

Jewish Festivals

Festivals of the Bible

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Names and Dates	Biblical References	Significance for Israel	Significance for the Church	1996 Civil Dates
<i>Shabbat</i>	Gen 2:1-3 Exod 20:8-11 Exod 31:12-17 Lev 23:3, 38 Deut 5:12-15 Isa 58:13, 14 Isa 66:22, 23	Sabbath. Celebrated weekly (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) as a day of rest, commemorating the Creation and the Exodus.	The majority of Christians (except certain churches such as Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists) have abandoned the Sabbath (between the 2nd and 4th centuries) to celebrate Sunday as a sign of the resurrection of Jesus.	Every Saturday
<i>Pesah</i> <i>Nisan</i> 14-21	Exod 12:2-28 Exod 13:3-9 Exod 34:18, 25 Lev 23:4-14 Num 28:16-25 Deut 16:1-8	Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. This feast is the first of the annual feasts in the Hebrew ecclesiastical calendar, and commemorates the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The principal element is the "Seder," a meal (eaten on the first night of the feast) with a lamb (a shankbone after the 2nd Temple times) representing the slain Passover lamb whose blood was sprinkled upon the doorposts and lintels so God would "pass over" without destroying the firstborn. This meal includes also the bitter herbs and unleavened bread, recalling the bitterness of bondage and the haste of the children of Israel in leaving Egypt.	Easter. The Messiah, symbolized by the paschal lamb ("who takes away the sins of the world"), died at Passover time and rose from the dead at the time of the waving of the sheaf of barley (as the firstfruits of the coming harvest, 1 Cor 15:23). Thus Good Friday and Easter Sunday are in remembrance of Jesus' death and resurrection. The counterpart of the Passover meal in Christian liturgy is the Eucharist or Lord's Supper with the wine and unleavened bread symbolizing the body and blood of the Messiah. The Lord's supper not only points backward but is at the same time a projection into the future awaiting Jesus' return which is to be the moment of total liberation, a veritable "Exodus."	For Jews, April 4-11 For Christians, April 5-7
<i>Shavuot</i> <i>Sivan</i> 6	Exod 23:16 Exod 34:22 Lev 23:15-22 Num 28:26-31 Deut 16:9-12	Feast of Weeks. Comes 50 days after Passover. This is the Feast of Harvest, also named <i>Hag Habbikkurim</i> "Feast of Firstfruits." This is also the feast of the revelation and giving of the <i>Torah</i> to Moses by Yahweh on Mt. Sinai. Modern custom is to study <i>Torah</i> all night.	Pentecost. This feast commemorates the giving of the Spirit by God at the time of Pentecost to the believers at Jerusalem (Acts 2), in fulfillment of the promise of Jer 31:33, to write the <i>Torah</i> in the hearts of people. The outpouring of the Spirit points to the first Pentecost at Sinai (both involving fire, thunder, and sound of rushing wind), and also was an earthly sign of the inauguration of the Messiah as Priest King in heaven (Heb 1:3, 9; Rev 4-5).	May 24
<i>Rosh Hashana</i> <i>Tishri</i> 1	Lev 23:23-25 Num 29:1-6 Neh 8:1-12	Feast of Trumpets. First day of the Jewish civil year. This is the day when God was proclaimed King of Israel. It is likewise the preparation for the judgment of the world (alluding to <i>Yom Kippur</i>), and also regarded as the first day of Creation week.	For the churches that attach significance to this feast, the Feast of Trumpets symbolizes the preparation for the day of judgment to come (see the significance of the sounding of the trumpets in Rev 8-11).	Sept 14

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<i>Yom Kippur</i> <i>Tishri</i> 10	Lev 16:1-34 Lev 23:26-32 Lev 25:8-17 Num 29:7-11	Day of Atonement. This is a <i>Shabbat-Shabbaton</i> , the most important day of the year. Day when "the divine sentence is sealed." Confession and repentance are fundamental to this day of fasting.	The high priest is a type of the Messiah, who makes expiation for the sins of the people. This day announces the final divine judgment coming at the end of the world's history (see Rev 11-20).	Sept 23
<i>Sukkot</i> <i>Tishri</i> 15-21	Lev 23:33-44 Num 29:12-39 Deut 16:13-17 Neh 8:14-18 Zech 14:16	Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. The people construct booths (<i>sukkot</i>) covered with branches to live in for 7 days, reminiscent of the 40 years of Israel's dwelling in "booths" in the wilderness following their exodus from Egypt. At the temple the spectacular "water outpouring" and light ceremonies symbolized the water from the rock and pillar of fire during the wilderness wandering. It was also the year's crowning agricultural feast celebrating the bounties of the fruit harvest.	This feast carries the message of the experience of joy which becomes complete at the time of the end of the existence of evil. At his final Feast of Tabernacles on earth, Jesus announced the Messianic fulfillment of the "water outpouring" and light ceremonies (John 7:37-38; 8:12). The ultimate celebration of this feast is in the "Earth made new" (in fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezek 47, Zech 14:16, and Rev 21-22), when the saints are gathered into their harvest home, "the tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev 21:3).	Sept 28 - Oct 4
<i>Simhat Torah</i> <i>Tishri</i> 22	Lev 23:36 Num 29:35-39 John 7:37	Rejoicing in the Law. In biblical times called the eighth or "Great" day of the Feast (of <i>Sukkot</i>), but since the Middle Ages it has been an independent festival called <i>Simhat Torah</i> ("Rejoicing of the <i>Torah</i> "). Modern customs include joyous <i>hakkafot</i> or "circuits" around the synagogue carrying the <i>Torah</i> scrolls amid dancing and singing.	Although many Christians emphasize the value of Bible study, there is no celebration parallel to <i>Simhat Torah</i> with a joyous reveling in the Bible.	Oct 5
<i>Hanukkah</i> <i>Kislev</i> 25- <i>Tevet</i> 2	John 10:22	Feast of Dedication or Feast of Lights. <i>Hanukkah</i> means "dedication." This feast commemorates Judas Maccabees' purification and dedication of the altar on the third anniversary of the profanation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, the 25th of <i>Kislev</i> , 164 B.C.E. The kindling of the 8 lamps at the time of this feast recalls the miracle of the oil: the oil which was only enough for a single day miraculously burned for eight days.	At the time of his last <i>Hanukkah</i> on earth, Jesus announced the Messianic fulfillment of this feast in himself, the antitypical Light and Temple whom the Father "dedicated" when he came into the world (John 10:22, 36; cf. 1:9, 2:19-21). The ultimate Feast of Lights will come in the New Earth where "the Lamb is its lamp" (Rev 21:23).	Dec 6-13
<i>Purim</i> <i>Adar</i> 14 & 15	Esth 9:17-32	Feast of Lots or Feast of Esther. <i>Purim</i> is a joyous feast inspired by the atmosphere of jubilation of the people of Israel at the time when God granted the prayer of Esther and gave victory over wicked Haman, who had cast lots (<i>Purim</i>) to determine the day for the destruction of the Jews. The feast recalls the age-long battle of God versus the forces of evil.	The New Testament implies an eschatological counterpart of <i>Purim</i> in the description of the final death decree upon God's people, from which they will be miraculously delivered and at which time their enemies will be destroyed (Rev 13:15; 15:2; 19:11-21).	Mar 5-6