

Celebrating the Jewish Holidays at the Jay & Rose Phillips Early Childhood Center

Shabbat



Shabbat is the holiest of holidays from the original creation of the world. We make Shabbat holy, special, and unique: to eat deliciously, be with people we love, appreciate all the beauty and wonder around us. Our school gathers together for Shabbat Sing on Friday mornings with families, and individual classes make challah and talk about how to make something special.

Havdallah

Havdalah, meaning separation, is the ritual using all of our senses that we do at the end of Shabbat to ease us into the new week, to leave us with the sweetness of Shabbat and reminders to fill the upcoming week with mitzvot as we work towards the next Shabbat. Classes at our school celebrate Havdallah on Monday mornings with kiddush cups, spices, and special braided candles before wishing each other “Shavua tov -- have a good week!”



Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is the World’s birthday, reminding us of the cycle of the year. We reflect on the previous year, and look ahead to the next. How can we be better versions of ourselves in the next year? What can we do to create a better world in the coming year? We listen to the shofar, calling us to “wake up” and get ready for a new year, make round challah, and dip apples in honey to symbolize the sweetness of the new year. Older classrooms perform *tashlich*, throwing breadcrumbs into running water to symbolize what we wish we had done differently in the past year and hope to do better in the next.



Yom Kippur

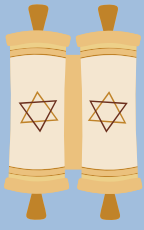
After the two days of Rosh Hashanah are over, the next week is spent preparing for Yom Kippur, checking in and apologizing and “cleaning up” anything in our relationships. Yom Kippur is the “Day of Atonement”. Together we read the tale of Jonah and the Whale, a story about making mistakes, apologizing, and making it better.



Sukkot

On Sukkot we remember the years of wandering through the wilderness after leaving slavery and Egypt. We also remember our time in ancient Israel as we built temporary shelters out in the fields during the harvest. Our focus through the week of Sukkot is gratitude, inviting others to our beautifully decorated Sukkah and talking about what it means to be included. We shake the lulav and etrog to remember that goodness and kindness surround us in all directions.





Simcat Torah

Simchat Torah celebrates the cycle of Torah reading. At the end of reading the very last story, we rewind the Torah, and begin again. At school we celebrate with dancing and parading with the Torah. We celebrate this most special scroll filled with our history and stories of our ancestors and mitzvot, all as a guide to creating a better world.

Chanukah

Chanukah celebrates miracles, including the miracle of the oil that served as our way to mark our rededication of the Temple and our peoplehood after the Maccabee victory 2000 years ago. Chanukah lasts for eight nights. Each night, we add an additional candle to our Chanukiyah/Chanukah menorah, as we increase the light and remember the light we bring to the world. Chanukah is about being strong in being who we are, and standing and speaking up for what we believe. Classrooms make latkes, play dreidel, and discuss miracles in their lives.



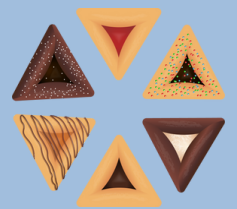
Tu B'Shevat

Named for the actual date it occurs, Tu B'Shevat is the trees' birthday. It has come to be a Jewish Earth day, as we consider how we treat the trees and their home, the Earth. It is a day we also connect to the land of Israel, where it is the time of year that sap begins to flow and trees are planted (even though it might be a freezing January/February day here). We plant trees, eat a seder with many different fruits, and show our appreciation for the trees through a collaborative art project.



Purim

In ancient Persia, there is an evil advisor to the foolish King with a plan to have all the Jews killed (or banished as we say at school). The Queen is secretly Jewish who very bravely comes out to the King, and in doing so, Queen Esther saves the Jews. Purim is a holiday full of costumes, carnivals, silliness, drinking and eating. It is a holiday celebrating bravery, heroes, being out and proud of who you are. Teachers put on the Purim schpiel, acting out the story of Purim, and classes make hamentashen and dress up in costumes.



Passover

The Passover story is our biggest story. It tells of our terrible time as slaves in Egypt, the story of Moses, and escaping slavery to be free people. We tell the story, and take with it the mitzvah to treat others kindly as we remember that we were once slaves and treated horribly. Our school cleans out all the *chometz* food that we don't eat on Passover, making room for matzah. We have a seder, which is a ritual meal filled with symbols, questions, and songs as we retell the Exodus story.

