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OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

October 7

Marking a Year Since October 7 This Yom Kippur

By Yonatan Hambourger and

Tzali Reicher





Monday October 7, marked the first anniversary of a day that changed the course of many lives forever.

In the powerful words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, it has become a "day that will live in infamy." Much like days such as 9/11 and December 7th, 1941, which are etched into history by the dates on which they occurred, so too does October 7 now hold similar gravity. On that day, the world witnessed an unspeakable act of terror – the invasion, massacre, rape, and kidnapping of 1,400 innocent people. The mere mention

of the date conjures the horrors of the day, bringing back the images and emotions that shocked the globe just a year ago. This past year has been both terrifying and eye-opening

not just for the Jewish community, but for all people who believe in freedom, tolerance, and the principles of Western civi-

As Hamas unleashed a merciless assault on Israel, videos and images of the atrocities quickly spread across social media, often posted by the terrorists themselves. At the same time, while the bodies of the innocent victims were still warm. thousands gathered in public spaces such as Times Square to celebrate the carnage. While Israel was just beginning to mobilize in response to the existential threat and to rescue the hundreds of hostages brutalized and tortured in Gaza, pundits and international organizations were already discussing "proportionality" and questioning Israel's right to self-defense Despite repeated debunking of Hamas's propaganda, Israel continues to be demonized as the aggressor, while the suffering of Israelis was downplayed or outright ignored by much of the international community.

This past year has also exposed how deeply flawed many of the institutions we once trusted are.

The United Nations, once seen as a neutral body dedicated to peace, has been revealed to harbor and enable terror sympathizers, with many of its own employees linked to terrorist organizations. Universities, long seen as bastions of free thought and open dialogue, have emerged as hotbeds of anti-Semitism and anti-American ideologies, while their leadership often fails to condemn these views. The media has distorted the truth, presenting "both sides" in what is clearly a fight between good and evil, running sympathetic stories about terrorists while ignoring the voices of Israel's victims. Calls for ceasefires - on terms favorable to Hamas and while hostages remain in captivity – have emboldened those who seek Israel's

Yet, despite these challenges, there is hope.

Support for Israel has never been stronger among those who understand the importance of its role as a defender of Western values in the face of radical extremism. Americans who see Israel as a vital ally in the fight against terror and tyranny have stood by Israel's side. These are the people who understand that Israel is not asking for foreign troops to fight its battles – it simply wants support and solidarity. This steadfast backing gives Israel strength in this existential fight. Israel's friends and supporters have stood by Israel in the face of attacks from radical terror apologists on American streets, and now defends Israel's right to exist on college campuses across the country. This support means the world to Israel, and the global community of decent people.

As we reflect on this past year, it's important to recognize that the struggle is far from over. Israel continues to face existential threats from Iranian-backed proxies, about 100 hostages from dozens of countries including the United States still languish in terror tunnels, and the fight for truth and justice in the media and on the international stage is ongoing. But with the support of people like you - people who see the importance of standing up for Israel – there is hope for the future Together, we can ensure that Israel remains strong, that its enemies are held accountable, and that the values of freedom,

tolerance, and justice prevail.

By Divine Providence, Yom Kippur begins this year this Friday night, days after the first anniversary of October It is a solemn day of judgment, where humanity pleads for forgiveness for our sins of the past year and begs to be inscribed for a year of blessing, sustenance, and life. But in the waning hours of the 25-hour fast, we pray the Neilah prayer. We are taught that this powerful last hour of Yom Kippur is when the Gates of Heaven are flung open and all prayers are welcomed in before the doors are closed once again when G-d signs off on his plans for everyone until the next Rosh Hashanah. While all the prayers of the night and day before are humble supplications, during Neilah the phrasing of the prayers becomes more confident and assured. The prayers go from asking for mercy to saying we are sure mercy and blessings have been extended. As all of us are children of the same benevolent G-d, we know He has accepted our prayers and will deliver us all a blessed year, one with good news and peace for all humanity.

From October 7 until this tragic anniversary, the world has been in a solemn and terrifying place, and it feels as though we've been living through one long Yom Kippur. As we mark one year since that awful date, we pray that we are now entering the Neilah phase when our prayers are heard, the hostages are freed, Hamas and all terror organizations forever vanish, and the world can rebuild and heal together. October 7 will always be a date that reminds us of the pain and loss suffered, but it will also be a reminder of the resilience and strength of Israel and its supporters with shared values around

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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.



What Are Your Priorities?

Last week I wrote that the storm could have been much worse for Georgia. I regret saying that. While it's true statistically, this is the last thing someone wants to hear who is sleeping on a cot in a temporary shelter or waiting for their elec-

By: Don Perry worldoutsidethebox.com

Outside

The Box

tricity to be restored. It's no relief whatsoever for anyone who has emptied their refrigerator and fed much of the thawed contents of the freezer to the dog because it's unsafe for humans and no dog food is available. It doesn't help someone who can't repair or replace their home because that home was uninsured due to their inability to afford the premiums. This is the situation right now in many parts of south and east

In North Carolina, there are still over 600 people missing, and by now we have all seen the pictures and videos of the results of a 1000-year flood, an event that has a .1% chance of occurring in any given year.

This morning I saw a meme that brought the relief of a smile. The image depicts a group of 4-wheel-drive trucks and ATVs crossing a flooded road, and the caption reads, "In almost any emergency situation, but especially natural disasters, one redneck friend or neighbor is worth a thousand

If you're offended by the humor, it might be because you're too many years away from the squad bay or the shop to remember that coping humor and survivor humor can be an essential part of dealing with the stress and emotions of a disaster. It doesn't threaten you because it's not meant for you, and rather than dismissing the plight of those who are still suffering, it embraces that suffering.

It also suggests an uncomfortable truth that many thousands of people are now facing: Expect little help from the bureaucracy. Yes, there is a federal response, and those boots on the ground are to be admired and appreciated as much as any volunteer for the risk and discomfort involved in disaster mitigation. But the overwhelming response has been grassroots and homegrown: state and local governments, individual businesses and store managers, churches, volunteer fire departments, power companies, police departments, hospitals, friends, and neighbors – and thousands of people many miles away organizing to send food and supplies to stricken areas.

FEMA has announced that it lacks funding to see it through the remainder of the hurricane season. Inquiring minds are curious. FEMA has spent about \$10 billion on disaster relief so far this year. Last year they spent over \$18 billion for the entire year. While there are no estimates so far for the amount needed for Helene, their budget for natural disasters this year was \$20.1 billion, which means they expect of the year.

FEMA spent \$650 million so far this year (and over \$1 billion in the last two years) on undocumented immigrants. The U.S. has spent over \$175 billion on the war in Ukraine. Considering that an uncounted number of taxpaying American citizens will need some form of assistance in the wake of Helene, not to mention the ongoing national disgrace of over 35,000 homeless veterans, 37 million American citizens living below the poverty line, and 13 million children living with food insecurity, it seems a fair question to ask Washington, "What are your priorities?"

"Ah, but Washington HAS already provided financial relief to the storm victims.'

That is true. Victims of Helene are eligible for a onetime payment of \$750. All you have to do to receive this pay-

Register with FEMA: Visit the FEMA website or call the FEMA helpline to register for disaster assistance. You can also use the FEMA mobile app.

Provide Necessary Information: Be prepared to provide details such as your Social Security number, address of the damaged property, a description of the damage, insurance information, and a contact number. Complete the Application: Fill out the application form

with all required information. Make sure to double-check for Submit Supporting Documents: You may need to submit documents such as proof of identity, proof of ownership

or occupancy, and insurance documents. Follow Up: After submitting your application, keep an eye on your email or phone for any follow-up communication from FEMA. They may request additional information or documents. Seems simple enough, though it might be a bit more complicated if you're living in a shelter, your home and all your "proof of identity" documents were destroyed, you

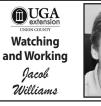
have no internet access, your bank is closed, and you have no

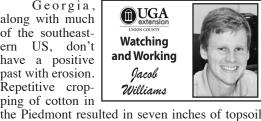
Perhaps a better and longer-lasting mitigation already exists. There is a federal program designed to help undocumented immigrants called "Refugee Cash Assistance," which pays up to \$800 per month for a family of four, who can also receive up to \$600 per month from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The refugee, or undocumented immigrant, can sign up for the program using a cell phone. No bank account is necessary to receive the funds, which can take the form of direct cash payments, checks, or

debit cards. All that remains is for the president, via Executive Order, to declare the thousands of tax-paying American citizens who are now homeless, and by virtue of that loss also undocumented, to be refugees. Perhaps this would elevate their status on the government's list of priorities.

Erosion Control

Georgia, along with much of the southeasthave a positive Repetitive cropping of cotton in





soil is something that is felt for generations. By the 1950s, new policies and programs began to change Georgia from endless cotton fields to forestland and other uses that are less susceptible to erosion. In the mountains, there is always a threat of erosion if we aren't proactive with protecting our landscape. Let's talk about why we should care about erosion and some things that you can do to make sure that your land isn't eroded away. Erosion can also lead to water quality issues. Not only does the topsoil muddy up our lakes and rivers, but also the nutrients that the topsoil is carrying can create algal blooms

being washed away into the ocean. Soil takes

hundreds of years to create, meaning that loss of

and the fish that inhabit them. Erosion can also create a hard pan that will repel water and increases surface runoff. Once top soil has eroded away it is much more difficult to grow in the So, what you can do to reduce erosion? First, construction makes soil very susceptible to erosion. Removing all the vegetation from the top of the soil leaves it open to the rainfall. In construction, surround the project site with hay bales and silt fences, preserve the already existing vegetation, and

keep any piles of loose vegetation or gravel covered. When-

ever you're clearing land try to leave as much of the existing

leading to decreased aquatic life. That is bad news for our lakes

vegetation as possible. This means you won't need to plant as much back once your project is finished. Planting permanent vegetation is the long-term goal for erosion control. Mulch can also be used temporarily while you are establishing vegetation. Trees are going to be the best for long term protection from erosion. The deep roots that they have means that they do a better job of holding soil in place than grass does. Grasses can help intercept runoff and infiltrate it back into the soil. Shrubs are good at creating cover and habitat for wildlife, and trees are best at blocking noise.

A lot of our soil in the mountains is most likely going to need lime and fertilizer before you can replant it with vegetation. A soil test is a great place to start to learn how much lime and fertilizer you need to add. The lime will raise the pH into the range for plant growth. Ground that has been cleared for new construction is most likely going to be very poor quality, even if top soil has been put back. In these cases, the addition of lime, fertilizer, and compost is best practice.

Minimizing impermeable surfaces such as the driveway or walkway on your property will also reduce erosion. Obviously, you will need some impermeable surfaces at your property, such as a roof for your house. For cases like that, it's important to design pathways for the water from those impermeable surfaces to travel so that they can be deposited in a place where they can soak back into the ground. Rain gardens collect water to infiltrate back into the soil instead of having it run downhill. Usually they have plants that are adapted to living in damp soils. Impermeable surfaces don't slow water down, and that velocity allows water to do more erosion dam-

If you have any questions about erosion or what you can do to prevent erosion at your property please contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Wil-

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

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546 Our email address: 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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Towns County Community Calendar

First Monday of each month:

School Board... HS/MS Media Center

10:30 am

4 pm

5:30 pm

5 pm

6:45 pm

Storytime for Children... TC Library

Every Tuesday:

First Tuesday of each month: 6 pm Hiaw. City Council... City Hall 6:30 pm YH City Council... YH City Hall

Second Wednesday of each month:

Board of Elections... Elections Office

Third Monday of each month:

Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse 6 pm

Third Tuesday of each month:

Commissioner's Mtg... Courthouse City of Young Harris Planning Commission...

Meeting Room in City Hall TC Water Authority Board Meeting

6 pm

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