

Celebrating Jewish Holidays in October

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October is a wonderful month every year, the leaves change colors, and you can finally leave your house in something other than shorts consistently without checking the weather. It's always been my favorite month, but this October is extra special for me as it contains several Jewish holidays this year. Next year, it will even contain one of my favorites, Rosh Hashanah, which started on September 25 this year. There is a tradition to ask for apple cake for Rosh Hashanah so you can receive help from someone during the year. If you do not receive apple cake for Rosh Hashanah, tradition dictates that you should receive it for one of the following holidays.

With Rosh Hashanah being our New Year celebration, the first holiday in October can help us prepare for the coming year and start it off on good footing. Yom Kippur starts at sundown on October 4 and is about 26 hours of abstaining from five things, including food and drink. The day it falls on the Jewish calendar, the tenth of Tishrei, is the day that Moses came down from Mount Sinai the second time bringing with him not just the tablets but also a pardon from the idol worshipping that was happening the first time he came down. This makes it a day of atonement and forgiveness. While we are fasting, many people will either apologize for things that happened over the past year or give forgiveness for things that happened to them, whether they are offered an apology or not. After sundown on October 5, we will partake in a festive, after-fast meal celebrating our joy at the acceptance our repentance, forgiveness our sins, and we're now ready for another year of life, health and happiness.



Immediately following Yom Kippur, families will often start building their sukkah, a structure similar to the temporary dwellings Israelites used on their way out of Egypt. During the holiday of Sukkot it is a



The sukkah is a walled structure covered with organic material.

mitzvah, or good deed, to eat all your meals in this temporary shelter. Sukkot begins after sunset on October 9 and ends at nightfall on October 16. The first two days of Sukkot are full-fledged holiday days where we are not supposed to work. The subsequent days are Chol Hamoed, when work is allowed, but with restrictions. The final day of Sukkot is known as Hoshanah Rabbah and is the only day with a specific food, kreplach, as well as apple cake for those who did not receive it before Yom Kippur or for Rosh Hashanah. It is also the final day of atonement for the upcoming year. While Yom Kippur was a solemn day, Sukkot is a time of thanksgiving before we celebrate the beginning of a new Torah cycle.

Sukkot is immediately followed by the holiday of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. The day of Shemini Atzeret, which begins at nightfall on October 16, features prayers for rain. The second day of this joyous holiday, Simchat Torah, celebrates the conclusion and restart of the Torah reading cycle. The Torah is dressed in splendor, removed from the ark, and danced around. The crowns are left on the Torah for this dance that begins, as selected members get to hold the Torah over their right shoulder and parade around the synagogue reading table, or bimah. After this procession, there is singing and dancing with the whole congregation passing the Torah around from person to person, allowing everyone the opportunity to be the "Torah's feet." After this amazing celebration to end almost a month full of festivities, the next holiday does not occur until Hanukkah and the next high holiday isn't until Purim next year.

