

Opinions

The Stubborn Weight of Guilt

Imagine carrying guilt so heavy that even seventeen years of forgiveness couldn't lift it. That's what happened with Joseph's brothers. Their story isn't just about betrayal and reconciliation – it's about the peculiar way guilt can persist long after we've been forgiven.

When Joseph first revealed himself to his brothers in Egypt, the scene was extraordinary. Rather than punishment, he offered them love. Instead of revenge, he gave them abundance. He wept with them, embraced them, and provided for their families. For seventeen years, he showed them nothing but kindness and generosity, treating them with the highest regard in their new Egyptian home.

Yet the moment their father Jacob died, raw fear gripped their hearts. Despite nearly two decades of experiencing Joseph's love and mercy, they convinced themselves that his kindness had merely been a show of respect for their father. "Perhaps Joseph will bear hatred," they worried, "and will surely repay us the evil that we have dealt him." Their guilt was so deeply rooted that they couldn't believe in the authenticity of forgiveness, even after years of proof.

This reality raises profound questions about human nature. Why do people often remain prisoners of their guilt long after they've been granted freedom? A spouse might carry the weight of a long-past infidelity, even after years of rebuilding trust and creating a stronger marriage. Adult siblings might still feel the sting of harsh words spoken during a parent's illness, despite countless family gatherings filled with warmth and reconciliation since then.

The Jewish tradition offers a fascinating perspective on this phenomenon. It recognizes that true forgiveness operates on two distinct levels: external and internal. While Joseph had completely forgiven his brothers externally – demonstrated through his actions, words, and genuine care – they struggled with internal forgiveness, the kind that requires us to forgive ourselves.

Consider the public journey of Martha Stewart. After her conviction for insider trading, she served her time, rebuilt her empire, and regained public trust. Yet in interviews years later, she still spoke of sleepless nights and regret, despite her remarkable

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Stories Behind the Stars

You are probably aware of the Union County men who died for their country during World War II; we can see their names on the plaque at the Old Courthouse, and soon we'll see crosses for them along the sides of the roads downtown. Did you know that there are now stories written about most of these men?

On Memorial Day, many people visit the graves of those who served in the U.S. military. Their headstones don't tell us much of their story, but now, instead of wondering about them, we can read their story while we visit their grave.

Beecher Anderson was one of the "local boys" who was killed during the war and is buried in Blairsville. He lived and farmed with his family on the Mauney property off Highway 19. When the TVA bought some of the Mauney land to create Lake Nottely, Beecher's family was relocated.

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Letters to the Editor

Speak Up to Protect Our Lakes

Dear Editor,

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has announced plans that could leave Lake Chatuge drawn down for up to eight years while they reconstruct the spillway at Chatuge Dam. According to TVA's own filing, the lake could sit 10 feet below winter pool (elevation 1908') for most of the next decade.

This would be devastating for North Georgia's tourism, small businesses, property values, and the lake environment. Even if you don't live on Chatuge, the stakes are high, and Blue Ridge and Nottely could be next.

TVA is accepting public comments through May 28. Please email your concerns to nepa@tva.gov and contact your elected officials. Ask them to push TVA for better alternatives and independent oversight. We need modern solutions – not a decade-long disaster.

Josh Murauskas

Graduation or Milestone...

Dear Editor,

In May, I will have graduated from high school 59 years ago. I remember it vividly. My graduation class was the largest the school had to date, with 1,000 students ready to be emancipated from the public education system. I still remember looking up, seeing my dad waving his arms; just so I could get a glimpse of him. It was very embarrassing but, who knew except me. Something like that you just chalk up to dad's diligence at wanting to be seen. And besides, even if other parents saw him, I think everyone was too caught up in the moment.

After getting my diploma, I was so excited to be finished with school a week earlier than the underclassman. I was finally done with practicing walking with my class. We had to take a bus across town to another high school for practice because our football stadium was too small to hold students and parents/guests. This went on for three weeks.

After meeting my parents briefly, it was time to party. The summer flew by, and I started college that September. During my third year of my collegiate career, I took courses on the West Coast in a community college. The credits were transferred back to my four-year college. Because of this, I was a year older when I got my bachelor's degree. Again, I couldn't wait to get back to the West Coast. I felt no need to attend my college graduation. I would have to wait another semester to walk with my peers.

My mom wanted me to wait to leave the area. She told me it would mean so much to my grandparents. Though never expressing any dis-

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Everybody has one...

Fingerprints

Jon Kahn is a singer/songwriter whose star is on the rise. Correlation is not causation, but it's notable that his rising interest in faith is coincident with his success as an artist.

Kahn was not raised in a religious home. As a boy he had profound questions about his place in the universe, questions which followed him into manhood. He tells about a conversation about life with another songwriter who said, "You know, you talk like a Christian. You have a seeker's heart." That intensified his questions and multiplied the conversations. At one point a friend said, "I've never seen God chase anybody like He's chasing you. He's got his fingerprints all over you."

"Fingerprints" became the name of a song Kahn wrote about his faith journey. It speaks to the realities of life and the steady presence of God. "When it gets dark and it's so hard to breathe, You'll be right there and I know won't leave. Even in the darkness I can see You got Your fingerprints on me." The lyrics acknowledge the evidence of God's presence and voice in Kahn's life.

If you look, you'll see God's presence and voice in your life as well. Why? Because God is patient, "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). What does it look like? See the night sky. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God" (Psa. 19:1). See "the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man" (John 1:9). See the cross about which Jesus said, "If I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32). Hear what Paul said to the philosophers in Athens, Greece: God gives you life and breath. He determines your appointed time and place so that you would seek Him, "though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17).

Every person's life bears evidence of God's fingerprints. You are made in His image. He loves you when you wander; He embraces you when you come to Him. He grasps for you in your pleasure and pain, in the beauty of creation and the horror of disaster. This is your reality. This is your hope.

After Kahn wrote the song, his mother died, and his father suffered serious injury. Then came the Palisades fire which

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Letters to the Editor

Why a Board of Commissioners? Part 2

Dear Editor,

There is no doubt the county is growing. A Board will move the county into the future to counter the negative impact of the 515 Corridor Syndrome that is changing the entire nature of counties to our Southwest. As people from urban cities move into the area, philosophies will shift, which is why we need to have a people's representative government.

The process of policymaking through a Board creates more public conversation. Everyone has a stronger voice. Some people may think or say, "The process of policymaking through a Board takes too much time and effort." Governing and policymaking should be a deliberate process, more inclusive, more consultative and less impulsive. A Board allows decisions to be made in a more open manner, reducing the likelihood of under-the-table initiatives or contracts that benefit individuals and not the county.

Let's keep in mind that our State Representative, Stan Gunter, will be putting this question on the November 2026 ballot as a referendum to give the citizens of Union County a vote on what type of government they want to be governed by. Make sure to mark your calendar to go vote "yes or no" in November 2026. Let your vote be an educated decision.

Cindy Vandereedt

Merchant Marine History

Dear Editor,

As a graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, I was gratified to see the article in the May 7 issue of the North Georgia News titled "Military Time: U.S. Merchange (sic – Merchant) Marine History." Not being the "man in the arena," as Teddy Roosevelt put it, I am hesitant to comment on/add to the author's effort. But, I will anyway.

While Kings Point, as it is known around the world (owing to its location in Kings Point, New York), is proud to have been the first Federal Academy to admit women, it has other points of pride of greater significance to our country's history.

The Academy was founded during World War II. Due to the emergency the conflict imposed, the planned course of instruction was reduced in length from four years to 18 months.

As part of the training, the academy sent its students (Cadet-Midshipmen) into combat aboard merchant vessels plying the seas with desperately needed supplies for the war effort and for the civilian populations of our allies. In that effort, 142 of the Academy's Cadet-Midshipmen died

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



From Your Commissioner

Many of you have noticed that Union County Government now has a new website. The website address is the same - union-countyga.gov – but it looks quite a bit different. The previous website was about 8 years old and the technology used to build it had become obsolete. The company that built it gave us a heads up that they would no longer support the old technology. We had to make some important decisions about the future of our web presence.

The current website puts popular hyperlinks front and center for Union County residents and visitors alike to quickly locate the most frequently accessed items. Open Records Requests, Staff Directories, and Reporting a Concern – these things are now much easier to find. Further down on the page, you will find some of the latest news items relating to Union County Departments and activities. Towards the bottom of the page, you will see calendars for meetings and for other types of events such as Parks & Recreation camps and sports sign-up dates.

One of the best features of this new website is the ability for Union County residents to subscribe to various parts of the website. For example, when someone subscribes to the County Commission Meetings, they will receive an email or text when a new meeting or meeting agenda is posted. This goes for any calendar category posted on the website.

When Union County Government posts alerts at the top of the page, anyone who has subscribed to the Alert section will receive an email or text telling about the alert. This ability to get information out to the public quickly is extremely valuable.

The data that we are able to get from this site is also amazing. For example, during the week of May 4-10, approximately 3,100 visitors came to the Union County Government website. Tuesdays seem to be the most popular for visiting the site, and 727 people went straight to the website search feature to locate their information. Much of our website visitors are people who live in the Atlanta area.

We are very excited about the new Union County Government website, and I encourage everyone to subscribe to the different meetings and event calendars offered.

Union County Commissioner

Harold Collins



Chamber 2025

Have you found your favorite senior's sign on the Square? We would like to extend our thanks to UC High School for allowing us to be a part of this annual tradition of honoring graduates with signs on the Square. We are so proud of all our graduates, whether they are pursuing advanced degrees, joining the military, or entering the workforce. We wish each of our graduates the very best. Good Luck and Success to All.

We would also like to thank Ryan West of Paro Strategies for serving as our speaker at last week's Business Builder luncheon. Ryan shared valuable insights on leveraging financial opportunities through grant programs to help businesses grow, upgrade, and expand. Following the luncheon, we drove to a meeting in Young Harris, where Ryan pointed out three projects that could possibly benefit from available grants or low-cost funding. I guess sometimes you don't know what you don't know.

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Watering Plants

All plants, but especially annuals (such as veggies) and freshly planted perennials, are affected by dry soil, because their root systems are not yet large enough to support the plant and do not yet efficiently collect water from surrounding soils. There is a fine balance to be observed when irrigating plants, though: too much water will wash nutrients away from young roots and may cause rot, while too little or shallow watering will either allow the plant to dehydrate or bring the roots too close to the hot surface of the soil.

In general, vegetable plants would rather have more thorough and less frequent watering. When the entire topsoil layer is saturated at least twice a week, the roots of a vegetable plant will tend to grow downward, towards the damper and cooler soil beneath them. Not only will the root system collect water more efficiently, it will also draw the roots away from the drier and hotter surface of the soil. This promotes a healthier plant growth pattern, reducing the need for external watering when there is a rain and lowering the chances of the root system being attacked by unwanted fungi.

In the case of other young transplants, such as fruit trees, bushes and shrubs, flowering perennials and other ornamental plants, the amount of water will usually vary due to the soil it was planted in, the size of the original root ball and plant, and the type of plant being watered. For example, a young apple tree from a 3-gallon pot transplanted in clay-based soil will require less frequent watering than a group of raspberry starts in the same soil, due to the higher amount of water loss through the leaves (transpiration) in the raspberry starts. It is always best to check the sticker or plant tag that came with the plant for advice first, but as a general rule of thumb, water trees and ornamental shrubs enough to keep the soil 4 to 6" around the root ball (including below it) moist, but not soggy, every other day that it does not rain. Continue this until they are established. For starts such as blueberries, raspberry and blackberries, hydrangeas, and vining flowers and fruits (like clematis), water 4-6" around the root ball every day it does not rain until they are established in the soil.

Common sense applies in this process as well: if the soil around the plant is still about as moist as it should be at day 2, then hold off on watering until it begins to dry again. A good "quick-n-dirty" test for soil moisture is to grab a handful, squeeze it in your hand, and let go. Optimal moisture content is when most of the soil is still in a ball in your hand, but when you touch

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UGA extension watching and working

Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 (Union County) - One Year \$45 INCLUDING UNION COUNTY CUSTOMER REQUEST MAIL SERVICE. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$10. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. *NORTH GEORGIA NEWS* is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 24, 1988, at the Post Office in Blairsville. *NORTH GEORGIA NEWS* is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.

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The Bank President was walking through the lobby and met Mrs. James as she walked into the bank. Now, you need to know the President, Obadiah Allman, knew Mr. James, but he'd never met his wife. So, he asked the lady if he could be of service. Mrs. James smiled and responded that her husband asked that she come to the bank and get some money. Obadiah asked, "What is your name?" The lady responded, "Jesse James."

All the color left the face of Obadiah Allman and he looked toward the vault and

realized the door was standing wide open. He grabbed his chest like he was having a pain and ran toward the vault door. He grabbed the door from inside the vault and pulled the door closed, locking himself inside. The tellers sent for a locksmith and 2 ½ hours later the door was unlocked. Obadiah Allman nearly suffocated just because of his reaction to the name of Jesse James. That name had and still has a profound influence upon people. And the previously mentioned bank president almost died because of a name.

Hanjes...continued from Page 4A

Anderson was a laborer at the Fontana Dam when he was drafted into the Army in 1943. He was assigned to the 119th Infantry Regiment and landed at Normandy a week after D-Day in 1944. Six weeks later his unit was fighting near the village of Gourfal-leur, France, when he was hit by artillery fire and, at age 19, died of his wounds. Beecher is buried in the Antioch Baptist Church Cemetery, on Antioch Church Road, off Gumlog Road.

Visitors can go up to Beecher's grave, type his name into the FindAGrave app (free) on their smartphone and get a link to his story on Fold3.com. I know this because I wrote the story, along with stories for most of the other Union County World War II fallen, like John G Dover, who fought with the 38th Infantry Regiment in the Ardennes and Germany. He's buried at the Union Baptist Cemetery in Choestoe.

Tommy A Dyer, who was buried at New Union Cemetery on Jones Creek Road, was killed at Guadalcanal while serving with the 94th Quartermaster Battalion.

H J Owenby fought with the 148th Infantry Regiment in the Philippines and earned the Silver Star for rescuing wounded soldiers during the battle for Manila. He's buried in Manila, but you can still find his grave on FindAGrave and read his story on Fold3.

Many of the fallen from other parts of the country also have stories written about them. For example, there are over 8,000 World War II fallen buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Every one of them now has their story written, and they can be accessed by the over-4,000 people who visit every year, in the same way as

Beecher Anderson's story.

This new experience is made possible by the hundreds of Stories Behind the Stars volunteers, from all 50 states and more than a dozen other countries, who have researched and written individual stories of the World War II fallen. Not only have they written the stories of every WWII buried at Arlington National Cemetery, they have written the stories of all 2,341 Pearl Harbor fallen, all 2,502 Normandy D-Day fallen, and tens of thousands more, for a current total approaching 70,000.

The audacious goal of Stories Behind the Stars is to make sure that every one of the 421,000 U.S. WWII fallen each have a story that anyone can read at graves and memorials for decades to come.

I read a Memorial Day news story two years ago and have been writing stories ever since. I've written about Marines killed at Iwo Jima, enroute Airmen whose troop ships were torpedoed, men who died in accidents, and soldiers who died in the European Theater.

I'm currently focusing on local men and am working on the last few from Union County. Every story has allowed me to get a glimpse of the life each man led here in Blairsville, as well as what he went through in serving and dying for his country. It has put meaning and familiarity into the names on the plaque and roadside crosses. I believe that other people would like to have the same understanding.

We welcome more volunteers to help us complete each of the remaining names. Free training resources are provided. To find out more, visit www.storiesbehindthestars.org.

Hambourger...continued from Page 4A

comeback story. Like Joseph's brothers, she discovered that society's forgiveness doesn't automatically translate to self-forgiveness.

Take the story of a real estate agent who once withheld information about serious structural problems from buyers to close a major sale. Though he later helped the family secure repairs at his own expense and transformed his business practices to emphasize radical transparency, he couldn't shake the memory of that ethical lapse. Despite making amends, the weight of that choice lingered.

The ancient Jewish concept of "teshuvah" (return) addresses this complex dynamic. It teaches that while seeking forgiveness from others is crucial, the harder work often lies in granting ourselves permission to move forward. This isn't about forgetting or dismissing past wrongs – it's about accepting that growth and change are possible, even after serious mistakes.

Joseph understood this when he responded to his brothers' renewed fears. "Do not be afraid," he told them, "For am I in place of God?" His words weren't just about absolution – they were an invitation to see their story through a larger lens, one where even grievous mistakes could be transformed into positive outcomes.

People who have genuinely changed and made

amends often continue to punish themselves long after others have forgiven them. The path to reconciliation with others, while challenging, sometimes proves easier than reconciliation with oneself. This inner struggle isn't unique to our time – it's as old as human consciousness itself.

The brothers' story teaches us that sometimes the hardest person to convince of our worthiness for forgiveness is ourselves. Their struggle reminds us that true healing requires not just accepting forgiveness from others, but learning to extend that same grace inward. It suggests that while we can't change the past, we can change how we carry it – not as a burden that crushes us, but as wisdom that shapes us.

In a world that often seems unforgiving, this ancient narrative offers timeless insight: sometimes the chains we think others hold have actually been locked by our own hands. And perhaps the key to freedom isn't in receiving more forgiveness from others, but in learning to finally, fully, forgive ourselves.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports communities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at y@tasteoftorah.org.

Local Al-Anon weekly meetings

Are you troubled by a family member or friends' drinking? Al-anon Family Groups meet in several locations in Towns and Union Counties:

Tuesday: 12 noon, Sharp Memorial Methodist Church, 1114 Main Street, Young Harris, GA.

Wednesday: 7 PM, Mountain Presbyterian Church, 3831 GA-515, Blairsville, GA.

Thursday: 12 noon, St. Clare's Episcopal Church, 777 Ledford Road, Blairsville, GA.

For more details on Al-anon call 888-4AL-ANON (888-425-2666) or visit www.al-anon.alateen.org.

NT(May21,22)CA

Accomplish your goals! Free GED Classes Available

If you never graduated from High School, now is your chance to accomplish your goal. Come see us at the North Georgia Technical College Adult Education Center and finally get it done! We offer in-

person classes to prepare you for the GED test and beyond.

Come by 38 Blalock Street in Blairsville or call us at (706) 439- 6342 to register and get your real life started!

Williams... continued from Page 4A

it, it begins to break apart again.

In vegetables, it usually takes until the first fruit is set and ripening on the plant for the roots to be fully developed. This typically (of course, depending on the kind of plant) takes anywhere between 3 and

Fowler...

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destroyed his California home. When pressed about how all this affects his faith journey, he said, "I never lost faith and I always had a peace that things were going to work out. I thought, what better time to release a song like this than in the middle of a storm."

What about you? Have you noticed God's fingerprints on your life? Kahn's lyrics nudge you along: "If my eyes were really open, I would've found the clues..."

Chamber...

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Once again, congratulations to our graduating seniors. We look forward to seeing the impact you will have on Making Life Better in Blairsville.

Kramer...

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appointment in my decision, I said goodbye to my parents and grandparents. I was off to the races and my life began with the usual changes. I became a Mrs., a mom, and a grandmother. During that time, I went back to school for a master's degree.

During that East Coast master's graduation, clocks also moved forward for my family. My grandparents had died, and my parents were no longer a couple. My mom did attend this graduation, but my dad now was the one on the West Coast. I had children, a husband and friends to accompany me. I declined invitations for after parties from my younger peers. A close family/friends gathering now suited me just fine.

I often find myself telling others that I now regret not attending my high school graduation. I reminisce to others how I wish my grandparents could have seen me. For me, it was a graduation. For them, it would have been another milestone in my life that they would have loved to share. Recently, I took care of my neighbors' dogs so they could spend a long weekend seeing their grandson graduate college. Initially, they told me that they would hire a dog sitter to come by to check in those few days. My response: I will do it, glad to help you, it is something you will cherish. I was glad I could make it easier for them knowing that their dogs were in good hands.

Now that high school seniors are graduating, I remember once again that excitement. If I could pass along one thing it would be this... you and your parents know this is a time of change and independence for you. Just give them the time to experience this milestone in all of your lives. You will look back one day because it is part of life. Though your memory of that day will be different than theirs, it will be worth it. Congratulations, seniors. You earned the cap and gown.

Lisa Kramer

Woodward...

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in combat. Kings Point records indicate that the average age of the deceased Cadet-Midshipman was less than 21 years. It is the *only* Federal Academy that sends its students into "harm's way" during their training.

Of the approximately 243,000 men and women who served in the Merchant Marine during WWII, an estimated 8,421 were killed at sea, died as prisoners of war or succumbed to wounds ashore later. Post-war analysis of casualty ratios found that the Merchant Marine was second only to the U.S. Marine Corps in casualties.

It is a debt we must never forget.

Acta non verba.

Sincerely,
Tom Woodward
Class of 1971



North Georgia Veterans Memorial Markers

It's time for the Memorial Markers to be placed around town again in time for Memorial Day.

If you are interested in having a marker made for a deceased Veteran, please call Leslie at 706-897-4579.