

## DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

## OPINIONS &amp; COMMENTARY

## A Guide to Life's Battles

By Yonatan Hambourger  
and Tzali Reicher

There's profound wisdom in knowing not just how to act, but when to choose one response over another. An ancient narrative offers us a fascinating study in strategic decision-making that remains remarkably relevant today.

Most people know the story of the Israelites at the Reed Sea – trapped between the advancing Egyptian army and the impassable waters. In that moment of crisis, God's instruction was clear and perhaps surprising: move forward. The sea split, the people crossed safely, and their former oppressors were defeated without the Israelites lifting a finger in battle.

But what's less commonly discussed is what happened next. After this miraculous deliverance, as the Israelites journeyed toward Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, they faced another formidable enemy: the kingdom of Amalek. This time, the divine instruction was markedly different. Instead of simply moving forward, Moses was told to mobilize an army and engage in battle.

These two episodes – occurring in quick succession and seemingly contradictory in their prescribed responses – offer a masterclass in strategic wisdom. Why the dramatic difference in approach? The answer lies not in the strength of the opponents, but in their position relative to the Israelites' goal.

Consider the Egyptians: though they were a fearsome force, they were pursuing from behind. Their presence, while threatening, wasn't directly blocking the Israelites' path toward their destination of Mount Sinai. The Egyptian army represented the past literally chasing the present – former masters trying to reclaim their slaves. In this case, the wisdom was clear: don't fight what's behind you. Move forward.

The Amalekites presented a fundamentally different challenge. They stood between the Israelites and their destination, directly impeding their progress toward Mount Sinai. This wasn't about the past trying to reclaim its hold; this was about an obstacle deliberately positioning itself between a people and their future. In this case, moving forward wasn't enough – the obstacle had to be confronted and overcome.

This distinction offers a timeless framework for decision-making. When confronted with challenges, the crucial question becomes: Is this obstacle behind me, trying to pull me back, or is it ahead of me, blocking my path forward?

Consider someone in recovery from addiction. When memories of "good times" or old drinking buddies try to pull them back to their former lifestyle, the answer isn't to argue or justify their sobriety – it's simply to move forward on their chosen path. Like the Egyptians pursuing from behind, these echoes of the past have no power unless you turn back to face them.

But when that same person encounters someone who actively tries to sabotage their recovery – perhaps by deliberately bringing alcohol to family gatherings or mocking their sobriety – that's different. Like the Amalekites, these obstacles stand directly between them and their goal of maintaining sobriety, requiring a firm stand and clear boundaries.

Or think about someone starting a new chapter in life after divorce. When well-meaning friends keep trying to rehash the past relationship or suggest reconciliation, the wisest response is to keep moving forward toward their new life. However, when their ex-spouse attempts to interfere with their parenting time or new relationships, that's an Amalek-like obstacle requiring direct confrontation and perhaps legal intervention.

Consider also a young person building their career. When former classmates or relatives remind them of past failures or doubt their abilities, the best response is to keep moving forward, letting results speak for themselves. But when a supervisor deliberately blocks their advancement or takes credit for their work, that's an obstacle that requires addressing directly with management or human resources.

The ancient narrative teaches us that both responses – moving forward and standing to fight – have their place. The key is discernment. When childhood insecurities, old fears, or past mistakes chase us, trying to drag us back to who we used to be, the answer is to keep moving forward. But when someone or something actively stands between us and the kind of parent, spouse, friend, or person we're striving to become, that might be the time to take a respectful but firm stand.

This wisdom proves invaluable in daily life. A person rebuilding their life after a setback doesn't need to fight every reminder of their past – they need to keep moving forward. But when they encounter people who try to prevent their progress or undermine their recovery, that's when they need to stand firm in their convictions.

The Israelites' journey teaches us that the path to our destinations isn't always a simple matter of either always avoiding conflict or always confronting it. Sometimes wisdom calls us to march ahead, letting the waters of progress close behind us. Other times, it calls us to stand our ground and overcome what stands in our way.

In the end, it's not about choosing one approach for all situations but about clearly seeing the nature of our challenges and choosing our responses wisely. Are we being pulled backward by the gravity of old habits, past relationships, or former versions of ourselves? Keep moving forward. Are we being blocked from progress by active obstacles that stand between us and our better future? That might be the time to take a stand.

That's how we move from where we are to where we're meant to be – knowing when to march forward and when to stand and fight.

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## 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.

Echos  
from Sinai  
"Torah for  
Everyone"  
Rabbi  
Yonatan  
Hambourger



## Something Out Of Time

The peach and pear blossoms might have been a bit too optimistic, but I'm happy with the cold snap of this April weather. It was 28 on the mountain last night. A few hardy hummingbirds came early too, and we will take their feeders inside tonight so they can have a warm breakfast in the morning.

It will be hot enough soon enough, but this "legacy" chill gives me a few more days before I have to start mowing grass and watching for snakes again. Snakes have been on my mind while I've been excavating rocks from an old chimney that fell down several years ago.

The rocks are all that remain of a cabin from the late 19th century world built by hand. They fell through the floor that covered a below-ground "can house," a structure common in the days before refrigeration. The rocks destroyed and also preserved a lot of old canning jars under several tons of stone.

The cabin stood abandoned for many years like the ghosts of Americana that have all but disappeared from our area. It became the realm of dirt daubers, and enough red wasps and rattlesnakes to discourage pilferers from that class of people willing to steal something old from a place they consider abandoned. Over time we caught several black snakes and relocated them there to help evict the rattlers, and one of those grew long enough to span the single-lane road leading to the old homestead.

Every rock I load into the bucket of the front-end loader gives me pause to admire the strength and endurance of our ancestors who lived here long ago. There were no tractors to lighten the load, nor thousands of devout hands to distribute the weight of a pyramid or a cathedral. Every rock coaxed from the ground, loaded onto a wagon, and pulled behind a horse or mule was a personal challenge.

Before we became a retreat for those seeking leisure, this was a rugged frontier where pioneers guided by faith to follow their dreams carved out homes and livelihoods. What was once a land of ambition and survival has softened into a place of retirement, an escape for pausing rather than pushing forward. The ghost of the pioneering spirit remains – not in homesteads and hard work, but in the quiet embrace of legends and landscapes, and the memories of a hardy people who came here to forge new beginnings.

From a dark crevice between two large rocks, a reflection catches my eye. A careful shifting of stone reveals a half-gallon Ball Mason jar with a rusted lid that has survived the crush of the rocks intact. The jar brings back memories of my grandparents.

If you have ever pressure canned, you know the work involved. Imagine doing that without the benefit of a pressure cooker, using weighted blankets to hold down the lid in a process that took hours, not to mention the time involved in making the crop and harvesting it for canning. Now imagine that instead of preserving food as a hobby or to save money, you were doing it so your family had enough to eat through the winter.

These stories are not unique. They belong to every corner of the globe in times past and even today, where survival is personal and intimate without the intervention of technology and machines. But these are my rocks, and this is my story and my heritage, and I proudly share that heritage with many who will read this.

Something round and rusted rests behind another rock. It is the remains of an old wind-up clock that ran out of time many years ago. It is a fitting symbol of civilization and the cities that so many are now fleeing for a life less ruled by the sweep of the second hand that with every click of the escarpment slices off another bit of our time. The rust reminds me that even this metaphor feels antiquated in an era rushing into the future by fractions of seconds, guided by algorithms rather than faith.

But batteries die too, and the cutting-edge technology of last year is already rusting in a landfill. Chances are the rocks I wrestle today will still be here long after the boast of every modern Ozymandias has been forgotten. Perhaps someone else will pick them up again to build a new story.

Outside  
The Box

By: Don Perry  
worldoutsidethebox.com

## BearWise

Black bears are active again. While people enjoy having them around, it's important to remember that these animals are wild.

Sometimes, when you see the bear time and again, you may feel a personal connection to that bear. That feeling is probably not reciprocated. Interactions with bears are inevitable to a certain level, so let's talk about what to do if you see a bear and the steps that you can take to make sure that your home doesn't become a playground for bears and that we allow these creatures to remain wild.

Firstly, it's important to remember that we live in an area with copious amounts of national forest. That means black bears are out there. Hopefully, though if you encounter one you'll

know what to do or how to make your space less attractive to them. Bears will typically live 8 to 15 years. The females can weigh up to 300 pounds and the males over 500 pounds. The females will give birth in their den in late January. Those cubs will stay with the mother until the following spring when she kicks them out.

Bears are omnivores meaning that they eat whatever is easily available depending on the time of year. Their natural diet is berries, fruits, acorns, grasses, insects, and even mammals. Bears can be attracted by the smell of human food if there is not much natural food available for them. Bears are naturally afraid of humans. However, bears that have been feeding on human food lose their natural fear of people, and become a danger. Bears will usually remain in an area where food is readily available, so the best way to make sure that bears don't move into your backyard is to remove the sources of food.

Never feed bears either intentionally or unintentionally. They will learn where food is available and become a nuisance for you and your neighbors. Make sure that your garbage is in a place that they can't reach. That means leaving it inside the garage or if you're out camping hoisting your trash in the air or putting it in a bear proof trashcan. Bird feeders can attract bears because of the high calorie content in bird feed. Bring your bird feeders in when bears are active. Usually, by the time bears are active there is plenty of natural food available for birds. Don't leave pet food out. Just give your outdoor pets enough food for one feeding. If you have a grill, clean and store it after use. Bears will be attracted by the smell of your grill so keep it out of reach for them. And finally, let your neighbors know if you see a bear so that they can take precautions too.

Most bears are not aggressive, unless they have been fed by humans before. Bear relocation is usually not an effective control option. Bears that are relocated might be moved to an area that another bear has already claimed, leading to territory fights, or the bear may try to return to its home and be struck by a vehicle. Relocation is a last resort.

If you do encounter a bear in the open make yourself look big and wave your arms and shout while backing away slowly. Do not get between a mother bear and her cubs. If you are attacked fight back aggressively with anything you can get your hands on. Bears can be dangerous but know that there are no recorded fatalities in Georgia.

If you have questions about bears in our area contact your local Extension office for more information or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Letters to the Editor

## Crash and Burn

Dear Editor,

If you have too many things in the fire daily, you need to take a moment to extinguish them down to an amber and turn to God's recipe that gives you access to His divine leadership that will guarantee you success every time. We sometimes forget that God is interested in every area of our lives.

Let's use an illustration about a train that is going way too fast and ready to crash and burn if you don't listen to the Master Engineer who is trying to steer your massive piece of steel onto the right track to arrive safely at your destination. How many times in our lives have we chosen to follow our own tracks of destruction, instead of leaning on God's wisdom and seeking His will for our journeys through this crazy train wreck of a sinful, out of touch world?

How many times have you tried in your own strength to achieve in getting your train on the right track but steered it off and crashed and burned? God is always willing to put your train back on the right track and give you the wisdom and knowledge to maneuver the controls so you can have a smooth and productive journey towards your final goal, but you must be willing to yield yourself over to His leadership to benefit from His gracious and merciful guidance. It's not easy to do, but necessary to stay on the right track before it's too late.

We all at times lose our way in life, but let us be reminded that this life is like a vapor, here one moment, gone the next, so slow your train down to a comfortable speed and let Jesus the Master Engineer be your Deliverer to guide you safely into the terminal that offers you eternal security from ever crashing and burning again.

Frank F. Combs

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor

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Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net

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