



Congregation Etz Chaim

Community, Spirituality, and You

Andrea J. Cosnowsky, Senior Rabbi
Frederick Kamil, Associate Rabbi
Carol Meyer, Executive Director
Marla Friedman, Religious School Principal
Steven M. Bob, Rabbi Emeritus
Anne Stein, Educator Emerita
Rachel Wood, Inclusion Specialist

Jewish Holidays 5780 - 5781 – Dates

***Indicates that holiday begins at sundown on that day**

- Tu B'Shevat – Monday, February 10, 2020
- Purim – Monday, March 9, 2020* – Tuesday, March 10, 2020
- Pesach (Passover) – Wednesday, April 8* – Wednesday, April 15, 2020 (ends at sundown)
- Yom HaShoah – Tuesday, April 21, 2020
- Lag B'Omer – Monday, May 11* – Tuesday, May 12, 2020
- Shavuot – Thursday, May 28* – May 29, 2020
- Selichot – Saturday, September 12, 2020 (after sunset)
- Rosh Hashanah – Friday, September 18* – September 20, 2020
- Yom Kippur – Monday, September 27* – September 28th
- Sukkot – Friday, October 2* – October 3, 2020
- Simchat Torah – Friday, October 9* – October 10, 2020
- Hanukkah – Thursday, December 10* 2020 – Friday, December 18, 2020 (ends at sundown)

HOW DO WE CELEBRATE (Jewish Holiday Guide)

Tu B'Shevat

Tu B'Shevat, the 15th day of the Jewish month of Shevat, is a holiday also known as the New Year for Trees. The word "Tu" is not really a word; it is the number 15 in Hebrew, as if you were to call the Fourth of July "Iv July" (IV being 4 in Roman numerals). Tu B'Shevat is the new year for the purpose of calculating the age of trees for tithing. See Lev. 19:23-25, which states that fruit from trees may not be eaten during the first three years; the fourth year's fruit is for God, and after that, you can eat the fruit. Each tree is considered to have aged one year as of Tu B'Shevat, so if you planted a tree on Shevat 14, it begins its second year the next day, but if you plant a tree two days later, on Shevat 16, it does not reach its second year until the next Tu B'Shevat.

One custom is to eat a new fruit on this day, or to eat from the Seven Species (shivat haminim) described in the Bible as being abundant in the land of Israel. The Shivat Haminim are: wheat, barley, grapes (vines), figs, pomegranates, olives and dates (honey).

Some people plant trees on this day.



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Purim – celebrated on the 14th day of the month of Adar. Congregation Etz Chaim is known as the “Purim Capital of North America”. We celebrate by coming to this fun holiday service dressed in costume. We read from the Megillah (Book of Esther), and eat Hamantaschen (3-cornered cookies). We ask everyone to bring boxes of Mac ‘n Cheese that are then used as groggers, to shake and make noise every time the name Hamen is said out loud. In addition, we hold a Purim carnival which provides an opportunity for even our youngest children to engage in this merry-making holiday.

Passover - The eight-day festival of Passover is celebrated in the early spring, from the 15th through the 22nd of the Hebrew month of Nissan. Passover celebrates the biblical account of the Israelites’ redemption and escape from 400 years of Egyptian slavery. Holiday rituals include a dramatic retelling of the Exodus story and many unique food traditions. We come together with friends and family to celebrate the great lessons of the story: the blessing of freedom and the reminder that since we were once slaves and were freed, it is our responsibility to work for freedom for all people, everywhere. Each year on the second night of the holiday we hold a Congregational Seder.

Yom HaShoah

Yom HaShoah, also known as Holocaust Remembrance Day, is the day set aside for Jews to remember the Holocaust and those who lost their lives. Rituals associated with Yom Hashoah are still being created and vary widely among synagogues. At Etz Chaim we observe Yom Hashoah as a congregation on the Sunday closest to the 27th day in the month of Nisan. This is a solemn occasion marked with special readings, original poetry, music and prayers. It is often led by our 8th grade students who spend the year studying the Holocaust. The Kaddish is part of the service and we conclude with the singing of Hatikvah (The Hope). During the year, we gather as a congregation on many sacred days to remember the events of our past. On Yom Hashoah we come together to mourn and to remember.



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Shavuot – celebrates the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai and encourages us to embrace the Torah’s teachings and be inspired by the wisdom Jewish tradition has to offer. The holiday occurs seven weeks after Passover. It began as an ancient agricultural festival that marked the end of the spring barley harvest and the beginning of the summer wheat harvest. At Etz Chaim we have made it a celebration of Torah, education, and following tradition, eating of dairy foods like blintzes, kugels, cheesecake, etc. with a Shavuot brunch.

Selichot – translates to ‘forgiveness’ and is observed on the Saturday evening just before Rosh Hashanah. Selichot ushers in the High Holidays with learning, worship and the blowing of the Shofar. Here at Etz Chaim we have observed this as a multi-generational gathering with learning and activities appropriate for all ages.

Rosh Hashanah – the Jewish New Year, is observed on the 1st and 2nd days of the month of Tishrei. Some customs associated with the holiday include the sounding of the Shofar, eating a round challah, as well as enjoying apples and honey to represent a sweet New Year. Services are held on the Erev (night before), and both the 1st and 2nd days at 10:00 in the morning. Junior Congregation Service for those in 3rd – 6th grades are held at the same time as the adult service. Babysitting is available for infants and children through the 2nd grade. A family/children’s service is held in the early afternoon and is geared for preschoolers – 2nd grade.

Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement. The holiest day in the Jewish year begins at sundown on the 9th of Tishrei. It is a day of fasting, reflection and prayer. Services are held on the Erev (night before) and the day of beginning with the morning service at 10:00 for both the adult and junior congregation services. This is followed by our family/children’s service. The afternoon services of Neilah, Yizkor, and concluding prayers begin at 3:30pm. A break-the-fast light meal is served at the end.



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Sukkot – also known as the Festival of Ingathering or the Festival of Tabernacles, is a weeklong Jewish holiday that comes five days after Yom Kippur. *Sukkot* celebrates the gathering of the harvest. Service is held on the Erev (night before). Members shake the lulav and etrog in our congregational Sukkah. At Etz Chaim we ask children to bring “Pretty Paper Packages” which are donated to our PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) site.

Simchat Torah - celebrates and marks the conclusion of the annual cycle of public Torah readings. The holiday service is held on the Erev (night before). The service includes a joyous procession carrying Torahs and flags. Religious school consecration of all kindergartners and new first and second graders is included in this service.

Hanukkah – also know as the Festival of Lights, this eight-day Jewish celebration commemorates the rededication during the second century B.C. of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, where according to legend Jews had risen up against their Greek-Syrian oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt. At Etz Chaim we celebrate with an early service 6:00pm followed by a festive Hanukkah dinner with everyone bringing their menorahs to light, singing the blessings and enjoying delicious latkes (potato pancakes).