

Summary Explanation of the Jewish Festival Holidays*

The Jewish calendar is based on a lunar calendar. For that reason, each holiday is celebrated at approximately the same time every year, but not necessarily on the same date of the Gregorian calendar. All Jewish holidays begin the evening *before* the date specified on most calendars. This is because a Jewish "day" begins and ends at sunset, rather than at midnight. **The first 7 Festivals** are listed in Leviticus 23 and considered major. **Many Jews do not work or attend school on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the first and second days of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Simchat Torah, Shavuot, and the first, second, seventh, and eighth days of Passover.**

<p>1. PASSOVER Pesach</p> <p>2. SHAG HAMOTZI Unleavened Bread</p> <p>3. RESHIT KATZIR First Fruits</p>	<p>Passover (or Pesach) commemorates the liberation of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. A feast called a <i>seder</i> is held on the first two nights and sometimes on the final two nights of the eight-day holiday.</p> <p>No leavened food (e.g., bread, cake) is eaten during Passover. <i>Matzah</i> (unleavened bread) is consumed instead.</p> <p>During the last two days of Passover, no work is permitted.</p>
<p>4. SHAVUOT Feast of Weeks</p>	<p>Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, is also known as "Pentecost." According to Rabbinic tradition, the Ten Commandments were given on this day. It is traditional to eat meals containing dairy during Shavuot</p>
<p>5. ROSH HASHANAH Jewish New Year</p>	<p>Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. Traditions include eating apples dipped in honey and blowing the <i>shofar</i> (ram's horn). Most Jews attend synagogue on these days and the preceding evening.</p>
<p>6. YOM KIPPUR Day of Atonement</p>	<p>Yom Kippur is considered by Jews to be the holiest and most solemn day of the year. Fasting begins at sundown and ends after nightfall the following day. Most Jews attend synagogue on this day and the preceding evening.</p>
<p>7. SUKKOT Feast of Tabernacles</p> <p>8. SHEMINI ATZERET Eighth Day of Sukkot</p> <p>9. SIMCHAT TORAH Rejoicing of the Law</p>	<p>Sukkot is a seven-day festival, also known as the Feast or Festival of Booths, the Feast of Tabernacles, or just Tabernacles. It is one of the three pilgrimage festivals mentioned in the Bible. Sukkot is celebrated by the building of a <i>sukkah</i>, or temporary dwelling, outdoors</p> <p>This one-day gathering of gratitude and hope immediately follows the conclusion of the seven-day holiday of Sukkot.</p> <p>This holiday either coincides with Shemini Atzeret or is celebrated on the following day. It concludes and begins anew the annual reading cycle of the <i>Torah</i>, the Five Books of Moses that make up the first portion of the Bible.</p>
<p>10. HANUKKAH Festival of Lights</p>	<p>Hanukkah (or Chanukah) is an eight-day festival marked by the lighting of candles – one on the first night, two on the second and so on – using a special candle holder called a <i>menorah</i> or <i>chanukiah</i>. Although not a major Jewish holiday, its popularity has increased in recent years, especially among American Jews. Traditions include a game involving the spinning of <i>dreidels</i> (tops), eating potato <i>latkes</i> (pancakes) and gift-giving.</p>
<p>11. TU B'SHEVAT New Year of the Trees</p>	<p>Jewish Arbor Day, the 15th of Shevat on the Jewish calendar, is the day that marks the beginning of a "new year" for trees when the earliest-blooming trees in the Land of Israel emerge from their winter sleep and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle.</p>
<p>12. PURIM Feast of Lots</p>	<p>Purim is one of the most joyous Jewish holidays. Purim commemorates the events that took place in the Book of Esther. Traditions include masquerading in costumes and giving care packages to those in need.</p>

*Adapted from a chart developed by the Jewish Federation of Columbus, Ohio