



Rosh HaShana

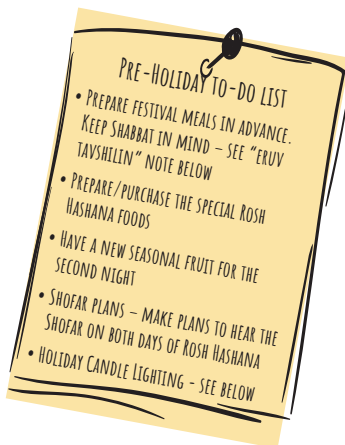
Oct 2-4, 2024



Rosh Hashana begins at 6:38pm on Wednesday, Oct 2.
Shabbat concludes at 7:33pm on Saturday, Oct 3.
All times displayed in this guide are for the Greater Toronto Area.

What is Rosh Hashana?

Rosh Hashana, as the name implies, is the “head” of the year, from which all the energy that flows through the rest of the year emanates – including our connection to the Divine and all the blessings we need for the year. Just as a body needs a healthy head in order to function properly, so too the year needs a healthy Rosh Hashana in order to channel its energy in the best way.



Rosh Hashana in Jewish History

3760 BCE: Birthday of humanity with the creation of Adam and Eve, and the first sin (of the Tree of Knowledge) and repentance on the same day.

2105 BCE: The Great Flood in the days of Noach ends.

1677 BCE: The Binding of Isaac, and the passing of his mother Sarah

1746: The Baal Shem Tov’s vision of Moshiach, during which he asked him when he would finally come. His reply? “When your teachings are disseminated and revealed in the world, and your wellsprings spread to the outside,” a reference to Chassidic teachings.

The First Rosh Hashana
Rosh Hashana is the anniversary of the birth of humankind. Why do we celebrate Rosh Hashana, and the beginning of the year, on this day?

The creation of humanity is what enables the true purpose of Creation to be fulfilled. G-d created a world that conceals His presence, and He wants us to reveal it. Only humans – who are endowed with intelligence and freedom of choice; the ability to accept G-d or reject Him – can accomplish this.

Shabbat and Holiday Candle Lighting

Shabbat and Holiday candles are lit by women and girls. The blessings for lighting, with instructions and times, can be found in the JRCC Calendar.

Learn more at jrcc.org/ShabbatCandles

We’re here to help
The JRCC is here to assist with all your Rosh Hashana needs. See the back page of Exodus for a list of High Holiday Services locations. For assistance in making your Rosh Hashana plans, including attending services, having someone blow the Shofar for you in your home, or any other assistance, visit jrcc.org/HighHolidays or contact the JRCC.

⚠ Eruv Tavshilin: Wednesday, Oct 2 (and Oct 16 and 23) before sunset

When Shabbat occurs immediately following a festival — as it does this year — an “eruv tavshilin” (i.e., food for at least one “meal” that is prepared and set aside in advance for Shabbat) must be set aside **prior to the onset of the festival**, so that it should be permitted to prepare food for Shabbat during the festival.



Why Shofar? Ten Reasons

Although the Torah does not specify why we are to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashana, Rabbi Saadia Gaon compiled a list of ten reasons for this special mitzvah:

1. On Rosh Hashana we coronate G-d as King of the world. The shofar's trumpeting call heralds this exciting event.
2. Its piercing wail serves to awaken slumbering souls that have grown complacent.
3. It evokes the shofar blasts that were heard when G-d descended on Mount Sinai and gave us the Torah.
4. It echoes the cries of the prophets who urged Israel to mend their ways and return to G-d and His commandments.
5. It reminds us of the war cries of our enemies as they broke into the Temple in Jerusalem and destroyed it.
6. Made of a ram's horn, the shofar recalls the near-sacrifice of Isaac, who was saved when G-d showed Abraham a ram to bring as an offering in his stead.
7. Its loud piercing sound humbles us and fills us with awe before G-d.
8. It foreshadows the day of judgment at the end of days, which the prophet describes as "a day of shofar and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers."
9. It gives us hope, mirroring the sound of the "great shofar" that will call together the Jewish people who are scattered to the corners of the earth at the time of the coming of Moshiach.
10. It reminds us of the Revival of the Dead, about which we read, "dwellers of the earth ... a shofar is sounded you shall hear."

📖 Learn more at jrcc.org/Shofar



The Moshiach Connection

The shofar blasts on Rosh Hashana are associated with the coming of Moshiach, especially the long, extended blast at the end of each set. The prophet Isaiah writes, "On that day a great shofar will be sounded, and those who are lost in the land of Ashur (Assyria) and those who are cast away in the land of Mitzrayim (Egypt) shall come and bow down to G-d on the holy mountain in Jerusalem."

There are different ways we can get lost in the journey of life. Ashur means "bliss," a reference to the luxuries and pleasures of prosperity we can get lost in. Mitzrayim means "constraints," a reference to the various limitations, stresses and pressures that swallow us alive.

Both of these phenomena are burdens that hold us back from realizing our true spiritual potential, and both will be lifted with the sounding of the great shofar that will awaken us with the coming of Moshiach.

📖 Learn more at jrcc.org/Moshiach



Special Rosh Hashana Foods

A central part of Judaism is about expressing the spiritual within our physical lives in a meaningful way. That's why there are so many mitzvahs and details governing daily life.

Even the foods we eat have significance – especially on an auspicious day like Rosh Hashana. Here are a few examples:



We dip a piece of sweet (red) apple into honey, praying that it be G-d's will to renew for us a good and sweet year.



A head of a fish, ram, or other kosher animal, is served. This symbolizes our desire to be at the "head of the class" this year.



A pomegranate is eaten, symbolizing our wish to have a year full of mitzvah and good deeds, as a pomegranate is filled with luscious seeds.



On Rosh Hashana it is customary not to eat foods which are sour or tart. Instead, the focus is on sweet foods, symbolizing our desire to have a sweet year, blessings and abundance.



It is also customary not to eat nuts on Rosh Hashana, as the numerical value of the Hebrew word for nuts ("egoz") is the same as the Hebrew word for sin ("chet").



Sweetness

One of the unique qualities of honey as it's described in Jewish literature is that it doesn't overpower with brute force, like fire which violently consumes whatever it touches. Honey overpowers with sweetness. The sweetness of honey is so intense that everything it touches is overwhelmed and succumbs to its sweet embrace. This power of honey represents a deeper approach to the High Holidays. Yes, these are somber times, and there is a real need to return to G-d. But the introspection and good resolutions that these days inspire need not come from a place of guilt. Rather, when we experience the sweetness of Divine love, when we feel how close G-d is to us and what a blessing it is to be a Jew, our joy can melt away whatever is evil and purify us from our less than kosher ways. This is why we start the High Holidays by dipping challah and apple in honey. Only a Judaism that is infused with sweetness and joy has the power to dissolve negativity, cynicism and indifference. Sadness and heaviness will not cleanse our soul. But the experience of sweetness will.

📖 Learn more at jrcc.org/NewYear

YOM KIPPUR

Oct 11-12, 2024

Yom Kippur begins at 6:22pm on Friday, Oct 11.

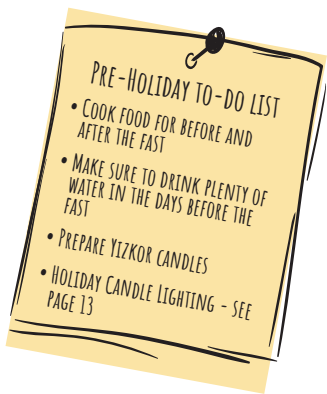
Yom Kippur concludes at 7:21pm on Saturday, Oct 12.

All times displayed in this guide are for the Greater Toronto Area.



What is Yom Kippur?

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year, when the essence of the soul shines and we are closest to G-d – a day of atonement and becoming one with our Creator and our true selves.



PRE-HOLIDAY TO-DO LIST

- COOK FOOD FOR BEFORE AND AFTER THE FAST
- MAKE SURE TO DRINK PLENTY OF WATER IN THE DAYS BEFORE THE FAST
- PREPARE YIZKOR CANDLES
- HOLIDAY CANDLE LIGHTING - SEE PAGE 13



Yom Kippur in Jewish History

1313 BCE: The receiving of the Second Tablets after the first ones were destroyed as a result of the Sin of the Golden Calf

410 BCE: Ezekiel's vision of the Third Temple following the destruction of the First and Second Temple.

1973: Start of the Yom Kippur War

Eve of Yom Kippur Rituals

For Friday, Oct 11



MIKVAH

Immerse in a Mikvah to purify before the holy day



ATONEMENT

Kaporot ritual (early morning)



LEKACH

Give and receive honey cake



FEAST

Eat two festive meals – one in early afternoon, one just before the fast



BLESSINGS

Bless the children with the Priestly Blessings before the holiday begins



YIZKOR

Light Yizkor candles before Yom Kippur begins

Five Key Yom Kippur Observances

On Yom Kippur, according to direct Torah law, we are commanded to avoid the following five activities:

1. Eating or drinking (in case of need, see here and consult a medical professional and a rabbi)
2. Wearing leather shoes
3. Applying lotions or creams
4. Washing or bathing
5. Engaging in conjugal relations



We're here to help

For assistance in making your Yom Kippur plans, including attending services, arranging Yizkor services for your loved ones, or any other assistance, visit jrcc.org/HighHolidays or contact the JRCC.



The Prayer Vault

No prayer is ignored and no tear goes unnoticed. But the response is not always in the form we expect it to be. At the high point of Yom Kippur, toward the end of the day in the Neilah prayer, we address G-d with the following plea: "You who hears the sound of weeping, store our tears in Your flask, and save us from all cruel decrees." This seems to be a strange expression. Why would G-d store our tears? It doesn't seem to be of any use to keep our tears in a flask. Not always are our prayers answered in the way we want them to be. Sometimes, in His wisdom, G-d does not grant us our wishes at the time we demand them. Instead, He stores away our tears and files away our prayers, to be taken out and answered at another time. In physics, the law of conservation of energy states that energy can never be destroyed, it just changes from one form to another. There is a similar law in metaphysics. No prayer is ever lost; no tear is ever wasted. Your request will be granted; it just may be in an unexpected form. So keep praying, because every word is stored away. It will rebound back to you when you need it most.

📌 Learn more at jrcc.org/Prayer

Myth:

Yom Kippur Is a Sad Day

Perhaps because it shares some basic components with Tisha B'Av, our national day of mourning for the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and the exile of our people, many view Yom Kippur as a sad day. The fact is that Yom Kippur is one of the two happiest days on the calendar. It is the day when G-d forgives us for our sins, a day when we are cleansed from the baggage we picked up during the course of the year. On a deeper level: This forgiveness is achieved because this day is when we rise above the mundane nature of our lives. We rise to a spiritual state of being, connect to our inner souls, and by extension, we are one with G-d himself. What could be more celebratory than that?

A Whale of a Story

On Yom Kippur afternoon, we read the story of Jonah (he of the got swallowed by a giant fish fame). What is the connection between the Book of Jonah and Yom Kippur? When he experienced his adventure, Jonah was trying to escape from G-d, so to speak. G-d wanted him to deliver a prophecy to the residents of Nineveh that their city would be destroyed if they did not repent. He was hesitant to do so, because he knew that they would repent while the people of Israel would not, creating "bad karma" for the Israelites.

The story of Jonah teaches us that we can't run away from ourselves. Just as Jonah's endeavor to escape G-d's providence was unsuccessful, so, too, we are incapable of eluding our divine purpose in this world and the divine justice for transgressions we may have committed.

On a more uplifting note: G-d spared the people of Nineveh although He had already decreed that they would be destroyed because of their evil ways. This teaches us that no matter our past behavior, G-d's benevolence and mercy awaits us if we only repent full-heartedly.



The Moshiah Connection

What will Yom Kippur look like when Moshiah comes? The Yalkut Shimoni states, "All the holidays will be nullified in the future except for Purim. Rebbe Eliezer says that even Yom Kippur will never be nullified, as the verse states 'it is an everlasting statute.'" We will fast on this day just as we do now, even though the world will be permeated with goodness. The purpose of this fast will be to atone for sins prior. Nevertheless, the other Yom Kippur observances, such as not wearing leather shoes, not bathing and the prohibition against marital relations, will be rescinded.

If the days of inauguration of the Third Temple falls during Yom Kippur, then on that Yom Kippur we will not fast, just as was done during the inauguration of the First Temple in the times of King Solomon.



Yizkor

When: Saturday, Oct 12

Yizkor is the remembrance prayer for departed loved ones, where we implore G-d to remember the souls of our relatives and friends that have passed on. The main component of Yizkor is our private pledge to give charity following the holiday in honor of the deceased. By giving charity, we are performing a positive physical deed in this world, something that the departed can no longer do, especially if our goods deed emulate theirs. Yizkor renews and strengthens the connection between us and our loved one, brings merit to the departed souls, and elevates them in their celestial homes.

📌 Online Yizkor form: jrcc.org/yizkor

SUKKOT

Oct 16-23, 2024



Sukkot begins at 6:13pm on Wednesday, Oct 16. Shabbat concludes at 7:10pm on Saturday, Oct 19, while Sukkot continues until Wednesday, Oct 23.

All times displayed in this guide are for the Greater Toronto Area.

What is Sukkot?

Sukkot is a seven-day celebration of the harvest season, and commemorates the miraculous protection G-d provided for the Israelites during the Exodus from Egypt and the forty years in the desert wilderness.



The Immersive Mitzvah

“Mitzvah,” the Torah’s word for the divine precepts which guide and govern every aspect of our daily lives has a dual meaning: the word means both “commandment” and “connection.”

In commanding us the mitzvot, G-d created the means through which we may establish a connection with Him. The hand that distributes charity, the mind that ponders the wisdom of Torah, the heart that soars in prayer — all become instruments of the divine will. There are mitzvot for each limb, organ and faculty of man, and mitzvot governing every area of life, so that no part of us remains uninvolved in our relationship with the Creator.

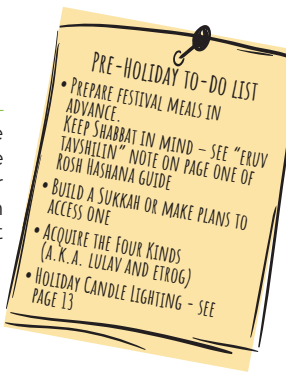
Therein lies the uniqueness of the mitzvah of sukkah. While other mitzvot each address a certain aspect of our persona, the mitzvah of sukkah provides a medium by which the totality of man is engaged in the fulfillment of G-d’s will. All of the person enters into and lives in the sukkah. “sukkah is the only mitzvah into which a person enters with his muddy boots,” goes the Chassidic saying. For the seven days of Sukkot, the sukkah is our home—the environment for our every endeavor and activity.

📍 Learn more at jrcc.org/Sukkot

Sukkah in the Rain?

The weather may be a little unpleasant, it may be a little squashy in there, and your palm allergy may be flaring up...but the inner serenity, the love and feeling of connection with those around you, the sense of being embraced by G-d—all that should override any physical discomfort. If you’re still not enjoying the sukkah, then you’re not really in the sukkah in the first place, and you can go inside. But if you know what you’re missing, you won’t want to leave.

There are moments when we are called upon to transcend the material world. Sitting in the sukkah is one of those moments. A little rain, or even a lot, can’t stop that.



Special Guests

According to Kabbalistic tradition, we are visited in the sukkah by seven supernal ushpizin (“guests”) – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David. On each of the seven days of the festival, another of the seven ushpizin (in the above order) leads the group. The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950) spoke of seven “chassidic ushpizin” as well: the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezeritch, and the first five rebbes of Chabad. The Rebbe would speak each night of Sukkot on the special characteristics of both the biblical and the chassidic ushpizin of the day and their connection to each other and their specific day of the festival.

i We're here to help
For assistance in making your Sukkot plans, including attending services, building a Sukkah, acquiring a lulav and etrog, or any other assistance, visit jrcc.org/Sukkot or contact the JRCC.



It Takes All Kinds

The etrog has both a taste and an aroma; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who have both Torah learning and good deeds... The date (the fruit of the lulav) has a taste but does not have an aroma; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who have Torah but do not have good deeds... The hadas has an aroma but not a taste; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who have good deeds but do not have Torah.... The aravah has no taste and no aroma; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who do not have Torah and do not have good deeds.... Says G-d: "Let them all bond together in one bundle and atone for each other."

The message is not just that "all are part of the Jewish people" or "all are precious in the eyes of G-d" or even that "all are necessary"; it says that they "all atone for each other." This implies that each of the Four Kinds possesses something that the other three do not, and thus "atones" and compensates for that quality's absence in the other three.



The Intermediate Days

Chol Hamoed (the "intermediate days") are, as the name suggests, a fusion of the mundane ("chol) and the sacred ("moed"). These are not holy days like Shabbat and Yom Tov during which work is prohibited, yet they are still festival days that are observed with limited work restrictions. The general principle is to minimize work and as to maximize the holiday celebration. Anything done to cook or otherwise celebrate the festival itself is generally permitted. Driving, lights and using electronics is permitted (but you might want to minimize screen time to be more present with the holiday), and one can do work in order to avoid incurring a loss. Consult your rabbi from more specifics.

The seventh and final official day of Sukkot is called Hoshana Rabbah, and is considered the final day of the divine "judgment" in which the fate of the new year is determined. It is the day when the verdict that was issued on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is finalized.



Shake the Four Kinds

It is customary to perform the mitzvah of the Four Kinds inside the Sukkah.

1. Blessing. Stand facing east. Hold the lulav in your right hand and recite the blessing: **Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-olam a-sher ki-de-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-tav ve-tzee-vah-nu al ne-ti-lat lu-lav.**

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding taking the lulav.

2. Pick up the etrog in your left hand.

The following blessing is recited **ONLY** on the first time the mitzvah is performed this year: **Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-olam she-heche-ya-nu ve-ki-yi-ma-nu ve-higi-a-nu liz-man ha-zeh.** *Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.*

3. Shake it Up (and all around)

Bring the lulav and etrog together using both hands. The bottom of all the Four Kinds should be parallel, with the top of the etrog touching the lulav. Your hands should be opposite your heart. Wave the Four Kinds three times in each direction, bringing them back to the heart after each time:

- Right (south)
- Left (north)
- Straight (east)
- Upwards - beware of low ceilings!
- Downwards - keep the tip pointing up and move your hands downward
- Backwards (west) - keep your feet planted, twist backwards to the right



The Moshiach Connection

The sukkah is defined as a temporary dwelling which, for the duration of the seven-day festival of Sukkot, becomes the home of the Jew. The sukkah must be "temporary" but it also must be a "dwelling," therefore the sukkah has a minimum height, length and width, a maximum height, and many other detailed laws defining its building. All these specifications have one exception: there is no limit to a sukkah's length and breadth. You can build a sukkah the size of a city, or the size of a continent — it'll still be a kosher sukkah. The Talmud derives from the verse above that "all citizens of Israel shall dwell in the sukkah." The Torah wishes to imply that "it is fitting that the entire people of Israel dwell in a single sukkah." The quality imparted by Sukkot is unity. Our interdependence and oneness as a people are expressed by the four kinds taken on Sukkot, and by the sukkah's embrace of every Jew — every type of Jew, and every individual Jew — within its walls.

Thus it is indeed most "fitting that the entire people of Israel dwell in a single sukkah." The big sukkah — the sukkah large enough to house all Jews together — cannot be a violation of the definition of "sukkah", since it is actually its most fitting expression. Whatever size sukkah we build, we must ensure that it should be a "big sukkah" in essence — a welcome home to each and every one of our brethren.

📖 Learn more at jrcc.org/Moshiach



SHMINI ATZERET & SIMCHAT TORAH

Oct 23-25, 2024

Shemini Atzeret begins at 6:02pm
on Wednesday, Oct 23.
Shabbat concludes at 6:59pm on Saturday, Oct 26.

*All times displayed in this guide are for the Greater
Toronto Area.*



What is Shemini Atzeret?

Shemini Atzeret is an independent holiday that follows Sukkot. Outside of Israel it is a two-day holiday, and the second day is known as Simchat Torah. (In Israel they are celebrated on the same day). This holiday is characterized by utterly unbridled joy, which reaches its climax on Simchat Torah, when we celebrate the conclusion and restart of the annual Torah-reading cycle.



Prayer for Rain

Jews have been praying for rain for millennia. In the ancient land of Israel, rain was a life-and-death concern. A good rainy season meant a good harvest and ample drinking water, while a drought could be fatal to livestock and cripple the economy.

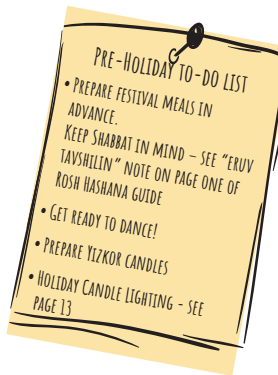
Marking the start of the rainy season (in the Middle East), we begin to mention rain in our prayers on Shemini Atzeret morning. This is dramatically marked with special addition of the The Prayer for Rain to the cantor's repetition of the Musaf, sung in a traditional tune, evocative of the soul-stirring High Holiday melodies.

We are joining Jews all over the world—especially those in our Holy Land, where every drop of water is precious—united in our request for bounty and blessing for all of humanity.



Goodbye Party

Simchat Torah is the grand finale of a season that began with the solemn repentance of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and then transitioned into the joy of Sukkot and Simchat Torah. The sages compare this final day to the following analogy: A king threw a grand feast for seven days. All citizens of the kingdom were invited for the seven days of partying. He then told his loved ones: We have fulfilled our duty to the citizenry. Now let me and you continue with what remains. This is our final party with G-d before we enter the year ahead, supercharge and inspired by the holiday.



- PREPARE FESTIVAL MEALS IN ADVANCE.
- KEEP SHABBAT IN MIND – SEE “ERUV TAVSHILIN” NOTE ON PAGE ONE OF ROSH HASHANA GUIDE
- GET READY TO DANCE!
- PREPARE YIZKOR CANDLES
- HOLIDAY CANDLE LIGHTING - SEE PAGE 13

“The forty-eight hours of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah should be dearly cherished, for at each moment one can draw bucketsful and barrelsful of treasures both material and spiritual, and this is accomplished by dancing.”

The Rebbe Rashab
Rabbi Sholom
DovBer of Lubavitch

i **We're here to help**

For assistance in making your Shmini Atzeret & Simchat Torah plans, including attending services, Yizkor or any other assistance, visit jrcc.org/SimchatTorah or contact the JRCC.



Yizkor Remembrance Prayer

When: Thursday, Oct 24

Yizkor is a special prayer in which we implore G-d to remember the souls of our relatives and friends that have passed on. Yizkor means “Remember.” When we recite Yizkor, we renew and strengthen the connection between us and our loved ones, bringing merit to the departed souls by pledging to perform a mitzvah in their honor (usually giving to charity), which provides a merit that elevates them in their celestial homes. Yizkor should only be recited by someone who has lost at least one parent; those with both parents alive leave the synagogue sanctuary during Yizkor. In addition to reciting Yizkor for one’s parent(s), one may recite Yizkor for any Jew who has passed on, including relatives and friends. When reciting Yizkor for more than one person, repeat the Yizkor paragraph each time.

What gives Yizkor its special power? It is the eternal power of the soul – including the soul of our departed loved ones above, and our souls here below. On the soul level, we are all one and always one. Yizkor is a moving moment when we recite the names of our loved ones whose souls are in the World of Truth above, and realize that at that very moment their souls are present here below.

📍 Online Yizkor form: jrcc.org/yizkor



The Moshiah Connection

The festival of Shemini Atzeret does not have special mitzvahs, customs or rituals like the other festivals – except for one: to be joyous. The mitzvah of joy on this day is actually explicitly ordained by the Torah in the verse “you shall be only joyful.” Commentators note that this verse is not only a precept but also a promise: “if you will fulfill the mitzvah of simchah, you are assured that you will be joyful forever.”

The concept of joy is central in Judaism, and especially in the teachings of Chassidus. The significance of joy is encapsulated in the notion that “joy breaks through barriers.” Through joy, we can transcend all kinds of challenges and obstacles to reach the highest heights, especially in spiritual matters. In this sense, some say that joy is not the goal of life; joy is the engine that drives life.

Moshiach, too, is referred to as “The one who breaks through.” Moshiah breaks through the chains and darkness to bring light into the world, and we see that historically many of Moshiah’s ancestors, from Judah to Ruth to King David, had to overcome intense challenges in order to break through and realize their destinies.

Our joy, which empowers us to break through in our own lives, is the channel that brings about the ultimate break-through – the end of exile and the coming of Moshiah.

📍 Learn more at jrcc.org/Moshiach



The Climax

The climax of the month of Tishrei—the point at which our celebration of our bond with G-d attains the very pinnacle of joy—is during the hakafot of Simchat Torah, when we take the Torah scrolls in our arms and dance with them around the reading table in the synagogue—a practice that is neither a biblical nor a rabbinical precept, but merely a custom.

For it is with our observance of the customs that we express the depth of our love for G-d. The biblical commandments might be compared to the explicitly expressed desires between two people bound in marriage. The rabbinic mitzvot, on which G-d did not directly instruct us but which nevertheless constitute expressions of the divine will, resemble the implied requests between spouses. But the customs represent those areas in which we intuitively sense how we might cause G-d pleasure. And in these lie our greatest joy.



Now What?

The holiday season comes to a close. It’s time to hit the road and get back to the “real” world. This concept is expressed in the verse, “And Jacob went on his way.” Each word in the verse is significant. The name used to describe the Jewish nation is Jacob, rather than Israel. Israel is the name associated with the unique loftiness and greatness of the Jewish people. The name Jacob, on the other hand, means “heel,” expressing the mission to elevate the lowliness of the material world. So, in this context, describing the movement from the holiness of the holidays into the mundane world, referring to ourselves as Jacob clearly indicates that this movement has meaning: The purpose is to bring the spirit and inspiration of the holidays with us into our lives, refine the world around us (and inside us), and thereby make the entire world a dwelling place for the Divine. The method to achieve this is through practical actions of goodness and kindness, which often require us to step out of our previous definitions of self and self-imposed limitations – which is expressed in the word “Jacob went.” Finally, “on his way” (or, more accurately, his “path” or “road”) signifies connectedness; the purpose of transportation infrastructure is to connect remote areas to the central region. The journey of the year is, in a sense, a mission to connect the remoteness of normal material life with the central elevated spiritual life of the holidays.

Wishing you and your family a healthy, happy, sweet year full of blessings!