

# INTRODUCTION TO HOLIDAYS/JEWISH FESTIVALS

## Introduction to Holidays/Jewish Festivals/Chagim/Yom Tov

*Jewish Festivals* are listed in the *Torah* and are of two types:

### 1. Three *pilgrimage festivals* (*shalosh regalim*):

- *Passover*,
- *Shavuot*, and
- *Sukkot* (including *Shmini Atzeret*).

These festivals were celebrated in ancient times by "appearing before God"--by bringing offerings to the *Tabernacle* or *Temple*.

### 2. *High Holidays*:

- The Jewish New Year (*Rosh Hashana*—"Yom Teru'a" in the *Torah*), and the
- Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*).

## Duration

Jewish holidays that were originally one day are now observed as follows:

- *Rosh Hashana*--2 days.
- *Yom Kippur*--1 day.
- *Shavuot*--1 day in *Eretz Yisrael* or 2 days elsewhere.
- *Passover* has festival days at the beginning and end of the holiday and intermediary days of lesser holiness, which are called *chol ha'moed*. In *Eretz Yisrael*, *Passover* lasts for 7 days in total and the first and last days are festival days. Outside of *Eretz Yisrael*, *Passover* lasts 8 days and has two festival days at the beginning and two at the end.
- *Sukkot* has festival days at the beginning and at the end and intermediary days of lesser holiness, which are called *chol ha'moed*. In *Eretz Yisrael*, *Sukkot* lasts for 8 days and the first and last days are festival days (the last day is *Shmini Atzeret*). Outside of *Eretz Yisrael*, *Sukkot* lasts for 9 days and the first two days and last days are festival days (the 8th day is *Shmini Atzeret* and the 9th day is *Simchat Torah*).

## Character

Each holiday contributes its own character to Jewish life (*Passover*--the theme of freedom; *Yom Kippur* brings atonement, etc.).

## Celebrating

How to celebrate these holidays is detailed in our *Oral Law* and *halacha* books. *Jewish festivals* as practiced today are similar in holiness to *Shabbat*. As with *Shabbat*, the *Jewish festival* has candle lighting, *kiddush* at two meals, and *havdala*. We eat our best food and wear our best clothing on *Jewish festivals* (we eat our next-best food and wear our next-best clothing on *Shabbat*!).

The main idea behind eating meals on *Jewish festivals* is joy (*simcha*), so you should drink wine and eat meat (only if you enjoy wine and meat). There is no third meal on *Jewish festivals* since people used to eat two meals each day (adding a third meal on *Shabbat* was for enjoyment/*oneg*).

## Melachot

Any activities or actions permitted on *Shabbat* are also permitted on the *Jewish festivals*. Actions that are forbidden on *Shabbat* are generally also forbidden on *Jewish festivals*, but there are some leniencies (only if

the actions are needed for that festival day).

## EXAMPLES

- Lighting from an existing flame,
- Cooking and baking for the Jewish festival day, and
- Carrying outside the eruv (hotza'a--transferring objects between domains).

### Grama

Grama (indirectly causing an action) is permitted on Jewish festivals (but not on Shabbat). For example, you may advance or delay a timer that will make a light go on or off in the future (the timer must already be plugged in and operating from before sunset of the festival day).

**NOTE** For an action to be considered indirect based on time, there must be at least 2.5 seconds after the first action is done before the resulting action begins to happen.

### Psik Reisha Dla Neicha Lei

Psik reisha dla neicha lei is forbidden on Jewish festivals, just as it is on Shabbat.

### D'oraita Restrictions

D'oraita restrictions apply world-wide to:

- First and seventh days of Passover,
- First and eighth days of Sukkot,
- First day of Shavuot,
- Yom Kippur,
- First day of Rosh Hashana.

**NOTE** The same restrictions apply to all other Jewish festival days but are *rabbinical*.

### Women

In general, women are not required to perform the positive, time-dependent commandments. Women and girls are not required to eat any Jewish festival meals except the Passover seder meal (but they are not allowed to fast on those days).