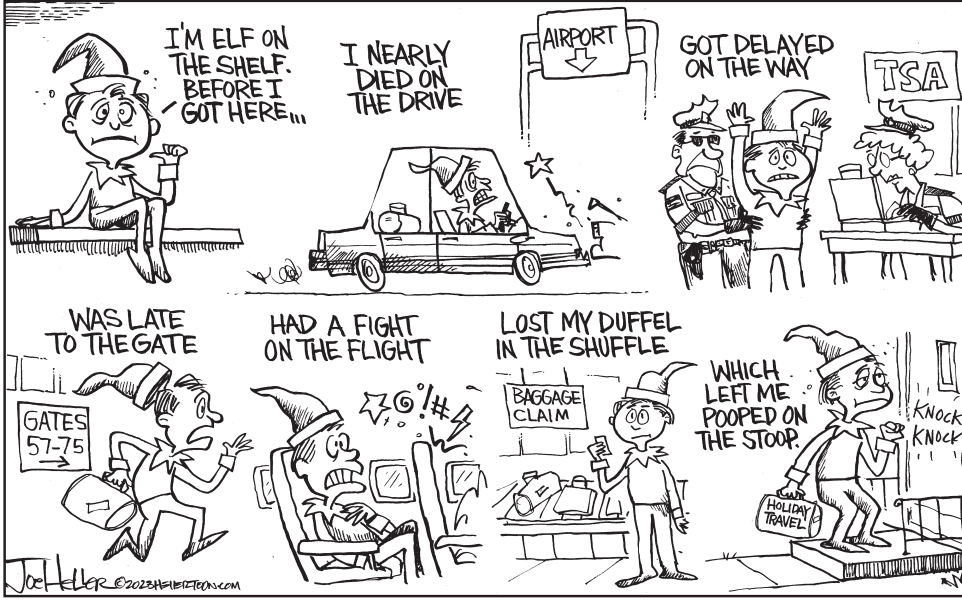
By every available metric, Arabs in Israel lead better lives than those in any of the 22 Arab states in the vicinity. Since 1948, the local Arab population in Israel has grown from 150,000 to a thriving community of 2.1 million citizens in this proud Jewish and democratic state. These Arab citizens have equal rights under the law, are represented by their own political parties serving their interests in government, and even have a Muslim Supreme Court Justice. Moreover, thousands of Arab civil servants contribute to the functioning of the state, and a law mandates that every state-run company must have at least one Arab member on its board of directors. Arabic is an official language of the State of Israel, with signs posted in Hebrew, Arabic, and English.

When you consider the higher levels of education and financial well-being of Arabs in Israel compared to surrounding states, it becomes evident why many choose to express happiness with their lives in Israel. When asked whether they would move to a new Palestinian state, they overwhelmingly respond with a resounding "no." They recognize that the current Palestinian leadership in Gaza, and the West Bank are often corrupt and retain power by terrorizing its own people. Many Gazan and West Bank Arabs are fed up and look with envy upon their brethren who live a better life in Israel, who they erroneously thought were the enemy.

What is life like for Palestinians living in other Arab countries? They mostly face second-class treatment, often confined to decrepit refugee camps without citizenship. A significant number live in Syria and Lebanon as refugees deprived of professional opportunities and government aid. In Jordan, many reside in refugee camps without citizenship, resulting in limited civil rights, poor living conditions, and restricted economic prospects.

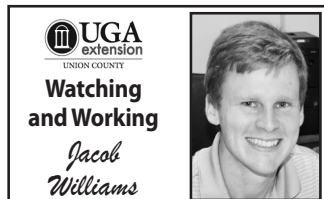
Through all these challenges, Israel remains a beacon of stability and prosperity in a volatile region. Many Arabs have expressed a preference for living in Israel because they appreciate the Jewish and Western values it embodies. This preference reflects the positive quality of life experienced by all citizens of Israel, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Druze.

Yonatan Hamburger is an Atlanta-based rabbi with Chabad of Rural Georgia teaching the richness of Judaism, while Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer currently residing in New York.



USDA Zones Changing

Recently the USDA released an updated USDA zone map, also called the plant hardiness zone map. Let's talk about this map, how it's made, and what purpose it serves.



Simply put, the USDA zone map gives an idea of what perennial plants will survive in which zone. This is important information for anyone considering planting perennials in their landscape. If you plant something that is not suited to your zone, that plant will not survive long. The newest version of the map is based on 30 years of data from 1991 to 2020 to determine where the lines for the zones should be. The map was last updated in 2012, it's usually updated every 12 years. The map is divided into 13 zones. Each zone represents a 10-degree Fahrenheit range. Each zone is subdivided into an 'a' and 'b' subzone that represent a 5-degree Fahrenheit range. The zones are divided based on a place's lowest annual winter temperatures. These temperatures were collected from over 13,400 weather stations across the US. The previous map used just less than 8,000 weather stations. The technology to be able to map microclimates has also improved since 2012. That allowed for the making of a more detailed map than before.

So, what does all of that mean for us? Basically, the USDA zone that we are in has changed. Under the previous map, most of Union and Towns counties were in zone 6b. There were exceptions, of course. Places of higher elevation were in zone 6a. However, under the new map most of Union and Towns are under 7b. The higher elevations are 7a. The parameters for each zone have not changed. A higher zone number means that our average annual extreme minimum temperature is a higher number than it was before. Simply put, the data from 1991 to 2020 shows that our winters have not been as cold.

I'll add a couple of footnotes to the map. Just because we shifted zones does not mean that the plants you planted for 6b are going to die overnight. It also doesn't mean that you should start planting tropical plants. The change in zones are about the extreme cold temperatures each year. So, plant species that have been struggling because of temperatures will continue to struggle.

You may wonder about the 0 or sub 0 temperatures that we had over Christmas in 2022. Those are below the 5-10 degree Fahrenheit range for zone 7b. Those temperatures were not used to create this map because the data included in this map is from 1991 to 2020. Overall this map shows that the contiguous states were 2.5 degrees warmer compared to the map released in 2012. About half of the lower 48 states changed zones between the 2012 and 2023 maps. In Georgia there are four main zones ranging from 7b in the mountains to 9a in South Georgia.

If you have questions about what things to plant in your zone contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

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P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546
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Vision of a Small Town

I don't live in Hiawassee. Some of the best people I know live and/or work there, but I live in the country because I prefer a lot more elbow room. Nothing personal, Hiawassee. It's not you; it's me.

We don't shop much in Hiawassee. It's definitely you. Prices are too high, and in the case of groceries, almost criminally high. We can drive east or west and pay half for some of the same items we usually buy. I'm not exaggerating. Half. It's a pleasant half hour drive and the savings pays for the gas and then some.

You're on my mind this morning, Hiawassee, because I've been reading about some of your growing pains in the paper. This is nothing new. For as long as I can remember there have been people who insisted that you grow, and they have always been resisted by folks who liked things the way they were.

It's been the same argument for generations. Ask someone who lived here before the lake was built or remembers the histrionics and political posturing that surrounded the establishment of laws protecting the mountains.

"We just want to create jobs for the people." That's what they always say, the visionaries, the movers and shakers. And they are often correct. Jobs are created. Some people prosper. Some don't.

I readily acknowledge the need for jobs, but I remain forever sceptical of the visionaries and world-improvers. Like Bill Bonner who wrote in "Empire of Debt" on his preference for presidents who didn't do anything, when I'm in the vicinity of a visionary, my hand just naturally moves to protect my wallet.

What usually happens in the interaction between visionaries and the rest of us is that a dynamic balance is achieved. It's not exactly what anyone wants, which is often a good sign of a reasonable compromise. We need the visionaries, the movers, shakers and developers because in thousands of years of human history we have yet to come up with an economic vision that doesn't rely on growth, on consumption. We've got that part down, and the people now alive are the biggest consumers the planet has ever produced.

We also need the resistance, the ones who want to protect what is desirable and good. We're not so good at what is sustainable, but technology offers glimmers of hope. If we don't burn all the furniture to stay warm, we might be able to preserve some of it.

So as always, Hiawassee, you have a choice, now that you have grown up enough to experience some of the same growing pains as the bigger, noisier and more crowded places. And yes, though no one is saying it out loud, that includes an element of the "culture wars" that are consuming the attention of politics, media and academia while the rest of us try to make a living.

Since I don't live there, I don't have enough skin in the game to tell you what your choices might be. But as I drive through on my way to spend my money somewhere else, I can't help but look at all the drive through restaurants that have popped up. There are some jobs for sure. I also look at the parrot feather infesting the lake. This invasive weed is prospering, and to me, at least symbolically, it's prospering in the same way as the fast-food.

Outside The Box
By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Letters To The Editor

Donating to the VFW Building Fund

Dear Editor,

On Saturday, Nov. 11, I had the privilege of attending the Veterans Day Celebration in Hiawassee, as I have done for many years. Only this time it was bittersweet as my husband Myron Grizio's name had been engraved at the Veterans Memorial Wall.

Eight of us whose relatives' names were engraved received a beautiful long-stem red rose. It was truly appreciated.

As always, a free delicious lunch with lots of different offerings was served for everyone attending the celebration. I am convinced the VFW Post 7807's many volunteers serve the unbelievable best hamburgers. If I would not have been embarrassed I would have gone back for a second one, not because I was still hungry, but because their hamburgers are truly the best, and I have eaten hamburgers in many different locations.

I am sure if Myron could have said a few words, he would have said: "How truly honored I feel, after so many moves, that my name was engraved at the Veterans Wall in Hiawassee, Georgia. With awareness of how active the members of the different Veteran Service Organizations are at this VFW Post, it has been so heartwarming to see for many years how much compassion and dedication all these retired service members are still contributing to the great enrichment of the residents of Towns County. Thank you and God bless you all with a happy and fulfilled family life."

Just to mention a few of the many services they offer: a place to gather for Veterans where they feel welcome; I know when Myron was at the Chatuge Nursing Home in Hiawassee they brought gifts to the residents at different times during the year; a golf league with many enjoyable golf players; monthly birthday party celebrations for Veterans at Brasstown Manor; a delicious and reasonably priced Fish Fry twice a month; yearly Memorial Day and Veterans Day Celebrations followed with a free delicious lunch; a Thrift Shop that is well attended, as they offer reasonable prices for everyone; and many more.

It was announced at the Veterans Celebration that Saturday that between 4,000 and 5,000 Veterans reside in Towns County. VFW members are in the process of building a new Post

building in Hiawassee.

It was also announced at the celebration on Saturday that someone – did not say who – has offered up to a \$10,000 matching contribution if people will donate to the building fund. What a great opportunity to allow the generous people of Towns County and the surrounding areas to show their appreciation for our dedicated Veterans who have sacrificed so much for all of us over the years.

We hear so much about Veterans suicide, what an inspiring and heart-warming idea to support our Veterans with a comfortable, inspiring, inviting, pleasant and safe environment to spend time with other Veterans.

What a generous and compassionate gesture of the individual who offered the \$10,000 match – especially around the holidays, having just celebrated Thanksgiving. You might want to contribute to the fund out of gratitude for a family member or friend who is a Veteran; in gratitude for unexpected blessings of good news for a great health report; in deep appreciation for the many blessings of living in the United States; the many blessings through the year of 2023; a new grandchild and knowing that we will always have dedicated service members willing to protect that precious child; in memory of a loved one; or for the many free luncheons over the years at the Memorial Day and Veterans Day Celebrations.

When I heard about the generous Fund Match Offer, my mathematical juices started flowing. If the 4,000 Veterans of Towns County would donate just \$10 each, that would be already \$40,000 plus the \$10,000 from the generous donor, amounting to \$50,000. But I am CONVINCED many non-veterans will be willing, out of deep gratitude, to contribute to the building fund too this holiday season.

If each one of us would be willing to talk to 10 people about this project, I am sure we would learn how deeply our Veterans are appreciated in Towns County, Georgia. Don't you agree?

Let's show our deeply committed Veterans that we truly appreciate their dedicated and sacrificial service over the years, and that we are delighted that they will be blessed with a great new VFW building.

With lots of love and hugs of gratitude,
Margret Grizio

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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 YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 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 City of Young Harris Planning Commission...	5:30 pm
Meeting Room in City Hall	5 pm
TC Water Authority Board Meeting	6 pm

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