



SHEMINI ATZERET & SIMCHAT TORAH

Oct 2-4, 2026

Shemini Atzeret begins at 6:39 pm
on Friday, Oct 2..
Shemini Atzeret concludes at 7:35 pm
on Sunday, Oct 4.

*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, supercharged and inspired by the holiday.



**“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



WE'RE HERE TO HELP

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



YIZKOR REMEMBRANCE PRAYER

When: Saturday, Oct 3

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.

① Online Yizkor form: jrcc.org/yizkor



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.



THE MOSHIACH 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.” Moshiach breaks through the chains and darkness to bring light into the world, and we see that historically many of Moshiach’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 Moshiach.

① Learn more at jrcc.org/Moshiach



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!

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