

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Each Morning's Exodus

In nature, one of the most remarkable transformations occurs when a seed first breaks through its protective shell. That tough exterior, which once sheltered the seed, must split apart for any growth to occur. What initially appears as destruction is actually the beginning of new life.

The Hebrew word for "Egypt" – "Mitzrayim" – carries profound truth within its meaning. Sharing its root with the word for confinement or limitation, it reminds us that the exodus wasn't merely a one-time historical event. When G-d commanded in the Torah that each person must regard themselves as having personally left Egypt every day of their lives, He was revealing a timeless spiritual principle. Our personal "Egypt" manifests as the limitations we face daily – the constraints that, like ancient slavery, keep us from realizing our divine potential.

This understanding transforms the exodus narrative from ancient history into living wisdom. Just as the children of Israel faced physical bondage in Egypt, we each contend with our own forms of confinement – mental, emotional, and spiritual barriers that feel as real as the brick and mortar of ancient Egyptian pyramids. Like that seed's shell, these self-imposed limitations might feel safe, but they prevent our growth.

Consider the art of pottery, one of humanity's oldest crafts. A lump of clay, when first placed on the wheel, is full of potential but shapeless. The potter must apply pressure – must break through the clay's natural resistance – to create something beautiful and useful. Too little pressure and the clay remains formless; too much, and it collapses. But with just the right touch, limitation transforms into possibility.

This wisdom appears throughout the natural world. The butterfly must struggle against its cocoon to develop the strength to fly. Precious metals must endure intense heat to be purified. In each case, what appears as constraint or difficulty actually enables transformation.

Our own lives follow this pattern. We develop habits and beliefs that feel protective but actually limit us. We convince ourselves that certain possibilities are beyond our reach, that some doors are closed to us, that our current limitations define our future. These thoughts create our personal Egypt – a narrow place that confines not our bodies, but our spirits.

Ancient Jewish teaching offers profound insight into this universal human experience. It suggests that true freedom isn't just about external circumstances – it's about recognizing our inherent divine connection and unlimited potential. Just as the Red Sea would not part until the Israelites took that first step, our own growth begins only when we challenge our perceived limitations.

This understanding transforms how we view life's challenges. Every obstacle becomes an invitation to break through another shell to discover another layer of possibility. Like the potter working with clay, the divine force shapes us through these experiences, helping us realize our full potential.

The wisdom of this process reveals itself in countless quiet ways. In gardens where patience and trust yield seasonal rewards. In workshops where craftsmen know that mastery comes only through embracing and then transcending limitations. In classrooms where teachers discover that lesson plans and curricula, far from constraining education, provide the framework through which genuine moments of inspiration flourish.

When we recognize this pattern, daily life becomes rich with meaning. Each challenge presents not a barrier but a doorway. Each limitation offers not a prison but an opportunity for growth. We begin to see ourselves not as finished products struggling against constraints but as works in progress, constantly being shaped and refined.

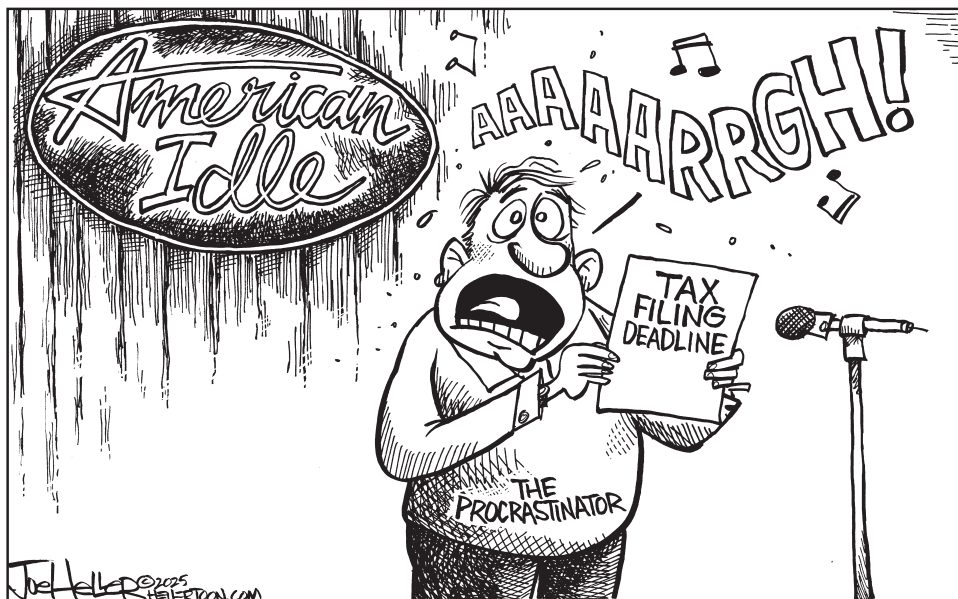
This shift in perspective changes everything. The very things that seem to limit us become the means of our growth. Our perceived prisons transform into launching pads for new possibilities. We move from seeing ourselves as victims of circumstance to active participants in our own development.

In this light, freedom takes on new meaning. It's not about the absence of constraints but about how we work with them. Like the seed breaking through its shell, like the clay taking shape on the potter's wheel, we grow not by avoiding pressure but by engaging with it purposefully.

The ancient exodus from Egypt thus becomes more than historical event – it becomes a blueprint for personal transformation that each person can apply today. It reminds us that our greatest limitations often protect our greatest potential, waiting to be realized when we find the courage to break through.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports communities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at y@tasteoftorah.org.

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi
Yonatan
Hambourger



Dynamite...

Dynamite Comes in Small Packages

One summer in my childhood I was at my grandparents' home in Traptown, Alabama. Papa had just come in from cultivating his cotton for lunch when into the driveway pulled an older model Ford Falcon. First the parents and then four small children piled out of the car. I didn't really know their names, but, I recognized them from our community church. I soon learned the names of the parents were Roy and Myrtle Jean. Roy was a tall, lanky individual while his wife, Myrtle Jean, was less than 5 feet while wearing her high heel shoes.

The family sat down to dinner with us and we all listened as Papa and Roy discussed the Bible. Each time Roy would declare his views on the Holy Scriptures, Granny would roll her eyes. Later after Roy and his wife left I asked Granny about the reason for her rolling her eyes. She said, "We'll talk about it when you are older." Later in the fall Uncle Bud went hunting and came upon Roy in the woods. For some reason unknown to me Uncle Bud had punched Roy in the nose and took a gun away from him. Uncle Bud then took the gun to his friend Kenneth. I listened to Uncle Bud tell part of the story, but, I only heard part of it because Granny made me leave the room. Again I asked her about what happened, and she said, "We'll talk about it when you are older."

Time went by for me and we all grew older. I never got around to asking my grandmother to explain things to me. Not long ago these memories came back to me and I talked with my mom about Roy and Myrtle Jean. This is their story. Myrtle's mother was Myrtie Evans, one of many daughters in a poor but proud family. Myrtie had a difficult time finding a husband, so, she ordered a mail-order groom from Czechoslovakia. Her new husband was hardworking and honest. These individuals raised a tiny little girl they called Myrtle Jean. She married this unscrupulous character by the name of Roy Heather. He claimed to be a preacher, but, when Myrtle Jean was not around, he loved to drink, and he was bad about borrowing things and not bringing them back.

Roy and Myrtle Jean left North Alabama and moved to Chicago to find work just like many other Southerners did in the '50s and '60s. Mom and Dad were living and working in Chicago at the time. Mom was working at an embroidery plant sewing the Boy Scout Emblem on uniforms. One day Mom told her boss about Myrtle Jean, and she was hired. But, about a week later Mom's boss came back to her and explained that someone had to tell Myrtle Jean about regular bathing and deodorant. That person was going to be Mom.

So, she explained to Myrtle Jean that she was no longer in the country with just a few people. Therefore, she needed to bathe every day and use deodorant. Mom gave her a list of items she could use. Myrtle Jean was appreciative and thanked my mother for her advice. Mom's boss thanked her as well. Later that week Myrtle Jean and Roy came to the house to grill some hot dogs. Also, Dad's longtime friend William Shelnett was there with his wife. At that time my Dad and William enjoyed drinking beer. Roy and Myrtle Jean showed up to the event whereupon Roy was offered a beer. Myrtle Jean said, "Oh, my Roy don't drink." Dad exclaimed, "Well he had some the other night." Roy's face became red and he sat down on the edge of an armless sofa. He tried to explain that he only drank a little every now and then. William asked, "Roy, what about that 6 pack you borrowed from me the other day?" Myrtle Jean had endured enough; she drew back her tiny hand and slapped Roy across the face. The impact from that slap knocked him off the couch and into the floor. Then she rolled her eyes in disgust just like Granny did when she heard Roy Heather proclaiming to everyone about his knowledge and virtues. I now understand what Granny was thinking all those years ago.

I can still remember this tiny lady, and although I cannot remember the slap across his face, I do remember that it was very easy for her to get his attention. As I grew older I came to understand the phrase "dynamite comes in small packages," and my understanding comes from this little lady.

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

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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.

Around The Farm

Mickey
Cummings



Spring Peepers

As we move into spring, the nighttime seems to come more alive. More and more animals will be roaming around, and insects start to show back up outside. One of the earliest heralds of spring are the spring peepers. These little guys start coming out in February to let us know that warmer temperatures are not too far away. Now that we are in spring there are more and more of them around. Let's talk about who these spring peepers are and why they are peeping.

The scientific name for the spring peeper is *Pseudacris crucifer*. They are a small frog that measures from one to one and a half inches long. They weigh in at about two tenths of an ounce. These tiny guys are still able to make some pretty serious noise. Their peep is high-pitched, which means that it can be heard from a mile away. I've heard the sound described like the chirp from a baby chick. The trill is brief and repeated at about one second intervals. A large number of peepers peeping at the same time is called a chorus. Large choruses can sound like sleigh bells. The males are the ones making all the noise, as they are trying to attract a mate. Their peep can become more aggressive sounding as they compete with other males for better spots to attract the females.

These little frogs are abundant in Georgia. Their skin color ranges from tan to brown to gray. Their most distinctive feature is the dark X on their back. This is also where they get their species name, crucifer. At this time of year, they start coming down from the woodlands to find a mate near a water source. Once a mate has been found, the female will lay eggs in the water that hatch into tadpoles in one to two weeks. They prefer shallow, semi-permanent pools of water. These pools are less likely to have predatory fish in them. After about two to three months, the tadpoles will undergo metamorphosis and change into a frog. These little frogs live for about 3 years. Most of their lives are spent in the woods where they eat insects. They'll consume beetles, ants, flies, and spiders. They only come down to the water's edge during their mating season.

Before coming out for mating spring peepers are in hibernation. They like to hibernate under logs and loose bark. In the winter their body fluid will freeze.

Spring peepers are hard to spot because they are so small and like to spend their time down in the brush. They have large pads on their toes for climbing, but they rarely climb very high. Most of time they do their insect hunting at night. However, if they are living in a dense, damp forest they may hunt in the day and at night. The reason for this is that frogs must be careful to avoid their skin drying out.

In the Georgia mountains we also have another spring peeper called the Collinses' Mountain Chorus Frog. This species range in Georgia is very limited. The call that it makes sounds a bit like when you run your finger down the bristles of a comb. This species is thought to be in decline in Georgia, but not much research has been done on it.

If you have questions about spring peepers or other wildlife, contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Letters to the Editor

Local OBGYN Says Farewell

Dear Editor,

After 23 years of providing care to the women of this area, the time has come to say goodbye. The feeling is bittersweet. My daughters were raised here, and over the years, my family formed deep connections in the local communities.

We moved back to the mountains in 2002 after my Army service. With a lot of hope (and a loan), I opened an OBGYN practice with a simple goal: to offer a level of care equal to that found in any big city. Thanks to the dedication of so many, both in the office and the hospital, tremendous progress has been made toward that end. In a time when many rural hospitals were eliminating their Labor & Delivery units, we have grown almost five-fold in births. OBGYN surgeries have increased from none to hundreds yearly.

The women of Southern Appalachia are special. They spend much of their lives caring for those around them. They are unstoppable because they have to be. I knew this from a young age – having been raised by a single mother of three kids in tough financial circumstances in East Tennessee – and continue to be inspired by the resilience and compassion of my patients on a daily basis.

Some reading this may have heard my mantra, "All you can do is do your best." It has been the greatest privilege of my career to help many of you through moments of joy, hardship, and everything in between. Thank you for letting me be a small part of your lives.

Though our journey here is ending, it is not quite time for retirement. We are moving to Colorado Springs and I will practice at Fort Carson, the Army post there. I am very excited to serve those who serve and to be surrounded by like-minded colleagues. In a way my family is coming full circle.

We will always carry the spirit of this place with us. Being from the mountains has shaped who I am as a doctor, father, husband and person. I feel lucky and full of gratitude.

Keeping up with families as they grow is so much fun. If anyone has pictures they would like to share, please send them to DrDavisbabypics@gmail.com
Kevin S. Davis, MD, FACOG

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.

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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.

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

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