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# Jewish Holiday Guide

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and protect Jewish life in  
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# Observances

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## Calendar

The Hebrew calendar is both solar and lunar, comprising twelve months. The lunar calendar is approximately eleven days shorter than twelve months, thus, every few years a leap month is added.

The day begins at sunset, the week begins on Saturday night, the month begins with the new moon, and the New Year, Rosh Hashanah, is in autumn.

There are twelve months in the Jewish calendar. The numbering of years is calculated from the creation of the world, which is traditionally understood to coincide with 3760 BCE.

The Hebrew calendar serves the religious and cultural purpose of keeping track of Holy Days, marriages, and the anniversaries of deaths. As a result of the discrepancy in days between the Jewish calendar year and the Gregorian calendar year, the date of each Holy Day will shift each year. However, the difference from year to year is usually minor and each Holy Day is expected to occur during the same season every year (e.g. Rosh Hashanah in the fall, Pesach in the spring, etc.)

## Holy Days

In the Bible, in addition to the Sabbath, the Holy Days are the three pilgrimage harvest festivals of Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot; as well as the "Days of Awe," the New Year and the Day of Atonement.

On all of these Holy Days, including the Sabbath (Saturdays), work is forbidden.

There are other post-biblical festivals on which work is permitted, such as Chanukah and Purim. In all cases, Holy Days are marked by special synagogue services and celebration in the home.

## Shabbat / Sabbath

The Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday evening and ends after sundown on Saturday evening.

Candles are lit, the kiddush, an ancient prayer over wine, is recited, and hallah (traditional bread) is served. Observant Jews go to synagogue Friday evening, Saturday morning, and Saturday evening.

All work is prohibited on Shabbat in order to commemorate G-d's day of rest on the seventh day of creation as well as the Exodus from Egypt. It is a time for spiritual renewal, contemplation, learning, and family gathering.

Please note that, on Shabbat, observant Jews do not work from Friday sundown to Saturday after sundown and that, as the days grow shorter in the winter months, early departure from school or work may be required.

In Jewish tradition, work includes a range of creative activities rather than simply physical or occupational labour. On Shabbat, observant Jews abstain from using technology, driving, writing, cooking, commercial activities, and other tasks.

## Sharing a Message

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When sharing a message to the Jewish community for the holidays it is always best to post your message early! Jewish Holidays begin in the evening of the day – at sundown – and Shabbat begins every Friday night at sundown.

**Be sure to share you message in the morning before the holiday or on the evening before a holiday begins to avoid your message being missed, or, worse, percieved as insensitive or misinformed.**



# Major Jewish Holy Days

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## Rosh Hashanah

Jewish New Year  
1-2 Tishrei (Sept / Oct)

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is considered one of the most important Jewish Holy Days. It celebrates creation as told in the Book of Genesis. Rosh Hashanah is the yearly renewal of creation and has come to signify the continuity of creation and the ongoing involvement of G-d in the lives of the Jewish people. Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the ten days of repentance. It is a time to assess one's personal achievements and failures and to prepare to begin anew.

The blast of the shofar, the ram's horn, in the synagogue reminds the Jewish people to fear G-d and to do good deeds during the ensuing twelve months.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated with symbolic foods such as apples and honey, which represent the hope of a sweet new year.

## Yom Kippur

Day of Atonement  
10 Tishrei (Sept / Oct)

Marking the end of the ten days of repentance, Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement, observed by twenty-five hours of fasting and prayer to be cleansed of sin.

Yom Kippur begins at sundown with an evening service called Kol Nidre, 'All Vows,' which is commonly preceded by a large meal, the last meal before the start of the fast.

## Sukkot

Festival of Tabernacles  
15-21 Tishrei (Sept / Oct)

Sukkot is a seven-day festival with historical and agricultural significance. Historically, Sukkot commemorates the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. Agriculturally, Sukkot is a harvest festival, sometimes referred to as the 'Feast of Ingathering.'

To celebrate, a sukkah – a booth of palm and willow branches – is built and meals are eaten within it.

No work is permitted on the first two days of Sukkot. The two days following the festival, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, are also days when work is not permitted. Though these days are separate holidays, they are related to Sukkot and are therefore commonly thought of as part of the holiday.

## Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah

Festival of Rejoicing with the Torah  
22-23 Tishrei (Sept / Oct)

Shemini Atzeret marks the completion of the annual reading of the Torah and Simchat Torah celebrates the resumption of the annual cycle of readings. The holidays are celebrated with singing, dancing, and processions of people carrying Torahs and waving flags.



## Pesach

Passover  
14-22 Nisan (Mar / Apr)

Commonly referred to as Passover, Pesach is a celebration of the biblical Exodus of the Israelites, under the leadership of Moses acting in the name of G-d, from the slavery imposed by the Egyptians.

During Passover, Jews refrain from eating leavened products including bread, cakes, pizza, cereal, and others. The ritual meal, or Seder, is the most important part in the celebration of Pesach.

The Hebrew term Seder means the order in which the events of the Pesach ceremony are carried out.

During the Seder, the symbolism of each traditional food is explained, the events of the Exodus are told, and the Haggadah (a book that recounts the Exodus) is read. Pesach begins on the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan and continues for eight days.

The Seder meal is observed by most Jews worldwide.

Work is not permitted on the first two and last two days of Pesach.

## Shavuot

Festival of Weeks  
6-7 Sivan (May / Jun)

Shavuot recalls G-d's gifts of the Torah and the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Holy Day commemorates the end of the spring harvest when, in biblical times, Jews brought the first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Shavuot begins on the fiftieth day after Pesach, the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan (in May or June), and lasts for two days. Consuming dairy foods and using floral decorations are customary ways of celebrating the holiday. Work is not permitted during this two-day festival.

The days between Pesach and Shavuot are seen as days of mourning and are held as a remembrance of the misfortunes that afflicted the Jewish people during the days of Roman domination, as well as during the Crusades of the Middle Ages.



We've included a calendar of the most important Jewish Holy Days on the final page of this guide to help plan your communication and messaging to Jewish Canadians.



# Minor Jewish Holy Days & Other Significant Days

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In addition to the High Holy Days, there are numerous other Holy Days, fast days, and special days marked as important in the Jewish calendar. While there is still some level of observance required for each of these days, there is no prohibition against work. However, an observant Jew may still require slight alteration to a normal work day in order to fully observe the day.

For example, on Kristallnacht and Yom Hashoah, there are customary community-wide observances that may occur during the day or in the evening.

## Kristallnacht

Night of Broken Glass  
9-10 November

Kristallnacht marks the night on which the Jewish community of Nazi Germany, including Austria and Sudetenland, was attacked by the Nazis and their sympathizers. Synagogues and Jewish-owned properties were devastated, and Jewish people were attacked.

A community-wide observance is held annually to commemorate Kristallnacht, which took place on 9-10 November, 1938.

## Chanukah

Festival of Lights  
25 Kislev— 2 Tevet (Nov / Dec)

A festival commemorating the victory of the Maccabees over the Hellenist-Syrians, Chanukah begins in either November or December and lasts for eight days.

Chanukah has several spellings (Hanukah, Hanukkah, Chanukkah) because there is no exact English transliteration for the Hebrew word.

In 164 BCE, the Maccabees, a band of Hebrews, recaptured their temple from the Hellenist-Syrians. The Temple was cleansed and purified and the menorah (candelabrum) was lit once again as a re-dedication to G-d.

When the jar of sanctified oil for the menorah was found, there was only enough to burn for one day. Miraculously, the oil burned for eight days until more was found. To commemorate this miracle, a chanukiah, a special menorah for the Holy Day, is lit for eight days; foods fried in oil, such as potato latkes or pancakes, are eaten; and children play with spinning tops called dreidels.

## Tu B'shevat

Festival of the Trees  
15 Shevat (Jan / Feb)

A festival marking the beginning of spring in Israel and a celebration of trees and the earth begins when the sap from the fruit trees of Israel begins to rise. It is celebrated by eating fruits and nuts that come from Israel, by planting trees, and by having picnics.



## Purim

Feast of Lots  
14 Adar II (Feb / Mar)

Purim commemorates the deliverance of the Jews from a planned massacre at a time when Jewish communities were living under Persian rule in 450 BCE.

The story is found in the biblical Book of Esther and is retold during this holiday. In addition to consuming traditional foods such as the hamantaschen, triangular cookies representing the malevolent enemy Haman, Purim is celebrated with costumes and loud noise-makers.

## Yom HaShoah

Holocaust Memorial Day  
27 Nisan (Apr / May)

Established to remember the Holocaust and the six million Jews who perished during that dark period in history, Yom HaShoah is commemorated on the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. A community-wide observance is held annually.

## Yom Hazikaron

Remembrance Day  
4 Iyar (Apr / May)

Occurring the day before Yom Ha'atzmaut, Yom Hazikaron is dedicated to the memory of all who died defending Israel before and after it became a state.

## Yom Ha'atzmaut

Independence Day  
5 Iyar (Apr / May)

Commemorating Israel's independence, Yom Ha'atzmaut recognizes the establishment of Israel, a democratic state and national homeland for the Jewish people, in 1948.

## Lag B'Omer

The 33rd Day of the  
Counting of the Omer  
17 Iyar (Apr / May)

This day serves as a break in the mourning days between Pesach and Shavuot and is held as remembrance of the misfortunes that afflicted the Jewish people during the days of Roman domination as well as during the Crusades of the Middle Ages.

Lag B'Omer serves as a reminder of the faith and courage of Torah scholars during the harsh rule of the Roman conquerors. No special liturgy or synagogue ritual exists for this day, and most people treat it as an ordinary work day.

## Yom Yerushalayim

Jerusalem Day  
28 Iyar (May / Jun)

The newest holiday in the Jewish calendar is celebrated each year on the 28th day of the month of Iyar.

Yom Yerushalayim marks the anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty in 1967.

## Tisha B'av

Destruction of the Temple  
9 Av (Jul / Aug)

In mid-summer, Jews observe the anniversary of the destruction of the ancient Temple that stood in Jerusalem. Today, Jews still turn toward the direction of Jerusalem when in prayer.

Traditional Jews mark the day with a fast of twenty-five hours, from sunset to the following day's nightfall, with prayers of mourning and with some limitations on usual workday activities.



# 2022-2025

## Jewish Holiday Calendar

Jewish Holiday	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
<b>Shabbat</b>	Begins sunset every Friday Ends nightfall every Saturday		
<b>Rosh Hashanah</b>	Begins sunset of Sunday, September 25, 2022 Ends nightfall of Tuesday, September 27, 2022	Begins sunset of Friday, September 15, 2023 Ends nightfall of Sunday, September 17, 2023	Begins sunset of Wednesday, October 2, 2024 Ends nightfall of Friday, October 4, 2024
<b>Yom Kippur</b>	Begins sunset of Tuesday, October 4, 2022 Ends nightfall of Wednesday, October 5, 2022	Begins sunset of Sunday, September 24, 2023 Ends nightfall of Monday, September 25, 2023	Begins sunset of Friday, October 11, 2024 Ends nightfall of Saturday, October 12, 2024
<b>Sukkot</b>	Begins sunset of Sunday, October 9, 2022 Ends nightfall of Sunday, October 16, 2022	Begins sunset of Friday, September 29, 2023 Ends nightfall of Friday, October 6, 2023	Begins sunset of Wednesday, October 16, 2024 Ends nightfall of Wednesday, October 23, 2024
<b>Shemini Atzeret</b>	Begins sunset of Sunday, October 16, 2022 Ends nightfall of Sunday, Monday 17, 2022	Begins sunset of Friday, October 6, 2023 Ends nightfall of Saturday, October 7, 2023	Begins sunset of Wednesday, October 23, 2024 Ends nightfall of Thursday, October 24, 2024
<b>Simchat Torah</b>	Begins sunset of Monday, October 17, 2022 Ends nightfall of Tuesday, October 18, 2022	Begins sunset of Saturday, October 7, 2023 Ends nightfall of Sunday, October 8, 2023	Begins sunset of Thursday, October 24, 2024 Ends nightfall of Friday, October 25, 2024
<b>Chanukah</b>	Begins sunset of Sunday, December 18, 2022 Ends nightfall of Monday, December 26, 2022	Begins sunset of Thursday, December 7, 2023 Ends nightfall of Friday, December 15, 2023	Begins sunset of Wednesday, December 25, 2024 Ends nightfall of Thursday, January 2, 2025
<b>Purim</b>	Begins sunset of Monday, March 6, 2023 Ends nightfall of Tuesday, March 7, 2023	Begins sunset of Saturday, March 23, 2024 Ends nightfall of Sunday, March 24, 2024	Begins sunset of Thursday, March 13, 2025 Ends nightfall of Friday, March 14, 2025
<b>Pesach</b>	Begins sunset of Wednesday, April 5, 2023 Ends nightfall of Thursday, April 13, 2023	Begins sunset of Monday, April 22, 2024 Ends nightfall of Tuesday, April 30, 2024	Begins sunset of v Saturday, April 12, 2025 Ends nightfall of Sunday, April 20, 2025
<b>Shavuot</b>	Begins sunset of Thursday, May 25, 2023 Ends nightfall of Saturday, May 27, 2023	Begins sunset of Tuesday, June 11, 2024 Ends nightfall of Thursday, June 13, 2024	Begins sunset of Sunday, June 1, 2025 Ends nightfall of Tuesday, June 3, 2025

