

A Teacher's Guide to Judaism

Jewish Calendar

Jewish calendar: The Jewish calendar consists of twelve months having either twenty nine or thirty days in them. It is based on both the moon and the sun. The Jewish calendar is based on the story about the creation of the world at the beginning of Genesis (Bereishit) the first book of the Torah – the Jewish Bible. This states that when G-D created the world “it was evening it was morning”. The Jewish calendar therefore starts in the evening and ends the following evening. A new day starts when the sun sets. Genesis 1 – 24 also talks about a seven day week.

Meaning: The lunar year is around eleven days shorter than the solar year. Without any adjustment, this would mean that the Jewish festivals, many of which are time-bound to seasons such as Pesach (Passover) in the spring time and Succot (Tabernacles) in the autumn time, would eventually fall in the wrong seasons. So Judaism has worked out a nineteen year cycle in which there are seven leap years. This involves inserting an additional month called Adar Sheni (a second Adar). In this way the Jewish festivals fall on different dates from those in the secular calendar each year but remain fixed in the same seasons – for example Pesach (Passover) can fall almost any time in March or April.

The first month of the Jewish year is Nisan which falls in the spring. The Jewish New Year is in Tishrei, the seventh month and that is when the year number is increased. This can be understood by thinking of the secular year starting in January, the tax year in April and the school year in September! The Jewish calendar doesn't have names for the days of the week – except for Shabbat (the Sabbath). The dates on which festivals fall and Torah readings are all marked in Jewish calendars which these days can easily be found on the internet.

Traditional activities:

- Each Jewish month begins when there is a new moon – called **Rosh Chodesh** (head of the month).
- There are special prayers to say on Rosh Chodesh and each month on the Sabbath before it falls, when a prayer asks G-D for a good month. This excludes the month of Tishrei which is the month starting with Rosh Hashanah – the Jewish New Year.
- Rosh Chodesh, in many families, is a holiday for women.

In the Home:

The Jewish calendar informs people when festivals fall, when Shabbat and Jewish festivals begin and end. Special prayers may be said on Rosh Chodesh and some people, particularly women, treat it as a special day.



www.scojec.org/education.html

These resources describe practices that are common in the UK, but there is a wide range of Jewish traditions and observance, and different Jewish people have different levels of observance. When interacting with Jewish pupils and their parents, teachers should be aware that it is always best to ask about their own preferences.

Biblical source: Apart from the information found in the Torah, in the 4th century C.E. (A.D.) a rabbi called Hillel together with his sanhedrin (the ancient Jewish court system) established the Jewish calendar which is followed today.

The basis of the Jewish calendar can be found in Genesis 1. This shows that the days start in the evenings and that the week should consist of seven days – six days for work and the seventh should be a rest day – Shabbat.

Greeting:

The traditional greeting on Rosh Chodesh is “Chodesh Tov” – a good month.



These resources describe practices that are common in the UK, but there is a wide range of Jewish traditions and observance, and different Jewish people have different levels of observance. When interacting with Jewish pupils and their parents, teachers should be aware that it is always best to ask about their own preferences.

DEFINITIONS AND GLOSSARY

Rosh Chodesh - head of the month

Jewish months (lunar calendar)

Tishrei (September-October)

Heshvan (October-November)

Kislev (November-December)

Tevet (December-January)

Shevat (January-February)

Adar (February-March)

Nisan (March-April)

Iyyar (April-May)

Sivan (May-June)

Tammuz (June-July)

Av (July-August)

Elul (August-September)

Days of the week

Yom Rishon – First Day (Sunday)

Yom Sheini – Second Day (Monday)

Yom Shishi – Third Day (Tuesday)

Yom R'vii - Fourth Day (Wednesday)

Yom Chamishi – Fifth Day (Thursday)

Yom Shishi – Sixth Day (Friday)

Torah – the five books of Moses from the Jewish Old Testament Bible



SCOJeC
Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities



Representing, connecting, and supporting Jewish people in Scotland
SCIO no. SC029438

www.scojec.org/education.html

These resources describe practices that are common in the UK, but there is a wide range of Jewish traditions and observance, and different Jewish people have different levels of observance. When interacting with Jewish pupils and their parents, teachers should be aware that it is always best to ask about their own preferences.



www.scojec.org/education.html

These resources describe practices that are common in the UK, but there is a wide range of Jewish traditions and observance, and different Jewish people have different levels of observance. When interacting with Jewish pupils and their parents, teachers should be aware that it is always best to ask about their own preferences.