

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Breaking Out of 2024

By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

Echos from Sinai  
"Torah for Everyone"  
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



As 2024 draws to a close, it's a natural time to reflect. Did you achieve the goals you set for yourself at the beginning of the year? Did you make progress in your career, grow your family, or meet someone special? Or, on the other hand, did the year pass by without reaching the milestones you'd hoped for?

Whether you're celebrating success or feeling the sting of missed opportunities, one thing is certain: the temptation to settle for less. Life's distractions and disappointments can easily lead us into stagnation, where we feel stuck emotionally, spiritually, or intellectually. We might feel like we've reached a peak, or we may feel as though we're caught in a loop, unable to move forward. But whether we're celebrating success or feeling defeated, the real danger is the same: complacency.

Jewish sages refer to the trap of stagnation as being stuck in our "personal Egypt." The word "Mitzrayim," the Hebrew name for Egypt, means "constraint" or "narrow passage." Egypt, in this context, isn't just a place – it represents the limitations that confine us, holding us back from reaching our full potential. Just as the Israelites were trapped in Egypt for centuries, we, too, can become trapped by our own habits, fears, and comfort zones. We might fall into the mindset of "this is good enough," forgetting that life's greatest fulfillment comes from pushing past those boundaries. Like the ancient Israelites, we risk being held back by self-imposed limitations, settling into a life that doesn't allow for true growth.

The journey of the Children of Israel offers a powerful lesson on how to break free from stagnation.

In the Torah, the journey is described in the book of Numbers: "These are the journeys of the children of Israel, going out of the land of Egypt" (Numbers 33:1). The use of the word "journeys" is significant. Why, the sages ask, is it written in the plural? After all, the Israelites departed from Egypt only once. The journey began when they crossed the Red Sea, and it would be complete when they entered the Promised Land. So why refer to it as "journeys"?

The sages explain that this reflects a deeper truth: the process of leaving Egypt is not a one-time event but an ongoing journey. It wasn't just about physically leaving Egypt – it was about shedding the mindset and limitations that Egypt represents. Each of the 42 stops where the Children of Israel encamped in the desert on their way to the promised land was an opportunity for them to evolve, face new challenges, and grow. Every stop wasn't just about moving geographically but about becoming better people, step by step.

Jewish mysticism further elaborates on this idea, saying that "leaving Egypt" is a personal, continuous journey for all of us. Egypt isn't just a physical place – it's a state of mind, a limitation that holds us back. Just as the Israelites had to leave behind the mindset of slavery and move toward freedom, we must continually strive to leave behind the narrow passages of our personal limitations. Whether those limits are fears, bad habits, compulsions, or complacency, the process of growth requires constant movement away from those confines.

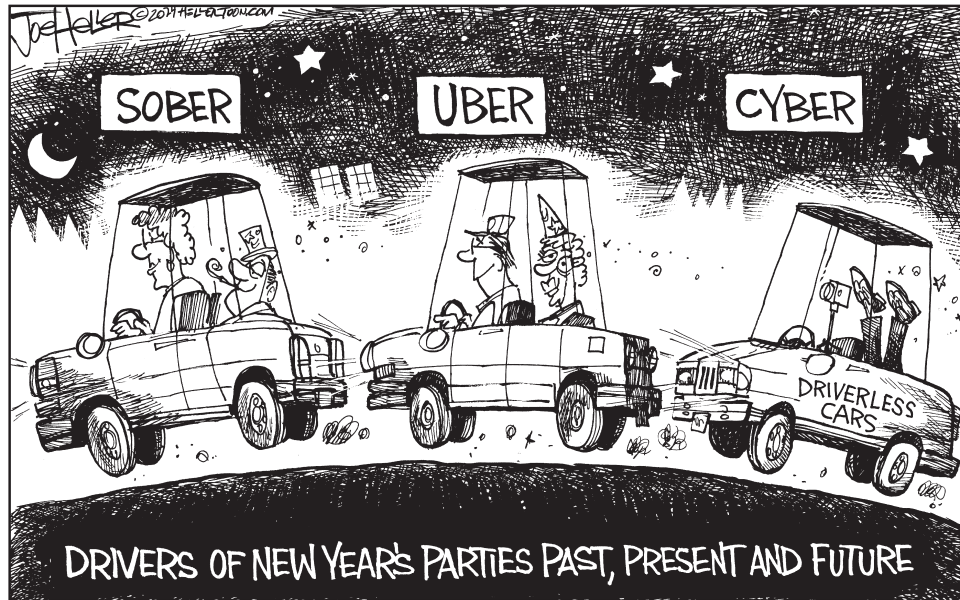
This idea is echoed in the teachings of the Talmud, which says, "When we have one hundred, we want two hundred." While this may sound like a lesson in greed, it's really about personal growth. In the material world, wanting more can be negative, but in terms of self-improvement, an endless desire to push forward is a virtue. Once we break free from one limitation, we often find ourselves needing to break through another. What once seemed liberating can start to feel confining as we continue to grow.

The journey of the Israelites was not a quick or easy process. It took decades. Every encampment brought new challenges. Yet, the key was that they didn't stop moving. They didn't remain stagnant. They grew through each hardship. The same is true for us: every time we break through one obstacle, we find new ones waiting to be overcome. The journey never ends, but each step brings us closer to realizing our fullest potential.

For us, the ultimate goal of the journey is to reach the "Promised Land" – a place of self-actualization where we no longer feel held back by the limitations of the past. Our "Promised Land" is a state of being where we fully realize our potential. It's where we live freely and authentically, without the weight of the constraints that once held us back.

As we look back on 2024 and prepare for the new year, it's important to plan the next steps in our own journey. What limitations are you ready to leave behind? What "personal Egypt" are you prepared to break free from? The Exodus is not a one-time event but a process that continues each day. Every day presents a new opportunity to take another step toward freedom, growth, and fulfillment. As we enter 2025, we can leave behind the narrow passages of the past and continue on the journey to the Promised Land of our best selves.

Yonatan Hamburger is a rabbi and writer serving spiritual seekers of all persuasions on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer serving communities throughout the regional South. You can reach them at y@tasteoforah.org.



DRIVERS OF NEW YEAR'S PARTIES PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

## 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.

UGA extension  
Watching and Working  
Jacob Williams



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 or 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.

## Veto and Barbra

Veto should have known better than trusting my father and his cousin Junior. However, he began to like the two Cummings boys and so he continued to hang out with them on Friday evenings. Prior to one Friday the boys were in a literature class and they were discussing the story of Romeo and Juliet. Veto asked Junior if he could introduce him to any girls. Junior told him about Barbra Lauderdale. Junior told Veto that Barbra was a beautiful young lady that lived out around Spruce Pine and he was sure she would like to go out with him.

He explained that Barbra's dad did not like him. However, he thought Lonnie Paul (my Dad) was a very good boy. So, it was decided that Dad would take Veto to Barbra's house to introduce him to Mr. Lauderdale. So, the boys made their plans to meet Friday evening about 7:30 and drive out to the Lauderdale house at Spruce Pine.

Unknown to Veto, Dad and Junior were setting him up for a practical joke. The Lauderdale house was an old abandoned house that was actually lived in by the Lauderdale family prior to this event. Junior was to be present in the house when Dad and Veto arrived. So, Dad met Veto in town at the Pool Hall. Veto showed up wearing enough hair tonic to wet the whole baseball team. Dad said the young man was very nervous because he had never been on a date.

Anyway, Junior was in the house with a coal oil lamp lit and burning when the boys arrived. Dad knocked at the door and Junior answered with a gruff voice, "Who's there?" Dad responded by saying, "Mr. Lauderdale, I am Paul Cummings here with Veto Gore to see Barbra." Junior answered again, "Who? Speak louder. You know I am hard of hearing." Dad yelled this time. "Mr. Lauderdale, Paul Cummings here with Veto Gore to see Barbra." He answered a third time. "Cummings? Junior Cummings, I told you to never come back to my place again." Before either could answer, the Cummings boy stuck a shotgun out the window of the house and fired. Dad grabbed his chest and hit the ground, yelling out, "I'm hit, Veto."

Veto spun and jumped from the porch, his feet hit the ground and he began running. He ran through the front yard and jumped off a 15-foot-tall bluff into a thicket of plants called the Devil's Walking Stick. These shrubs were about 8-feet-tall and covered in 1-inch thorns. Dad said he heard Veto breaking sticks and then heard the wind leave Veto's lungs when he hit the ground. When Dad and Junior quit laughing, they walked around the bank to the thicket and searched for their friend. All they found were some pieces of clothing and bloodstains. The boys followed the bloodstains back to the road and then down the road toward Phil Campbell. So, they walked back to the car and drove slowly down the road to Phil Campbell.

Dad said they expected any minute to come across Veto, but never did. Pretty soon the blood trail disappeared and Dad began to worry. However, someone must have picked up Veto. Because Dad and Junior drove back to the Pool Hall in Phil Campbell and found Veto laying on a pool table. Glenn Cummings was on top of Veto with a big pair of side cutters pulling out 1-inch-long thorns from his backside. The boys had a big laugh at the expense of Veto Gore.

All three of these fellows have passed now. But, they remained friends for years after this incident, and can you believe that both of the Cummings cousins became ministers?

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



## Letters to the Editor

### Waffle House Christmas

Dear Editor,

On Christmas Day, my wife and I decided to ride around to see more of the festive decorations. Most businesses and restaurants were closed for this very special day. We spied a Waffle House with a full parking lot, and decided to stop. We got lucky, and were promptly seated. Having to work on Christmas Day is a bummer for anyone. Our waitress told us her family would celebrate Christmas on the 26th.

The place was packed and very loud and everyone was in happy spirits. Some small kids were there and had obviously brought recently received gifts from Santa, like iPads and cellphones. There were 10 employees working hard to serve everyone, and it seemed like they were throwing a Christmas party for all who had stopped to eat there. They all had on Christmas attire and some of the waitresses had on reindeer antlers. Upon entering and leaving, they greeted everyone with a "Merry Christmas."

I'm sure, if given the choice, all of them would have preferred to be home with their families. But, they had risen to the occasion and were doing a great job. Their performance reminded me of the old saying: When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.

Gene Vickers

### Re: Impoundment Control Act

Dear Editor,

I read with interest the statement by Trump sycophant Andrew Clyde that presidents have in Article II of the Constitution a power, known as "impoundment authority," to refuse spending money appropriated by Congress. ("Rep. Andrew Clyde, Sen. Mike Lee introduce Legislation to Repeal Impoundment Control Act," Towns Co. Herald, Dec. 25, 2024.) Of course, if that is true, why introduce legislation when the courts, which are never shy of overturning unconstitutional laws, are available?

Let's ignore the ludicrous idea that the Impoundment Control Act prevents Trump from getting "America's fiscal house back in order," as if he is really going to do that. This is the same Trump who demanded recently that Congress get rid of the debt ceiling. Think about that. If I ask the bank to get rid of my credit limit, do you really believe I would do that if I intended to suddenly become fiscally responsible?

But let's get back to Clyde's theory of presidential power. The argument he makes turns the Constitution's command that a president "take care that the laws are faithfully executed" on its head by claiming this encompasses the power to refuse to spend money authorized and appropriated by congress. In *Kendall v. United States ex rel. Stokes*, the Supreme Court held: "To contend that the obligation imposed on the President to see the laws faithfully executed, implies a power to forbid their execution, is a novel construction of the constitution, and entirely inadmissible." Assistant Attorney General William Rehnquist (later Chief Justice Rehnquist) wrote in 1969: "It is in our view extremely difficult to formulate a constitutional theory to justify a refusal by the President to comply with a congressional directive to spend."

It is true that presidents in the past exercised what might be considered impoundment authority, but they did so within limited discretionary bounds and not as President Nixon did by abusing his authority and impounding billions in authorized spending simply because he disagreed with the programs Congress enacted. His abuse showed the danger of free-handed impoundment and set the stage for the Impoundment Control Act, as it led to multiple cases brought against his illegal impoundments, one of which, *Train v. the City of New York*, is often cited as a clear Supreme Court ruling against presidential impoundment authority.

The truth is the Impoundment Control Act provides authority for a president to cut unnecessary or improper spending authorized by Congress through the processes of oversight and deferral. What the act does is provide for proper oversight by Congress and preserves the separation of powers, which in the words of Justice Brandeis saves "the people from autocracy."

Bottom line: Clyde knows or should know his constitutional argument is faulty and that he would likely lose in court. He should tell us the truth about how the Impoundment Control Act works and not use lies to justify his support for the misguided legislation he is now trying to sell. Instead, we get grandstanding and half-baked arguments from him for a bill designed mainly to let him dodge responsibility for making tough decisions.

What Clyde should do is tell us honestly and frankly where he wants cuts to fall or taxes to be raised and then work (as he is being paid to do) to bring those policies to fruition if he believes they are best for the country. Otherwise, why is he even there?

Sincerely,  
David W. Plunkett

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## 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 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

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