

# *Beth Yeshurun Family Camp*

January 31 – February 2, 2020

## *Joe Buchanan, Musician-in-Residence*



A Texas native, Joe Buchanan makes Jewish Americana music. Grounded in the idea that there is always room at the table, Joe's music highlights the values, Torah, and history of the Jewish people to deliver stories steeped in the struggle and triumph of the human spirit, all while praising Gd for the goodness in life. It's music that you can crank up to 18.

Raised with one foot in Houston and one in the Texas Hill Country, Joe grew up swinging off ropes on the Frio River and spending time like any kid - trying to figure out what was what. The biggest question was about Gd and despite a deep belief in a creator, he couldn't find much that he agreed with in what he was hearing. The struggle led to more struggles and he finally decided that he and Gd would sort it out later.

Then one day, about 13 years into his marriage, Joe found out that his wife was Jewish. Now, with the discovery of his wife's heritage, their family started down a path that would change everything. From the first class and a million questions to the mikvah and beyond, Judaism answered every spiritual question and brought an incredible amount of healing. There is one Gd, we can see Gd in the world and in others, we are going to struggle - that's ok, we are not damaged goods by any means, and this is the life that matters because this is the one we've been given. Amen.

In the five years since his conversion, this Americana artist from Houston, TX has truly found his voice in the history, Torah, and values of the Jewish people. He's toured the United States, leading an original Shabbat service, playing concerts, and giving a workshop called "Choosing to be Chosen" which is all around his conversion to Judaism and the reasons why so many are coming home. Combining elements of country, roots-rock, and folk, Joe's music reaches deep to tell personal stories of struggle and triumph. This is feel-good, toe-tapping, Americana with a Jewish Soul.

## *Jamel Birnbaum, Preschool Song Leader*



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## *Rabbi Ariel Sholklapper, Rabbi-in-Residence*



Rabbi Ariel Sholklapper is a mindfulness practitioner who got his start under the guidance of Rabbis Jeff Roth, James Jacobson Maisels, and Joanna Katz in 2011. Since then he has attended, managed, and facilitated retreats and mindfulness meditation groups all over the world. He was recently appointed Director of the Jewish Mindfulness Center of Houston at Congregation Beth Yeshurun, the largest Conservative Jewish congregation in the United States. He earned a degree in philosophy and Jewish studies at UCLA, was ordained at the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, and holds an MBA in nonprofit management. Rabbi A's passion is in helping people of all walks of life to live with vigor and personal, spiritual awareness through mindfulness and Jewish living.

## *Rabbi Sarah Fort, Rabbi-in-Residence*



Rabbi Sarah Fort graduated from the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles, California in 2017. She holds a BA in Government and International Politics from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. A native of the DC-area, Rabbi Fort spent years working in Jewish formal and informal education: as a youth group advisor, religious school instructor, Hillel president, and assistant preschool teacher.

While in rabbinical school, Rabbi Fort was a Leffell Fellow with AIPAC for two years and was awarded the Jacob Pressman Award in Homiletics. She had the opportunity to travel to Birobidzhan, Russia to serve as a camp rabbi at the JDC Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family Camp, alongside her husband.

Rabbi Fort's husband is Rabbi Ariel Sholklapper, who is the Director of the Jewish Mindfulness Center of Texas and the Rabbi at Congregation Beth El in Missouri City, Texas. A certified Jewish mindfulness meditation teacher, Rabbi Sholklapper has enjoyed leading Jewish meditation in both Los Angeles and Houston, as well as at retreats throughout the country. Together, both rabbis enjoy bingeing on TV shows, cooking, and traveling the world with their son David.