



JEWISH COMMUNITY OF THE HILL COUNTRY

July – August, 2025

Looking Ahead . . .

The first half of the year has come and gone. Below are the dates and times of the holidays and celebrations for the remainder of the year. As always, you'll receive reminders as the events draw near. But for now, **be sure to mark your calendars!!!**

Rosh HaShana

Evening Service: Monday, September 22, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Morning Service: Tuesday, September 23, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

(Tashlich following the Morning Service)

Yom Kippur

Kol Nidre Wednesday, October 1, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Short Yizkor and Closing Service: Thursday, October 2, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

(Followed by blessings and Break the Fast potluck dinner)

Sukkot

Sukkot this year is from October 6th through October 13th. Date, time and place are to be determined. **WOULD YOU LIKE TO HOST OUR CELEBRATION?** If so, contact Don.

Community Hanukkah Celebration and Menorah Lighting

Always a much anticipated annual event, both for the JCHC and the citizens of Kerrville and Kerr County. This year the celebration will be held on Sunday, December 14th at 6:00p.m. Our giant 12-foot Menorah will be on the Courthouse lawn by the gazebo, right next to the big Hanukkah Bush! Yes, the weather might be a bit nippy but bundle up and join us. The Service will last less than an hour.

Shabbat Services

Friday, July 11, 2025 at 6:00pm

Friday, July 25, 2025 at 6:00pm



Friday, August 8, 2025 at 6:00pm

Friday, August 22, 2025 at 6:00pm

Shabbat: A Radical Jewish Notion

Rabbi Ruth Adar

Shabbat is a radical, transformative idea. In the ancient world, there were no weekends; most people worked seven days a week. Even those who lived more leisurely lives, like Pharaoh or the Mesopotamian rulers, had rigid roles to carry out and from which there was no break.

Then along came the Jews, with our peculiar creation story, unlike any other creation narrative. The process of creation is not a making from nothing, but an organization of a pre-existing chaos. From that chaos, the Creator separates light from darkness, and organizes time as well: “evening and morning, a first day.” This goes on for six “days,” with the organization becoming more and more complex and sophisticated. Then something remarkable happens: The Creator steps back from Creation, and rests. Work stops.

Some people get all wound up over this story, fighting about whether the world was “created in six days” and how that squares with evolution. Those people are missing the point, which is that in six steps, the Creator takes the world from utter chaos to exquisite organization and then *stops to rest*. And by “declaring it holy,” the narrative suggests this is an example to us – that will be fleshed out in the rest of the Torah.

Later, in Exodus 20:8-11, we are again commanded to rest on Shabbat, in case we didn’t catch it in the narrative the first time.

So, here we are, 21st century Jews who have to figure out what to do with this idea of Shabbat. Oddly enough, we are now back in an age when more and more of us are forced to work seven days a week, with demands coming hourly through email and smartphones.

It is a radical act to say, “No, I am going to make time and space in my life that I will use to *be* instead of to *do*. I will use this time to make a genuine connection with people I love. I will use that time to become more truly myself. And yes, I will rest.”

It isn’t easy or profitable to do these things. It means hustling a little more to take the time off. And perhaps we need to begin by carving out a little time, gradually expanding it as we are able. That’s OK. The more Shabbat, the richer life can be; we have a lifetime to get there. Ahad Ha’am, a great Hebrew essayist and cultural Zionist wrote: **“More than Israel has kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept Israel.”**

Shabbat is a taste of the world as it could be, a world in which there is no slavery, and in which every person is valued for who they are, not for what they can do. It is said that if enough Jews kept Shabbat, the world would be transformed. I believe it.

Rabbi Ruth Adar holds a M.A. in Hebrew Letters from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. She is a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Where are you, God?

A Jewish cry of protest amid Iranian missiles and Hamas massacres.

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach



Missiles fired from Iran are pictured in the night sky over Jerusalem on June 14, 2025.

Photo by Menahem Kahana/AFP via Getty Images) JNS June 17, 2025

On Oct. 7, 2023, the Jewish state endured the greatest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Babies beheaded. Grandmothers burned alive. Young women raped next to the corpses of their murdered friends. And now, just months later, thousands of Iranian missiles are blowing Jewish and Arab Israelis to smithereens. Where is the world's outrage? But more hauntingly—for believers like myself—where is God?

It's a question many religious leaders are too afraid to ask. But Judaism is not a religion of silence. Ours is not a faith of resignation. We do not submit to suffering—we challenge it. In the Jewish tradition, it is not only permitted to question God in times of moral catastrophe—it is a mitzvah.

Because the opposite of faith is not doubt—it is indifference. And the Jewish people, even in our darkest moments, have

never been indifferent to God's silence. We have challenged it. Our very name—Yisrael (Israel)—means one who wrestles with God. Not worships blindly. Not accepts passively. But wrestles.

When Abraham stood before God and heard that Sodom would be destroyed, he did not fall to his knees in obedience. He stood tall and asked: "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" When Moses descended Mount Sinai and saw the Golden Calf, he did not excuse God's wrath—he smashed the Tablets, demanded mercy, and told God He would need to forgive the people or blot him out from the Book of Life.

This is our spiritual inheritance: not piety in the face of evil, but protest. And today, in the wake of Oct. 7 and in the shadow of Iranian rockets, we must summon that protest once more.

We must ask the Almighty: How can

You allow such horrors to befall Your people? We rebuilt the land You gave us, we revived Your Torah, we made the deserts bloom, we returned to Zion not with swords but with song—and we were answered with slaughter. How long must the Jewish people pay the price of divine silence?

Iran funds global terror. Hamas carries it out. The international community nods in performative disapproval but does little. And then there is the silence of Heaven.

I do not question God's existence. I question His manifest presence. I do not question God's omnipotence. I question his plan. What good can there possibly be in Iran raining fire and brimstone missiles and incinerating families?

On Oct. 7, where was the God who promised Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you"? Where was the God who split the sea, felled Pharaoh, and guided us through the wilderness?

That God seemed absent from Be'eri. Absent from Kfar Aza. Absent from the Nova Music Festival. Absent as women were violated and children executed.

This is not blasphemy. It is theology in its rawest form. It is the Judaism of Job, who screamed from his ash heap. It is the Judaism of King David, who asked, "Why, O Lord, do You stand far off? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?"

It is the Judaism not just of kings but of prophets, as when Moses said, "Why, Lord, have you behaved wickedly with your people?" If our religion cannot accommodate anguish, then it is not the faith of Israel. But it can. And it must.

In the wake of tragedy, many turn to theology for comfort. But too often, comfort becomes complicity. They say, "This is

God's will." Or worse, "We must have sinned." This is moral cowardice masquerading as faith.

Do not tell the mother who lost her son at the hands of Hamas that there is a reason. Do not speak of divine plans to the father whose daughter was raped and executed. God does not need defenders. He needs challengers.

Let me say it plainly: When God is silent, we must speak. When He hides, we must seek. When He delays justice, we must demand its immediate deliverance.

Because if we believe that God is good, then we must hold Him to that goodness. If we believe He is just, then we must hold Him to that justice. Anything less is theological treason.

I have long argued that what we need today is a theology of confrontation—a Jewish theology that restores the right, the obligation, to protest seeming divine inaction.

This is not a rejection of God. It is a refusal to reduce Him to a passive deity whose ways are forever beyond us. If God is our Father, as we say every day in the Amidah, then we must ask: What father would watch his children being butchered and remain silent?

And if we say that God has reasons we cannot understand, then what are we saying about the murdered children of Oct. 7? That their deaths were meaningful? That they were necessary?

No. A thousand times no. We must scream: "*Ad matai, Hashem?*"—How long, O Lord? How long will You stand by while Your people bleed? This is not heresy. This is the Judaism of the Prophets, who thundered not only against kings but against Heaven itself.

I do not question God because I have lost faith. I question God because I am

certain beyond the shadow of even a molecule of doubt of His existence, omniscience, and omnipotence.

Because I believe God is not indifferent. Because I believe God is moral. Because I believe God loves the Jewish people. Because I believe that God protects the innocent and safeguards the righteous.

And love, real love, demands accountability. If you saw a loved one doing something destructive, would you remain silent? No. You would speak out, precisely because you love them.

So too is my most deep-seated love of God, my Creator, protector, and Guardian of Israel.

The Book of Isaiah opens with God crying out, "Come, let us reason together." The Hebrew word used—*niva'necha*—can also mean, "Let us argue." This is the God of Israel—not a dictator to be feared, but a most senior partner to be engaged. And partners, even divine ones, must answer for their seeming inaction.

We Jews are not God's cheerleaders. We are His conscience.

We exist, as Isaiah said, to be a "light unto the nations." But sometimes, that light must shine inward—toward the Divine throne itself.

Not to reject God, but to remind Him. Remind Him of the covenant. Remind Him of His promises. Remind Him

that the blood of children cries out from the earth.

After Auschwitz, many asked: Where was God? Today, we must ask again. And we must not whisper it. We must scream it, from pulpits, from platforms, from synagogues and from the Knesset.

Because this is what it means to be a Jew: not to accept injustice, even seemingly from God. Indeed, especially from God. We will never abandon God. But we will never absolve Him either.

Our relationship with the Divine is not one of obedience but of partnership. And just as God commands us to pursue justice, so too we must remind Him of His commandments.

When He delays, we must press Him. When He is silent, we must provoke Him. When He turns away, we must turn toward Him—not with reverence alone, but with righteous anger and holy indignation. This, too, is holiness.

So to those who ask where God was on October 7th—I ask something more urgent: Where are we? Will we speak for the murdered? Will we rage for the raped? Will we cry out for the orphaned?

And will we cry to God, not as beggars, but as covenantal partners? Because if there is one thing more tragic than God's silence, it is our own.

