

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Making Everyday a Holy-day

By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

The Jewish month of Tishrei, which just concluded, is a whirlwind of spiritual and communal celebration. It begins with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, marked by reflection and renewal. Then comes Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when we seek forgiveness and strive for a fresh start. After these solemn days, comes Sukkot, a week-long festival of joy celebrated in makeshift huts called sukkahs, with eating, singing, and connecting with family and friends. Finally, the month culminates in the raucous celebration of Simchat Torah, where communities dance and rejoice in their relationship with the Torah.

For an entire month, the Jewish calendar is overflowing with spiritual and festive experiences. Each day has its own rituals, meals, and gatherings, enveloped in a constant atmosphere of meaning and inspiration. But then, suddenly, it all stops. The second month of the Jewish year, Cheshvan arrives – a month with no holidays at all. After the emotional highs of Tishrei, Cheshvan can feel like a sharp drop, a sudden plunge into a boring routine and ordinariness.

Why is there such a stark contrast? How does one navigate this abrupt shift from a festival-packed month to a stretch of mundane, uneventful days?

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of blessed memory, the most influential Jewish leader of modern history, would often quote the verse, “And Jacob went on his way” (Genesis 32:2), at the end of the holiday season. It’s a simple phrase, but it encapsulates the essence of Cheshvan. After a period of intense spiritual encounters and celebration, we, like Jacob, must return to our regular routines. The real question is: What do we take with us from these festive highs into the quiet valleys of everyday life?

Tishrei is a month filled with powerful experiences that elevate us. It’s easy to feel spiritually connected and motivated when surrounded by family, rituals, and a constant flow of celebrations. But Cheshvan is the opposite. It’s quiet and barren of festive obligations or special observances. It’s a month of “real life,” where we have to channel the spiritual energy we experienced during Tishrei into the rhythm of ordinary days.

When the angels asked G-d to keep the Torah in the heavens instead of giving it to humanity, He responded that the Torah doesn’t belong in the heavens; it’s the property of every single one of us. We are meant to take the insights, resolutions, and inspiration we gained during the holidays and integrate them into our day-to-day lives. The challenge is to transform the extraordinary into fuel for the ordinary – to sustain the flame even when the environment doesn’t provide an immediate spark.

That’s why Cheshvan is crucial. If Tishrei represents the sprint, Cheshvan is the marathon. Tishrei gives us the initial burst of energy to start the year, but Cheshvan is when we need to run on our own steam. It’s when we take the values we just reaffirmed and weave them into the fabric of our everyday lives. It’s a reminder that real growth happens not during moments of grandeur, but in the quiet, steady grind of consistent effort.

This challenge isn’t unique to the Jewish calendar. It’s a universal truth: when inspiration is high, it’s easy to be the person we want to be. It’s easy to be generous, compassionate, and patient when everything is going well. But when we enter a “dry season,” when the excitement has faded and the environment feels dull and unremarkable, what happens then? How do we keep the flame alive when the external support is gone?

That’s where the quiet month of Cheshvan comes in. It forces us to take everything we experienced and turn it into fuel for the year ahead. It’s a time to show ourselves – and God – that we’ve truly internalized the lessons of Tishrei. The energy and joy of the festivals are meant to ripple through these quieter days, giving us strength and clarity even when life feels mundane.

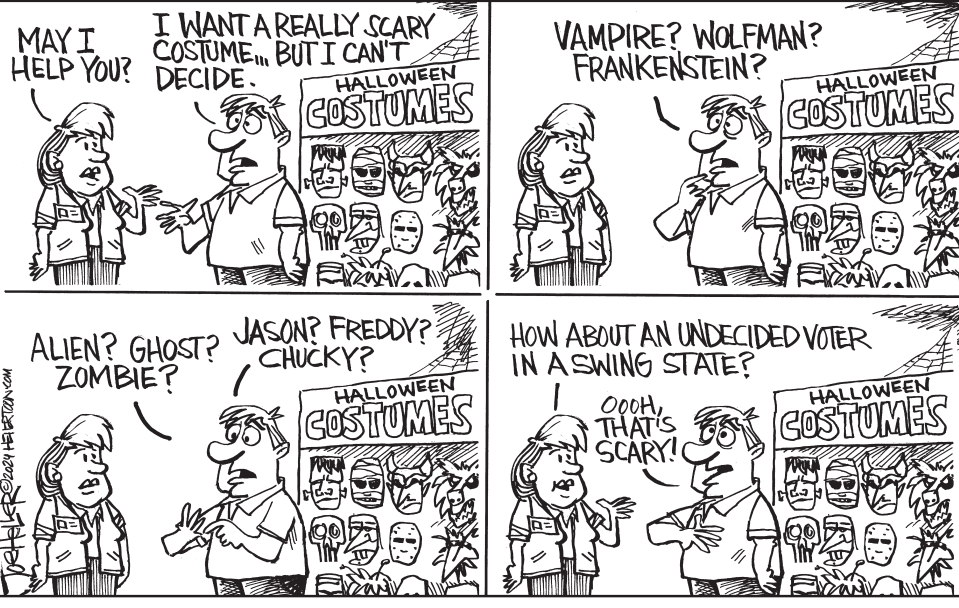
Cheshvan is not a month of emptiness. It’s a month of opportunity. It’s a time to translate inspiration into action, to ensure that the joy and growth we experienced during Tishrei become the new foundation for the year ahead. The absence of holidays isn’t a void; it’s an invitation. Cheshvan asks us to make every mundane day into its own small celebration. To take the spirit of generosity, patience, and joy we felt during Tishrei, and weave them into our regular schedules.

As we move through this seemingly uneventful month, the challenge is to find holiness not in the peaks, but in the plateaus. To keep the spirit of Tishrei alive, even when the sukkah has been packed away and the holiday lights have gone out. Like Jacob, we must “go on our way,” carrying the light of the holidays into the darkness of the ordinary days, making every step a continuation of the spiritual journey we began. In doing so, we turn every moment – no matter how mundane – into an opportunity for continued personal and communal growth.

Yonatan Hambourger 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@tasteoftorah.org.



Echos from Sinai
“Torah for Everyone”
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger



Master Gardeners

Today I want to talk about the Master Gardener Extension Volunteer program and how much they have done for Towns and Union counties since they were created.



Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

Originally, the Master Gardener program was created in Washington state in 1972. There, a local county Extension office identified the need for more help with answering gardening questions from homeowners. The county agent there trained a group of Master Gardeners to help with this problem and the program was born. Over the years the Master Gardener program spread across the United States, arriving in Georgia in 1979. Since then, Master Gardeners

have assisted Extension by going through training and then assisting their community through education and projects that make their community a more beautiful place.

The Towns and Union Master Gardener program started in 2009. That year had seven people complete the training and their volunteer hours. 15 years later four of those Master Gardeners are still active today. Since then, trainings have been held in 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019, 2021, and 2023. There are currently over 60 active Master Gardeners in Towns and Union now.

Since 2013 Towns and Union Master Gardeners have volunteered over 48,000 hours. These hours are valued at over \$1.2 million. In 2023 alone, Master Gardeners volunteered over 4,700 hours valued at over \$141,000. Master Gardeners work on a variety of projects ranging from giving presentations to the public, maintaining public gardens, fundraisers, and operating an Ask a Master Gardener booth at the farmers market. Currently, there are about 30 active projects. All of these projects are focused on making our community a better place to live.

Master Gardeners fill a vital role in the mission of UGA Extension. They extend the outreach that the county Extension office is able to provide. They provide consumer horticulture outreach to the community. Master Gardeners are people who care about the place where they live and want to make it a better and more beautiful place.

2025 is going to be the next Master Gardener training. If you are interested in being joining the program email Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. The training is a 13-week course that meets once a week on Thursdays from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. The training will start at the end of January and run through mid-April. Those who wish to take the training must go through a background check, reference check, and interview before the training begins. The cost of the course is \$200. The course covers topics like botany, soils, propagation, vegetables, fruits, trees, ornamentals, turf, native plants, and more. After completing the course 50 hours of volunteer work are required to become an active Master Gardener. To remain an active Master Gardener after that, 25 hours are required each year.

If you have questions about the Master Gardener program you can contact me at jacob.williams@uga.edu. The University of Georgia is an equal opportunity, affirmative action, veteran, disability institution. If you need a reasonable accommodation or language access services, reach out using the contact information provided, at least three weeks prior to the program date.

Mr. Newell

Old Man Newell was a little different. Some folks said he was a mite “quare,” while others just said he was “turned funny.” The bottom line was that he just didn’t like young boys for some reason or another. He was always rough talking and short tempered when it came to the boys around Trapptown. No one knows the reason why, but, Old Man Newell just didn’t trust any of the local boys.



Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings

Paul and Bud Cummings grew up during the late 1940s and early 1950s. They ran with the likes of Tommy Trapp, William Shelnett, Jerry Cohen and Hubert Brooks. These boys grew up and did everything together. They had a code and it was enforced. None of the boys ever told on another one of the boys. You might not agree with what one of the boys was doing, but, you never told on your buddy.

One day during church the boys were all sitting together and Paul (my father) noticed that Tommy Trapp had something in his pockets that was causing them to bulge. When asked about the contents of his pockets Tommy pulled out a nail and whispered, “I am getting even with Old Man Newell.” After church the gang of boys walked outside to Old Man Newell’s log truck. Tommy walked around the front of the log truck and emptied his pockets of the nails. Dad said, “There must’ve been 2 pounds of roofing nails in front of the wheels of that truck.”

He and his younger brother, Bud, felt sorry for Old Man Newell, so, after Tommy and the other boys left, they began trying to kick the nails away from the front of the truck. At this point in time Old Man Newell came up and thought the boys had placed the nails in front of his wheels. The old man had a fit and screamed out, “You boys are trying to give me a flat tire.” Papa ran up to the boys and whipped them in front of the whole crowd. Paul and Bud would not tell on their buddies. So, they took the whipping without a word. But, they vowed to take vengeance on Old Man Newell.

Years later Old Man Newell’s logging truck broke down and the old man was relegated to driving his little buggy back and forth to town. A plan was soon hatched among the boys. On a Saturday in early June, Paul and Bud Cummings, Tommy Trapp, Jerry Cohen, William Shelnett, and Hubert Brooks went out to Old Man Newell’s house and waited for him to go to bed. After he went to sleep, the boys took apart the old man’s buggy and re-assembled it on top of the old man’s barn. Paul and Bud didn’t make it back home until the wee hours of the morning. They slipped into their house and beds with the smug satisfaction of finally getting even with Old Man Newell.

Paul and Bud were awakened the next morning by the familiar booming voice of Old Man Newell screaming out the words, “Your boys put my wagon on top of my barn.” Papa called his sons into the kitchen for breakfast and asked them about Newell’s claims. The boys couldn’t lie to their Daddy considering the fact that they had not cleaned the wagon grease from their hands from their escapades of the night before.

The boys confessed their crimes to their Daddy and explained why they had committed them. Their Daddy listened and stated that he understood. However, they were told to go and take the wagon down from the top of the barn. They were also told to go and get the other boys to help the old man.

When the boys drove up, the old man began screaming. He stood at the bottom of the barn and watched to make sure the job was done to his satisfaction. Tommy Trapp asked the other boys, “How are we going to do this?” The old man screamed, “The same way you got it up there.” So, Tommy shrugged his shoulders and began taking apart the buggy. He pulled the wheel from the axle after the hub was removed and said, “Watch this.” Tommy let go of the wheel right above Old Man Newell, and it rolled down the sloped roof of the barn. The wheel came within 6 inches of the older man’s head. He must’ve got the message, because he left the boys alone to finish the job and never again screamed at the boys from Trapptown.

Towns County Community Calendar

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

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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Letters To The Editor

What Do We Want?

Dear Editor,

Look, Trump certainly has his baggage. But do we really want four more years of: 1) Bidenomics/Bidenflation? [Compare the real purchasing power of your personal earnings with your personal needs.] 2) Expansive crime with no consequences? 3) Border chaos and the overwhelming influx of illegal transients? 4) Creeping socialism versus earning and paying one’s own way? 5) Disrespect for law enforcement and other people’s wellbeing? 6) A lack of common sense? 7) Minority rule, to the exclusion and/or detriment of the majority?

PLEASE let your wellbeing and that of your nation answer the foregoing.

Claude Spears

What Goes Around

Dear Editor,

Across the restaurant from where I was sitting, a father and his son were having breakfast. Their resemblance was unmistakable. The father, if I had to guess, was 40 years old or so, and the son looked to be around 15. I couldn’t hear their conversation, but they talked easily and with passion. They smiled a lot, and when the boy laughed, it was infectious, causing me to smile as well.

I assumed they were talking about something special to both of them – sports, fishing, or the like. I wanted to go over and sit with them and enjoy this all too familiar memory once again. Actually, I wanted to roll back the hands of time, not permanently, but just long enough to enjoy one more meal with my son, the way this father was doing. To talk sports, to laugh easily, and to revisit a special relationship that comes and goes all too quickly.

When I left, I walked by their table and strained to hear what they were talking about. I wanted to stop and tell them to enjoy this special time in their lives because it is so fleeting. My son, now 50 years old, lives a long way from me. His son, my grandson, also has an infectious laugh. There’s a good chance they’re having breakfast, talking easily and laughing often. What goes around, comes around.

Gene Vickers

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.

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Phone: (706) 896-4454 Fax: (706) 896-1745 Email: tcherald@windstream.net

Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546

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Kenneth West
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