



In 2021, the fall Jewish holiday season starts early and remains busy throughout September. The Hebrew month of Tishrei (this year Tishrei begins September 7th and ends October 6th) has five important Jewish holidays that students may ask to be excused from classes for: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shmini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah.

Though each holiday is celebrated with its own ceremonies and traditions, they share one thing in common: evening and daytime hours of all major Jewish holidays include practices that are followed by a number of Jews observing the holiday. These may include spending time with family, sharing in celebratory meals, attending religious services and/or participating in other spiritual practices. Observances may also include refraining from use of electricity or electronic devices including computers, cell phones, email, lights, and cars. Some also refrain from writing, erasing, and lighting a flame. These are practices that are also observed every week on the Jewish Sabbath, Friday night until Saturday night, by many Jews.

These observances allow Jews to pause typical daily activities and fully embrace the spirit of the holiday. The Jewish community is extraordinarily diverse and while not all students follow these practices, Jewish students will still be celebrating the holiday in a variety of ways. Many Jewish students with a wide array of personal practices may ask for accommodations in order to maintain their religious connections while also fulfilling their academic responsibilities.

We ask the ASU faculty and staff to be aware of the upcoming Jewish holidays and to see Hillel as a resource if any questions arise. Please expect Jewish students of all backgrounds to ask for accommodations. When possible, please be proactive in letting the whole class know they can speak to you about accommodations needed for holidays. With rising anti-semitism, we know that some students are feeling timid about sharing their Jewish identity. Any help in making it clear you are open to their sharing their identity and needs is much appreciated in creating an open and welcoming ASU community.

Questions? Contact Debbie Yunker Kail, Executive Director - debbie.kail@asu.edu

Quick Look of Holidays- Fall 2021

All holidays begin at sundown on the first date listed.

Rosh Hashanah- September 6-8th 2021

Yom Kippur- September 15-16th 2021

Sukkot- September 20th-27th 2021

Shemini Atzeret- September 27th-28th 2021

Simchat Torah- September 28th-29th 2021

Holiday explanations

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. This year, Rosh Hashanah begins on Labor Day evening, September 6 and ends one hour after sundown on September 8th. In addition to worship services, in both the evenings and mornings, celebratory meals are common. Apples and honey, symbolizing a sweet new year, are commonly enjoyed, as are pomegranates and new fruits one has not yet eaten that season. A common greeting for Rosh Hashanah is "Happy New Year" or "May you be written in the Book of Life". The latter acknowledges that Rosh Hashanah begins the ten-day Season of Repentance that culminates in Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is often referred to as the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. It is a 25-hour fast day, beginning this year before sunset on September 15th and ending one hour after sundown on September 16. No food or drink may be consumed during this entire period, and most of the evening and day are spent in communal prayer. Commonly one wishes one another "An easy fast" or "A meaningful fast."

Sukkot

Five days after Yom Kippur is the seven-day long holiday of Sukkot, the Feast of Booths. This year, Sukkot begins at sundown on September 20th and ends one hour after sundown on September 27th. Like for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the first two and last two days of this period have some particular restrictions (see above) commonly followed by traditionally observant Jews. This holiday commemorates the 40-year journey of the Biblical Israelites from Egypt through the wilderness to the Promised Land of Israel. Thus, a prominent symbol and practice of the holiday is the building and dwelling in a "sukkah", a temporary house/hut-type building often with tent-like walls and a roof made of bamboo or branches. Jews eat, study, hang out, and try as much as possible to "live" in this structure for the week. The sukkah is a reminder of the fragility of life, and of the partnership with and dependence upon God and not

simply our own efforts for protection, as well as a time to experience more fully the outdoors. The ASU Hillel sukkah can be found in the Hillel Jewish Student Center parking lot (1012 S Mill Ave), and a communal sukkah will be built on campus. Jewish and non-Jewish guests are welcome to visit and rest or eat in the sukkah. Feel free to wish anyone there a “Happy Sukkot.”

Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah

The holiday of Sukkot ends with two more holiday days, Shemini Atzeret (literally, the “eighth [day] of assembly”) and Simchat Torah (roughly translated as, “rejoicing with the Torah”), which also have the restrictions noted above. This year, Shemini Atzeret will be celebrated beginning at sundown on September 27th followed directly by Simchat Torah which ends one hour after sundown on September 29th. Shemini Atzeret is a “cap” on the just-completed week of festivities. It is followed the next day by Simchat Torah, during which the annual cycle of public readings from the Torah (the Five Books of Moses, which begins the Hebrew Scriptures) is completed with the chanting of the final chapters of the Book of Deuteronomy, and then immediately restarted again with chanting from the beginning of the Book of Genesis. The day’s celebration includes festive processions with the Torah scrolls, including much singing and dancing.

Why do the dates of Jewish holidays change from year to year?

The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar. This means that from year to year, from the perspective of the solar Gregorian calendar, the Jewish holidays “shift” over a three to four week period of time. Thus, for example, the Jewish New Year of Rosh Hashanah can fall from early September to early October depending upon the date of the new moon. Jewish holidays start in the evening, before sunset, and go until nightfall one or two days following.