

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## New Year, New Me

By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

The way the Jewish community celebrates Rosh Hashanah – the Jewish New Year – often raises eyebrows, and not just because it usually occurs in September.

In a distant cry from the way the majority of the world celebrates the secular New Year, with raves and parties to cast the animus horribilis that was the year before aside for the innocent optimism that this upcoming year will be better, Jews spend the New Year – also known as the High Holidays and the Days of Awe – in their local synagogue. On the first day of the Jewish calendar, we affirm G-d's kingship over us, apologize for the mistakes we made against man and G-d the year before, and ask to be signed and sealed for a good and sweet year ahead.

Why do Jews celebrate their New Year like that? Is there something in the Torah against partying?

Of course not. There are plenty of Jewish holidays marked with joyous celebrations, and we are commanded about our festivals to "rejoice in them." But when we appreciate the magnitude of the opportunity the New Year presents us with, we can quickly appreciate that it isn't an occasion we can let slip by with just merrymaking.

The end of one year and the turning of the calendar into the next offers the chance at a clean slate presented only once a year. We can cast aside the burdens of the past, shed the layers of our shortcomings, and embark on a journey towards self-improvement and spiritual growth that only the promise of a New Year can offer. It's a profound moment of reflection and introspection, a time to take stock of our actions, intentions, and the impact we've had on the world around us.

It's also a time of profound honesty, as G-d accounts for the past year and determines how our next year should look. In that vein, we ask G-d for forgiveness and compassion, and ask the same of our friends and colleagues who we may have wronged or offended to let go of past grievances and move into the new year with peace and tranquility. We set realistic goals, about the growth we'd like to see in our personal, professional, and spiritual pursuits.

All these are lessons that can be applied to the New Year 2024.

Amidst all the revelry and celebrations that have rightfully been earned after a tough year, I urge our readers to create their own Rosh Hashanah Moment and reflect on the events of the past year to influence the direction the next year will take you on.

Think about your 2023. What positive events happened and what less-than-positive things happened, what were the things you did well and what could be done better, and who do you need to make things right with? What are your hopes, goals and aims for the upcoming year, and what can you do now to be the change you'd like to make happen?

It's taking meaningful and proactively positive steps like these that can transform what is otherwise simply a public holiday into the first day of the best year of your life.

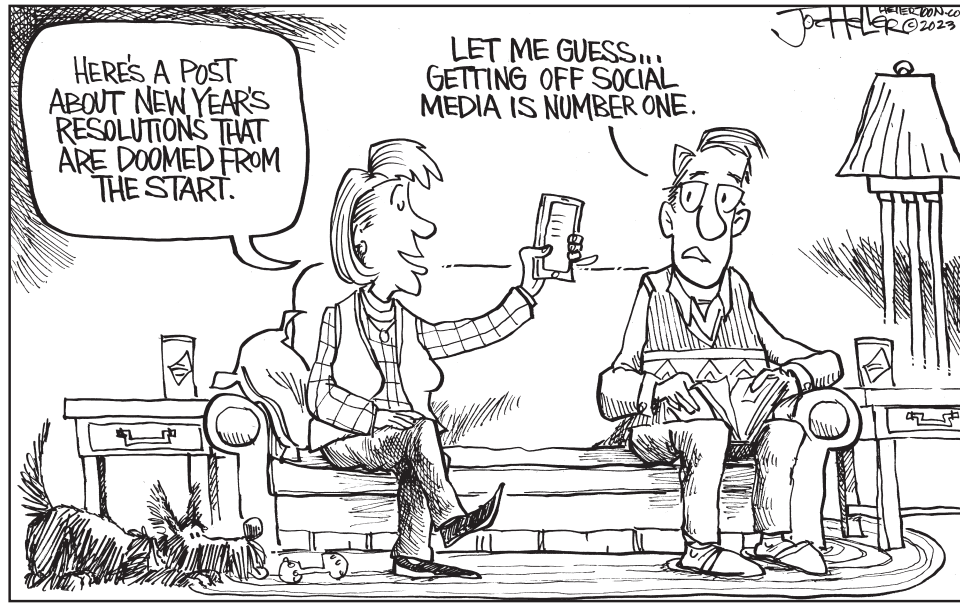
So as January 1st looms, I wish all our readers a sweet and joyful 2024, a year in which all your hopes and dreams are achieved, and you know only blessings. As a nation, we should only experience peace, joy, and sustenance. Our leaders should be blessed with the courage and wisdom to lead us to peaceful outcomes in all our domestic and international challenges, and may the United States of America continue to affirm its position as the moral center of the world.

I would love to hear your thoughts on this week's column. Please email me at [yonatan@chabadruralgeorgia.com](mailto:yonatan@chabadruralgeorgia.com).

Wishing you G-d's abundant blessings in the new year, and always, Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger.

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.

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



## Apple Tree Pruning

Deep winter is prime apple tree pruning time. Pruning apple trees is important early in the tree's life so that it gets started off right. Later on, if you properly prune the tree each year the tree will be more productive, more disease resistant, and have a longer life. Keeping all these things in mind, let's talk about apple tree pruning today.

The general advice that I give people when it comes to pruning apple trees is to prune as much as you feel comfortable, then go back and prune a bit more. Most of the time people are afraid of damaging the tree if they cut too far back. However, if trees are pruned at the right time of year and the right branches are cut off, it will be better for the long-term health of the tree.

If you have a tree that has not been pruned regularly, and you're trying to get it back into shape you'll want to start out by pruning out dead and diseased branches. Second, you'll want to cut out any crossing branches. Crossing branches create open wounds that can be easily infected. After you've pruned out dead, diseased, and crossing branches you want to try to open up the canopy. An open canopy will allow airflow. That's going to reduce the humidity, and therefore reduce the severity of disease occurring. The saying is that you want the canopy to be so open that a bird could fly through it without hitting any branches. A tree that has too many branches will not be as productive. An apple tree is only able to effectively produce a certain amount of fruit. Adding fertilizer can boost the productivity. Therefore, pruning might affect the number of fruit you tree produces, but you'll have better quality and they'll be more likely to make it all the way to maturity.

Trees that have been properly pruned their whole lives will have more a Christmas tree shape than a teardrop shape. If you have a newly planted tree, you'll need to prune it as well. If you have planted an unbranched whip, you'll need to cut it back to 24 to 30 inches above the ground. This is going to encourage the new tree to branch out. If you don't prune an unbranched whip, you'll probably end up having a 20-foot tall tree that doesn't have any branches on it.

Sometimes people will plant a seed from an apple core that they've eaten. This can be a fun experiment for kids to see an apple tree grow. An issue that you may run into with this is that there is no telling what kind of apple tree will come up. If you plant a seed from your favorite apple, that fruit could have been pollinated by a different variety, leaving you with an unknown cross. Another issue is that nowadays most trees have been grafted onto a rootstock. The grafted rootstock will provide more protection from root diseases and may dwarf the tree, which cuts down on the difficulty of managing the tree.

If you have questions about pruning apple trees, contact your County Extension Office or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu).



## Be It Resolved

We've made another trip around the sun together since this time last year. Traditionally this is a time to reflect on the past and make resolutions for the future, but I'm reluctant to do that today.

January 1st seems like an arbitrary starting point for our next trip around. There's nothing of terrestrial or even sidereal significance about it, like a solstice or an equinox, but I suppose one day is as good as the next when the main function of a calendar is to facilitate the conducting of business.

If I'm pressed for a new year's resolution, however, I will resolve to refuse to allow tradition or convention to strip away another page from my personal calendar. I'm only a day, not a year older than I was on December 31st. There are still leftovers from the Christmas party to enjoy, and the decorations are as becoming today as they were on Christmas Eve.

They will be coming down soon enough, but we will continue to celebrate the birth of Christ every day, and Thanksgiving, and every other holiday and observance that reminds us to slow down long enough to embrace the moments that make up the days. The earth is rotating at 1000 miles per hour. We're traveling around the sun at 67,000 mph, and moving through the galaxy at 490,000 mph. That's fast enough, thank you, without being gaoled by the gremlins of profit and politics.

There. Now. We come to the root of my reluctance to let go of the holiday season: 2024 will be another year of peak politics. Too soon the good will we gathered among family and friends will be spent, if there's any leftover after looking for a parking space at the After Christmas Sale, in trying to overcome the cognitive dissonance of the now ubiquitous political process.

Cognitive dissonance is mental discomfort, anxiety, tension, or even anger that is produced when you're given information that conflicts with what you have chosen to believe. When we "take it personally," we are experiencing CG, and the results can be so uncomfortable that we're willing to resort to violence to relieve that bad feeling.

Most of us experience a form of cognitive dissonance when we do something that troubles our conscience, and as politics has become more hostile and divisive, the problem is increasingly difficult for those of us still trapped between the horns of the democrat/republican dilemma. In order to vote for our party, we must believe, set aside, or compartmentalize the lying, dissembling, and prevarication our candidate has done in order to influence our decision.

For example, a democrat must believe that the economy is good in order to vote for an economic policy that continues to impoverish the working and dissolve the middle classes. A republican concerned about the 46 million migrants currently living in the US must set aside the facts that migration is a worldwide problem; there are 86 million migrants living in Asia and 87 million in Europe.

When dishonesty, gaslighting, and manipulation fails to influence the rational democrat and the reasonable republican, politics will then resort to making the alternative candidate appear to be so bad that the voter has no choice but to select the lesser of evils.

This is what we have to look forward to in 2024 if we allow these concerns to become a part of our thinking. This is why I'm eyeing that unopened bottle of Glogg on the kitchen counter, and that plate of lemonia cookies given to us by a dear friend. Yes. Be it resolved that 2024 will be the year of dear friends, neighbors, and community, and that circus politics will occupy the place it deserves – an entertaining diversion that becomes harmful if indulged, and faster than leftover turkey and dressing.

**Outside The Box**  
By: Don Perry  
[worldoutsidethebox.com](http://worldoutsidethebox.com)

## Letters To The Editor

### Clyde Gets It Wrong Again

Dear Editor,

I'm shocked to find that Rep. Andrew Clyde so vehemently opposes and discourages returning and expanding manufacturing in the United States. In his latest lie-filled list of buzz words and contextual distortions, Clyde calls the Biden effort to expand the use of electric cars in the U.S., "a reckless attempt by the Biden Administration to expand government control over our everyday lives in order to advance the Left's garbage Green New Deal policies."

This diatribe clearly demonstrates one of two scenarios:

1. Clyde opposes the U.S. manufacturing of not only electric cars, but their parts, batteries, and charging stations, and the 8-10 million high-paying jobs created by that demand, OR;
2. Clyde didn't bother to think through his typical BS and rhetoric because he was too busy tossing red meat to his unquestioning base.

Either way, it's just another spew of the disinformation and selective (but easily disproven) nonsense Clyde always delivers while avoiding answering any direct questions or addressing any actual problems or issues facing the country, the state of Georgia, or anything that could benefit the people of GA District 9.

I'm still waiting for his answer as to whether he supports his bestest buddy Speaker Mike Johnson's plan to cut \$5.7 trillion from Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. We deserve an answer to that, too – even the people who choose to ignore and disbelieve the threat to their livelihoods that's staring them in the face.

Once again, here's the link proving that it's not "the same old fear-mongering": <https://www.commondreams.org/news/gop-budget-destroy-social-security>

We deserve an actual \*representative\*. Instead, we're stuck with a duplicitous shill like Andrew Clyde.

Gary St. Lawrence

### Alert All Christians

Dear Editor,

We who have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior need to be busy telling others about God's free gift of salvation. This was not a suggestion or a maybe later, but an urgent call to God's servants to be busy in reaching those who are lost without a Savior. I believe a lot of our problem lies in the fact that we have lost our first love, meaning when we got saved by God's grace. Yes, it's easy to forget after years of being saved, but the message is still the same today as it was for the disciples in ancient times. We all know family members who are still on the fence about these issues, and yes, we have to be careful how we handle this issue so that we don't drive them further from the Lord.

When we express our heartfelt concerns it must always be in a loving way; even folks we meet on our journey who don't know the Lord need to be informed about the truth of God's word, not condemning them, but encouraging them to ponder what you have conveyed in love.

As the old saying goes from God's word -- Today is the day of salvation, for tomorrow is promised to no one. Time is growing short as we see our world falling into darkness each day, for the fields are ripe, but the harvesters are few. Let's strive daily to spread the good news of the gospel of Christ, before the Lord returns. Lord Jesus, we don't know who will and who won't accept you, but you do. Our task is to go tell and leave the rest to the power of Almighty God.

Frank F. Combs

## Towns County Community Calendar

<b>First Monday of each month:</b> School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
<b>Every Tuesday:</b> Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
<b>First Tuesday of each month:</b> Hiaw. City Council... City Hall YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 6:30 pm
<b>Second Tuesday of each month:</b> Conventions & Visitors Board... Civic Center	8:30 am
<b>Second Wednesday of each month:</b> Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
<b>Third Monday of each month:</b> Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b> Commissioner's Mtg... Courthouse City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall TC Water Authority Board Meeting	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

## 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.

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

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor  
PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.  
Our email address: [tcherald@windstream.net](mailto:tcherald@windstream.net).

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.*

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