

Calendar of Main Jewish Religious Observances and Resource Guide

This calendar and resource guide is designed to encourage public awareness of Jewish religious observances. We hope that it will help administrators and teachers avoid scheduling examinations, special day or night programs, and graduation ceremonies at times that conflict with Jewish observances. There is wide variation of religious Jewish practices. Therefore, some students and staff members will be absent while others might not. Please note that all Jewish religious observances begin at sunset the preceding evening and end at nightfall, approximately one hour after sunset. For a list of all faith holidays visit: interfaithcalendar.org/index.htm.

Religious Observance	2018-2019 School Year	2019-2020 School Year	2020-2021 School Year	2021-2022 School Year
	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
Rosh Hashanah*	Sep 10-11 (Begins sunset Sep 9)	Sep 30-Oct 1 (Begins sunset Sep 29)	Sep 19-Sep 20 (Begins sunset Sep 18)	Sep 7-Sep 8 (Begins sunset Sep 6)
Yom Kippur*	Sep 19 (Begins sunset Sep 18)	Oct 9 (Begins sunset Oct 8)	Sep 28 (Begins sunset Sep 27)	Sep 16 (Begins sunset Sep 15)
Sukkot	Sep 24-25 (Begins sunset Sep 23)	Oct 14-15 (Begins sunset Oct 13)	Oct 3-4 (Begins sunset Oct 2)	Sep 21-22 (Begins sunset Sep 20)
Shemini Atzeret	Oct 1 (Begins sunset Sep 30)	Oct 21 (Begins sunset Oct 20)	Oct 10 (Begins sunset Oct 9)	Sep 28 (Begins sunset Sep 27)
Simchat Torah	Oct 2 (Begins sunset Oct 1)	Oct 22 (Begins sunset Oct 21)	Oct 11 (Begins sunset Oct 10)	Sep 29 (Begins sunset Sep 28)
Chanukah	Dec 3-10 (Begins sunset Dec 2)	Dec 23-30 (Begins sunset Dec 22)	Dec 11-18 (Begins sunset Dec 10)	Nov 29-Dec 6 (Begins sunset Nov 28)
	Spring 2019	Spring 2020	Spring 2021	Spring 2022
Purim	March 21 (Begins sunset Mar 20)	March 10 (Begins sunset Mar 9)	Feb 26 (Begins sunset Feb 25)	March 17 (Begins sunset March 16)
Passover*	Apr 20-27 (Begins sunset Apr 19)	Apr 9-16 (Begins sunset Apr 8)	Mar 28-Apr 4 (Begins sunset Mar 27)	April 16-23 (Begins sunset April 15)
Shavuot*	Jun 9-10 (Begins sunset Jun 8)	May 29-30 (Begins sunset May 28)	May 17-18 (Begins sunset May 16)	June 5-6 (Begins sunset June 4)

*Observances which are most likely to result in absences.



The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) serves as the central public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community, representing over 60 synagogues and Jewish organizations in the Bay Area. JCRC produced this guide. **Visit our website for additional resources: www.jcrc.org**

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This document is available for download from jcr.org/what-we-do/resources/

The Jewish calendar is a lunar/solar calendar; therefore, the dates of these holy days, festivals, and days of remembrance will vary from year to year. Even though the dates of the Jewish religious observances will be different each year, they will always be observed in the same season. The Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat) begins each week on Friday at sunset and ends Saturday at nightfall (approximately one hour after sunset). Traditionally observant Jews will refrain from school, work and many activities.

Fall Observances

Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) This two-day observance marks the beginning of the holiest time of the year for Jews. *School or work will be missed on these holy days and nights.*

Yom Kippur (Day Of Atonement) This is the most solemn day of the Jewish year and signals the end of the Ten Days of Penitence. It is devoted to fasting, prayer, and synagogue services. *School or work will be missed on this holy day and night.*

Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) Sukkot is a harvest festival of thanksgiving. To commemorate the dwellings of the ancient Israelites during the harvest, many families build temporary huts (Sukkot) in which they eat and even sleep. *School or work might be missed by some for the first two days and nights.*

Shemini Atzeret The "eighth day of assembly" is a religious observance at the conclusion of Sukkot. *School or work might be missed by some.*

Simchat Torah Celebrates the conclusion of the year-long cycle of reading the Torah (the five books of Moses) and the beginning of a new cycle and marks the end of the fall season of special religious observances. *School or work might be missed by some.*

Winter Observances

Chanukah (Festival of Lights) This eight-day observance is a celebration of religious freedom and commemorates the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 165 B.C.E. Families celebrate in their homes by lighting candles for eight nights, exchanging gifts and eating special foods. *No school or work is missed.*

Purim (Feast of Lots) Based on the biblical Book of Esther (The Megillah), Purim celebrates the foiling of a plot to kill the Jews in ancient Persia. A ritual of Purim is to read the story from The Megillah of how Esther and Mordecai prevented Haman from exterminating the Jews. *School activities might be missed by those who attend synagogue for the evening observance of Purim*

Spring Observances

Pesach (Passover) This eight-day festival of freedom-celebrates the deliverance of the ancient Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Families gather for a traditional meal, or Seder, on the first two nights, when the story is retold and symbolic foods are eaten. Many students will eat matzo instead of bread, and other dietary restrictions may be observed. *School or work might be missed by some for the first two and last two days and nights of this observance.*

Shavuot (Festival of Weeks) Coming in late Spring, this two-day observance celebrates the giving of the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) on Mount Sinai, and commemorates ancient Israel's acceptance of the Torah and its obligations. *School or work might be missed by some; please take note when scheduling commencement ceremonies.*

This guide prepared by the Jewish Community Relations Council: www.jcrc.org

For more info on Jewish religious observances and Judaism:

www.myjewishlearning.com - www.judaism.about.com - www.jewfaq.com

For curricular materials that follow the California standards:

www.icsresources.org

This document is available for download from jcr.org/what-we-do/resources/

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

JULY 2019

July 10

MARTYRDOM OF THE BÁB • Bahá'í

Observance of the anniversary of the execution by a firing squad in Tabríz, Persia, of the 30-year-old Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad, the Báb, the prophet-herald of the Bahá'í Faith.

July 16

DHARMA DAY • Buddhist

Also known as *Asala Puja*, it commemorates the historical Buddha's first discourse following his spiritual awakening.

AUGUST 2019

August 11

TISHA B'AV • Jewish

Mourning of the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem in 586 BCE and 70 CE.

August 12–15

EID AL-ADHA • Islamic

Commemoration of Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience of a command from God. Marks the end of the annual Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).

August 15

RAKSHA BANDHAN • Hindu

Also called *Rakhi*, this festival celebrates the protective relationship between brothers and their sisters.

August 15

ULLAMBANA (also known as Obon) • Buddhist

Ullambana, a Sanskrit term that means "hanging upside down and suffering," honors the spirits of past ancestors and strives to relieve aching souls from suffering. It lasts about half of the month of August. Obon, the Japanese transliteration of Ullambana, is only three days and varies from region to region—July in the eastern region and August in the western region.

August 24

KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI (Also known as JAYANTI) • Hindu

Celebrates Krishna's birthday, Vishnu's eighth incarnation on earth.

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

August 31

MUHARRAM • Islamic

The month of Muharram marks the beginning of the Islamic liturgical year. This first day, al-Hijra, remembers the migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. It also marks the beginning of the ten-day Shī'ite Remembrance of Muharram, a period of intense grief and martyrdom of Hussein, the son of Ali and grandson of Muhammad.

SEPTEMBER 2019

September 2

GANESH CHATURTHI • Hindu

Celebrates the birthday of Ganesha, the elephant-deity.

September 10

ASHURA • Islamic

A day of fasting observed on the 10th day of the month of Muharram to celebrate Moses' exodus from Egypt. For Shi'a Muslims, it also marks the climax of the ten-day Remembrance of Muharram, which mourns the martyrdom of Hussein at the Battle of Kerbala.

September 16

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

September 29–October 7

NAVARATRI • Hindu

Nine-day festival celebrating the triumph of good over evil. It worships God in the form of the universal mother commonly referred to as Durga, Devi or Shakti, and marks the start of fall.

September 30–October 1

ROSH HASHANAH • Jewish

Beginning of the Jewish New Year and first of the High Holy Days, which marks the beginning of a ten-day period of penitence and spiritual renewal.

OCTOBER 2019

October 8

DUSSEHRA/DASSERA • Hindu

Anniversary of the day when Rama killed the evil demon Ravana. Also known as *Durga Puja*, which celebrates the goddess Durga.

October 9

YOM KIPPUR • Jewish

The "Day of Atonement" marks the end of the Ten Days of Penitence that begin with Rosh Hashanah.

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

October 14–20	SUKKOT • Jewish The week-long “Feast of Booths” commemorates the 40-year wandering of the Israelites in the desert on the way to the Promised Land.
October 20	BIRTH OF THE BÁB • Bahá’í Bahá’í observance of the anniversary of the birth in 1819 of Siyyid, “the Báb,” the prophet-herald of the Bahá’í Faith, in Shíráz, Persia.
October 20	GUR-GADDI GURU GRANTH SAHIB • Sikh Since 1708, Sikhs have accepted Sri Guru Granth Sahib as their eternal Guru that holds the spirit of all Ten Gurus of the Sikhs. They consider Guru Granth Sahib to be a spiritual guide not only for Sikhs but for all of mankind; it plays a central role in guiding the Sikhs' way of life.
October 21	SHEMINI ATZERET • Jewish “The Eighth (Day) of Assembly” is observed on the day immediately following Sukkot.
October 22	SIMCHAT TORAH • Jewish “Rejoicing in the Torah” celebrates the conclusion of the public reading of the Pentateuch and its beginning anew.
October 27	DIWALI • Hindu Also called Deepavali, “Festival of Lights”, it celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance.
October 27	BANDI-CHHOR DIWAS • Sikh A commemorative occasion having no fixed date which occurs in October or November and celebrates the release of the Sixth Guru Har Gobind Sahib from imprisonment and coincides with Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.
October 31	REFORMATION DAY • Christian Commemorates the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517.
October 31	HALLOWEEN The eve of All Saints’ Day.

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

NOVEMBER 2019

November 1

ALL SAINTS' DAY • Western Christian

Commemorates all known and unknown Christian saints. Eastern Christianity observes it on the first Sunday after Pentecost.

November 2

ALL SOULS' DAY • Christian

Commemoration of all faithful Christians who are now dead. In Mexican tradition it is celebrated as *Día de los Muertos* between October 31 and November 2, and is an occasion to remember dead ancestors and celebrate the continuity of life.

November 10

MAWLID AL-NABI (Also known as MILAD AL-NABI) • Islamic (Sunni)

The observance of the birthday of Islam founder Prophet Muhammad, which is celebrated in Rabi' al-awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar. Shi'a Muslims celebrate it five days later than Sunni Muslims.

November 12

BIRTH OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH • Bahá'í

Observance of the anniversary of the birth in 1817 of Bahá'u'lláh, prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith, in Núr, Persia.

November 12

GURU NANAK DEV JI'S BIRTHDAY • Sikh

A very important holiday in the Sikh faith as Guru Nanak Dev's was the First Guru of the Sikhs and the Founder of Sikhism. He was born in mid-November; the holiday is celebrated according to the lunar date.

November 15

MAWLID AL-NABI (Also known as MILAD AL-NABI) • Islamic (Shi'a)

The observance of the birthday of Islam founder Prophet Muhammad, which is celebrated in Rabi' al-awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar. Sunni Muslims celebrate it five days earlier than Shi'a Muslims.

November 26

DAY OF THE COVENANT • Bahá'í

Day of the Covenant is a festival observed to commemorate Bahá'u'lláh's appointment of His son, Abdu'l-Baha, as His successor.

DECEMBER 2019

December 1–24

ADVENT • Christian

Advent is a season of spiritual preparation in observance of the birth of Jesus. In Western Christianity, it starts on the fourth Sunday

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

before Christmas. In Eastern Christianity, the season is longer and begins in the middle of November.

- December 8** **BODHI DAY • Buddhist**
Also known as *Rohatsu*, commemorates the day that the Buddha, Siddharta Gautama, experienced enlightenment or spiritual awakening (bodhi). Celebrated on the eighth day either of December or the 12th month of the lunar calendar.
- December 12** **OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE • Christian**
Celebrates the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary (by her title, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of Mexico and the Americas) before Juan Diego, an indigenous convert to Roman Catholicism, on the Mexican hill of Tepeyac in 1531.
- December 23–30** **CHANUKAH • Jewish**
Eight-day “Festival of Lights”, celebrating the rededication of the Temple to the service of God in 164 BCE. Commemorates the victory of the Maccabees over the Greek King, Antiochus, who sought to suppress freedom of worship.
- December 24** **CHRISTMAS EVE • Christian**
Celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus.
- December 25** **CHRISTMAS • Western Christian**
Commemorates the birth of Jesus.
- December 26– January 1, 2020** **KWANZAA**
A seven-day celebration honoring African American heritage and its continued vitality. “Kwanzaa” means “first fruits (of the harvest)” in Swahili.
- JANUARY 2020**
- January 5** **GURU GOBIND SINGH JI’S BIRTHDAY • Sikh**
Guru Gobindh Singh was the 10th Sikh guru of Nanak and founder of the Khalsa.
- January 6** **CHRISTMAS • Armenian Orthodox Christian**
Armenian Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on Epiphany, except for Armenians living in Israel, who celebrate Christmas on January 19th.

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

- January 6** **EPIPHANY • Christian**
Known as *Theophany* in Eastern Christianity, it celebrates the manifestation of Jesus as Christ. In addition, the Western Church Associates Epiphany with the journey of the Magi to the infant Jesus, and the Eastern Church with the baptism of Jesus by John.
- January 7** **CHRISTMAS • Eastern Christian**
Most Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas 13 days later than other Christian churches based on their use of the Julian rather than the Gregorian version of the Western calendar.
- January 10–12** **MAHAYANA NEW YEAR • Buddhist**
In Mahayana countries the New Year starts on the first full moon day in January.
- January 15** **MAKAR SANKRANTI • Hindu**
Seasonal celebration marking turning of the sun toward the north.
- January 19** **WORLD RELIGION DAY • Bahá'í**
Observance to proclaim the oneness of religion and the belief that world religion will unify the peoples of the earth.
- January 25** **LUNAR NEW YEAR • Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist**
Also known as the Spring Festival, an important festival celebrated at the turn of the traditional lunisolar Chinese calendar.
- January 27** **HOLOCAUST REMBRANCE DAY**
- FEBRUARY 2020**
- February 10** **TU B'SHVAT • Jewish**
New Year's Day for Trees, and traditionally the first of the year for tithing fruit of trees. Now a day for environmental awareness and action, such as tree planting.
- February 15** **NIRVANA DAY • Buddhist**
Celebrates the day when the historical Buddha achieved Parinirvana, or complete Nirvana, upon the death of his physical body. Sometimes celebrated on February 8.

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

- February 22** **MAHA SHIVARATRI • Hindu**
Also called *Shiva Ratri*, the Great Night of Shiva, is a festival in reverence of the god Shiva. The festival is celebrated at the 13th night or 14th day of the waning moon in the Hindu calendar (month of February or March of the English calendar).
- February 25** **SHROVE TUESDAY • Western Christian**
A day of penitence as well as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. Also known as Mardi Gras, Fat Tuesday and Carnival Day as this day is observed in many ways worldwide.
- February 26** **ASH WEDNESDAY • Western Christian**
The first day of Lent for Western Christian churches, a 40-day period of spiritual preparation for Easter, not counting Sundays.
- February 26–29** **AYYÁM-I-HA OR INTERCALARY DAYS • Bahá'í**
The Ayyám-i-ha, or “Days of Ha” are devoted to spiritual preparation for the fast, celebrating, hospitality, charity and gift giving. They are celebrated the four days, five in leap year, before the last month of the Bahá'í year by inserting days into the calendar in order to maintain their solar calendar.
- MARCH 2020**
- March 1– March 19** **NINETEEN-DAY FAST • Bahá'í**
Baha'is between 15 and 70 years of age do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset and set aside time for prayer and meditation.
- March 2** **CLEAN MONDAY • Eastern Christian**
The beginning of *Great Lent* for Eastern Christian churches, which starts 40 days before Orthodox Easter (Pascha), counting Sundays.
- March 9** **MAGHA PUJA • Buddhist**
Also known as *Sangha Day*, it commemorates the spontaneous assembly of 1,250 disciples, completely enlightened monks, in the historical Buddha's presence.
- March 10** **PURIM • Jewish**
The “Feast of Lots” marks the salvation of the Jews of ancient Persia from extermination.

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

March 10	HOLI • Hindu A spring festival in India and Nepal dedicated to the god of pleasure, also known as the festival of colours or the festival of sharing love.
March 10	HOLA MOHALLA • Sikh An annual event which is a martial arts parade historically coinciding with Holi, the Hindu festival of colors. Celebrations related to Holla Mohalla may be held in various locations over several weekends preceding the actual date of the holiday.
March 17	ST. PATRICK'S DAY • Christian Feast day of the patron saint of Ireland. In the U.S., a secular version is celebrated by people of all faiths through appreciation of all things Irish.
March 28	KHORDAD SAL • Zoroastrian The Zoroastrian celebration of the birth of Zoroaster, the founder of the Zoroastrianism religion. The holiday is specifically celebrated in India and Iran, immediately following the Persian new year, Nowrúz.
APRIL 2020	
April 2	RAMA NAVAMI • Hindu Celebrates the birthday of Rama, king of ancient India, hero of the epic Ramayana, and seventh incarnation of Vishnu.
April 5	PALM SUNDAY • Christian Observed the Sunday before Easter/Pascha to commemorate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.
April 7–9	THERAVADA NEW YEAR • Buddhist In Theravada countries the New Year is celebrated on the first full moon day in April.
April 9–16	PASSOVER/PESACH • Jewish The eight-day “Feast of Unleavened Bread” celebrates Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

- April 9** **HOLY THURSDAY • Christian**
Also known as *Maundy Thursday*, it is celebrated on the Thursday before Easter commemorating the Last Supper, at which Jesus and the Apostles were together for the last time before the Crucifixion.
- April 10** **GOOD FRIDAY • Christian**
Known as *Holy Friday* in Eastern Christianity, it commemorates the Crucifixion of Jesus on the Friday before Easter/Pascha.
- April 12** **EASTER • Christian**
Known as *Pascha* in Eastern Christianity, it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus.
- April 14** **VAISAKHI (also spelled Baisakhi) • Sikh**
The festival which celebrates the founding of the Sikh community as the Khalsa (community of the initiated). On this day, Sikhs gather and celebrate Vaisakhi at their local Gurdwaras (Sikh house of worship) by remembering this day as the birth of the Khalsa.
- April 20–May 1** **FESTIVAL OF RIDVÁN • Bahá'í**
Annual festival commemorating the 12 days when Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith, resided in a garden called Ridván (Paradise) and publicly proclaimed his mission as God's messenger for this age. The first (**April 20**), ninth (**April 28**), and twelfth (**May 1**) days are celebrated as holy days when Baha'is suspend work.
- April 21** **YOM HASHOAH • Jewish**
"Holocaust Remembrance Day" memorializes the heroic martyrdom of six million Jews who perished in the Nazi Holocaust.
- April 24–May 23** **RAMADAN • Islamic**
Observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting to commemorate the first revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad.
- MAY 2020**
- May 7** **VISAKHA PUJA • Buddhist**
Also known as Vesak or Buddha Day, it marks the birth, spiritual awakening and death (nirvana) of the historical Buddha. (This date may vary based on region or sect.)

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

- May 12** **LAG B'OMER • Jewish**
Celebrates the end of a divine-sent plague and/or Roman occupation during Rabbi Akiva's lifetime (died c. 135 CE).
- May 19** **LAILA AL-QADR • Islamic**
Commemorates the night that the *Qur'an* was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It is known as the "Night of Power." Often set on the 27th day of Ramadan, Sunnis may observe it on the 21st, 23rd, 25th or 29th and Shī'ite (Shiite) observe it on the 19th, 21st or 23rd day of Ramadan.
- May 21** **ASCENSION DAY • Christian**
Celebrated 40 days after Easter/Pascha, it commemorates the ascension of Jesus into Heaven.
- May 21** **NOWRÚZ • Zoroastrian**
A traditional ancient Iranian festival celebrating the first day of Spring and the Iranian New Year. Also celebrated as New Year's Day in Baha'i tradition (Naw-Ruz). (This date may vary based on region or sect.)
- May 23** **DECLARATION OF THE BÁB • Bahá'í**
Commemoration of May 23, 1844, when the Báb, the prophet-herald of the Bahá'í Faith, announced in Shíráz, Persia, that he was the herald of a new messenger of God.
- May 24** **EID AL-FITR • Islamic**
The "Feast of the Breaking of the Fast" marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting from dawn until dusk.
- May 28** **ASCENSION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH • Bahá'í**
Observance of the anniversary of the death in exile of Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith.
- May 29–30** **SHAVUOT • Jewish**
The "Feast of Weeks" celebrates the covenant established at Sinai between God and Israel, and the revelation of the Ten Commandments.

2019-2020

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

May 31

PENTECOST • Christian

Also known as Whitsunday, the seventh Sunday after Easter/Pascha commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and women followers of Jesus. Marks the birth of the Christian Church.

JUNE 2020

June 14

RACE UNITY DAY • Bahá'í

Observance promoting racial harmony and understanding and the essential unity of humanity.

June 14

ALL SAINTS' DAY • Eastern Christian

In Orthodox churches observed on the first Sunday after Pentecost, it commemorates all known and unknown Christian saints.