

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Thanksgiving...

What To Be Thankful for This Thanksgiving

By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

For many, 2024 has been a challenging year.

The Middle East is facing the most prolonged war the region has seen in centuries, as the radical regime in Iran continues to deploy its proxy armies against Israel. Still reeling from the horrific events of October 7, 2023, the world's only Jewish state is fighting brutal wars on seven different fronts, while seeking to recover the 101 innocent hostages still being held by Hamas in Gaza. On the other side of the world, the Russia-Ukraine War has continued in the background and claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands, while China, Iran, and North Korea continue ramping up their aggressive rhetoric that threatens the stability of the world.

Domestically, the cost of living has soared and public sentiment about the economy and the future remains bleak. The drawn-out election season was taxing and divisive, and our faith in the institutions that are meant to lead and guide us has plummeted.

So, as Thanksgiving approaches, after the year we've had: what is there for us to be thankful for?

The answer can be found in a talk delivered by the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, about Thanksgiving almost 40 years ago:

In the Rebbe's telling, the most powerful part of the Thanksgiving story was how the country's original settlers immediately proclaimed a holiday of thanksgiving to G-d upon their arrival, expressing gratitude for a secure land and freedom from religious oppression. The Rebbe, who maintained warm and mutually respectful correspondence with the presidents and leaders of his day, drew a throughline to how the United States remains a beacon of freedom and opportunity, and lauded America as a "Medinah shel Chessed" – a nation of kindness, a sanctuary for the Jewish people, and a pillar of support for Israel.

If those settlers, who endured so much more than we can imagine, could pause to be thankful, how much more should we, with all the resources and abundance we have today, find reasons to express gratitude?

Even in the face of hardship, there is much to appreciate: Yes, politics is contentious, but our peaceful and respectful transition of power remains a cornerstone of our democracy. Yes, the economy has been difficult, but the forecasts are beginning to brighten, and the incoming administration has placed economic recovery front and center. Globally, while conflicts still dominate headlines, there are glimpses of resolution – steps toward peace in Ukraine, and support for Israel to eliminate the enemies massed on its borders once and for all, ready to begin a new dawn of peace and prosperity.

We are living in extraordinary times, where challenges and triumphs coexist in ways that highlight the resilience and potential of our nation. America is not just a country – it is the center of innovation, the leader of global democracy, and the defender of human rights. Our achievements in technology, medicine, and the arts have set the stage for progress that benefits people across the globe.

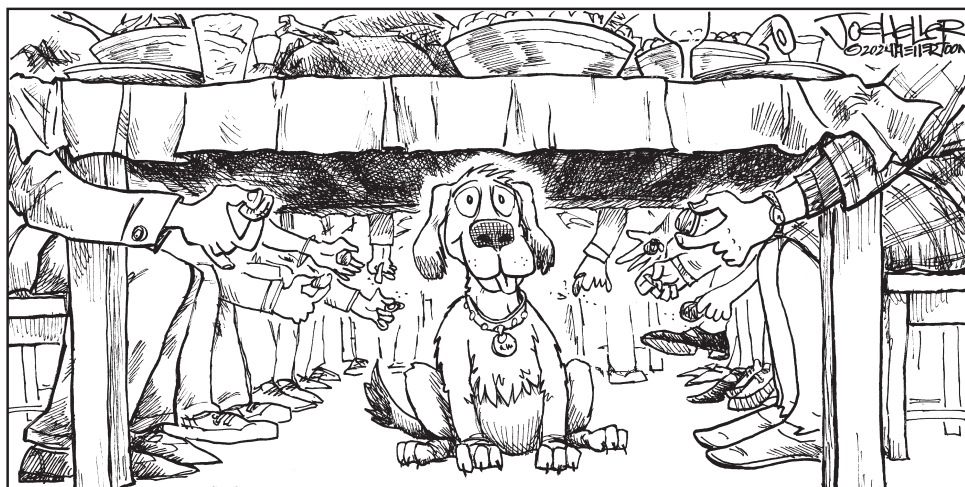
Moreover, the freedoms we enjoy are unparalleled in history. From the right to vote and speak freely to the ability to practice religion without fear, these liberties are gifts that form the bedrock of a nation that values justice and equality for all. As the world looks to America for guidance and leadership, we must appreciate the privilege of being part of this extraordinary experiment in democracy.

Even amidst difficulties, America stands as a beacon of hope, generosity, and compassion. It is a nation that welcomes the oppressed, feeds the hungry, and shelters the displaced. These are not just policies – they are a reflection of the kindness and humanity that define the American character. This Thanksgiving, let us take pride in how far we've come and embrace the responsibility to continue shaping a brighter future.

On top of being a time to share our gratitude for our personal blessings, Thanksgiving is an opportunity to recognize the divine providence that has placed us in a nation that champions democracy, kindness, and justice. So, this Thanksgiving, we are thankful not only for family, health, and security but also for the privilege of calling America our home – a place where freedom thrives, support for democracy and liberty endures, and kindness defines our national character.

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



Happy Thanksgiving
Have a Bountiful Holiday

Spotted Lanternfly

The spotted lanternfly (SLF) has been seen in Georgia. A population was found in Fulton County, Georgia. Even though this population was not particularly close to us, it is important to talk about. This is potentially a serious invasive species that can damage grapes, hops, stone fruits, and hardwood trees. Let's talk about this invasive species, the damage that it can cause, and what you can do about it.

SLF is native to China. It was first spotted in the United States 10 years ago in Pennsylvania. Since then it has spread to 17 different states, including our neighbors Tennessee and North Carolina. It has been a matter of when it would arrive in Georgia, not if. The primary threat that this insect poses is to agriculture, which is the number one industry in Georgia. The insect does not pose a direct threat to people. Some vineyards in Pennsylvania have seen a yield reduction of up to 90% and vine death because of SLF.

SLF has a nymph and adult stage. The nymphs are red and black with white dots and get up to about half an inch long. The adults are up to one inch long. When the adults have their wings folded they look pinkish with black dots. When the adults spread their wings, you can see a very striking black, white, and red underwing. They will also lay egg masses that you may be able to spot. Fresh egg masses are white, and start to turn tan as they age. Egg masses can be laid on many different surfaces including trees, outdoor furniture, vehicles, light-bulbs, fenceposts and more.

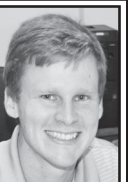
SLF is in the planthopper family of insects. This means that its mouth is like a needle. They will stick this needle like mouthpart into the tree to draw out sap, similar to an aphid. This feeding will significantly reduce the vigor of the plant or kill it. When the SLF is done feeding they will leave a honeydew behind. The honeydew will attract sooty mold to start growing. Sooty mold does not directly harm the tree, but it can make the trees look bad. Other insects cause sooty mold on trees too. Sooty mold is pretty common on maple trees.

The adult spotted lanternfly is generally found from July through December. September through December is when the females are laying eggs. Each egg mass has 30-50 eggs in it. The eggs typically hatch in May and June. The baby SLFs grow throughout the summer, finally maturing in the second half of the year.

What should you do if you find a spotted lanternfly? The best thing to do is take a picture, kill it, then report it. Reports can be made using this link. <https://www.gainvasives.org/slf/report/> Another action that you can take is to remove Tree of Heaven from your yard if you have it. This is an invasive plant that is the primary host of SLF.

If you have questions about the spotted lanternfly, contact your county Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Thanksgiving Turkey Fire Safety

Thanksgiving: a day of family, football, and a lot of comfort foods. On Thursday, tables will be piled with steaming dishes of creamed corn, dinner rolls, dressing, green bean casserole, and, of course, turkey. While the typical Thanksgiving dinner only threatens a stuffed stomach, and perhaps a lengthy afternoon nap, cooking this holiday's favorite fowl can be dangerous.

According to a report by the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS), the likelihood of a residential fire is double that of any other day of the year! In order to make sure your feast doesn't go up in flames, read on and learn how to cook a Thanksgiving turkey safely! For most, the kitchen is the heart of the home, especially during the holidays. From testing family recipes to decorating cakes and cookies, everyone enjoys being part of the preparations.

Keeping fire safety on top of mind in the kitchen during this joyous but hectic time is important, especially when there's a lot of activity and people at home. As you start preparing your holiday schedule and organizing that large family feast, remember, by following a few simple safety tips you can enjoy time with your loved ones and keep yourself and your family safer from fire.

Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires with more than three times the daily average for such incidents. Christmas Day and Christmas Eve ranked second and third, with both having nearly twice the daily average. Most cooking fires are the result of an unattended stove. Whether you're baking a turkey or steaming some veggies, stay in sight of the stove or oven as long as it's on. Consider setting up a TV inside the kitchen so you don't miss your favorite game!

Just like operating heavy machinery, cooking with loose or baggy clothing can be a hazard. It only takes a moment for the sleeve of your sweater to catch fire when stirring the pot, so avoid such attire when you're playing the part of the chef. Some kids love to be a part of the action in the kitchen, and Thanksgiving meal prep can be a great opportunity for them to pitch in. However, it can be dangerous to put them in charge of the heat. Instead, consider placing them in charge of measuring, heating, and stirring. This allows them to be a part of the process and learn without putting them in harm's way.

Make sure your smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are in working order. It is recommended that you check smoke alarms once a month and replace their batteries every six months. Fire extinguishers should have their pressure gauges checked once a month, but need to be annually certified by a professional every year. While it's important to have hot pads on hand, these can lead to kitchen fires if left too close to hot surfaces. Your wooden spoon or spatula (the one that your mom used for decades) can also be a fire hazard, so make sure to place it on a rest away from the heat when you're done using it.

Frying a turkey might be delicious, but there is a reason that firefighters and insurance underwriters everywhere caution against it. In fact, Underwriters Laboratories has never given its seal of approval to a turkey fryer. Unsurprisingly, a large vat of boiling grease greatly increases the probability of starting a fire because there are a number of things that can easily go wrong. Over-filling a fryer with oil can lead to a spill when the turkey is added. Partially frozen turkeys can cause sputtering when introduced to hot oil, resulting in a fire. They can also simply tip over and spread flames instantly and grease fires are incredibly dangerous and difficult to extinguish. If you do fry your turkey, always do so outdoors and keep the fryer on a level surface that isn't wood away from buildings. Make sure not to over-fill the container and take into account the volume of the turkey so that it doesn't overflow. If your setup doesn't have a thermometer, get an attachable one so that you can monitor it properly and never leave the fryer unattended. Most grease fires can be prevented by using a thermometer, watching for smoke, and keeping a close eye on your cooking surface.

No matter what, do not use water or a towel to try and put the fire out. Water can make a grease fire far worse, and flammable towels can easily catch and spread the flames. Keep baking soda and a metal baking sheet nearby in case you need to cover an out-of-control fire. Baking soda has carbon dioxide in it, which can deprive the flame of oxygen, but only if the fire is relatively small. If it's contained in a pot, turn off the stove and cover it with a lid or baking sheet if possible.

Fire extinguishers are usually the best option, but not all fire extinguishers are capable of putting out grease fires, so make sure you have the correct type. It might seem like a good idea to try and get the burning dish outside but moving it across the house can result in spillage, spreading the fire.

While baking times and temperatures vary based on the weight of the turkey, it's always important to follow the baking instructions. However, even if you're taking the safe route and baking your turkey in the oven, fires can still happen. If your oven or microwave catches fire, keep the door closed. Hopefully, this will deprive the flame of oxygen and extinguish it, but it's always best to have your extinguisher at the ready.

Don't risk playing the role of a firefighter. While putting out small fire contained in a pot is possible, attempting to put out a blazing kitchen is extremely dangerous and should be left to the professionals. If you have the slightest doubt about your ability to put out the fire, get out and call the professionals at 9-1-1.

Have a safe and happy Thanksgiving!

RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director



Against The Wind

The trees on the ridge high above our cove are discussing the wind this morning, and there are strong opinions among the crowd. Morning came earlier than my situational awareness, and the t-shirt I wore to the barn was a thin response to 34 degrees.

Curiously, I didn't really feel chilly until I came back inside and checked the temperature. I wonder if that's why Peaches, whose coat is thinner than my shirt, doesn't seem to suffer from the cold: She never looks at a thermometer.

I also wonder if, had I never read an opinion about climate change, listened to a professional talker reiterating the latest warnings and predictions, or spent hours doom-scrolling through the worldwide web of misfortune, I would have taken more time to appreciate the abundance of beautiful October and November days of t-shirt weather that we were granted this year.

It is my observation that many times the fly in the ointment is the one we put there, the one we have labored to catch.

Granted, there are plenty of flies available. Here in our own backyard, thousands of people are bracing against the cold wind in a coat that was donated to replace the one they so recently lost. Far away, there is war and rumor of war, and the earth is still plagued by the tyranny of evil men.

It has always been thus, but sometimes the events driven by fear sweep across the land like a cold front, and the howl is as loud as the wind on the mountain this morning. I feel a tinge of sadness as the sound of a tall sentinel losing its grip on the soil punctuates the roar.

It always comes back to fear. Hatred is fear of the other. Anger is fear of our vulnerability. The most fearful people are the most controlling, and from this poisoned spring, the tyrants of the world flow. And the bureaucrats.

Faith banishes fear, but we conflate faith with religion, and religion without faith is just another bureaucracy. Gratitude also shines a light on fear. Pity that Thanksgiving only comes once a year when we need its reminder so much more often. Thousands in North Carolina will celebrate the holiday grateful to be alive. I'm grateful that the trees above us are still standing, unlike over 800,000 acres of forest too close for comfort.

Gratitude brings us back to the moment, the only time we have, and away from the phantoms of our fears which, the vast majority of our precious time, are ghosts of the past or imaginings of the future. Neither of those is real like the sun coming over the mountain on a new day.

The tree that fell was a red maple, and I have learned from his clan. Cut him down and he sprouts again from the stump. Knock him over and he sends down roots wherever he touches the ground, and turns his branches upward again, into the light.

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.

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 YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 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 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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