

# JEWISH HOLIDAYS

## Shabbat

the sabbath day, from sundown on Friday until sundown on Saturday. Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-14 give explicit instructions regarding the sabbath: "Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work" (Deuteronomy 5:12-14a). For many Jewish people, the sabbath is a day spent with friends, family, and God. Worship at a temple or synagogue, which includes reading from the Torah and reciting certain prayers, takes place on Friday nights and Saturday mornings.

## Pesach

Passover, the eight-day festival celebrating Israel's liberation from slavery in Egypt. (See Exodus 12:1-28.) This festival serves to remind the Jewish people that freedom should be cherished and constantly sought. Pesach begins on the 15th day of the month of Nisan on the Hebrew Calendar and falls some time in March or April.

## Shavuot

the festival of weeks commemorating the first fruits of the spring harvest and Moses receiving the Torah on Mt. Sinai. Shavuot falls on the fiftieth day after Pesach and also is known as Pentecost, which is derived from the Greek word for "fiftieth." Shavuot falls on the sixth day of the month of Sivan on the Hebrew Calendar, which is usually in late May or early June.

## Rosh Hashanah

the new year. Rosh Hashanah is a solemn time of reflection on the past year and a commitment to return to God in the year to come. Rosh Hashanah is the first day of Tishrei on the Hebrew Calendar and falls in September or early October.

## Yom Kippur

the Day of Atonement, when Jewish people repent of their sins during the past year and spend the day in prayer and fasting. Yom Kippur is the tenth day of Tishrei on the Hebrew Calendar and falls in September or October.

## Sukkot

the Feast of Booths, an eight-day festival that marks the autumn harvest. People build simple huts, called sukkahs, using cornstalks and leaves as the walls and roof. Time spent in these booths reminds one to be thankful for the workers of the fields and the fruit of the earth. Sukkot begins on the tenth day of Tishrei on the Hebrew Calendar and falls in September or October.

## Chanukah

an eight-day Feast of Lights celebrating Judas Maccabeus's restoration of the Jerusalem Temple after it was profaned by Syrian-Greek ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

## Bar Mitzvah/Bat Mitzvah

meaning "[son or daughter] of the commandments," when a young Jewish person turns 13 (boys) or 12 (girls), he or she inherits responsibilities for maintaining the Jewish community. This event is marked by a public ceremony in which the young person reads from the Torah and offers an explanation of what he or she has read.