



# 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 22–24, 2025; 1–2 Tishrei 5786

**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 *shannah 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:** October 1–2, 2025; 10 Tishrei 5786

**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

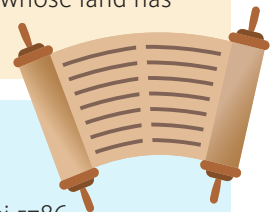


**When:** October 6–13, 2025; 15–21 Tishrei 5786

**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 13–15, 2025; 22–23 Tishrei 5786

**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 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.