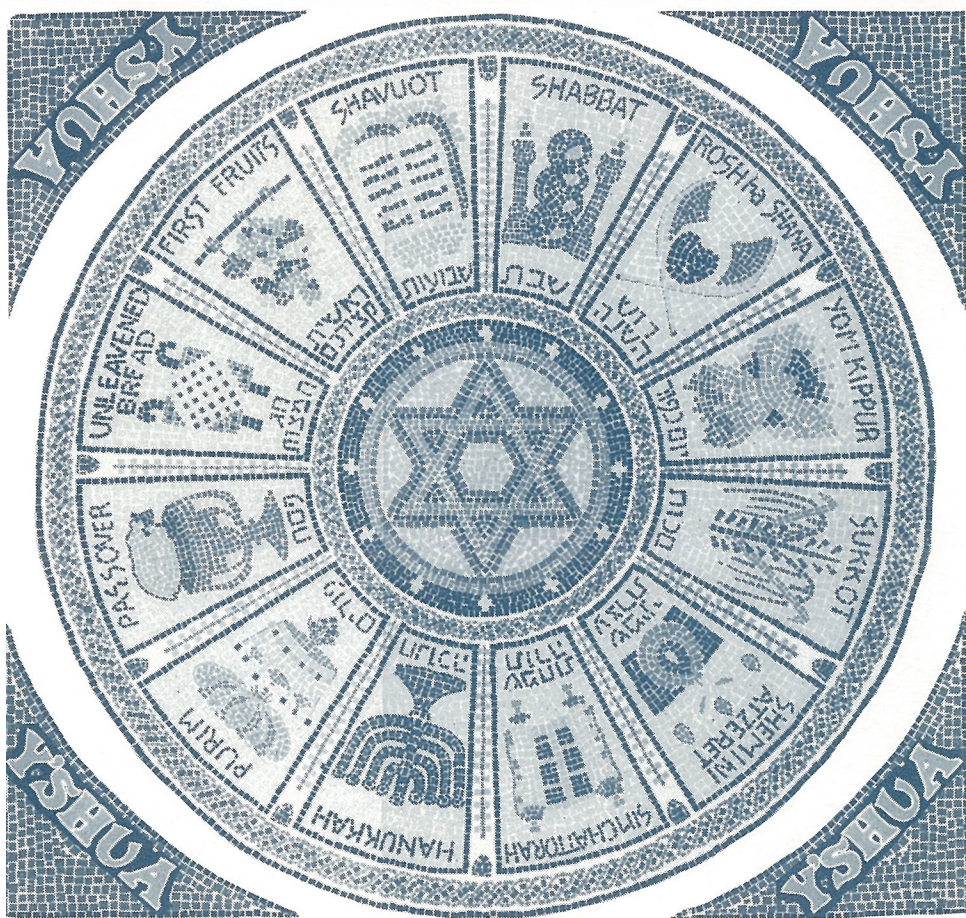


JEWISH HOLIDAYS



A description of the main festivals of the Jewish people
by Erwin J. Kolb

Foreword to the 2017 edition:

Much has changed in our ministry since this booklet was originally published. So I thought I would take this opportunity to update the reader on what is going on in the LC-MS within Jewish missions.

In 1973, at the encouragement of Rev. Bruce Lieske, their pastor, St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia submitted a memorial to the 1973 convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, titled "To Facilitate Gospel Proclamation among Jews." The synod ultimately referred this issue to an ad hoc committee, headed by Dr. Erwin J. Kolb then the Executive Director for Evangelism of the LC-MS. You can find these and related documents in *Witnessing to Jewish People* by Bruce J. Lieske available through our website at www.lije.org on the "Resources" page.

This beginning grew into what is now Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism (LIJE), founded in 1981. Rev. Lieske became its Founder and first Executive Director, and LIJE became the first mission society outreach of the LC-MS since World War II. There are 6,000,000 Jewish people in the United States, accounting for 45% of world Jewry.

To minister to this community, we help prepare congregations for ministry to Jewish people through preaching, teaching, writing and workshops while developing branches that are active and intentional in evangelism to the communities where God has placed them. We affirm and seek to be faithful to St. Paul's proclamation, **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).**

The vision of LIJE is two-fold:

- First, LIJE seeks to engage in intentional evangelism within every significant Jewish community in the United States, sharing Y'shua (Jesus) with all people and especially the Jewish people.
- Secondly, LIJE seeks to connect congregations for training in evangelism and to help our churches understand the Jewish roots of their faith.

This booklet was written by Dr. Kolb in 1987 and he continued to serve our ministry until his death in 2010. He worked to help facilitate those goals with the expressed goal of opening mission branches in every city in the United

States with a population of 20,000 or more Jewish people. There are 39 such areas in this country!

When this book was written, I was not a believer in Jesus, having been raised in a Jewish home in Denver, CO. I came to faith in 1991 through the ministry of St. John's Lutheran Church in Denver, and began my ministry with a Jewish outreach organization in Denver, CO, called Menorah Ministries where I was serving as a volunteer missionary on the campus at the University of Colorado. By 1996 I was attending Concordia Seminary and had not heard much about the existing Lutheran mission to the Jews when I met Steve Cohen. He was then the field counselor and advisor to LIJE. In 1996 he left Jews for Jesus and came full-time with LIJE and moved to St. Louis. We worked together to found The Apple of His Eye Mission Society, which was ostensibly intended to be a missionary training center, working with LIJE. But it ended up effectively operating as a competing mission to the Jews, causing a lot of confusion within our church body. So Steve and Bruce decided to separate their work. Steve left the ministry of LIJE but continued to operate under LIJE's street name of "The Apple of His Eye."

Because of all this confusion, LIJE determined to open new mission branches under the name of "Burning Bush Ministries" to distinguish itself from Steve's new ministry, and in 1999, opened a new branch of mission in Detroit, MI, the first of "Burning Bush Ministries."

However, two branches of ministry were still open, St. Louis and New York, operating under the "Apple of His Eye" name. Both branches were attached to messianic-Lutheran congregations, Congregation Beth El in Queens, New York, and Congregation Chai v'Shalom in St. Louis, where I have the privilege of pastoring.

Congregation Chai v'Shalom was founded in 1998, celebrating its first worship service on April 18, 1998, about a year-and-a-half since beginning mission work in St. Louis. Then, in 2005, Bruce retired and LIJE called me to serve as its second Executive Director, and has moved its offices to St. Louis, MO, where it continues a variety of ministries under the structure of LIJE, such as The Apple of His Eye, Burning Bush Ministries, and Aish HaEmeth, our Center for Jewish-Christian studies.

Unfortunately, in 2008 our ministry and congregation in Queens, New York closed as the missionary there took a call to serve a traditional Lutheran congregation. But, we have opened new mission stations in Atlanta and S. Florida, and continue to minister in Detroit, St. Louis and Orlando, and work with

partner ministries to serve in the Ukraine and in Israel. We are actively working with congregations in the New York metro area to reopen our New York branch. **LIJE continues as a faith-ministry of the LC--MS, and as such relies on the regular support of those to whom God has called to sustain it with their gifts and prayers.**

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"

(Matthew 9:35-38).

--Rev. Kevin Parviz, Executive Director

Nota bene: On page 3 is a dated schedule of Jewish holidays. While the information there other than the dates is a good summation, for a current holiday calendar, you should access the calendar on our website at www.lije.org.

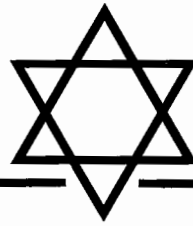


Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism

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Introduction



There have been law suits, court decisions, arguments and many editorials in the press, pro and con in many communities. What is the issue? Should a Jewish menorah be allowed on public property during Hanukkah? Should a Christian creche be permitted on public property during Christmas?

Only in recent years have Jewish people made this an issue and Christians in some places have reacted strongly. Perhaps the bigger issue than whether to allow such displays or not is what the menorah stands for or what is Hanukkah.

Hanukkah is only one of the Jewish religious holidays. Christians generally understand very little about any of them. This booklet is intended to help Christians better understand the principal holidays of the Jewish people in a quick overview fashion. For a more in-depth study of the Jewish holidays, we have developed studies on specific holidays available. Write for information.

Why should Christians bother to learn about Jewish holidays? We suggest at least these reasons:

1. To help us better understand our Jewish neighbors.
2. To increase our Bible knowledge of the Old Testament, which contains the roots of most of the holidays. The Old Testament was "written for our instruction." (Romans 15:4)
3. To help us understand and appreciate the Jewish roots of our Christian faith.
4. To give us natural conversation starters that can lead to opportunities for loving Christian witness to the Gospel.
5. To help Jewish believers better appreciate their Jewish heritage and when they observe some of the holidays to see Jesus in the center of their celebrations.

Erwin J. Kolb, Executive Director of Evangelism

Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People

The Board for Evangelism Services

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

1987

The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish calendar is based on the period of the moon, rather than the sun which determines the common calendar of the rest of the world. The year based on the moon cycle is called a lunar year. It has only 354 days a year, while the solar year has 365 days. The Jewish calendar is centered on the agricultural activities of Israel. In order to stay with the proper seasons, a leap month was added approximately every three years to bring it back in balance.

Today the Jewish people have two separate calendars, one a religious or sacred calendar and the other a civil or secular calendar, and each begins at a different time of the year.

The Jewish years are counted from the creation of the world so that 1987 is year 5747 A.M. The A.M. is Latin for *Anno Mundi*, the year of the world. Jewish people do not use B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (*Anno Domini*, the year of the Lord). They use instead B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era).

The first month of the year for Jewish people depends on which of the two calendars one is using, the civil or religious. The civil calendar year begins in our September or October with the New Year Day Festival of Rosh Hashanah (the Head of the year). The religious year begins with the Passover in March or April.

<i>Jewish Months (Religious sequence)</i>	<i>Festivals</i>
Abib or Nisan (Mar-Apr)	Nisan 15—Passover Nisan 16—First Fruits
Ziv or Ivar (Apr-May)	
Sivan (May-June)	
Tammuz (June-July)	
Ab (July-Aug)	
Elul (Aug-Sept)	
Tishri or Ethanim (Sept-Oct)	Tishri 1—Rosh Hashanah Tishri 10—Yom Kippur Tishri 15—Sukkot
Bul or Marcheshvan (Oct-Nov)	
Kislev (Nov-Dec)	Kislev 25—Hanukkah
Tebeth (Dec-Jan)	
Shebat (Jan-Feb)	
Adar (Feb-Mar)	Adar 14—Purim
Second Adar or Adar Shenai (The 13th month which is added to bring the lunar calendar back in correspondence to the solar year. It is actually added seven times in 19 years, in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years of each cycle.)	

Schedule of Jewish Holidays

Jewish holidays are days set aside to commemorate special events in Jewish history. They are celebrated in several ways: with prayers and rituals, stopping work or not doing certain activities and, in some cases, by fasting or eating special foods. How one observes these holidays depends on the particular religious faith of the Jewish person, whether that person practices the Orthodox, the Conservative or Reform faith or whether he or she is a cultural or secular Jew.

The holidays include days of repentance such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; seasonal festivals relating to harvest time, Sukkoth, Pesach, Shavuoth; and days observing events in the history of the Jews, Hanukkah, Purim. In this booklet we have included primarily the religious festivals that have roots in the Scriptures. Other related holidays very important to Jewish people today are: Yom Ha-Shoah, the holocaust remembrance day; Yom Ha-Atzmaut marking the creation of the State of Israel (May 14, 1948); and Tisha BeAv, marking the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Today Jews pray at the Western Wall, the last remaining part of Solomon's Temple.

All Jewish holidays, with the exception of some fasts, begin on the evening previous to the first day, a half hour before Sunday. The schedule below is taken from a brochure of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America.

	1988 5748- 49	1989 5749- 50	1990 5750- 51	1991 5751- 52	1992 5752- 53	1993 5753- 54	1994 5754- 55	1995 5755- 56	1996 5756- 57	1997 5757- 58	1998 5758- 59
Purim	Mar 3	Mar 21	Mar 11	Feb 28	Mar 19	Mar 7	Feb 25	Mar 16	Mar 5	Mar 23	Mar 12
Passover	Apr 2-9	Apr 20-7	Apr 10-7	Mar 30- Apr 6	Apr 18-25	Apr 6-13	Mar 27- Apr 3	Apr 15-22	Apr 4-11	Apr 22-29	Apr 11-18
Rosh Hashanah	Sep 12-13	Sep 30- Oct 1	Sep 20-21	Sep 9-10	Sep 28-29	Sep 16-17	Sep 6-7	Sep 25-26	Sep 14-15	Oct 2-3	Sep 21-22
Yom Kippur	Sep 27	Oct 9	Sep 27	Sep 18	Oct 7	Sep 25	Sep 15	Oct 4	Sep 23	Oct 11	Sep 30
Sukkoth	Sep 26- Oct 2	Oct 14-20	Oct 4-10	Sep 23-29	Oct 12-18	Sep 30- Oct 6	Sep 20-26	Oct 9-15	Sep 28- Oct 4	Oct 16-22	Oct 5-11
Hanukkah	Dec 4-11	Dec 23-30	Dec 12-19	Dec 2-9	Dec 20-27	Dec 9-16	Nov 28- Dec 5	Dec 18-25	Dec 6-13	Dec 24-31	Dec 14-21
Yom Ha-Shoah	Apr 14	May 2	Apr 22	Apr 11	Apr 30	Apr 18	Apr 8	Apr 27	Apr 16	May 4	Apr 23
Yom Ha- Atzmaut	Apr 21	May 10	Apr 30	Apr 18	May 7	Apr 26	Apr 14	May 4	Apr 24	May 12	Apr 30
Tisha BeAv	Jul 24	Aug 10	Jul 31	Jul 21	Aug 9	Jul 27	Jul 17	Aug 6	Jul 25	Aug 12	Aug 2



Sabbath

Date: The seventh day of the week from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday.

Name: Sabbath, Shabbat in Hebrew, which means rest.

Purpose: Originally a day of rest to commemorate the completion of the creation of the work on the first six days. After the Exodus its observance included a reminder of the deliverance from slavery and the consecration of the people of Israel as God's chosen people.

Old Testament: Genesis 2:2-3, "By the seventh day God had finished . . . and God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." Deuteronomy 5:11-15, "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy . . . Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord brought you out of there with a mighty hand . . . Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day." Also Exodus 20:8-11.

New Testament: Matthew 12:1-14, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath . . . Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Observance: Originally the cessation of all work, controlled by detailed regulations in the law and strict punishments for breaking the laws. Observing the Sabbath meant active participation in spiritual and intellectual activities. Because it was not celebrated in the temple, it could be celebrated anywhere, even in exile.

Traditions: The Sabbath is ushered in at sundown on Friday evening by the lighting of two candles in the Jewish home. At the conclusion of the Sabbath at sundown on Saturday, the Havdalah candle is extinguished. The lighted candles demonstrate the separation of the sacred Sabbath from the non-sacred other days of the week.

Attendance at the synagogue for worship on Friday evening and Saturday morning are central to a religious Jewish person's life. There assigned portions of the Torah and the liturgy are read.

The Kiddush (blessing over the wine) and the eating of Challah (special Sabbath loaves) are an integral part of the family observance of the Sabbath.

Fulfillment: In the New Testament the people of God are free from the regulations for celebrating the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week because the Old Covenant has been fulfilled in Christ (Heb. 8:6-13). They chose to observe the first day in commemoration of the resurrection of the Messiah from death on that day.

When both Jew and Gentile have faith in the Messiah, they have peace and rest from all efforts to save themselves, trusting in the grace of God and looking forward to the rest that God has prepared for all His people in heaven. (Hebrews 4:11)



Rosh Hashanah

(Feast of Trumpets—“New Year”) _____

Date: The 1st and 2nd day of the Jewish month, Tishri, which falls in September or October. It was an autumn festival associated with preparations for harvest.

Name: The Bible name is Feast of Trumpets because it was observed with the blowing of trumpets or the shofar, the ram’s horn. In later years, it was called Rosh (Hebrew for head or beginning) Hashanah (Hebrew for year) since it marked the beginning of the year (rosh hah shah NAH).

Purpose: To present Israel before the Lord for His favor.

Old Testament: Leviticus 23:24-25, “On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. Do no regular work, but present an offering made to the Lord by fire.” Also: Numbers 29:1-6.

New Testament: None.

Observance: It was a day of rest when Jewish people gathered at the tabernacle (temple) with their sacrifices. Today they come to the synagogue to examine their deeds of the past year and pray for forgiveness. They reaffirm their faith and prepare for a 10-day period of repentance that climaxes on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur.

Tradition: The ram’s horn recalls Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son when God asked it of him, but in the last moment God provided a ram and accepted the sacrifice of the ram instead of the son. The sounding of the shofar reminds people of their responsibility to God and calls them to repentance.

Oral tradition says that the world was created on Rosh Hashanah.

Some say this is the day on which all mankind will be judged.

One tradition holds that three books are opened at the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah—one for the completely righteous, one for the completely wicked, and one for the average person. Those most righteous are inscribed in the Book of Life, the wicked are inscribed in the book of death, and the average are kept in suspension for the 10 days of repentance until the Day of Atonement. If they fare well, they will be inscribed in the Book of Life.

Some people go to a river or lake and, into the water, empty their pockets of crumbs or stones put there for that purpose. This symbolizes the putting of sin out of their lives.

Fulfillment: As the trumpet called people to the presence of God to stand before his judgment and mercy, believers in the Messiah look forward to hearing the trumpet on the last day when he will return with “the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God” (1 Thess. 4:16).



Yom Kippur

(Day of Atonement)

Date: The 10th day of the Jewish month Tishri, September or October.

Name: Yom (Hebrew for day) Kippur (Hebrew for covering which referred to the covering of sin, the equivalent of the English word "atonement"). (yom kee PUR)

Purpose: To atone for the sins of the priests and the people.

Old Testament: Leviticus 16:34, "Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites." Leviticus 23:27-28, "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering . . . Do no work on that day . . . when atonement is made for you before the Lord." Also Leviticus 16; Numbers 29:7-11.

New Testament: Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews 9:7, 10:3, 19-22.

Observance: Next to the Sabbath, Yom Kippur is considered the most holy day on the Jewish calendar. It is preceded by the 10 Days of Awe which are filled with personal reflection and repentance. In Bible times there was a solemn assembly during which the High Priest made two sacrifices for the atonement (covering) of sins.

This was the only day on which the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies. He entered first to sprinkle the blood of the first sacrificed bull on the mercy seat to make atonement for his sins. The second time he entered he would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed goat for the sins of Israel.

The Jewish people observed Yom Kippur throughout the centuries as a day of rest, fasting, meditation and prayer to find forgiveness of sins and thus begin the new year with a clear conscience.

Tradition: Because no sacrifices have been made since the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., Jewish people seek forgiveness through their own prayers and the good that they do. It is customary to ask and to give forgiveness to each other, believing that God's forgiveness depends on people being forgiving to each other.

The service before sundown on Yom Kippur Eve is called *Kol Nidre* (all vows). Each person affirms promises to God for the coming year and prays to be excused from previous vows not kept.

Fulfillment: "We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).



Sukkoth

(Feast of Tabernacles)

Date: The 15th day of the Jewish month Tishri, September/October, five days after the Day of Atonement.

Name: Sukkoth means huts or booths, which are erected for the celebration, so it is called the Feast of Tabernacles which means booths or temporary dwelling (soo KOT). Also known as the Festival of Ingathering.

Purpose: Give thanks for the harvest and memorialize the journey from Egypt to Canaan.

Old Testament: Leviticus 23:33-36, "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Lord's Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts seven days. The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. For seven days present offerings . . . on the eighth day hold a solemn assembly . . ." Leviticus 23:39-43, "After you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival . . . live in booths for seven days . . ." Also Numbers 29:12-34; Deuteronomy 16:13-15.

New Testament: John 7:2,37, "When the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near . . . On the last and great day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

Observance: A week of living in booths and offering sacrifices to celebrate the harvest and remember the journey from Egypt to Canaan. Three sided dwellings are built and decorated with branches and fruit of the season. They are dedicated as places of prayer. The booths symbolize the huts the Jewish people lived in during their 40 years journey to Canaan as well as the field dwellings farmers used during the harvest time. In some places, a miniature booth is built as Christians do a creche.

In the temple ritual, there was pouring of water at the altar symbolic of prayers for the much needed winter rains and reminding them of how God provided water when it was needed.

Tradition: The seventh day of Sukkoth, called Great Deliverance Day (*Hoshanah Rabbah*), willow branches are beaten so some leaves fall off, a symbol of the renewal of life. Old leaves fall in autumn and new ones grow in spring. This is also the day on which God decides the fate of each person for the next year.

The eighth day of Sukkoth, the Solemn Deliverance Day (*Shemini Atzereth*), prayers are said for rain and good crops for the coming year.

The day after *Shemini Atzereth* is the day of Rejoicing with the Torah (*Simchath Torah*). The last chapters of the Torah are read and the first book begun again. The scrolls are taken from the Ark, and the congregation walks around the synagogue with them seven times.

Fulfillment: Jesus is the water of life and the bread of life. John 4:13-14; 6:35-40. At the end of time the "Tabernacle of God is with men" and Jesus says "To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life" (Rev. 21:3.6).



Hanukkah

(Festival of Dedication)

Date: Eight days beginning with the 25th day of the Jewish month Kislev (November/December).

Name: Hanukkah means Dedication. It commemorates the rededication of the temple after it was defiled by Syrians and made into a pagan shrine. It is also called the "Festival of Lights" because the sacred temple lamp is said to have burned eight days on one day's supply of sacred oil, all that was left. (HA noo kah).

Purpose: To celebrate the Jewish victory over the Syrians in 165 B.C. by Judah the Macabee and their regaining political and religious freedom.

Old Testament: None. (The Jewish victory over the Syrians occurred after Old Testament history.) The story is recorded in 1 and 2 Macabees, two historical books of the Apocrypha.

New Testament: John 10:22-23, "Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade."

Observance: A special nine-branch candle holder, called *Hannukkiyyuh*, is used so that a candle can be lit on each of the eight days of Celebration. The *Shamesh*, the helper or servant candle, is lit first and it is used to light the other candles, one on the first day, two on the second, and so on through the eight days of Hanukkah. This recalls the miraculous burning of the temple light for eight days on one day's supply of oil.

Traditions: Pancakes made with potatoes and oil, called *latkes*, are a traditional treat, the oil recalling the oil in the sacred temple lamp. Other popular foods are doughnuts and cheese dishes.

Children play with *dreidels*, square tops inscribed with the Hebrew letters N, G, H and S for the Hebrew phrase, "Nun Gadol Hayah Sham," meaning "A great miracle happened there."

Gifts are exchanged, especially between members of the family.

Fulfillment: Just as the lights of Hanukkah overcome darkness, so the darkness of this world is overcome by Jesus who said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).



Purim

(Festival of Lots)

Date: The 14th day of the Jewish month, Adar (February/March).

Name: Purim means “lots.” The Persian King’s advisor, Haman, who was plotting to destroy the Jewish people in the kingdom, cast lots to choose the day on which he would carry out his plan. So it is sometimes called the Festival of Lots. Because Queen Esther saved the Jewish people, it is also called the Festival of Esther. (POO rim)

Purpose: To celebrate the national deliverance of the Jews from destruction under the Persians.

Old Testament: Esther 9:18-32, “The Jews in Susa . . . had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth . . . that is why rural Jews—those living in villages—observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to others.” Also the entire book of Esther.

New Testament: None.

Observance: The celebration in the synagogue revolves around the reading of the book of Esther from the *Megillah*, the scroll that contains this book. It rehearses how Queen Esther, through the counsel of her uncle, Mordecai, revealed Haman’s plot to destroy the Jews. King Ahasuerus had Haman hanged on the gallows Haman built for Mordecai.

Traditions: During the reading of Esther, noise makers (groggers) are twirled when the name of Haman is read in order to blot it out from hearing and from memory. A traditional festival meal, *purim seudah*, is held in the late afternoon. Special three-corner pies are served, known as *hamantashen* (Haman’s pockets), reminding us that Haman’s pockets were full of bribe money. Gifts are given to friends and the poor. It is a time to be merry and joyful.

The 13th day of Adar, the day before Purim, commemorated Esther’s fasting before seeing the King to plead for her people—the Jewish people.

Fulfillment: The Jewish people were miraculously delivered from destruction under the Persians and returned to the promised land. Jesus delivers us from the destruction that is the consequence of sin and all evil and will bring us to our promised land. “The Lord will deliver me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:18).



Pesach or Passover

(First Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread)

Date: The 15th day of the Jewish month Nisan, which falls in March or April. In the Bible this month, the first month of the religious year, is called Abib.

Name: Passover comes from the “passing over” of the Angel of Death over the homes the Israelite slaves in Egypt had marked on the door post with blood from a sacrificed lamb. This was the last of 10 plagues when the firstborn in every Egyptian home was slain and which moved Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go. Also called Pesach. (PEA sah)

The name Unleavened Bread came from the requirement that only unleavened bread, bread without yeast, be eaten during the seven days of this observance. During the captivity in Babylon this was observed as a separate holiday while today the unleavened observances are absorbed into the Passover celebrations.

Purpose: To remember Israel’s deliverance from 400 years of slavery in Egypt.

Old Testament: Exodus 12:1-20, “The animals you choose must be year old males without defect . . . take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lambs . . . The blood must be a sign . . . I will pass over you . . . the generations to come will celebrate it as a festival to the Lord.” Also Ex. 13:3-10, Lev. 23:6-8, Numbers 9:1-14, 28:16-25, Deut. 16:1-7.

New Testament: John 2:13, “When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” John 11:55, “When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover.” Luke 22:8, “Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.”

Observance: Originally involved sacrificing a lamb on the 11th of Nisan and eating it with the family together with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The Passover was considered the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which lasted eight days and ended with another celebration. The New Testament calls it the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Today the Passover *Seder* (Order of Service) is eaten in a festive mood to relive the bondage of slavery and the freedom of Passover. The *Haggadah* (the book with the Order of Service) lists four questions to be asked by one of the children and in response the story of the Exodus is told.

Traditions: Required food includes: flat, crisp unleavened bread called *Matzoth* since the Jews left Egypt in such haste their bread did not have time to rise; bitter herbs and salt water called *Maror* to symbolize the suffering of slavery; four cups of wine. Other traditional foods include *charoseth*, a mixture of chopped apples, nuts and wine, recalling the mortar Jewish slaves mixed for Pharaoh’s monuments, and *karpas*, greens, standing for new spring. One place setting is left empty for the long-awaited guest, the prophet Elijah, who is to announce the coming of the Messiah.

Fulfillment: 1 Cor. 5:7, “Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. Let us keep the Festival . . . with the bread of sincerity and truth.” Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper at that Passover meal using the matzoth as his body and the wine as His blood. Christians celebrate the Lord’s Supper in order to receive the forgiveness He obtained by the sacrifice of His body and blood and in order to remember their release from the slavery of sin to the freedom of His kingdom (1 Cor. 12:23-26).



Bikkurim

(Feast of First Fruits)

Date: A pilgrimage festival associated with the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread and celebrated on the 16th day of the Jewish month of Nisan (March/April).

Name: First fruits, from the first of the barley harvest.

Purpose: To recognize the Lord's goodness in providing the harvest and to acknowledge that everything belongs to God.

Old Testament: ". . . bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the Lord so it will be accepted on your behalf . . . You must sacrifice a burnt offering . . . together with the grain offering . . . This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live" (Leviticus 23:9-14).

New Testament: None.

Observance: Presenting in the temple a sheaf of the first barley harvest together with the burnt offering and grain offering. It was a festival of Thanksgiving. The Feast of First Fruits is not observed today.

Traditions: None.

Fulfillment: The Messiah is called the "first fruits" of those who have died (fallen asleep). As all die because they are children of Adam so all will be made alive, resurrected from the dead by Jesus Christ. He was the first fruit, the first one to rise and all will follow just as the full harvest follows the first fruit that is presented to the Lord. 1 Cor. 15:20-23

St. Paul speaks about the Spirit being the first fruit given to us while we wait for the full redemption of our bodies in the resurrection. (Romans 8:23).



Shavuot

(Feast of Weeks/Pentecost)

Date: Sixth day of the Jewish month, Sivan (May/June), 50 days counted from the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Name: Shavuot means weeks. The festival comes seven weeks after Passover, so gets the name of Festival of Weeks. The Greek for "50th" is Pentecost, so this festival is sometimes called the Jewish Pentecost.

Purpose: A harvest festival to thank the Lord and express joy at the wheat harvest.

Old Testament: Leviticus 23:15-21, "Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord . . . Present . . . seven male lambs . . . proclaim a solemn assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live." Numbers 28:26-31, "During the Feast of Weeks, hold a sacred assembly, and do no regular work . . ."

New Testament: Acts 2:1, "When the day of Pentecost had fully come." Acts 20:16, ". . . he (Paul) was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost." 1 Cor. 16:8, "But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost."

Observance: Traditionally there was the offering of the wheat, first fruit, sacrifices and joyful celebration with an assembly and no work. Since the destruction of the temple (70 A.D.) the emphasis changed to a celebration of the giving of the Torah (law) on Mt. Sinai. Rabbinical tradition maintains that from the first Passover to Sinai was a period of 50 days.

Traditions: This is an agricultural holiday, so synagogues and homes are decorated with the first ripe fruits, greens and flowers.

Blintzes (sweet cheese pastries) and other dairy foods are eaten to celebrate the harvest and the giving of dietary laws.

The story of Ruth is read because she was faithful to her chosen religion even in great poverty. She fed herself and her mother-in-law by gleaning in the wheat fields during the harvest.

Shavuoth ends a solemn period when no weddings or public celebrations are traditionally held, so there are many following Shavuoth.

Fulfillment: 50 days after the Festival of First Fruits, Shavuot celebrates the bringing in of the full harvest. 50 days after the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the harvest of believers is gathered on Pentecost.

The Old Covenant was given 50 days after Passover, and the Israelites were established as God's chosen people. The new Covenant was written on the hearts of God's new people that were gathered together on Pentecost, 50 days after Easter. (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Acts 2:38-47)

Notes



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