

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Our Values Under Siege

As the revelations out of Israel regarding the atrocious butchering of more than 1,300 innocent Jews grow increasingly disturbing, one may rightly ask why this is happening to a nation the Bible calls a "light unto the nations?" Over the years, people have offered many complicated answers to this problem, but the truth is simple. Some "human beings" want to snuff out the light so that they can be free to perpetrate evil in the darkness.

Hitler summed up pretty well the fundamental motivation behind antisemitism. He said, "Conscience is a Jewish invention" and that he was "freeing man from the restraints of an intelligence that has taken charge. . ." The Islamic terrorists who murdered whole families last week, who kidnapped, mutilated, and tortured Israelis, were rebelling against these same moral restraints.

Even more so, they were rebelling against the Word of G-d. It's no coincidence that last week Jews across the world were reading the opening lines of Genesis as part of a scheduled week-by-week reading of the Bible: "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth."

Rashi, the greatest commentator on the Torah asks, why does the Bible begin this way? He was puzzled because he knew G-d intended Scripture to offer moral guidelines, not a history lesson. Why then start with the story of Creation? His answer was that "if the nations of the world should say to Israel, 'You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations,' they will reply, 'The entire earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it . . . and gave it to whomever He deemed proper.'"

In other words, G-d begins the Bible the way He does because He wanted to make clear from the start that He created the world, and it was His to distribute as He liked, and He gave what became the Holy Land to the Jews, the people He chose to be a light unto the nations.

In the 20th century, first the British in the 1917 Balfour Declaration and then the United Nations in 1947 authorized a Jewish nation in Israel, but it was not in 1948 that Israel was truly founded. It was closer to 1,948 years after the Creation, when Abraham was born, that the Jews got their real charter.

When Abraham arrived in the land of Canaan, . . . the Lord

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Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger

Unadulterated Evil

President Biden got it right. He used theological words in condemning the attack on Israel.

"You know, there are moments in this life when the pure, unadulterated evil is unleashed on this world," he said. "The people of Israel lived through one such moment this weekend. The bloody hands of the terrorist organization Hamas — a group whose stated purpose for being is to kill Jews. This was an act of sheer evil." His enumerated list of atrocities in that speech was not the end of the carnage.

Another world leader agrees with Biden's characterization of the pogrom against Jews. "These innocents were killed for one single reason — for being Jewish and living in the State of Israel," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. "It is an ancient evil, which reminds us of the darkest past and shocks all of us to the core."

Atheist Richard Dawkins doesn't agree with the language of evil. In the past he wrote, "The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference." No evil? Really? The irony is that we do see design, purpose, evil and good in the universe. Isn't that evidence for a Creator?

Of course it is. To call something "evil" is to assume the existence of a moral law. If no moral law exists, defining evil can only be an opinion or a preference. But when informed people condemn acts of violence as unadulterated evil, they appeal to a universal moral law embedded in the human soul. It defies logic that a material universe could produce such a sense of right, wrong, and justice. So, you must conclude that the presence of a moral law implies a moral lawgiver who stands apart from the material universe. Now you are looking into the face of God, your Creator, who wired you to know good and evil, right and wrong. God is the moral lawgiver. So when you call something "evil" you are using the language of God. If there is no God, then the best you can offer is a pitiless opinion about what terrorists and their sup-

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler

Commissioner's Questions

The following questions/answers illustrate your property taxes at work to help make Union County a safer and more affordable environment in which to live.

We feel that Union County has one of the best rural fire departments in Georgia. We have a total of 18 paid firefighters working for you with six on shift 24/7 — all day and every night — plus a firefighter in Suches working five days a week. In addition, we have approximately 60 dedicated volunteer firefighters that donate much of their time and effort to assist the public and are constantly taking additional training to improve their skills. Our fire department responds to approximately 2400 calls per year — all in an effort to make Union County one of the safest counties in which to live.

Q. When dealing with our homeowner's fire insurance what does ISO mean?

A. ISO stands for "Insurance Service Office". This is a for-profit organization that provides statistical information on fire risk for insurance companies nationwide. They examine each community or county, usually on a four or five-year cycle. They assign a Public Protection Cycle (PPC™) rating that insurers use for underwriting and to calculate premiums for fire insurance. It is based on ISO's Fire Suppression Class Schedule (FSRS).

Q. When was Union County last surveyed for ISO (PPC™) fire rating?

A. Union County was surveyed in January of 2021. Union County Fire Department, Union County E911 Communications, City of Blairsville Water Department, Notla Water Authority and Coosa Water Authority were all proud to announce that Union County's PPC™ class remained at 4/4Y. The PPC™ ranges from class 10 (worst) to class 1 (best).

Q. What agencies are examined and to what extent by ISO?

The E-911 dispatch center, which makes up 10% of the survey, was evaluated for equipment, personnel, and training. The water departments, which make up 40% of the survey, were evaluated for hydrants, water pipes, supply, and usage. The fire department, which makes up 50% of the survey, was evaluated on

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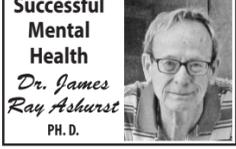


Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris

Problems III

Carrie and Crystal were identical twins of fourteen. Their parents claimed that they were being driven to the "loony bin" by their daughters having constant babbling disagreements. The twins had a hysterical sense of humor. They would feed off of one another and drive their parents up the anxiety wall. However, their twins were charming and delightful.

When some issues became aggravating to them, their humor became priceless. Their issues were simple: each had not yet learned to mind her own particular affairs and to refrain from involving herself with the issues of the other sister. Cassie believed that she was totally responsible to take Crystal's problems as if they were hers and vice-versa. Because their daily problems became such a hodgepodge, solving issues for the other sister, hurt feelings, distress, and anxiety would always take place, day after day. Each girl was assuming that the problems belonging to the other was hers to solve. It be-



Successful Mental Health
Dr. James Ray Ashurst
PH. D.

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Letters to the Editor

The Farmers Market

Dear Editor,
Now that the season is coming to an end, we want to give a "shout out" to the wonderful Union County Farmers Market and all the folks who make it such a special place.

For several years we have made it a regular Saturday event to join so many others at the market. The quality of the produce, the crafts, the food — everything coming together to make it a truly enjoyable experience and one that should make everyone proud of what they have accomplished.

From the moment we arrive with our doggie Riley and drop him off at the Humane Society booth, through the many visits we have with the vendors, it is always a wonderful time. And the people: they are a special part of our North Georgia communities. From the farmers bringing in their produce, the craftspeople, the honey, the popcorn, the biscotti, the coffee, the hot sauce, the alpaca clothing and rugs, and so much more!

We never lack for meeting new friends, some of whom have become close friends. It always starts with a smile and a simple "Hello!", and the stories pour forth — from past experiences to their vision of their crafts, even a long discussion about tomato, mayo, and white bread sandwiches (nothing compares to a well-made tomato sandwich!!!!). And let's not forget the truckloads of corn when it is in season!

Congratulations to all those who make it happen every Saturday for creating something special here in North Georgia, from the county for building and maintaining a terrific property and opportunity, to the vendors for their commitment every weekend during the summer and the quality of what they bring to the market, and to the visitors who share in the experience.

Everyone involved should be proud of what you have accomplished, and we look forward to many more years of enjoyment on our Saturday mornings!

Len Lichtenfeld

County Commissioner

Dear Editor,
Just curious, why do these petitioners want five commissioners? Don't they know that means five salaries, five offices, five secretaries, five sets of computers and office supplies and equipment?

Most of us think that Commissioner Paris is doing a great job!

Tom Bunten

Letters to the Editor

20 Months Later

Dear Editor,
20 months! That's how long it's been since Putin began his full-scale barbarous assault on Ukraine. The U.N. Commission of Human Rights has verified that as of September 2023 over 9,600 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and over 17,600 injured, many of them children, in unprovoked targeted Russian attacks in clear violation of international humanitarian law. Many more have lost their homes and are refugees. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers on both sides, all of whom have grieving families, have been killed or maimed in this needless war.

At the beginning of the invasion, Putin thought the war would be over in a matter of days. He underestimated the determination of the Ukrainian people who are willing to fight to regain their peaceful way of life under a democratically elected government. He also underestimated the strong bipartisan support of the United States and European allies in helping Ukraine defend itself from Russian aggression.

While the United States and its allies focus on defensive objectives, the emerging partnership of Russia, China, and North Korea seeks autocratic dominance of other countries. The threat to democracy from this emerging Russian/Chinese/North Korean alliance should be taken very seriously.

After 20 months of unrelenting fighting Putin is running low on ammunition and other military supplies and is courting ties with other countries with records of human rights violations, such as North Korea and China. This is a dangerous turn!

In September 2023, the North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un spent six days with Putin in

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Sorghum Festival

Dear Union County Residents,
We know many of you have been out of town on Union County Schools Fall Break, so don't forget to come out to the Sorghum Festival this weekend.

As a big "thank you" to all Union County residents, visit the festival after 12 p.m. this Sunday, Oct. 22, for half-price. Children under 12 are free.

Tommy Townsend, local icon, will be on the stage at Meeks Park at 2 p.m. and he would love to see you come out and join him for Union County Day.

All you need to do is bring an ID that shows your Union County address (Driver's License or School ID) and we'll only charge you half price to get in.

Fran Parks

Things We Take For Granted

We all have things in life that we take for granted. These items have always been around and we assume they will always be around.

For example, I remember a little school house I attended where grades one through three and then grades four through six were all in the same room. It was the same school my Dad attended as a boy.

My second-grade teacher was my Grandfather's cousin. When Mrs. Cummings called me by both my first and second name, I knew I was in trouble. I can still hear her asking, "Mickey Paul, do I need to talk to your Grand Daddy about your behavior?" I have a lot of fond memories of that school house, and now it is in a state of decay.

I remember riding on the bus with a bunch of other kids from our community. I think Edith Ann was the oldest girl on the bus, and a boy named Steven had a crush on her. Sometimes they would sit next to each other, and it was a comical sight, because Edith Ann was about a foot taller than the boy.

Papa drove the bus, and every Friday he would stop at Eb Trapp's Country Store. He always took enough money to pay for each kid a cold drink. After everyone finished their drinks, they placed their trash in a little box at the front of the bus. I cannot remember ever seeing any trash on the floor of the bus. Everyone understood that it was our duty to place the trash in the box.

I remember a little white church house where the only means of keeping cool were two ceiling fans and opening the windows.

I remember dinners on the ground and all-day singings. I remember going to singing schools and revival meetings. There was a musically gifted young man who played the piano at the church named Ronnie Thomas. I would place his talent up against anyone playing the piano.

Each Sunday, the last song of the service, before the sermon, was the kids' song. The song leader, Fred McMurray, would invite all the kids to come forward to sing a song. Debbie was a participant in that song, and as she came forward, she noticed a problem. You should understand Debbie was a fixer. If she noticed a problem, she immediately tried to fix the problem.

The problem she noticed that day was that Fred's pants were unzipped and his shirt tail was poking out of his fly. She placed her

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Streambank Stabilization

We are very fortunate to live in a part of the country that has plenty of water. Water is important for a number of reasons. Obviously, we need water for drinking. Wildlife and livestock need water too. Plants need water to live. We also use water for a number of different purposes. Fishing, boating, and electricity generation are all uses of water. Because water is so important I think everyone generally recognizes the importance of taking care of water.

Today I want to write on how individuals can protect water that flows through their property. The biggest thing that property owners can do is to establish a buffer. On trout streams in north Georgia there are restrictions on building or clearing land within 50 feet. The purpose of this is to reduce the sediment that gets into the water. The bigger you can make your buffer the better it will do at trapping and filtering materials that would otherwise get into the water. Sediment getting into the water is very detrimental to the quality of the water. Sediment can carry all kinds of things from fertilizers to pesticides to litter. Anything that enters the water ends up downstream. Sediment will make the water cloudier and affect the availability of oxygen in the water. Cloudy streams with no rocks in the bottom do a very poor job of supporting the insects and bugs that live in the water. Fish rely on those critters as a food source.

So how do you create a buffer? At its best a buffer consists of trees and brush alongside the river. It's best if those plants are native plants and not invasive. Native plants do a much better job fitting into the ecosystem that surrounds and supports the stream. Some plants that make a for a good buffer are red maple, pawpaw, elderberry, river birch, and nine bark. You want to plant things that are well adapted to wet soils. Fall is a great time to plant these trees and shrubs. Planting in the fall and winter allows those plants to set their roots and get established before the summer.

In the summer, the plant's root system will be taxed to draw up the water needed by the plant, so any lead time we can give plants to prepare for that will benefit them. Even in the mountains plant roots will still grow some during the winter, enabling them to become established.

There are some plants that can be live staked into stream banks. Nine bark and elderberry are some examples. To live stake, you just take cuttings in the fall that are 6-12 inches long and put them in wet banks. These plants

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

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apparatus, equipment, training, station placement, response times, and the number of firefighters on scene of structure fires. Union County is very proud of our Fire Department, both paid and volunteer as well as our E911 Communications Center!!

Q. What does lowering or in this case maintaining of the ISO or PPC rating mean to the homeowner?

A. The lowering of the ISO/ PPC rating could mean lower insurance rates for home and business owners. Although there are many factors that make up the insurance rates, the lowering of the PPC™ can contribute to the reduction of the overall insurance premium. It is up to the individual insurance companies to determine premiums, and not all are affected the same. If you have a question, contact your insurance company to make sure you are being rated properly. You can call the Union County Fire Department to confirm your ISO rating.

Q. What are the exact numbers we need to know to discuss this issue with our insurance company?

A. If a building or home is located within five road miles of a fire station and has a fire hydrant within 1000 feet, it is considered a class 4 in Union County. If a building or home

is located within five road miles of a fire station and there is NO fire hydrant within 1000 feet, it is a class 4Y (formally class 8B). All homes or buildings beyond five road miles of a fire station are classified as class 10.

Q. What are some of the major fire protection factors considered within a county?

A. The major elements that are considered in the FSRS are emergency communications, fire department, and water supply. It also has added a Community Risk Reduction section that recognizes community efforts through the fire department to reduce losses through fire prevention, public fire safety education, and fire investigation.

Q. When will Union County be surveyed again for ISO ratings?

A. The last new ISO rating took effect on August 1, 2021. ISO expects to survey Union County's fire suppression efforts every 3-4 years or sooner if there have been any major changes to the dispatch center, fire department or water systems. Union County Fire Department works continuously to maintain and improve Union County's ISO PPC™ class. Union County Fire Department – Our Family Protecting Your Family.

Hambourger... continued from Page 4A

appeared to him and said, "I will assign this land to your offspring." Ultimately, this is the Jew's true claim to the Land of Israel, one that is accepted by anyone who accepts the Bible, including billions of Christians, Muslims, and adherents of other religions.

But, again, it's not about territory. Throughout history people from the ancient Egyptians to the Amalekites, to the Romans, to the Crusaders, to Nazi Germany have attempted to destroy the Jewish people wherever they lived. Even now, Hamas, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Mullahs in Iran are calling for attacks on Jews not just in Israel but throughout the world. But every time, the Jewish people have endured and emerged victorious.

What has kept the Jews going? The answer is found in the Haggadah, the Passover prayerbook that contains the lines, "It is this (faith in G-d) that has stood by our ancestors and us. More than one enemy has risen up against us to destroy us. Rather, in every generation they rise against us to annihilate us. The Holy One, blessed be He, however, saves us from their hand."

Hamas doesn't just want to rid the Middle East of Jews, it doesn't just want to rid the world of the light of Judaism, but of the light of G-d, Himself. And if you read the accounts of the atrocities they committed, you will see what the result of a world without that light would be.

And don't be fooled. It's not just the Jews such people want to eradicate. They want to destroy anyone who stands in the way of their animalistic desires. For them, "in the be-

ginning" means start with the Jews, but it doesn't end there. Like Hitler's war, Hamas' war is not a war against the Jews per se but against Jewish and Christian values, the values upon which Western Culture was built. You can see that in their butchery of the 250 peace-loving young people attending a music festival celebrating idealistic, humanist values, in the Negev desert near Gaza.

How, then, can we, as G-d fearing and loving individuals respond? How can we combat the hate directed against the moral foundation of Western Culture?

Judaism maintains that the purpose of creation is to create a dwelling place for G-d in this physical world. The land of Israel, the place that G-d chose as the Holy Land, is the focal point of that dwelling place. It is the place from which light will grow—or darkness spread. So, we must support the defense of Israel.

But we should also cultivate spiritual light wherever we are by recommitting to G-d's blueprint, the Bible, by practicing the moral system it lays out for us. Live your life to the fullest, not by indulging the animal within, but by liberating your holiness within. Be kind. Be thoughtful. Create a dwelling place for G-d in your heart and in your home and share the light with others.

This article was co-authored by Thomas P. Balazs.

I would love to hear your thoughts on this week's column. Please email me at yonatan@chabadruralgeorgia.com.

*Wishing you G-d's abundant blessings,
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger*

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

came a disaster!

Being joined at the hip was an understatement. Cassie and Crystal were not free to deal effectively with their own issues without the well-meaning interference from the other. It looked much like a circus of performers who were all over the place, in one another's lives, trying to reach solutions to conflicts that belonged to the other. In addition, at times, the twins would try to wander into the issues facing their parents. Two fourteen-year-olds who believed, in a non-confrontational way, that they were fully capable of solving adult issues.

Once again, the emphasis is to know whose problem is it that you are wanting to solve. If you are dealing with issues

that belong to someone else in which that person is fully qualified to face, solve, and move on, then back away! You have a choice. You can absolutely STOP moseying into the Corral of others, thus causing a stampede. It's entirely your mature choice.

Suggestions: Even when invited into the space of another, seek the Lord's insights and guidance.

Stay closely in touch with your own feelings and thoughts to know what to say and to know when to stop.

Think, think, think before you give your advice to someone else.

Always ask yourself the question: "Is this my problem or not?"

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have the ability to root and grow from a simple cutting. After they have grown for a couple of years you can take cuttings from them to spread around.

Grass does not work well as a buffer. It is better than nothing, but does not slow water to help with water infiltration near as well as trees and shrubs. Most grass roots are not deep enough to hold a bank in place. It also does not help nearly as much to support the ecology of the stream. In the same regard rocks or rip rap don't work as well because they don't slow water down or assist with infiltration.

If you have questions about protecting streams

you can contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. Mountain True works in Towns and Union and are also a great resource to help protect streams.

2024 Board of Health Meetings

Meeting Location:
Union County Health Department
67 Chase Drive
Blairsville, GA 30512
11 AM

January 24, 2024

April 24, 2024

July 24, 2024

October 23, 2024

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

song book on the ground and tried to zip up Fred's pants. He was trying to lead the song and maintain his composure at the same time. He turned his body away from the little girl. He walked away from her and yet she followed.

Each time he turned she turned, and when he walked away, she followed. The song never stopped, and Fred continued keeping time with one arm and holding the song book with the other. Finally, Aunt June was able to pick up her sister and walk to their seats.

But, Ronnie Thomas kept playing and couldn't understand why the whole congregation laughed during the kids' song. Meanwhile, Fred McMurray maintained his composure. He continued keeping time for the song with one arm and holding the song book with the other. Nobody remembered the sermon that day, but everyone remembered Debbie.

At that time there was only one generation of Cummings buried at the cemetery.

Now, the church is a

brick building with central air and heat and there are four generations of my relatives buried in the cemetery.

I remember moving to Union County, and there were a bunch of farmers I remember coming to our educational meetings. Many of these farmers have since passed on.

But, I always assumed they would be with us. I miss seeing and talking with these farmers. They were more than farmers. They were hard-working, good and honest people that made my life happier.

What I am trying to say is make sure you are thankful for people and things in your life. Because life changes so fast, those people and things could be a memory tomorrow.

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secret talks and visiting Russian military sites and research labs. On live TV at one of Russia's largest Spaceports, Kim promised "full and unconditional support for all measures taken by the Russian government." Analysts fear arms transfer deals between the two countries in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions. Citing the "intensification of U.S. military threats," Kim is working to enlarge his arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Xi Jinping of China met with Putin at the Kremlin in March 2023, and Putin recently announced that he will meet with Xi in China in October. In April Putin met with the Chinese Defense Minister in Moscow where they discussed military cooperation and a "no limits" relationship. Economic and political ties between the

two countries have strengthened during the past 20 months. Russia has become cash-strapped while China, the world's second largest economy, is providing Russians with goods such as helmets, drones, radios, and other items with potential military use. U.S. security analysts are deeply concerned about this alignment of China with Russia, two countries that have repeatedly committed crimes against humanity.

President Biden has firmly stated that the United States will stand with Ukraine and do whatever it takes to support the Ukrainian fight to maintain their independence. Let us continue working together in a bipartisan manner with our allies to stand up to Putin, not cozy up to him and his fellow brutal dictators!

Martha Miller

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porters do.

Jesus, God the Son, came to this earth to overcome suffering and evil. That's why the cross is such good news for you about life. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy," Jesus said. "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

What a contrast between the one who kills and the One who gives eternal life! And if unadulterated, sheer, ancient evil continues like the world has seen of late, God help us. Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus.

Chamber...**continued from Page 4A**

Then, end the day with time with family and friends around the firepit roasting your favorite smores combination. Whether you like your marshmallows lightly toasted or crispy, there's no better time spent than a day in the mountains.

If you want to share our beautiful mountains with friends and family, go to the Chamber website and have them scroll down to the community webcams.

This is a great way to share the changing leaves or the downtown activities.

Remember, you help make Life Better in Blairsville!