

Joe BUCHANAN

AMERICANA WITH A JEWISH SOUL

"A tour de force in country music"



ROSH CHODESH ELUL FRIDAY AUG 21

SERVICE: 6:30 CONCERT: 7:30

www.temple Sinai vt.org

TEMPLE SINAI SERVICES AND EVENTS

Day	Date	Time	Description
Fri	8/21	6:30 pm	ROSH HODESH ELUL/KABBALAT SHABBAT- Join Temple Sinai and JOE BUCHANAN for a special service with blessings and songs for the month of Elul and a festive Shabbat service
Fri	8/21	7:30 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">ELUL Concert JOE BUCHANAN <i>Americana with a Jewish Soul</i> <i>(link on website; usual passcode)</i></p> 
Sat	8/22	9:30 am	SHACHARIT SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE Our 1-hour more traditional service, mostly sung in Hebrew, but you don't need to know Hebrew to enjoy it.
Sat	8/22	10:30 - 11:30am	TORAH STUDY: SHOFTIM <i>(control+ click for text, audio, and modern commentaries on the portion.)</i> Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue: Jewish values and the legal system
Sat	8/22	Noon	BRUNCH AND LEARN with JOE BUCHANAN Join Joe to hear more about his personal religious journey from Christianity to Judaism, and his experiences along that process. This is to honor all the Jewish by Choice who are so central to our community.
Sat	8/22	9 pm	HAVDALAH on FACEBOOK LIVE Just go to Temple Sinai's Facebook page to join.
Sat	8/29	Noon	SAVE THE DATE: RABBI BARRY BLOCK INTRODUCTION TO MUSSAR AND TORAH STUDY

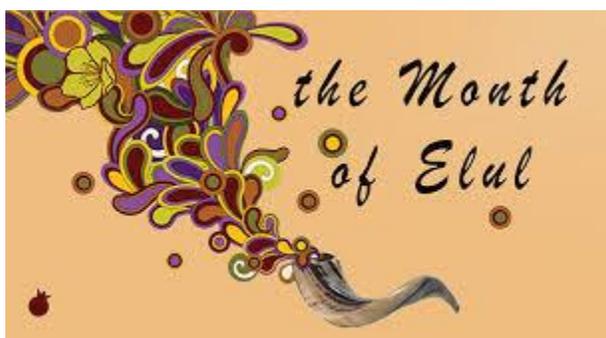
ZOOM SERVICES, CLASSES AND MEETINGS NOW REQUIRE PASSWORDS



Shalom Temple Sinai!

It's hard to believe that the High Holy Days are almost upon us. COVID and Quarantine seem to have made time move both more slowly and much more quickly. How often have you referred to something that happened before COVID like it was yesterday, only to realize it has been months.

But you can't quarantine Judaism, and our holiday calendar rolls on, no matter the events of world history they have witnessed over the millennia. Members should have gotten the details of our High Holy Day services in the mail, and electronically. I'll attach them to this email as well.



ELUL - The High Holy Days start with the new moon on the Hebrew month of Elul. It is then that we begin to do our self-evaluation, to look in the mirror, and to reflect honestly about where we have done well, and where we have not lived up to what we know we can and should be. But to me, it should NOT be a time

of beating ourselves up, or feeling unworthy, or like we failed. Quite the contrary, it is because we ARE worthy, we are created good, in the image of God, and have the miraculous capacity to do such good that we stop and try to get ourselves back on track. It is more like dusting off the coating of stress, greed, despair and anxiety that accumulates over the year of living so we can see the beauty that lies beneath. It is in recognizing our own profound goodness that we are best motivated to do better, to live up to our own potential as caring, human beings.

The rabbis teach that Elul can be seen as an acronym for "Ani L'dodi v'dodi Li", "I am my beloved and my beloved is mine" meaning that it is a time to remember the love we have for God and God's love for us. It is from love that we do **t'shuvah**. **T'shuvah** means "to turn" or "return" (but is often mistranslated as "repent"). We do t'shuvah when we turn our hearts more fully to one another and to God. We do t'shuvah when we remember who we are – infinite light wrapped in a body. We do t'shuvah when we help the vulnerable with work and money, when we rest and refresh our spirits on Shabbat, when we go out and work for a just and fair society. We do t'shuvah by deepening our spiritual Jewish practice, so that we get better at staying on our sacred path.

During Elul, we will be singing a very popular niggun by Israeli singer Eitan Katz: Here is the link to his ["Elul Niggun."](#) And here is a link to the popular song we will be singing for Elul, "[Achat Sha'alti](#)" (One thing I ask).

During Elul, I'll be sending out a few *kavanot*, or reflections each week. I'll be offering classes jointly with OZ. We'll be studying the key prayers of the High Holy Day during our usual Torah Study time. We will begin to study the Mussar ethical tradition of Judaism, particularly as it relates to Torah Study.

And we will kick off Elul this Shabbat with a service announcing the month, sounding the Shofar, and a concert with JOE BUCHANAN. On Saturday, you are all invited to a Brunch and Learn at noon, where Joe will share his personal spiritual journey as a seeker and a Jew by choice, and we can ask questions or discuss our own journeys.

Texas born and southern raised, Joe Buchanan makes country music that is steeped in Torah and the trials of the human spirit. He grew up struggling with religion and his place in the world until one day outside of the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., and 13 years into their marriage, his wife revealed that she was Jewish. An exploration of faith led the way home for the whole family and kicked off a whirlwind of songwriting, ultimately leading to Joe's debut album, *Unbroken*. Since his conversion, he's toured the country leading services, concerts, and workshops. Joe's goal is to help drive connection to what connects us all and to hold the door for other seekers. His latest



release is *Back From Babylon* and his website is www.joebuchananmusic.com



And on August 29 at noon, my classmate, friend, rabbi, and author of THE MUSSAR TORAH COMMENTARY, Rabbi Barry Block will be joining us by Zoom for a very special Torah Study, introducing Mussar and Torah. Even if you are not a Torah Study regular, join us for this to learn about Mussar, a powerful Jewish

spiritual and self-improvement tradition that is VERY popular in Reform synagogues across America and Israel. We will be introducing MUSSAR to our community through Torah Study and other opportunities in the coming year.

NEW ATTACKS ON THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

I was very upset to see an article in the Israeli press this week reporting that a coalition over 60 progressive organizations had signed on to a movement and petition to boycott the ADL. The letter begins:

AN OPEN LETTER TO PROGRESSIVES: THE ADL IS NOT AN ALLY

It then mischaracterizes the ADL, saying it can't be an ally because of its history of support for, involvement with, and statements defending Israel and resisting BDS. The ADL, founded over 100 years by Jewish immigrants to fight bigotry and hatred, an organization with a sterling record of education and anti-bias work, is now no longer welcome, say these organizations, in progressive spaces. The organizations the signed include Democratic Socialists of America, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, The Movement for Black Lives, and the American Friends Service Committee.

I am torn. I don't want to give this petition any more publicity or oxygen than it has. Mostly, this will go unnoticed outside progressive activist circles. If the goal is to divide us, and make support of Israel taboo, then we only aid them by publicizing it. I also remember Evan Traylor wisely reminding us that lobbing statements at one another is not helpful; relationships are helpful. Doing the work is helpful.

Still, it seems to ignore history to say nothing as this sort of thing continues to grow on the margins of acceptable politics. The puritan impulse to expel and banish is a dangerous one, from us or from any part of civil society. When politics becomes religion, disagreement become heresy, and compromise become inquisition. Our tradition teaches that the realm of the sacred is a realm with room for many points of view and passionate arguments, and our society, and our synagogue should strive to embody the Talmudic principle of *Elu v'elu: both this opinion and the opposite opinion are words of the Living God*. Ever narrowing and more dogmatic purity tests do not serve the greater good, do not serve justice, and do not serve our better natures.

Sadly, it feels really good and satisfying to call others out. It makes us feel better than, and humans love that feeling. In it we can find the root of so many evils, including racism. This Yom Kippur, I intend to confess and apologize for my own inclination toward narrowmindedness in the name of higher values. I will apologize for my own love of feeling right. *Al chet*.

For your education, here is a link to the [DROP THE ADL letter](#).

And click [here for the joint statement by the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstruction movements condemning it. Here's an excerpt:](#)

We vehemently reject efforts to silence or shun the ADL. Many of the criticisms that have been made are unjust or distort ADL's long record of commitment to civil rights and its successful efforts in legislatures, courts, schools, and communities to fight discrimination and hate. We remain committed to working in our vital coalitions in close partnership with the ADL on our shared desire to fight bigotry, wherever it may be found. In this moment when our nation is rightly reckoning with the systemic racism that has fostered ongoing injustice, we urge greater dialogue, greater engagement, and greater commitment to the power of coalitions of decency. Together, we can continue to heal what is broken in our world.

We must not let anti-Semitism keep us from doing what is right and fighting for our values. But one of our core values must be holding one another up, supporting one another across difference, not putting up more walls to separate us.

Blessed Elul. May we be signed in the book of Life for a blessing.

David

RABBI BARRY BLOCK *author*

The Mussar Torah Commentary

SPECIAL TORAH STUDY

THE MUSSAR TORAH COMMENTARY
A Spiritual Path to Living a Meaningful and Ethical Life

Edited by RABBI BARRY H. BLOCK
Foreword by Alan Morinis, DPhD
Introductory Essay by Rabbi Lisa L. Goldstein
Special Commentaries by American rabbis

A brilliant approach to the weekly Torah portion through the Mussar lens! Block has created a structure allowing both those new and experienced with the Mussar to explore the sacred text of Torah in a fresh light and to bring the teachings and practice of the Mussar into one's daily life. These chapters fulfill the highest goal of Torah study, to allow the text to transform us

--Rabbi Mary I. Zamore, Executive Director, Women's Rabbinic Network, Editor of *The Sacred Exchange: Creating a Jewish Money Ethic* and *The Sacred Table: Creating a Jewish Food Ethic*

SATURDAY AUGUST 29 NOON

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