

Jewish Holiday Guide

Typically, Federation offices are closed for holidays with an * or closed for part of holidays with **

Shabbat*

Occurs Every Week

- Also referred to as Yom Menucha — The Day of Rest, Shabbos or the Sabbath.
- Observed for 25 hours beginning 18 minutes before sundown on Friday night through Saturday night once it's dark outside and you can see three stars.
- Traditionally observed through not doing any kind of work including use of modern technologies, spending money or travel by car or plane as well as attending prayer services.
- Culturally observed through meals with family and friends.



"Shabbat Shalom"

"Good Shabbos"



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Rosh Hashanah*

Typically Occurs in September or October

- Also referred to as the Jewish New Year, Yom Hadin — The Day of Judgement.
- Beginning of the period of time referred to as the High Holy Days, it is a time of celebration & reflection on self-improvement and repentance.
- Traditionally observed through prayer service and festive meals. A major ritual and symbol of Rosh Hashanah is the blowing of the shofar — a special ram's horn — to call our attention to the new year.
- Culturally observed through meals with family and friends, and the eating of symbolic foods such as apples with honey and rounded challah bread.
- This holiday also includes the cessation of work, technology, and travel, similar to Shabbat.



"Shanah Tovah" or "L'shanah Tovah"

"Happy New Year"

"May you be inscribed in the book of life"



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Yom Kippur*

Typically occurs in September or October, 10 days after the start of Rosh Hashanah

- Also referred to as the Day of Atonement.
- Traditionally observed through a 25-hour fast and prayer services, as well as asking forgiveness for the wrongs one has committed over the past year.
- Culturally, Jews may wear white to symbolize purity, and partake in gatherings to break the fast at the conclusion of the day.
- This holiday also includes the cessation of work, technology, and travel, similar to Shabbat.

 "G'mar Chatima Tova"
"May you be sealed in the book of life" 

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Sukkot**

Typically occurs in September or October, 5 days after Yom Kippur

- Also referred to as The Festival of Booths, Hag Ha-asif — The Harvest Festival, and Z'man Simchatenu — Season of Our Joy.
- Traditionally observed through the building of temporary dwellings called a sukkah, where you may see a lulav (palm frond) and etrog (citrus fruit).
- Culturally observed through the gathering of meals inside the sukkah with family and friends.
- The festival (including Simchat Torah) lasts for 8 days. For Jews living outside the land of Israel, the first two and last two days of this holiday also include the cessation of work, technology, and travel, similar to Shabbat.

 "Chag Sameach" (first 2 days and last 2 days)
"Good Yontif"
"Moadim L'simcha" (middle days, especially when speaking with Israelis) 

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Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah*

Typically occurs in October or early November, part of the end of Sukkot

- Final festival of the high holiday period.
- Celebrates the completion of the yearly Torah reading cycle.
- Traditionally, Jews go to synagogue and sing and dance with the Torah scrolls.
- This holiday also includes the cessation of work, technology, and travel, similar to Shabbat.



"Chag Sameach"
"Good Yontif"



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Chanukah

Typically occurs in late November or December

- Also referred to as the Festival of Lights or the Festival of Rededication.
- Celebrates the Maccabees' defeat of the Assyrian Greeks and the miracle of one day's worth of oil lasting eight days during the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- Traditionally observed through the lighting of the hanukiyah, also called a menorah (candelabra) for eight nights.
- Culturally observed with the eating of fried foods such as sufganiyot (jelly donuts) and latkes (potato pancakes) and gathering with family and friends.
- This holiday has no work, technology, or travel prohibitions like we have on Shabbat or other major festivals.



"Happy Chanukah"
"Chanukah Sameach"



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Tu B'Shvat

Typically occurs in January or February

- Also referred to as the New Year of the Trees.
- A farming holiday that serves as a Jewish arbor day.
- Celebrated by a ritual meal, the eating of dried fruits from the land of Israel, and the planting of trees.
- This holiday has no work, technology, or travel prohibitions like we have on Shabbat or other major festivals.



"Chag Sameach"



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Purim

Typically occurs in March

- Also referred to as the Festival of Lots.
- A joyous holiday that celebrates the bravery of the Jewish heroine Esther who saved the Jewish people from a plot by a wicked minister in Persia's plan to eradicate all of the Jews.
- Religiously observed through a ritual reading of the Purim story, a large meal, and giving of food baskets to friends and family and charity to the poor.
- Culturally observed through dressing in costumes and the eating of foods depicting elements of the Purim story, such as hamentaschen (triangle shaped cookies).
- This holiday has no work, technology, or travel prohibitions like we have on Shabbat or other major festivals.

“Happy Purim”
"Chag Purim Sameach" or "Chag Sameach"

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Passover**

Typically occurs in late March or April

- Also referred to as Pesach or the Festival of Freedom.
- Commemorates the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt and their transition from slavery to freedom.
- Traditionally, those celebrating gather for a seder (a ceremonial festival meal) during which the story of Passover is read and those observing refrain from eating chametz (leavened bread and its byproducts).
- For Jews living outside the land of Israel, this festival lasts for 8 days. The first two and last two days also include the cessation of work, technology, and travel, similar to Shabbat.

“Happy Passover”
"Chag Pesach Sameach"
"Moadim L'simcha" (during middle days for many Sephardic and Israelis)

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Lag B'Omer

Typically occurs in May

- A festive holiday that falls on the 33rd day of counting the Omer — the period of time between Passover and Shavuot — that is an otherwise somber period.
- Traditionally observed through gatherings at bonfires, or other celebrations that don't otherwise occur during this period.
- This holiday has no work, technology, or travel prohibitions like we have on Shabbat or other major festivals.

“ No traditional or cultural greetings ”

Shavuot*

Typically occurs in May or June, seven weeks after Passover begins

- Also referred to as the Festival of Weeks.
- Celebrates the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, which occurred seven weeks after the exodus from Egypt.
- Traditionally observed by staying up all night studying the Torah.
- Culturally observed through gathering with friends and family with meals focused on dairy foods, such as cheesecake.
- This holiday, which lasts two days in communities outside the land of Israel, also includes the cessation of work, technology, and travel similar to Shabbat.

“ Chag Sameach ”

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Yom HaShoah

Typically occurs in late April or early May, a week after the 7th day of Passover

- Holocaust Memorial Day in Israel, in remembrance of the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust.
- A somber day throughout Israel, observed through the lighting of memorial candles and remembrance ceremonies.
- This holiday has no work, technology, or travel prohibitions like we have on Shabbat or other major festivals.

“ No traditional or cultural greetings ”

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Yom HaZikaron

Typically occurs in late May or early June, a week after Yom HaShoah

- The Israeli Day of Remembrance serves as a day of public mourning to honor Israel's fallen soldiers and victims of terror.
- A somber day throughout Israel, you may see prayer services or observance of a moment of silence.
- Sometimes referred to as Israel's Memorial Day, the day is observed differently than Memorial Day in the United States, and often includes visits to the grave of those fallen in action or acts of terror.
- This holiday has no work, technology, or travel prohibitions like we have on Shabbat or other major festivals.

“ No traditional or cultural greetings ”

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Yom Ha'atzmaut

Typically occurs in late May or early June, the day after Yom HaZikaron

- Israel's Independence Day commemorates the founding of the State of Israel in 1948.
- A day of celebration in Israel, you may see Israeli flags or people wearing blue and white, as well as Israeli food.
- Many offices and businesses in Israel are closed this day to allow for celebration.
- This holiday has no work, technology, or travel prohibitions like we have on Shabbat or other major festivals.

“ No traditional or cultural greetings ”

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Tisha B'Av

Typically occurs in July or August

- Observed on the 9th of Av.
- A day of mourning remembering the destruction of the holy temple in Jerusalem.
- Traditionally observed through a 25-hour fast.
- This holiday has no work, technology, or travel prohibitions like we have on Shabbat or other major festivals.

“ Many follow the practice that it is forbidden to greet one another ”

