

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## The Sacred Art of ...

*The Sacred Art of Mindful Eating*

By Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher



Echos from Sinai  
"Torah for Everyone"  
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger

In today's fast-paced world, where instant gratification reigns supreme, taking a step back to rethink how we approach the most basic activities – like eating – can feel downright revolutionary. The ancient Jewish practice of kosher eating offers a profound way to engage with food and life, one that transcends religious observance. It's about living mindfully, connecting deeply with the world, and transforming everyday moments into opportunities for meaning.

At its heart, kosher – derived from the Hebrew word meaning "fit" or "proper" – is more than a set of dietary rules. It's a philosophy that considers the relationship between people and what they consume. The Torah outlines guidelines for kosher eating, such as which animals are permissible, how they must be prepared, and the separation of meat and dairy. While these laws serve a religious purpose, their underlying principles resonate far beyond faith. They offer a perspective on food as more than mere sustenance – it becomes a reflection of values and intentions.

This message of thoughtful consumption can inspire anyone. In essence, kosher eating asks us to pause and consider not just what we eat but how and why. This concept isn't unique to Judaism. Across traditions, food often serves as a vehicle for deeper meaning. For example, Lent in Christianity encourages fasting and reflection, emphasizing that what we consume or choose not to consume shapes our character and values.

A powerful story from Jewish tradition highlights the depth of this approach. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, a mystic and scholar, was once asked by a butcher if a particular cow was kosher. The rabbi meticulously studied the matter, consulting texts and taking great care in his answer. The butcher, embarrassed by the effort he had caused, offered to discard the meat. The rabbi's response was surprising: "I'm not doing this for you; I'm doing it for the cow."

This story illustrates a profound idea: consumption isn't just about the consumer. In Jewish thought, everything in the world, including food, has a divine spark. When we engage with what we consume thoughtfully, we elevate it, turning the mundane into something sacred. For those outside the Jewish faith, this might echo the Christian concept of stewardship – caring for what we've been given with purpose and gratitude. It's a reminder that even the smallest choices, like what we eat, can honor something greater.

These age-old principles have never been more relevant. In a world grappling with selfishness and consumerism, eating more mindfully offers a framework to align our choices with our values. Imagine sitting down to a meal and asking yourself: Am I eating in a way that shows gratitude for the health and body G-d has blessed me with, or am I just shoving food in for the dopamine hit?

Does this choice contribute to something greater than my immediate desire?

What positive action will I do with the energy the food has fueled in me?

These questions challenge us to think beyond ourselves and consider the broader impact of our actions. They also invite us to slow down, savor the present moment, and appreciate the journey our food has taken to reach us.

While kosher eating provides a meaningful entry point, mindful consumption can extend to all aspects of life. In a society often driven by consumerism and the relentless pursuit of "more," embracing mindfulness can feel like a countercultural act. Kosher principles teach us that every decision, no matter how small, has significance. Whether it's the food we eat, the resources we use, or the time we spend, living with intention transforms the mundane into the meaningful.

This shift in perspective also brings a sense of gratitude. Seeing food as a gift rather than a given helps cultivate an attitude of appreciation. Similarly, viewing life's daily tasks as opportunities for purpose encourages us to find joy and fulfillment in even the simplest activities.

What if we approached every meal as an opportunity to connect – not just with the food on our plate but with the people around us and the world itself? A mindful meal could become a moment of reflection, a chance to honor the work, resources, and lives involved in its creation. We create space for gratitude, awareness, and connection by slowing down and eating with intention.

This approach isn't about perfection, adhering to strict rules, or reinventing your lifestyle overnight. Instead, it's about progress – choosing one moment, one meal, and one act at a time to live more purposefully.

By embracing these ancient ideas in a modern context, we can align our choices with our values, honor the world around us, and find purpose in the everyday. Living mindfully starts with what's on your plate, but its impact can ripple into every corner of your existence, transforming the ordinary into something truly extraordinary.

Yonatan Hamburger 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@tasteoforah.org](mailto:y@tasteoforah.org).

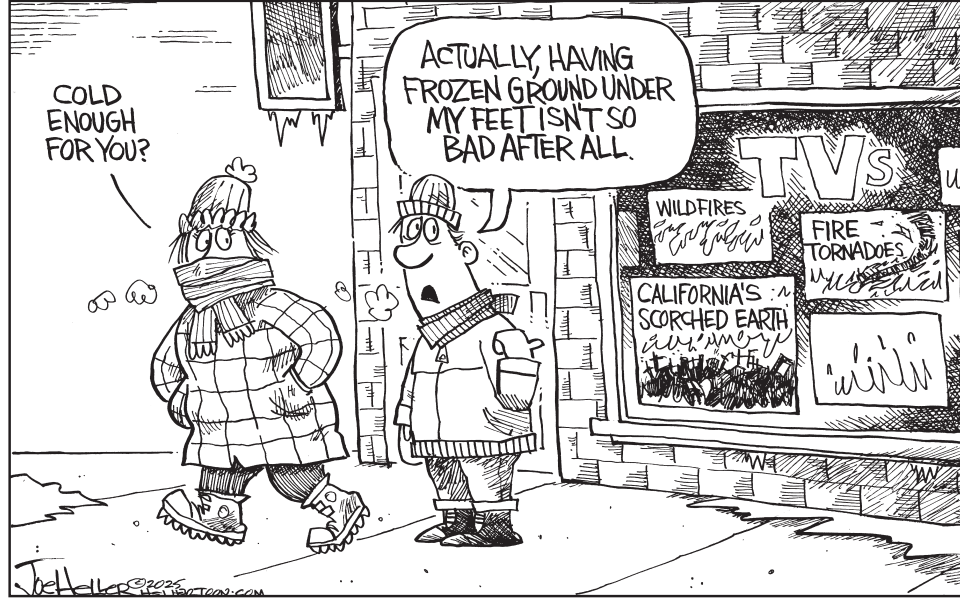
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## Enjoy The Weather

It is a balmy 24 degrees here as Peaches settles in to warm my toes, and hers as well. There is still plenty of snow on the ground, if you can call it "snow." It looks like snow, but it's as hard as rock, deceptively beautiful and treacherous, like that girl I dated in college. It's so slippery that during our morning walk, my foot-warming friend elected to leave the deer in peace as they dined on our surplus of acorns.

Remember a few weeks ago when we agreed to enjoy the unusually warm weather in December rather than joining in the panic over global warming, because cold weather was going to catch up with us regardless? By the time you read this, I think we will have seen some single digits again in the high country, and maybe even more of that snow that everyone couldn't wait to have, but then couldn't wait to see melt.

This year there is less sea ice in the Arctic than usual, which is consistent with a 40-year trend. This decline has multiple effects that we don't fully understand. What we do know is that the ice helps keep the polar vortex confined to the poles. When that vortex weakens, Arctic air flows south, which is what we are experiencing right now. It also changes the course of the jet stream, which can bring cold air and winter storms farther south as well.

Additionally, fresh water from melting ice flowing into the North Atlantic is like water in the gas tank when it comes to ocean currents, particularly the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, which includes the Gulf Stream that moderates the climate in northern Europe. When that circulation slows, less warm water is transported north. Colder water in the North Atlantic can lead to disrupted weather patterns and more intense storms.

Earth's climate seeks a dynamic equilibrium (almost as if it was designed that way). The complexities are hard to grasp, leading to scores of unreliable predictions that fail to manifest, which has increased climate skepticism. Cry "wolf" often enough, and many people will simply stop listening. At the other end of the spectrum are the drama-addicted who hear "wolf" in every utterance.

Add politics to the mix, and you have a recipe for something as unappetizing as it is indigestible. In some ways, politics is like the Philosopher's Stone of the ancient alchemists, but instead of transmuting common metals into gold and silver, politics transmutes anything it touches into more politics: Science, including medicine, nutrition, economics, and of course, weather, all degrade into political litmus tests.

It's difficult for a civilization thus encumbered, crowded onto a small planet in dynamic equilibrium, to make sober, well-considered choices for its collective best interests, especially when government, the least efficient, least effective organization with the worst track record, steps in to mandate those decisions.

We've had a couple of decades of panic, preaching, and prescribing that seemed to point to a future where only the wealthy could afford freedom of movement, while the rest of us huddled in our tiny homes waiting for the sun to come out and charge up the batteries in our electric two-seaters so we could drive to the co-op and buy our plant-based burgers and bug sausages. The powers-that-were, that still are, though forced to take a step back for the moment, seemed content to crash the economy on their way to gaining the coercive power necessary to save us from ourselves.

Yesterday we had two hamburgers with fries and two iced teas at what used to be, but no longer is, one of our favorite restaurants. The bill was \$48 before the tip. If that seems excessive to you, there's a good chance you're not lining up to buy a \$50,000 electric vehicle or replace your reliable gas stove and water heater with electric alternatives that cost twice as much as they did five years ago.

It is clear that alternatives are needed, if for no other reason than the fact that fossil fuel is finite. The biggest danger we face is that we're going to run out before we have scalable alternatives. We've seen the failures of the draconian approach where necessity breeds invention, and we've also seen Europe retreat from some of its green initiatives to restart gas generation plants to meet the demand of hot summers and cold winters without Russian gas.

It is the thriving, not the failed economy, which creates breakthroughs and advancements, and like it or not, the world economy is currently, and for the foreseeable future, dependent on fossil fuels. Market forces, not government mandates, create compliance and move initiatives forward.

There is abundant fuel for hope. Compact nuclear reactors can increase the efficiency and resiliency of a more distributed power grid. New battery technologies on the verge of scalability are moving us closer to the goal of affordable electric vehicles. New technology is building houses that are better insulated and cheaper to heat and cool, and perhaps we will learn not to build them on flood plains, fault lines, crumbling coastlines, and areas frequented by wildfire.

In the meantime, enjoy the weather when you are able, and leave the panic for social media and network television. They depend on it to make their living.

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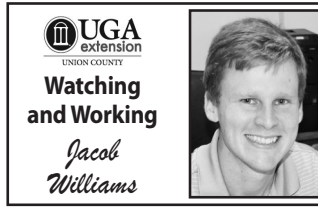
## Outside The Box

By: Don Perry

[worldoutsidethebox.com](http://worldoutsidethebox.com)

## Bird Flu

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), commonly called bird flu, is making rounds again. Let's talk about what it is and steps that you can take to be prepared.



Watching and Working  
Jacob Williams

Broadly speaking there are two types of bird flu. Low pathogenic and highly pathogenic. Pathogenic refers to the ability of the virus to spread disease. Low pathogenic strains of bird flu are fairly common and are not a large concern for backyard flocks or the poultry industry. Highly pathogenic strains are a concern and present a threat to backyard flocks and the poultry industry. Therefore, biosecurity should be of utmost importance to any farm involving poultry. Biosecurity is implementing practices to prevent the spread of harmful diseases. Some examples would be restricting who has access to the animals, quarantining new animals, and disinfecting equipment after use.

The current outbreak of HPAI is really a continuation of the outbreak that started in February of 2022. Do you remember the really high egg prices from a couple of years ago? That was partly due to post COVID supply chain issues and inflation, but HPAI wiping out over 40 million egg laying hens in the U.S. played a big role in that too. Eggs also have seasonal ebbs and flows in demand, with November/December holidays and Easter as the high times for demand. Recently, the Georgia Department of Agriculture confirmed HPAI in a backyard flock on January 9th, 2025. This backyard flock was in Clayton County, Georgia, which is just south of Atlanta. This backyard flock had 13 chickens and ducks. Most likely this flock had contact with migratory wild birds that introduced the disease as there was a pond nearby. The owner of the flock noticed that the birds were dying very quickly and contacted the Georgia Poultry Lab Network, who confirmed HPAI. After the confirmation Georgia Department of Agriculture euthanized the remaining flock, cleaned, and disinfected the premises to mitigate the spread of the disease.

One thing unique about the HPAI strain that we are fighting right now, is that it has been able to cross over into mammals. In March of last year there was a confirmed case at a cattle dairy. That has instigated additional testing protocols for cow milk. HPAI has not been found in any mammals in Georgia. There have been 67 confirmed cases in humans with 1 human death associated with bird flu since 2024 nationwide, none in Georgia. The vast majority of cases in people has been individuals who work with poultry or dairy cattle.

The primary threat of bird flu is to our poultry in dairy industries. Georgia is the top poultry producer in the country, so HPAI is something that must be taken very seriously. The poultry industry in Georgia has an annual economic impact of more than \$28 billion and employs over 88,000 people. The current outbreak has affected over 133 million birds nationwide, but less than 0.025% of those birds have been in Georgia. That means that Georgia producers have been vigilant with biosecurity measures. If you have a backyard flock stay aware and keep all wild birds away from your flocks.

If you believe that your flock has HPAI call the Georgia Department of Agriculture at 770-766-6850. If you have questions about Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza contact your County Extension Office or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu).

Frank F. Combs

## Letters to the Editor

### Location, Location, Location

Dear Editor,

When looking for a place to live, we search for a house that will be right for our family. It's funny how mankind can search for the pleasures of life that are fleeting, yet they never give God a second look. If you are a believer in Christ, the Holy Spirit should be in your prayer life so that you find the right home, because the Holy Spirit has all wisdom when looking for the right place. Why did God send us the Holy Spirit? He did because He knew we at times can make wrong location decisions, based on our own thinking, not relying on the Holy Spirit to guide us in our search for the right home.

We believers in Christ know that this life is temporary, and that death comes to all, so choosing the right place to live after death here on earth is essential, for we only have two choices, Heaven or Hell. And yes, I know a lot of folks who don't think that there is a hereafter will be in total shock when they face the Lord Jesus Christ on Judgment Day, which is real as well. In our beloved America, no one has an excuse for not hearing or reading the word of God or seeing the beauty of God's creation. The scary part about death is we never know the time it will take place, so don't think just because you are young that you have your whole life ahead of you. Only God knows the day and hour.

The Bible is the most read book in the whole world, and when God speaks about eternity, please listen intently to His plea, for He wants no one to spend eternity separated from a Savior who came and died on the cross so that you could spend eternity with Him in heaven. Your location should be Heaven, not Hell. It's up to you.

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 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

Publication No: 635540  
Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.

Towns County (1 Year) \$30. Out of County (1 Year) \$40. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald 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. **Postmaster:** Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

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