

Joy Breaks Barriers

Joy Breaks Barriers This Troubled Holiday Season

By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

As the holiday season approaches, many of us eagerly anticipate the warm embrace of joy and happiness that typically accompanies this time of year.



Echos from Sinai Torah for Everyone Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger

Holiday cheer is the typical sentiment that defines the month of December, but for countless people, finding joy and happiness this year feels heavier and more challenging than ever.

And yet we must. We must find that mental bandwidth to celebrate our traditional holidays guilt-free, because only with joy and purpose can we overcome any challenge or adversity.

Let's explore the importance of joy in Judaism, where the need to be happy is emphasized in many scriptures and teachings: Deuteronomy 28 warns the Jews of dire consequences if they do not serve G-d with happiness and gladness of heart.

And finally in the daily morning prayer, we are commanded to "serve God with joy," as mentioned in Psalm 100. This commandment reminds us that joy is an integral part of our service to G-d.

The answer is simple: Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi in his

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Listen Carefully

I would like to offer you a New Year's resolution. It may be the single most powerful change agent in your life. It is simply, listen to God.

The new House Speaker Mike Johnson says he does. "I am a Bible-believing Christian," he said. To know how he thinks about issues, "Go pick up a Bible off your shelf and read it. That's my worldview."



All Things New Wayne Fowler

If you see the difference between Maher's straw man argument about homicidal insanity and the life-giving habit of listening to God, then there's hope for you.

The Bible tells the story of God revealing Himself to humans. You can't know someone if they don't talk to you. So, immediately after creating humans in His image, God spoke to them (Gen. 1:28).

The pinnacle of God speaking to humans happened when He stepped into creation as a man. "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son...through whom also He made the world" (Heb. 1:1-2).

Being made in God's image means having a mind to receive His thoughts. All day long you process thoughts from various sources, which you either ignore, dismiss, or adopt.

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Commissioner's Questions

As is customary, instead of doing questions and answers this week, I would like to do an end-of-year recap and talk a little about our community and the people in it.

If you really sit down and think about it, the people of our community are the ones that make things happen. For example, the recent Christmas Parade was organized by the Historical Society and the Downtown Development Authority.



Q & A from Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris

There are so many other things this year that demonstrate the wonderful people who live in our community: there are new stores opening and established businesses moving to newer and better locations; there are non-profits out and about all the time.

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Divider-in-Chief

For the last three years, President Biden has intentionally sowed division in our nation. The most powerful example of the Biden Administration's callous agenda is now unfolding just outside of Washington.

In the coming days, the Biden Administration intends to remove the Reconciliation Monument from Arlington National Cemetery. The monument was erected in 1914 to commemorate reconciliation and national unity after the Civil War.

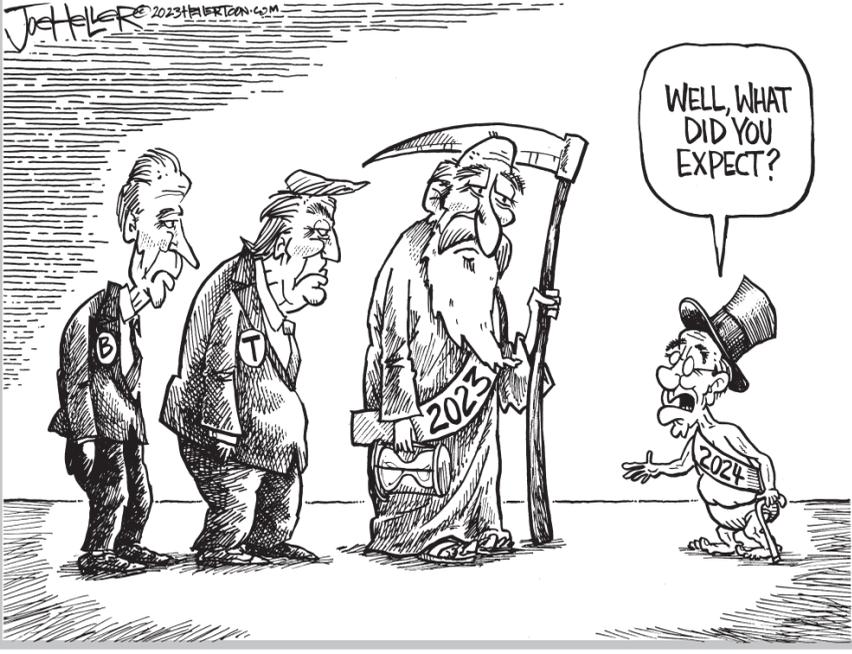


United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde

As evidenced by its obsession with removing the Reconciliation Monument, the Biden Administration doesn't want peace, unity, and reconciliation; they want discord, division, and destruction.

The Biden Administration's disastrous decision to remove the Reconciliation Monument was made possible by the infamous Naming Commission.

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Chamber of Commerce

The new year is just around the corner, but before we go there, let's take a minute to take time to enjoy what remains of 2023. What better way to do that than to enjoy the natural beauty of the mountains? The final days of this year are the perfect opportunity to get outside and breathe in that crisp, refreshing air as you hike and explore the waterfalls.



Blairsville - Union County Chamber President Steve Rowe

one of our amazing local shops? Nothing says new year better than a shopping spree for that fabulous new outfit or that gift that was left off Santa's list. And when you're ready for a break, head to one of our vineyards to relax with a glass of wine or at a coffee shop with a cup of joe.

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Letters to the Editor

A New Year

Dear Editor,

A new year is coming. Are you happy with how the country is going? Are you happy how the state is doing? Are you happy with how this county is doing?

If you are not paying attention, you need to. Yes, it is depressing, but doing nothing is no longer an option. You cannot stand there, you must become an activist. No, I don't mean marching in the street or blocking roads or waving signs, but you can do something from your armchair if that's your physical limitation.

You must do something to help the fight to take back this country. People fought and died for this country. You must not refuse to get involved.

Take a deep breath and follow the news, from different news sites, not the same ones all

See Lausier, page 7A

Repeal Certificate of Need Laws

Dear Editor,

Clarity from leaders is a wonderful thing. It shows they know what they want to do, and that they have the courage of their convictions to explain it plainly.

Clarity is evident in the final report of the Georgia Senate's Study Committee on Certificate of Need Reform, chaired by Sen. Greg Dolezal, R-Cumming. The directive is short and sweet: "the Study Committee recommends that Georgia's CON laws should be repealed in their entirety."

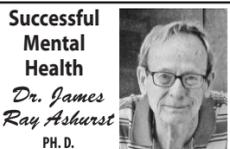
Similarly clear is the committee's concise summary of its findings justifying that recommendation: "Based upon the testimony, research presented, and information received, the (committee) has found that the problem which Georgia's CON laws were intended to combat no longer exists. The CON process is used by market incumbents to prevent competition and deny patients the benefits therefrom. The CON laws prevent the citizens of Georgia from benefiting from advances in healthcare delivery, especially in rural communities."

Let's go to all that, too. Amen. Similarly clear is the committee's concise summary of its findings justifying that recommendation: "Based upon the testimony, research presented, and information received, the (committee) has found that the problem which Georgia's CON laws were intended to combat no longer exists. The CON process is used by market incumbents to prevent competition and deny patients the benefits therefrom. The CON laws prevent the citizens of Georgia from benefiting from advances in healthcare delivery, especially in rural communities."

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Expectations III

Expectations can be a major problem in relationships. In a relationship, there is a difference in expectations and responsibilities. Sometimes I hear the following: "I'll end up doing everything in the relationship if I end the expectations and trust the responsibility side." When this happens, a meeting of the minds and emotions needs to occur. If that doesn't produce positive results, bring in a third, objective person to referee. If nothing seems to work to get that person to be responsible, then go ahead and do the responsibilities yourself - if you plan to remain in the relationship, whether it's a friendship or marriage. Yes, yourself? It'll be far better in the long run than hoping your expectations will become a reality. Warning: if you are saddled in carrying out all the responsibilities, you need to be on guard that bitterness, anger, and resentment do not home-stead in your psyche because they will certainly try.



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

Warning to those who are not carrying your own weight in a relationship: Don't think for one little moment that the responsible one will continue doing what you don't. Relationships like those die on the vine. Healthy relationships demand more than just one person doing the "maintenance" work. All types of relationships must have a balance, and the balance requires responsibilities on each person... but not expectations!

This life skill (expectations) is one of the most difficult to master. It may take days, months, and perhaps years to incorporate this life skill into your everyday lifestyle. Becoming free of expectations may become a day-by-day challenge. Expectations continue to creep in, unannounced, unwanted, and certainly unbelievable at times. Whether we are waiting on a phone call, sitting in a doctor's office, hurrying through traffic, or needing our vehicle serviced, we must acknowledge the challenge of having no expectations - at times we will succeed and at other times, we will fail. We cannot measure expectations by how small, large, important, or crucial they might be. Expectations are expectations!

You and I can STOP having expectations towards others in our arena. However, it will require the super strength of Superman, the delicate finesse of Snow White, the sheer determination of Cinderella, and the enduring patience of Job.

Extraordinary people do the ordinary things extraordinarily well even when doing them ordinary is good enough. -Coach Rick Robinson

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People 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. It was the same school my Dad attended as a boy. My second grade teacher was my Grandfather's cousin. When she called me by both my first and second name I knew I was in trouble. I have a lot of fond memories of that school house, and now it is in a state of decay.



Around The Farm Mickey Cummings

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. 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 there.

This time last year my parents were still with us. However, last spring we lost them as well as my mother-in-law. I can remember taking my parents to a UGA Football Game. It was Labor Day weekend in 1987 or '88. As we walked into the stadium my wife was carrying a big goody bag and the guard waved us through. However, my mother was only carrying small purse. The guard motioned her to the side and searched the contents of her purse. My father said, "If you are looking for smuggled liquor, you do not have to worry, because I am a Baptist Preacher." The guard looked at Dad and told him that he'd heard that excuse before.

We climbed three or four flights of stairs to our seats and sat down. Two students came and sat down beside Mom and complained about the heat. One also declared that he was thirsty. Mom agreed, and the student pulled off his binoculars and unscrewed the cap. He then offered Mom a drink. After her initial shock she declined. By the beginning of the third quarter the Dawgs were behind and this student was well inebriated. Finally, with 1 minute and 35 seconds left in the game UGA blocked a punt and fell on the ball in the end zone to go ahead by 4 points. The crowd of 93,000 people went wild. People were hugging each other and the stands were rocking. Meanwhile this drunken student grabs my Mom, dips her like he was on a ballroom dance floor and kisses her right on the mouth. Mom never went to another football game with me again.

A few years back I took Dad down to Athens to watch UGA and Georgia Tech play

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Plan Ahead

Winter provides some down time from the garden each year. If you have been a gardener for a long time you may be using the winter months to plan ahead and select which varieties you're going to grow next year. You could be planning some additions or trying to figure out how to make your garden more successful next year. The best gardens are ones that were planned out thoughtfully to try and mitigate problems before they happen. Every gardener will tell you that you learn something new each year. Trying to incorporate each year's lesson into next year's garden will help you plan for success. Let's talk about some tips to plan your garden next year.



Watching and Working Jacob Williams

If this is going to be your first garden, or your first garden in the red clays of Georgia, I would encourage you to start small. Sometimes we think that for it to be worth it, you need to plant a big garden. I would argue that a small garden that makes you happy is worth more than a big garden that you dread. If you start small you can always increase the size of the garden next year.

If this is going to be your first garden or you are expanding an existing garden think about how you're going to water it. Some years we have plenty of rain and water is not an issue, but if you have young plants you will most likely need to water them at some point. If you can put in irrigation that's great. If you're going to water by hand and the spigot is far away, think about how much time it's going to take to water.

Weeds are the bane of every gardener. Try to plan ahead about how you're going to take care of weeds. Can you put mulch down? How about landscape fabric? Will you be using the Santa Claus method (hoe, hoe, hoe)? Planning ahead to control weeds can save you a lot of time in the long run.

Make sure that you put the right plant in the right place. Planning the layout based on sunlight, moisture, and space requirements lends itself to long term success. If you're planting trees or shrubs think about where they will cast shade as they grow and mature. Will they begin to shade out other plants? Will they have enough space in that spot? Not all annuals grow to be the same size. In a vegetable garden where sunlight is limited think about how tall corn or pole beans will get. Will they shade out plants below them?

A soil test is a good idea for any garden, but in particular if you are breaking new ground. The pH of the soil, and the nutrients in the soil will have a huge impact on how successful your garden is. Take 8-10 random subsamples from

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raising money for their organizations to help people; there are often benefits organized for people in our community who need assistance; and people are always volunteering to take on new projects to fill a need within our community.

So, I want to say thank you to all of the Union County citizens for making Union

County and Blairsville the best place to live. Your dedication to community and dedication to each other is unsurpassed as far as I am concerned. I want to wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I am excited about 2024 and all the great things that will be happening in our community.

## Clyde... continued from Page 6A

established by the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to recommend the removal of “all names, symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederate States of America.” Notably, President Trump vetoed the FY21 NDAA due to concerns about the Naming Commission and its attempts to rewrite history – yet the Uni-party overrode his veto.

In the years following this misguided move, the U.S. Army has implemented the Naming Commission’s recommendations, including the renaming of numerous military installations. As you know, they even attempted to rename our own Lake Lanier and Buford Dam, as these are the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ civil works projects. But so far, we have successfully stopped these efforts. Yet the Commission also recommended the removal of the Arlington Reconciliation Monument – but the memorial doesn’t meet the key criteria for this ill-advised guidance.

First and foremost, the Reconciliation Monument does not commemorate the Confederacy; it commemorates national unity. Furthermore, the Naming Commission’s authority explicitly prohibits the desecration of grave sites. Considering the hundreds of gravestones encircling the monument and the four grave sites at the base of the memorial, it would be impossible for these graves to remain untouched. Undoubtedly, the removal of the monument alone constitutes a desecration of these graves.

Due to my sincere concerns with the Naming Commission’s flawed recommendation to remove the Reconciliation Monument in spite of these facts, I introduced an amendment to the FY24

Defense Appropriations bill to prohibit funds from being used to dismantle the memorial. The full House passed my amendment by voice, with no opposition. Shortly after, we passed the entire Defense Appropriations bill – with bipartisan support – in September.

Since Congress is still considering this single-subject spending bill, I led over 40 of my House Republican colleagues in urging the Department of Defense to halt its plans to remove the monument until the FY24 appropriations process is complete. I strongly believe that the Department of Defense must comply with this request or risk disrespecting and violating the principle of separation of powers between Congress and the Executive, outlined in the Constitution.

Yet on Friday, December 15th, the Secretary of the Army responded to my letter confirming that the U.S. Army intends to remove the Reconciliation Monument by the January 1st, 2024, deadline – citing the severely flawed FY21 NDAA. Over the last few days, crews have started setting up to carry out this despicable effort at Arlington National Cemetery. But thankfully, they have been temporarily prevented from executing the Biden Administration’s vile efforts.

Yesterday, a Trump-appointed Judge, Rossie Alston Jr., issued a temporary restraining order, halting the removal of the Reconciliation Monument at Arlington National Cemetery pending further court action.

This was a major win – but our fight is far from over.

Please know that I will continue closely monitoring the situation and doing everything in my power to protect the Arlington Reconciliation Monument. Because our nation, our history, and our unity are worth fighting for.

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seminal work The Tanya explains that serving G-d without joy indicates a lack of faith. If someone is upset about their situation, and falls into a melancholic funk (excluding mental health conditions), they are in effect questioning the plan that G-d has for them.

In the midst of those “curve balls” which life throws at us, mustering the faith that it is G-d who has custom-made our challenges out of His love for us, invariably leads to joy, which is the secret to overcoming any challenge. The Jewish motto of “joy breaks all boundaries” endures, while negativity and pessimism lead to apathy, paralysis, and the abdication of personal responsibility.

This holiday season – precisely when the world feels dark and confusing – is a time for reflection, gratitude, and joy.

It’s a time to thank G-d for and rejoice in the blessings that we have been granted – our families, our homes, our communities and other blessings we typically take for granted – and make an

effort to share those blessings with others less fortunate than ourselves. Practicing this gratitude and taking stock of all the good things in our lives, while engaging in acts of service and community, will foster a sense of contentment and joy while making our challenges seem trivial and easily fixable in relation to all the positive things going on. Embracing traditional celebrations with family and friends can serve as an anchor in these troubled days.

Joy is not a mere fleeting emotion but a profound state of being that sustains us through adversity. It serves as a beacon of hope in the darkest of times, reminding us that even in the midst of turmoil we can find light and purpose. By embracing joy and gratitude, we can overcome the long winter darkness, together.

*Yonatan Hambourger is an Atlanta-based rabbi with Chabad of Rural Georgia teaching the richness of Judaism, while Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer currently residing in New York.*

## Wingfield... continued from Page 6A

These laws block not only new hospitals from being built, but new surgery centers, imaging centers, childbirth facilities and others. In a state where access to care is lacking, these laws stand in the way of making care more accessible and affordable. Given all that, what exactly was the problem CON laws were supposed to address, and why does it no longer exist?

State CON laws came from a federal mandate in the 1970s. At the time, Washington largely picked up the tab for new hospital facilities and pricey medical equipment, and it wanted to ensure it was spending tax dollars wisely. Officials also worried that more facilities would lead to more care being provided unnecessarily – that “in an insured population, a hospital bed built is a hospital bed filled.”

But that’s not how we finance new healthcare facilities anymore, and Congress repealed its mandate for states to have CON laws in 1986. Yet, most states still maintain these laws.

So the problem CON laws were meant to solve no longer plagues us. Today, private capital backs most proposed new facilities. Why not let investors invest?

Defenders of CON laws like to say the healthcare industry is different from others, that it wouldn’t be economically viable for hospitals and other providers to compete with one another rather than focusing on their patients. But the only reason this even seems true is the

existence of CON laws.

If any other industry had laws protecting its members from new entrants, that industry, too, would argue that its economics didn’t allow for more providers. It might even adopt some of the same practices – such as opaque pricing and aggressive vertical consolidation – that make healthcare appear to be a vulnerable industry. The arguments in defense of CON are circular.

All of this denies patients the benefits of healthcare advances, particularly in rural communities. It has become so expensive and time-consuming to file a CON application that the bar for even trying to build something new has become too high. Rural communities don’t offer the critical mass of potential patients to make an application worth the risk. And it’s not as if CON laws have prevented a spate of rural hospital closings over the past decade-plus.

So, rather than protecting what rural communities have, CON laws mostly just make it less likely they’ll get anything new.

The Senate passed a modest CON repeal bill earlier this year, only to see it idle in the House. The House also has a CON study committee this year, and its report is due soon. If it has the same inspired clarity as the Senate’s report, Georgia patients may finally get some new options.

**Kyle Wingfield**  
Georgia Public Policy  
Foundation  
President & CEO

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on the 71st last Saturday of November. Dad’s foot was injured so I left him at the Arches and went to park the car. About 20 minutes later I met him back at where I had left him. I asked if he was OK to which he told me that he’d had a little excitement. I listened to his explanation.

Apparently, two men had bumped into each other and spilled beer upon each other. One man was much larger than the other and was about to punch the smaller one when Dad intervened. He told the bigger fellow that his boss would not like it if this fellow punched the smaller man. The man asked my Dad, “Who is your boss?” Dad said, “I am a preacher and my boss is God.” The bigger fellow turned and walked away.

Over the past few years we have not attended many games due to Dad’s health. When a UGA game was on TV and a great play happened, Dad would always call me immediately after the play.

I must confess that I am very intense during a UGA game. And I would always get a little frustrated with Dad calling wanting to talk about a specific play. But now I would love to receive one of those phone calls.

Mother also told me a story about when I was very young. The old house we lived in was just a clapboard old house with no insulation. My first winter was a cold one, so Mom pulled the bed against the wall and I slept there with them between my Mother and the wall. One night she woke up to my crying but could not find me. She woke Dad and

## Williams...

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around your garden. Each subsample should be from the top 4-6 inches of soil. Combine these together to make a representative sample. We need 2 cups to be able to run the test. Bring your soil sample into the Extension Office. We charge \$12 for a soil test in Union and Towns.

If you have questions about planning ahead for a garden contact your County Extension Office or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu).

## Ashurst...

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Suggestions: Be continually aware to identify expectations when they occur. Before expectations become unmanageable, talk out the expectations with a neutral party. Don’t beat yourself up when you are guilty of expectations. Try to use humor when your expectations are in control. Keep expectations from escalating by staying alert. When your expectations interfere with relationships, be wise and honorable to apologize and make things right.

## Chamber...

### continued from Page 6A

even more amazing new year!

Happy New Year and we hope you have a Blessed 2024!

## Fowler...

### continued from Page 6A

not saying any more than, it appeared to me.” Lennox was more specific. “The capacity for humans to think seems to be a reflection of their Creator.” You have many thoughts, and some of them are God’s truth.

What would God speak to you? That He exists. Truth exists. He loves you. He has a plan for you. So why not make a resolution this year to pick up a Bible off the shelf and read it. And when you do, listen carefully.

## Lausier...

### continued from Page 6A

the time, and HEAR the truth.

Become an activist, with any or all of the committees around this county.

Join the election integrity committee, or join the concerned citizens committee, learn about tactical civics, or go to the commissioner’s meeting to hold the government accountable. Go to school board meetings even though you have no kids in this school district; these people affect your taxes.

Get on a phone tree to call your state legislators weekly or twice a week to affect bills in the state (Gunter and Gooch).

Do something. DO SOMETHING!!!

Get your duff up out of that easy chair and become an activist to help turn this county, state, and country around.

**Eva Lausier**

is make sure you are thankful for people in your life, especially during this Holiday

Season. Because life changes so fast those people could be a memory tomorrow.

told him that I had been stolen. Dad ran outside with his gun wearing nothing but his underwear. He made five rounds around the house before Mom found me in the crack between the wall and the bed. She ran out and stopped Dad. She giggled a little and explained where she found me. I am just glad that no other people were around our house that night.

Mom and Dad were hard working, God-fearing, honest people that made my life better and happier.

What I am trying to say