



Kehilat Gesher  
embraces  
Reform and  
Conservative  
Judaism

Kehilat Gesher  
קהילת גשר

The French-Anglophone Jewish  
Congregation in Paris and  
Saint Germain en Laye



## Taking a peek at the fall Jewish Cycle of Holidays

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### **Rosh Hashana** (October 4-5, 2005)

Celebrated on the first day of the Jewish month of *Tishrei*, this holiday marks the new year for the following:

The counting of years, *shmita*, the jubilee, planting, and for vegetables.

Rosh Hashana begins the ten "Days of Awe" during which it is customary to reflect on our actions of the past year.

**Mitzvot:** Hearing the sound of the Shofar (ram's horn), repenting for sins committed in the past year, giving tzedakah.

**Minhagim – customs:** Attending a "*Selichot*" service the Saturday before the holiday, eating round challah with raisins, dipping apples in honey, sending *Rosh Hashana* greeting cards to friends and family, *tashlich* - on the afternoon of Rosh Hashana we gather by a water source and cast into it bread crumbs as a symbol of casting away our sins.

### **Tzom Gedaliah (Fast of Gedaliah)** (October 6, 2005)

Tzom Gedaliah, observed on the day immediately following Rosh Hashanah, is an annual fast day instituted by the Jewish Sages to commemorate the assassination of Gedaliah Ben Ahikam, the Governor of Israel during the days of Nebuhadnetzar King of Babylonia. As a result of Gedaliah's death the final vestiges of Judean autonomy after the Babylonian conquest were destroyed, many thousands of Jews were slain, and the remaining Jews were driven into final exile.

### **Yom Kippur** (October 13, 2005)

Is our Day of Atonement. We observe Yom Kippur after the 10 *Days of Awe* that come between this holiday and *Rosh Hashana*. It is a day of rest, prayer and fasting, when we are called upon to reflect on our sins of the past year and think about how to improve in the year to come. On *Yom Kippur* we read the Biblical story of Jonah and the whale.

**Mitzvot:** Fasting, enjoying a festive meal before the fast, resting from all work, taking part in our community's prayer services, and lighting the

*Yizkor* candle in memory of parents and relatives who have passed away.

**Mitzvot:** Doing a mitzvah as soon as the holiday is over – some people hammer the first nail into their *sukkah* as soon as they get home from services!

Breaking the fast with a joyous meal.

### **Sukkot** (October 18-24, 2005)

Celebrated for 7 days starting on the 15th day of *Tishrei*, it is also called the *Feast of Booths* and the *Festival of the Harvest*, and is considered one of our *Shalosh Regalim* – "Three Pilgrimage Festivals" – when Jews would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in ancient times. On Sukkot we commemorate God protecting and sheltering the Israelites during their 40 years wandering through the desert after the exodus from Egypt.

**Mitzvot:** Building a *sukkah* (an outdoor booth), eating at least one meal in the *sukkah*, saying blessings for and waving the four species – the *lulav* (palm branch), *etrog* (citron fruit), *hadas* (myrtle branch) and *arava* (willow branch), reading the biblical Book of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes).

**Minhagim – customs:** inviting guests to the *sukkah*, eating from the seven species that God promises in the Torah to provide in the Land of Israel: wheat, barley, figs, pomegranates, grapes, olive oil, and date honey.

### **Simhat Torah** (October 25, 2005)

Celebrated at the end of Sukkot, this holiday marks our finishing the yearly cycle of Torah readings and starting it anew.

**Mitzvot:** finishing the annual reading of the Torah and immediately beginning the new reading, participating in the *hakafot* – a festive procession around the sanctuary with the Torah scrolls.

**Minhagim – customs:** Children bring flags – often with apples stuck on top – to wave during the *hakafot*.

At Kehilat Gesher, we open two Torah scrolls – one to the end and one to the beginning - and rabbi Tom reads from the opened Torah scrolls that are held by our community members

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