

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Your Own Purim Story

You Have the Power to Create Your Own Purim Story

By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger



Purim, the Jewish holiday celebrated this year from Saturday evening till sundown Sunday, is unique in its emphasis on joy.

Indeed, while the Torah instructs us to be joyful during several festivals, none have the same level of emphasis as those commandments (mitzvahs) and rituals expressly instituted for this purpose as does Purim. There is the command to read the story of the original Purim, when Mordechai and Queen Esther saved the Jewish people from total extermination at the hands of the evil vice chancellor Haman and the bumbling King Ahasuerus, to demonstrate how G-d delivered the Jewish people from their enemies then and now. There is the custom to have a joyous meal with wine, revelry and dress up in costumes, and a focus on sharing gifts and charity with friends and those less fortunate to ensure they too can celebrate the festival with the same joy.

At face value, the reason for such celebrations is obvious. Just under seven decades after destruction of the First Temple and forced exile from their homeland of Israel, the Jewish people once again faced destruction by a people driven by an irrational hatred towards them and were miraculously saved in an incredible series of events.

Of course, that is worth celebrating, and there are many lessons from this story that can be applied nowadays. There is the fact that Jews are being persecuted and scapegoated around the world amidst a historic rise in antisemitism, yet like Mordechai and the Jewish people of his day, we remain proud and unbowed. Like Haman's opportunistic followers in Ancient Persia, just several months ago (and many times in preceding decades and centuries) a people rose up seeking to destroy and kill as many Jews as they possibly could, yet Israel is fighting back and slowly rebuilding, their spirit intact and alive.

But perhaps an understated lesson of Purim is one that is universal in its application, and a reason we can all celebrate and use as fuel to inspire us all.

The Book of Esther, which tells the story of Purim is told in an exceptionally detailed and narrative oriented, far more than any other book in the Old Testament. When reading it, one finds themselves in the corridors of power and great dining halls in the court of the king. The reader feels Mordechai's anguish and witnesses his attempts to save the Jewish people. We are inside Haman's family home as he schemes and plots, and we are a fly on the wall when he finally gets his comeuppance as Queen Esther reveals her Jewish identity to the king and tells him of Haman's machinations.

Throughout it all, we see the courage of the individual standing up and jostling to affect change, both for better and for worse.

The king starts off as an antagonist of the Jewish people, throwing a party to celebrate the destruction of the Holy Temple and the Jewish kingdom in Israel, and ends up as an ally who ultimately helps the Jewish people return to Israel facilitating the rebirth of the Jewish Kingdom, and the rebuilding of the Second Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Haman, the brilliant and twisted advisor to the king, is single handedly able to subvert policy to legally purge the Jewish people from the king's global empire, only to be foiled by the relentless efforts of Mordechai and Queen Esther, who has tremendous courage and self-sacrifice to enter the lions' den and reveal her true identity, at the risk of infuriating the king and endangering her life.

None of these people let themselves be dictated by the status quo; they all embraced their individual agency and power to change what others would have assumed was a foregone conclusion and beyond their capability to change or affect. Haman used that power for evil, while Mordechai and Queen Esther embraced it for good, and are celebrated for that till this day.

Today, at a time when more and more people feel powerless and caught up in the rat race with no power and agency, Purim reminds us that we each have the ability to take control and break the myth of status-quo. Our identities are not as political pawns for politicians or as worker bees for faceless corporations, rather we are valuable members of our communities and families who have so much to contribute to enhance society. There is no time like the present to stop scrolling on social media about what everyone else is doing and self-actualize the change you want for yourself. Whether that's by beginning a family, turning that side gig into a business, or volunteering your time to help your community – grab the G-d given opportunities and talents you have been blessed with and manifest them into reality.

It's been a proven formula for success, from the times of the Purim story to the founding of our great nation, and up to this very day: individuals make a difference and have the power to change history. You are that individual, and that is worth celebrating.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi with Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer currently living in Florida.



Happy Easter

The Booger at the Weaning-Off House

Have you ever wondered about the magnitude of which electricity has influenced our lives? For example, I am sitting at home writing this article for the newspaper. The computer I am using requires electricity. The lights are on and they require electricity. The TV is on and requires electricity. My cellphone will not operate without electricity. Our society could not maintain its present status without electricity. But, there was a time when people didn't even know about electricity.

My great-grandfather had four sons and two daughters. When one of the children married, that child moved into the weaning-off house next to my great-grandfather's house. A weaning-off house was an older house generally next to the house of one's parents. The custom of living in a weaning-off house allowed a child to live under the economic protection of his or her parents while trying to build one's economic status and self-sufficiency.

Some time around 1950 electricity came to Trapptown, Alabama. At that time Papa's youngest brother, Poggy, lived at the weaning-off house. Uncle Pick, Papa's older brother, lived about 1/2 mile north and west of the weaning-off house. My Great-Grandfather Lon lived close by as well, and very close to the weaning-off house was a storm shelter. When the TVA brought the "electricity" to Trapptown, a big power line was erected between the weaning off house and Uncle Pick's house. Everyone in the family signed up for the electricity and yet none of them really understood electricity.

Uncle Pick had taken his turn in the weaning-off house, and he never liked living in it. He said, "There was just something scary about that place." Pick's eldest daughter Polly was born sometime around 1936. On her second birthday all the family was up the road at my great-grandfather's house celebrating her birthday. After supper the family sat around the battery-powered radio to listen to a show called "The War of the Worlds." To make sure we all understand, let me explain. Orson Wells read this story to a live radio audience and pretended that he was reporting the news. People all over the USA thought we had been invaded by monsters from Mars. Anyway, this event had a profound effect on my Uncle Pick that would not have an impact for 12 years.

One night in the spring of 1950 after electricity had come to North Alabama, a serious storm hit the area around Trapptown. Uncle Pick decided to take his young family by the weaning-off house to his Dad's house where he could find safety in a storm shelter. As Uncle Pick and his family walked in front of the weaning-off house, he noticed something flying through the air. It turned out to be a big piece of tin from a barn roof.

But, in Uncle Pick's state of anxiety, he imagined it was a flying saucer from Mars. Anyway, the tin landed on the power line. When the tin hit the power line it caused the line to short out and sparks flew everywhere. The tin wrapped around the top line, and as the wind continued to blow, the tin would wave back and forth and hit the bottom line. Each time it hit the bottom line an arc would occur and sparks would fly and make an awful growling noise.

All Uncle Pick could think about was the radio show back in 1938. The sound the arc made resembled the sound of those monsters from Mars. At any moment he expected to be taken captive by the Martians. So, Uncle Pick would take his family back toward his house. Then he would think the storm was getting worse and he would turn back toward the storm shelter. Upon hearing the arcing noise and seeing the sparks he would turn back home. He finally got his nerve up and decided to push through to the storm shelter. Just as he got to the weaning-off house a transformer exploded. Uncle Pick just knew the Martians were shooting at him so he screamed at his family to run for the storm shelter.

The family burst through the door of the storm shelter in a sheer state of panic. Young Polly was squalling, which made all of her young cousins already in the shelter begin to cry, while the look on Pick's face exhibited an indescribable terror. His brothers looked at him as if to ask what had happened. He slowly began to describe what his family had just experienced. He finally blurted out, "We barely escaped something like them Martians."

Nowadays we can all sit back and laugh about this event. After all, we are more educated and think we have seen it all. And in certain ways I guess we have seen much due to the influence of television, radio and the internet. Back in 1950 we did not have any of those things, which makes me wonder if just maybe my parents and grandparents were better off without those things.

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Garden Ready?

Spring is officially here, but we still have a while to go before we are past the last chance of frost. Let's talk about some ways that you can plan ahead to make sure that you are garden ready when the time arrives.

UGA Extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



If you haven't already, I would recommend taking a soil sample and bringing it to the Extension Office. The soil test report will give you recommendations for lime and fertilizer that your garden will need. Recommendations can be given for people who want to use organic fertilizers too. If your soil needs lime it is best to get the soil tested in as quickly as possible because lime takes 6-9 months to be fully active in the soil. I have seen a number of people do soil tests on beds that are 100% compost. These samples typically have a pH of around 7.5 which is too high for most plants. Generally, plants like to have a soil pH in the 6 – 6.5 range.

In our area is recommended to wait until mid-May to start putting plants outside. By this time the soils have warmed up enough that seed germination will be better and we are past the threat of frost. Some years it may be possible to plant earlier than mid-May, depending on the weather. Mid-May is good general, conservative prediction.

If you are going to be planting from seed in the garden, you can begin buying the seeds that you're going to plant, if you haven't already done so. If you are going to be growing your own transplants under protection, it's recommended that you start them six to eight weeks before putting them outside. A heat pad and grow light make a big difference if you are trying to start your plants indoors. Growing your own transplants takes more work, but it can give you a wider selection of plants than if you just shop for transplants at a garden center. I do recommend using transplants over seed when possible, because it will give you a stronger stand.

Before you plant put some thought into the layout of your garden. Make sure that you have a place that has plenty of sun. Ideally at least 8 hours a day. For a vegetable garden think about crop rotation if you have been planting in the same spot for a few years. For a pollinator garden think about including as much diversity of flower color and flower shape as possible. This will encourage the most beneficial insects, and support a wide variety of pollinators. Consider plants of different heights, native, and non-native plants.

Spring is the best time to plant summer annuals. I know there is a strong temptation to plant other things too. Perennials do best if planted in the fall or winter. Planting perennials in the spring means that you will need to do a lot of watering over the summer to make sure that they survive.

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

On April 10th from 1-3 PM the Towns-Union Master Gardeners Association and the Enotah Garden Club are hosting an afternoon tea with Ashley Frasca. The cost is \$15. You can register for this event by going to <https://t.uga.edu/9JK>

I am also hosting a Master Naturalist training. This is an 8 week course that focuses on the natural resources around us. If you are interested in participating in that email me or call the Union County Extension Office at 706-439-6030.

Letters To The Editor

Elections Board Thankful

Dear Editor,

The Towns County Board of Elections and Registration wishes to thank the dedication and service of the many volunteers who served as poll workers and the staff of the Elections and Registration Office for their excellent performance during the Presidential Preference Primary.

The poll workers capably carried out their duties with efficiency, thereby allowing the citizens of Towns County to confidently cast ballots for the candidate of their choice. They did so while working long hours during early in-person voting and on Election Day without complaint, serving the voting public courteously, respectfully, and with a friendly and helpful demeanor. The Board is deeply appreciative of their excellent work.

The Board would be remiss if it failed to also congratulate Election Supervisor Rachel Edwards, Election Coordinator Sue Sutton, and Registrars Nancy Clemons and Teresa Conner for their excellent work in overseeing the election. Rachel ensured the polling places were prepared, and election and post-election activities were carried out in compliance with the law and best practices for conducting a primary. Sue, Nancy and Teresa were responsible for ensuring the integrity of the voting lists and that poll workers were trained and ready when the polls opened. All three fulfilled their duties with extraordinary skill and competence.

As a result of the combined efforts of the poll workers and staff on Election Day, Towns County's polling places received an A-plus rating from the State Election Board inspector for its preparation for and administration of the primary. The Board encourages the citizens of Towns County to join in thanking the volunteers and staff who served during the primary.

Board Members Jeff Pierot, Betsy Young, David Plunkett and John Bennett

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.

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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 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... Meeting Room in City Hall TC Water Authority Board Meeting	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

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.

The Towns County Herald is an independent and non-partisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

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