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OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

A Nation of Innovation...

A Nation of Innovation and Resilience
By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger



When the world looks at Israel, it often sees a country defined by conflict, resilience, and survival – a nation that has weathered wars, terrorism, and the occasional bout of political instability to defend its existence. This view is only reinforced by Israel's recent struggles, with the brutal Hamas invasion, massacres, and kidnappings of October 7, 2023, marking a painful chapter in a year spent defending against multiple fronts and rogue states.

Yet Israel is so much more than its conflicts. Beyond the struggle, it is a powerhouse of global innovation – an engine of solutions that improve lives far beyond its borders, even as attempts to delegitimize the country through the BDS movement persist.

BDS, or the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, works to undermine Israel by promoting the idea that it should be isolated while imposing economic sanctions. Per Wikipedia, "Boycotts are facilitated by urging the public to avoid purchasing goods made by Israeli companies, divestment by urging banks, pension funds, international companies, etc. to stop doing business in Israel, and sanctions by pressuring governments to end military trade and free-trade agreements with Israel and to suspend Israel's membership in international forums."

But the irony of these calls for boycotts is that they overlook a profound truth: Israel is a country that not only survives but thrives, pioneering technologies that have become essential to modern life. In Israel, necessity drives invention at a pace unmatched by most developed nations. From agriculture to AI and healthcare, Israel's advances reach far beyond its borders, benefiting millions in ways that can't simply be dismissed or ignored.

Take healthcare, where Israeli innovation shines in addressing real-world needs. Nuvo's Invo, for instance, is a groundbreaking wearable device that allows expectant mothers to monitor their pregnancies from home, reducing hospital visits and offering critical peace of mind. It's a profound example of how Israel doesn't just solve local challenges – it creates solutions that resonate globally, improving lives in areas with limited healthcare access. BDS, however, seeks to ignore such contributions, overlooking the impact of these technologies on the very people it claims to support.

Agricultural technology is another area where Israel's ingenuity benefits people worldwide. In a region with limited arable land and scarce water, Israelis developed drip irrigation – a method now used in drought-prone regions globally to conserve water and increase crop yields. More recently, innovations like BeeHero's Pollination Insights Platform tackle the global pollinator crisis, helping ensure food security as bee populations decline. Such advancements address challenges faced not just by Israel but by the world at large, making it clear that efforts to delegitimize these achievements are both misguided and counterproductive.

Israel's achievements in artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, too, are undeniable. Aporia Guardrails, an AI management tool, helps companies monitor and prevent real-time AI risk, showing how Israeli innovation prioritizes safety and responsibility in an era when technology is often deployed without oversight. These contributions are indispensable to Fortune 500 companies and startups alike, yet BDS proponents would have us overlook these impacts, as if isolating Israel could somehow erase its vital role in our interconnected digital lives.

But Israel's impact doesn't stop with its technology exports. Waze, the navigation app created in Israel, revolutionized how we commute, and Mobileye's driver-assistance technology has saved countless lives by making roads safer. The influence of Israeli tech is woven into the fabric of everyday life worldwide, underscoring the absurdity of calls to isolate or erase these contributions. Even as BDS tries to diminish Israel's influence, millions continue to benefit from Israeli solutions daily.

The absurdity of BDS's agenda becomes even clearer when we consider that Israel, despite facing constant security threats, is a leading global humanitarian responder. Israeli NGOs and aid organizations are often the first on the ground in crises, offering medical aid and resources to disaster-stricken areas worldwide. From earthquake zones to drought-afflicted regions, Israel has consistently provided expertise, equipment, and care to those in need – regardless of political or national affiliations. Ignoring this spirit of compassion does a disservice to the people whose lives have been touched by Israel's efforts.

Ultimately, BDS fails to recognize that Israel's story is not one of mere survival but of thriving against all odds. The words of the prophet Isaiah, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law," reflect Israel's modern mission to bring knowledge, solutions, and hope to the world. Whether through lifesaving health devices, sustainable agricultural practices, or world-changing technologies, Israel's contributions improve lives on every continent, regardless of the political narratives surrounding it.

In boycotting Israel, BDS doesn't just miss the point – it actively advocates against the solutions that enrich lives worldwide. Rejecting Israel's achievements isn't a stand against politics; it's a stand against progress itself. The world needs more of the hope and creativity that Israel provides, not less. In an era defined by shared challenges, Israel's resilience and innovation are gifts to the global community – proof that even amid struggle, light shines from Zion.

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@tasteoforah.org.

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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Wildfires and Insurance

Wildfires could increase your Fire/Hazard Insurance Costs

Increases to the cost of Fire and or Hazard Insurance for both homes and businesses is affecting values and affordability nationwide. The risk of Hurricanes, Tornados, Earthquakes, Wildfires or other natural disasters are forcing insurers to increase premiums or cancel policies. Insurance premiums have increased nationwide to offset losses in disaster areas. Premiums in many high-risk locations have increased 300-400% or more.

Relief - The process is slow but states and insurers are working on rewarding property owners who modify or mitigate hazard risk with lower premiums or just being able to offer insurance.

What can you do - Starting or joining a Firewise Community (NFPA.org) is one way to put your best foot forward to show insurers that you are working on reducing wildfire risk not only to your property but throughout your neighborhood. Case by case insurers are offering discounts for mitigation efforts.

It has been well documented by fire departments around the world that Embers are the biggest threat during a fire. CalFire in California has documented that 90% of structure losses during a wildfire are a result of ember ignition. The other 10% comes from direct or radiant heat (Usually a burning building or vegetation within 30').

Home and yard hardening products along with defensible space can greatly reduce the ember threat and protect a home during a fire. Embers like to collect at the base of a structure and 5' out around a structure depending on wind conditions.

Keeping Zone 0 (5' around a structure) clear of combustible materials is the first step recommended in combating embers. Installing other layers of fire protection products are necessary as well to protect a structure properly from embers.

Sprinkler systems mounted on a structure are becoming more common and are proving to be effective in saving structures from Ember Ignition.

Creating defensible space around a home is one of the most effective ways to protect it from burning.

There are three zones recognized by most fire professionals.

Zone 0 – This is the area within 5 feet of a structure. The best plan is to have no combustible materials in this area. Many new homes are being landscaped with 5' of crushed rock surrounding the structure. There are no plants or mulch recommended for this zone. Do not store building materials or furniture in this zone. Replace fencing in this zone with non-combustible materials. It is best to remove any weeds, branches or debris from this area on a regular basis.

Zone 1 – This is the area between 5 feet and 30 feet of a structure. This area is also known as the green zone, meaning keep plants watered and trimmed of dead branches, pick up leaves and other debris. During fire season move furniture and other combustibles in doors or beyond the 30' radius of a structure if possible. Regular maintenance of an irrigation system will help keep this area green.

Zone 2 – This is the area between 30 feet and 100 feet of a structure. This area needs annual trimming of dead branches, removal of dense foliage and trimming up branches on trees. These practices will reduce fuel for a fire.

If all of these zones are maintained you have greatly reduced the fuel for a fire and created a buffer around your home help protect all structures from wildfire. The number one thing you should have to prepare for a Wildfire is an evacuation plan. There are terrible stories of people perishing in fires because they went back inside to grab one more bag. When a fire is identified you should grab your family and pets and get out the door as quickly as possible. Don't wait for an evacuation order because the streets can get clogged if everyone is trying to leave at once. In advance you should talk about the plan and identify multiple exit routes depending on which direction the fire is approaching. Your plan should include backing up all important paper work in advance as well as taking annual videos of the inside and outside of your home. These electronic backups will help you resolve any financial or insurance issues if you do experience a loss.

By preparing a plan and discussing it in advance you are giving you and your family the best chance to survive a wildfire.

Evacuation is an essential part of a wildfire survival plan because you need to get out of the area when a wildfire is approaching so the professionals can work to save your homes.

Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D is the Georgia Firewise Liaison and we have 130 recognized Firewise USA Communities across Georgia from the mountains to the barrier islands on the coast and all in between. These communities are doing things to make their communities safer from a wildfire disaster, and a Firewise "Chipper" or community cleanup day brings community members out of their homes and routines at least once a year to work together to create a safer community. Some communities even have a "dinner on the ground" for workers cleaning up the common areas, utilities, and evacuation routes.

A community that works together is a much safer place to live because of the common cause of community safety.

For more information go to: Firewise.org, Chestatred.org or gatrees.org

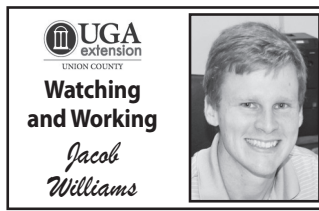
RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director



Well Water

Most people in Georgia have well water in their homes. Here in the mountains, many people enjoy fresh mountain water as their primary drinking source. Therefore, it's very important that people be aware of potential issues with well water and things that they can do to mitigate issues. Let's talk about some well issues and things you can do to prevent those issues from occurring.

The US Geological Survey keeps track of water aquifer levels. The nearest test site for us is in White county. Because of the high amounts of rainfall that we receive each year, our aquifers drying out is not a concern like it is in the Western US. The aquifer we access is the Blue Ridge



aquifer. It's a crystalline rock aquifer, which means that the gallons per minutes that you get from a well here is going to most likely be in the 5-10 range. Wells can be pretty variable in yield in North Georgia because of the variations in the fractures in the ground. Basically, for well drilling here, you put the well in and hope that you cross some of the fractures where water is present.

You want to make sure that your well is located at least 50 feet from the septic tank and 75 feet from the septic system's drainage lines. You also want to make sure that your well cap is at least 8 inches above the ground. This is going to keep surface water from getting inside of your well. Surface water can carry bacteria and debris that you want to keep out. It's also a good idea to have a well cover to protect the well cap. A well cover makes your well more visible so that it's less likely to be backed into by a vehicle or run over by the lawn mower.

Always be on the lookout for changes in the water. If you see a difference in color, a new odor, new taste, or particles in your water that's a clue that your well has become compromised. There's a lot of water tests that the Extension Office can assist you with to find out what is going with your water. By knowing the symptoms, when the issue started, where the septic system is, what kind of construction might have gone on nearby, among other factors can help narrow down the range of issues that we are dealing with.

Shock chlorination is a common treatment that is effective if bacteria are present. Shock chlorination won't be effective if the source of the contamination is not removed. Sources of contamination could include a septic system, absence of well cap, or a cracked well casing. You'll want to use three pints of ordinary bleach for 100 gallons of water in the well.

Annual testing of the water in your well will start to build data on what your well normally is like. If you do run into problems with the well, then you'll have data to look back at to see what's changed. It's best to test in the spring, because that is generally when our aquifers are recharging.

If you would like to test your well water contact your local Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. We can assist you by providing the resources to test.

I am hosting a well water program for people who have questions about their wells. It will be on November 19, 2024 at 5:30 pm in the Pat Haralson Memorial Civic Center. This program is free and open to the public. 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.

Letters To The Editor

A Predictable Response

Dear Editor,

The following excerpt was written by Hayes Brown, an opinion writer for MSNBC:

"The one thing that might soften that blow (of Trump's landslide victory) is how much Trump had to lie to do it. He had to lie about where he stands on abortion. He had to lie about migrants posing a threat to American communities. He had to lie about the many criminal charges against him. He had to lie about how great the economy will be under a disastrous tariff policy. He had to lie about trans kids and crime rates, and his claim in his conversation speech that he was offering 'a hand of loyalty and friendship' to every American was an obvious falsehood. Lying is a well-established part of Trump's brand by now."

It is obvious that Hayes Brown fixates on Trump's supposed lies while overlooking the actual falsehoods from Kamala Harris and her allies in the media. Clearly, the Democrats and their media supporters are more interested in creating a false narrative than reflecting reality. Just look at how they concealed Joe Biden's dementia. They are showing no interest in listening to American voters and even less in addressing our real concerns. So, for Brown and his fellow "woke" journalists, softening the blow of Trump's victory is their pathetic way of licking their wounds. What a telling – and predictable – response.

John Ripma

An Open Letter to Georgia's Congressmen

Since nearly all politicians in Congress seem to agree that \$400,000 per year is the salary point where tax issues should be applied, I formally request, as a 48-year payer of the mandatory Social Security tax, that all three of you co-sponsor a bill immediately to increase the Social Security tax cap from the \$176,100 limit that takes effect on January 1, 2025, to a new limit of \$400,001.

In 2024, \$1.51 trillion was collected by the tax at the \$168,600 limit. Increasing the limit to \$400,001 would immediately infuse an additional \$2.6 trillion annually into the Social Security fund, and thoroughly eliminate any need for benefits cuts, eligibility restrictions or concerns about any lack of surplus funds.

This increase would have absolutely no impact whatsoever to any American making less than the 2024 limit, or the new 2025 limit. The 2024 average income is \$59,428.

There is no downside whatsoever ... except those making between \$168,600 and \$400,000 would pay the additional 6.6% that they aren't paying now.

We've been hearing about the Social Security deficit and political scare tactics for decades. It's now time to stop talking and take positive action. Enough with the meaningless, insincere rhetoric and bogus campaign promises.

Given that members of Congress pay NOTHING in Social Security or Medicare tax, it's long past the time for them to put up or shut up.

I'm talking to you, Senators Ossoff and Warnock, and you, Representative Clyde.

Gary St. Lawrence

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