

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Finding Freedom In Focus

By Yonatan
Hambourger and
Tzali Reicher

**Echos
from Sinai**
"Torah for
Everyone"
Rabbi
Yonatan
Hambourger



For as long as history has been recorded, there has been a paradox that has confounded societies. It's the delicate dance between the desire for freedom and the innate yearning for structure and discipline – that feeling of knowing we're tethered to something that has a proven history of giving us the grounding and fulfillment we crave.

In the modern world, the call for freedom resounds through the ages. The Woodstock generation broke from their conservative parents and championed free love and alternative spirituality. The Apple generation called for its users to break free of conformity in their "Orwellian" 1984 Super Bowl commercial, while more and more permissive agendas are mainstreamed to the youth of today, to let them figure it all out for themselves. We champion autonomy and the ability to cast off the perceived shackles of tradition and rules, and the allure of unrestrained choice seems intoxicating, promising a life untethered and unburdened.

However, beneath this surface desire lies a more profound truth – that human beings, in their quest for meaning, find solace, purpose, and fulfillment within the confines of structure and discipline. This is proven by the historical outcomes of mass movements for unrestrained freedom: The 'Summer of 69' era crashed under the weight of psychedelics and decadence. Apple has become the cultural enslaver it claimed to be fighting, most recently with its launch of a face computer that will inevitably hasten the disconnection and alienation many of us are already experiencing. And we see that today's youth are more discontent, unhappy, and depressed than previous generations, in a total repudiation of the experimental open and digital society that they have been the guinea pigs for.

There's a reason Jordan Peterson's "12 Rules for Life" became an international bestseller. It served as a roadmap for a disaffected generation craving a guidebook on how to reach a stable footing in a volatile world that they had not been equipped to face. These rules and guidelines paradoxically lead to a sense of purpose and order.

This past week, Jewish communities around the world studied the Torah portion of Mishpatim (Laws) in the book of Exodus, which include some of the denser chapters in the entire Pentateuch. Verse after verse is filled with law and law, telling the recently confirmed Children of Israel (as of the events of Mt. Sinai in the previous chapter) the rules by which they must live for all time. While the earlier parts of the Torah told the pulsating stories of creation, the patriarchs, and the escape from slavery in Egypt, there is no dramatic respite in Mishpatim: we just have a lengthy list of commandments and prohibitions, governing the Jewish people on the issues of commerce, dietary restrictions, capital punishment, how to observe the festivals, and more. In all, there are 53 commandments in this Torah portion alone.

These detailed laws were given to the Jewish people immediately following the 'main presentation' at Mount Sinai, when G-d descended in fire on the mountain while smoke billowed like from a furnace as He gave over His wisdom. After the heady and euphoric events that brought the Jewish people together on the once humble mountain, in Mishpatim, G-d presented a roadmap for how they were to live in a society seeking order, justice and fulfillment.

This smoke and fire, tangible manifestations of the divine presence, are symbolic of passion. There is a connection between the fire and smoke that appeared at Mount Sinai and the laws that were taught there: that when performing even the most routine and mundane acts, they must be infused with passion. Discipline should not be mechanical; it should be a vehicle for channeling one's inner fire towards a purposeful life. When we lose sight of why we follow traditional and disciplined pathways to success, that is when self-defeating untrained 'freedom' festers and leads to disinterest and dissatisfaction. In the pursuit of rules and discipline, there is an unseen fire – one that burns within the heart of every individual seeking a meaningful existence.

Apathy and disengagement stand as formidable adversaries to achievement and success. In a world that often glorifies apathetic and cool detachment, in favor of a hedonistic living for the now, the wisdom of the Torah's lessons beckons us to resist the temptation of indifference. True fulfillment is not found in the absence of rules but in the active engagement with them – with a pathway that transforms routine into purpose and discipline into a pathway to greatness.

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Cupid inc.



Raised Bed Soils

Last week I talked about the different materials that can be used to construct a raised bed. This week I want to talk about what we put in the raised beds. There are many different options out there, some are better than others are, and some are cheaper than others are. So let's talk through some options for soil in your raised garden bed.



Before filling up your raised garden bed figure out how many cubic feet of soil you will need. This is a simple calculation of multiplying length by width by height. Let's use the dimensions 8 feet X 4 feet X 10 inches. In this case, we would multiply 8x4x0.833 because 10

inches is 0.833 feet. The answer is 26.66 cubic feet. If we wanted to convert cubic feet to a cubic yard, we would divide our cubic feet by 27. This means that we have close to one cubic yard of volume.

Now that we have the math out of the way and know how much material we need let's talk about what materials can be used. Obviously, you can use top soil to fill the raised bed. If you have extra top soil nearby this might make sense for you. Otherwise, I don't think that it's a great option. Top soil is not regulated in terms of what is in it. So you might have many chunks of bark that haven't started decomposing. If you don't know the source of top soil, it will also contain weed seeds that will grow and compete with your plants.

Another option would be to go to the store and buy bags of soil that are made for raised beds. This would give you quality soil in the beds. The flip side is that you're going to spend a lot of money doing it. You could easily spend \$\$\$ for soil using the dimensions I talked about earlier. If the money is not a problem, this is a quick and easy solution.

Compost is a great way to fill your raised beds. However, beds shouldn't be 100% compost, they need some soil in their too. Compost that has completely composted will provide many nutrients to the soil. If you have your own compost you can use that, or you can buy compost in bulk. Some companies will deliver or if you have a pickup truck, you can use that. You can also buy compost in bags. A product like Black Kow is an example. Buying bags will be more expensive. One drawback to using compost is that the pH will most likely be high. This can lead to some nutrient shortages. Another thing to keep in mind with compost is that it will continue to decompose. This means that the amount you have will decrease and more will need to be added periodically.

The lasagna method is a popular way to fill raised beds. You alternate layers of brown and green material. Brown material is dry leaves, shredded newspaper, peat, and pine needles. Green materials are vegetable scraps, garden trimmings, and grass clippings. The green materials contain nitrogen and the brown materials contain carbon. Make the brown layers twice as thick as the green layers and it will compost down into a good material into which you can plant.

If you have beds that are very deep another option is the put branches in the bottom to fill up space. The branches will break down over time, giving you good material in which to grow. My preference is to use a third native soil, third bagged soil, and a third compost to fill up the raised bed.

If you have questions about filling your raised bed contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

State of Readiness

There have been several studies which suggest, no, that's too polite, which record the diminishing physical strength of college-age males compared to students of the past. In fact, the Pentagon did a study in 2020 which revealed that 77% of Americans would not qualify for military service due to obesity, drug use, mental and physical health issues.

The Army reached only 66% of its recruitment goals last year, and while the Marines, Air Force, and Space Force reached 100%, the overall rate is at 85%. This is not the only challenge faced by the military in maintaining readiness. Not only are enlistees unqualified for service, but the number of young people enlisting is diminishing.

In recent years (some would say particularly in the last 4) the trend in military training has been toward a more "holistic" approach. Some lawmakers have suggested that recruitment is down because the military is not a "safe space" for those who serve. Irony of ironies, don't you think? I can envision some future Trève de Noël where our emotional secure soldiers text back and forth with their enemies and try to help them get in touch with their feelings.

As far as diminishing physical fitness is concerned, it's easy to see where technology, if not a root cause, is certainly an enabler of the decline. I blame electricity.

My grandfather was tougher than me. His world was built by hand. He used a sling blade to cut weeds. My father's generation and my own used gasoline-powered trimmers. The young man of today, if he even cares to have any amount of ground where weeds might be a problem, uses a battery-powered electric trimmer.

Electric trimmers are great. They just work. You pick it up, slide in a battery and start cutting. You don't have to mix any gas and oil. You don't have to clean or rebuild the carburetor or change the spark plug or the air filter. There's no gas to turn to jelly if you forget to empty the gas tank in the fall.

Yesterday Tracey wanted some help trimming her flower garden, so I grabbed the trusty Kobalt, popped in a battery and set to work. Alas, the electric trimmer was not physically fit enough to overcome the armies of woody stems. It was too weak. The lighter gauge line used in electric trimmers shattered to pieces and after half a minute of trimming, it was down to nubs.

My state of readiness in the war on the weeds was dismal. All those small conflicts, helping little tufts of grass and patches of Creeping Charlie get in touch with their inner compost, had given me a false sense of security in thinking my battery-powered forces were sufficient to defend the farm. My frontline troops were unprepared. I had to call up the reserves, so I hiked down to the shed to retrieve the behemoth Husqvarna gas trimmer with the blade.

Only a Husqvarna could hang in a shed for two years unattended and have any hope of cranking again, but I could tell after a few pulls that it wanted to crank. It just needed a little help. The gas line had hardened in the tank and curled into a shape that raised the intake above the level of the gas. I didn't have a spare gas line, and I was burning daylight, so I held the intake down with a screwdriver and pumped the bulb, which allowed the trimmer to start and run a minute or two before repeating the process.

It took several repeats of this ritual, and many, many... many pulls on the cord to crank the machine again and again and again. My own physical state of readiness began to diminish rapidly, as anyone who has ever owned a two-cycle engine with a pull cord can understand.

Defeat seemed inevitable, but in a moment of inspiration I spied the solution to my problem hanging in the shop, the simple, elegant, low-tech "green" solution: The sling blade. Together we won the battle if not the war.

I don't know what the military will do to maintain a state of readiness against an array of enemies who are not in touch with their feelings and are driven by whatever demons pursue them. Technology is not a permanent defense against anger, fear and desperation when that technology is accompanied by complacency and ambivalence. The answer to these problems is above my pay grade, but what I can do is keep my sling blade sharpened.

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry

worldoutsidethebox.com

Letters To The Editor

Vote NO on SB390

Dear Sen. Bo Hatchett,

It has come to my attention that SB390 is currently being considered in the Georgia Senate that would eliminate the certification requirement for library directors of Georgia's public library systems. I am strongly opposed to SB390. I have a Master's Degree in Library and Information Sciences and was employed as a certificated public librarian in the State of Georgia for 25 years.

I am aware of the quality of Georgia's public libraries and the huge responsibility that the directors of our public library systems have to provide excellent library services to all citizens of the State. I also know that Georgia allocates over \$38 million to public libraries each year. I believe it is imperative that public library directors maintain the current level of education and certification by the State in order for Georgia's libraries to continue to be some of the best in the nation. I believe that the Georgia State Legislature should continue to maintain the highest levels of professionalism in our public library systems and to protect the yearly taxpayer investment.

I am an avid user of our public library and a member of the Friends of the Libraries of Towns County. I hope that you will join all of Georgia's citizens who care deeply about our public libraries by voting NO for SB390. Thank you for protecting the quality and reputation of our libraries!

Suzanne Carter

Poor Old Joe

Dear Editor,

During a recent campaign stop, old Joe Biden recounted a conversation he says he had with "Mitterrand of Germany" not long after he was elected President. This was most remarkable, for François Mitterrand was not "of Germany," he was president of France from 1981 to 1995, and he died in 1996. Old Joe's words are just the latest in a long string of gaffes that prove he is unfit for the presidency.

To correct the most recent gaffe, the official White House website replaced "Mitterrand" with "Macron." Apparently they wanted to hide the fact that Biden has the ability to communicate with the dead. Actually, this trait could be very advantageous to Old Joe. He could call up some great advice from the likes of Jefferson and Madison.

This is just another sign that the man is totally unfit to be president of the U.S. As long as he remains president, the weaker America appears and the more our enemies become more daring and adventurous. However, Biden's advisers have never shown any concern about that, and want to keep him in place for the next four years until he is 86 years old. Let's hope and pray that does not happen.

Tim Groza

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P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, 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.

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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	6 pm
YH City 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
TC Water Authority Board Meeting	6 pm

Towns County Herald

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