



THE AJWS GUIDE TO THE HIGH HOLIDAYS

Each year, the Jewish High Holidays help us refocus, repent, rejoice, and recharge. The holidays can represent different things to each of us—from a connection with ancient Jewish wisdom, to a chance for spiritual renewal, to simply a reason to gather with community and eat delicious food. This season of the Jewish calendar holds space for all these meanings and more.

At AJWS, we see the High Holidays as an invitation to recommit ourselves to creating a more just and equitable world. Whether this guide introduces you to the holidays or offers a new way of looking at holidays you've long celebrated, we hope you'll join us in building a world of equity and dignity for everyone, everywhere.

We wish you a meaningful High Holiday season. May we strengthen our mission of *tikkun olam*—repairing the world—together!

ROSH HASHANAH



When: September 11–13, 2026 (29 Elul 5786–2 Tishrei 5787)

What it's all about: Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. The bracing blast of the *shofar*, a ram's horn, is heard in synagogues across the world, signifying the start of the 10 Days of Repentance: a period of introspection and atonement that concludes with Yom Kippur. Many Jews eat apples, pomegranates, honey, and other traditional foods—symbolizing the hope for a sweet year ahead—and wish each other *shanah tovah* (a good year).

This year ... Let Rosh Hashanah be a new beginning. How can you give more of your time, resources, or energy toward making a difference this year in your community and around the world?

YOM KIPPUR



When: September 20–21, 2026 (9–10 Tishrei 5787)

What it's all about: On Yom Kippur, we pause our busy lives to reflect on ways we fell short in the past year. Many Jews abstain from eating, bathing, and working to devote the day to atonement, whether through communal prayer in a synagogue or through quiet introspection. As the Book of Life opens on Rosh Hashanah, it is officially “sealed” on Yom Kippur. Tell a friend, *g'mar chatimah tovah* (a good final sealing).

This year ... After reflecting on your own actions, ask yourself how the social structures you're part of—your school, community, city, or country—have fallen short of treating all people with dignity, respect, and kindness. How can you work to make them more inclusive and welcoming?

SUKKOT

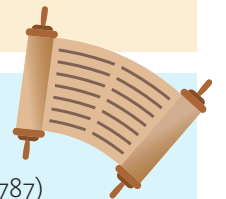


When: September 25–October 2, 2026 (15–21 Tishrei 5787)

What it's all about: Sukkot is an autumn harvest festival when Jews traditionally build *sukkahs* (temporary outdoor dwellings) and invite friends, family, and community members to eat, sing, and socialize. It's a *mitzvah* to wave a *lulav* (a bundle of branches, including a palm frond, willow, and myrtle) and *etrog* (citron) in six directions, reminding us that divinity is all around. Sitting in the *sukkah*, we recognize our own impermanence and vulnerability.

This year ... Challenge yourself to cook with locally grown foods, representing the harvests of your community. Let this festival open your eyes to our dependency on the land, and look for ways to act in solidarity with Indigenous communities whose land has been exploited or dispossessed.

SHEMINI ATZERET & SIMCHAT TORAH



When: October 2–4, 2026 (22–23 Tishrei 5787)

What it's all about: These dual holidays close out the High Holiday season with vibrant festivities. On Shemini Atzeret, we extend the joy of Sukkot for one last day. And, with Simchat Torah, Jews finish our cycle of the reading of the Torah, and joyfully celebrate this annual accomplishment with singing and dancing, before taking a deep breath and starting over again from the beginning. We acknowledge that each year's reading can reveal new lessons.

This year ... Rejoice unabashedly with friends, family, and community—and then realize: We have so much more to learn. Expand your understanding of global human rights issues with AJWS and other organizations.