

LAW ENFORCEMENT GUIDE TO JUDAISM



Jewish Federation®
OF GREATER METROWEST NJ

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What is Judaism?

1

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people and, at over 3,500 years old, is one of the oldest religious traditions still practiced today. Its values and history are a major part of the foundations of Christianity and Islam.

There are approximately 13.2 million Jewish people in the world, 40 percent of whom live in the United States. Greater MetroWest NJ's Jewish community is estimated at 126,000. The Jewish people belong to a number of different denominations, including:

Orthodox

Orthodox Jews regard the Torah (the primary document in Judaism containing the entire body of Jewish teachings) as being given directly by God on Mount Sinai, and hold it in the highest authority. Members of these communities are sometimes identifiable through their mode of dress and strict customs. Many modern Orthodox Jews dress in modern fashion, while the more traditional Orthodox dress in dark clothing with the men wearing black hats and the women in modest dress and often covering their hair with wigs.

Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform

Members of these movements take a different approach towards Judaism while still retaining its principles and morals. Many Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform Jews have different views as to how to keep Sabbath observance or kosher dietary laws. Additional differences are that women can become rabbis, and men and women sit together in the synagogue.

There are also many people who are not affiliated with any denomination and who do not practice the traditional laws, but who still identify as Jews. The simple descriptions of the practices of the various branches of Judaism are meant for illustrative purposes only – there are many exceptions to these descriptions. The branches also share common values such as a sense of Jewish responsibility to improve the world and a sense of being part of, and responsible for, the universal Jewish community.

2

The Sabbath (Shabbat, Shabbos)

SHABBAT BEGINS EVERY FRIDAY AT SUNSET AND CONCLUDES ONE HOUR AFTER SUNSET ON SATURDAY.



Practical Policing Issues on the Sabbath — AS RELATED TO THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY (AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE OTHER BRANCHES OF JUDAISM)

- *They will usually not report non-emergency crimes/incidents until after the Sabbath (or the holiday) has ended, as members of the Orthodox community may not write statements or sign their names during the Sabbath.*
- *Orthodox Jews generally do not drive or answer the telephone during the Sabbath.*

The Sabbath, or Shabbat as it is called in Hebrew, is one of the most important parts of the Jewish faith. Jews are required to refrain from various acts of “work” on the Sabbath, in commemoration of G-d’s cessation of work on the seventh day of creation. Instead, the day is traditionally spent engaged in religious study and prayer, as well as enjoying time with family and friends.

What is considered “work”?

Taken in a modern context, Orthodox Jews generally refrain from such activities as:

- driving a car
- using any electronic equipment
- switching lights on and off
- handling money
- writing
- carrying anything outside of the home or a larger defined area
- using a telephone
- pressing the “walk button” at a traffic light

It is difficult to stress adequately the centrality and binding nature of the Sabbath laws for Orthodox Jews. There can be no compromise and there is no mechanism for granting dispensation, apart from matters of life and death.

The Sabbath (Shabbat, Shabbos)

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The timing of the Sabbath

The Sabbath starts on Friday about one hour before nightfall, or 18 minutes before dusk. Therefore, Orthodox Jews need to leave work or school in sufficient time to arrive home before the onset of the Sabbath. At its earliest in mid-winter, the Sabbath commences at approximately 4:30 p.m., but during the summer months will be much later. The Sabbath lasts for approximately 25 hours.

Life-threatening emergencies

The only relaxation to these strict laws is when there is a potential threat to life. In this case, one is obligated to ignore every Sabbath requirement and immediately seek medical attention or call the police.



Family gathered around Shabbat candles

3

Jewish Holidays

Practical Holiday Policing Issues

- *Holiday laws are almost indistinguishable from Sabbath laws, and exactly the same policing issues will apply.*
- *Many Jewish people who do not typically attend services during the year will do so during the holidays. The synagogues will therefore be full and the nearby streets will often be more congested with cars and pedestrians.*
- *Each holiday, and its specific policing requirements, are described in this section.*
- *The Jewish calendar has a number of holidays and special days, either commemorating major events in Jewish history or celebrating certain times of year. All holidays begin at sundown the night before.*

Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)

Rosh Hashanah takes place over two days in September or October and is considered one of the most important periods in the Jewish calendar. It is an opportunity for reflection on our actions in the previous year.

Practical Policing Issues on Rosh Hashanah

- *Many synagogues will have additional overflow services either on the premises or nearby.*
- *Members of non-Orthodox communities will often drive to synagogue services, and there may be significant congestion and parking issues. Even in Orthodox communities there may be an increase in traffic.*
- *On the afternoon of the first day (or the second day if the first falls on the Sabbath), many Jewish people walk to a river to symbolically “cast away” their sins by tossing bread into the water. This ceremony is called tashlich.*



The shofar (ram's horn) is symbolically sounded during Rosh Hashanah

Jewish Holidays

3

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

This holiday is the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar and involves praying for forgiveness for sins committed in the past year and demonstrating repentance. Every Jewish person, except children and those who are ill, is required to abstain from food or drink for 25 hours – from sundown until nightfall the next day.



Practical Policing Issues on Yom Kippur

- *Synagogues are open all day with high traffic levels, especially during the evening services.*
- *Many people walk home during the day for a short break from prayers. There is likely to be a continuous flow of people on the streets throughout the day. You may notice that many are wearing sneakers with their dress clothes, as they are not permitted to wear leather shoes.*
- *Since most Jewish families are in synagogue for the opening and concluding services of Yom Kippur, their homes may be more vulnerable to burglaries.*



A sukkah, where all meals are eaten during Sukkot

Sukkot (Festival of Booths/ Harvest Festival)

This holiday begins in the evening of the fourth day after the end of Yom Kippur and commemorates the temporary booths which the Israelites constructed in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt. During this eight-day festival, Jewish people are required to eat in a similar booth known as a sukkah. The intermediate days of this festival are regular working days.



Practical Policing Issues on Sukkot

- *Many Orthodox Jews carry long boxes containing palm tree leaves to and from synagogue. This is a tradition of the holiday.*
- *Synagogues and many Jewish homes will have a sukkah on their premises.*

3

Jewish Holidays

Simchat Torah (Rejoicing with the Torah)

Immediately following Sukkot is Simchat Torah, which is one of the most joyous festivals in the Jewish calendar. Many synagogues hold parties after the service.

Practical Policing Issues on Simchat Torah

- *Many families and children attend synagogue services on this day, and there are often outdoor parties where alcohol is consumed.*
- *Synagogue services usually last a lot longer during the day, and many communities also hold a communal luncheon. Therefore, synagogues may not close until mid-afternoon.*



Matzah (unleavened bread) is eaten during Pesach

Pesach (Passover)

This eight-day festival, which often coincides with Easter, recalls the freedom of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. To remember the haste with which they escaped, no leavened food such as bread, cereals, or beer, may be consumed or kept in the house during this holiday. Observance is primarily in private homes.

Shavuot

Shavuot takes place seven weeks after Pesach (usually around late May/early June) and celebrates the Jewish people receiving the Torah. The holiday lasts for two days.

Practical Policing Issues on Shavuot

- *It is traditional to study all night on the first evening of this holiday and there may be many people walking home at all hours of the night and early morning.*

Jewish Holidays

3

In addition to these “high holidays,” there are two other “minor” holidays you should know about in which normal work and activities are permitted:

Hanukkah (Festival of Lights)

This joyous festival is celebrated in the winter around Christmas time by lighting a candelabra (called a menorah) every night for eight nights. Other traditions include eating food cooked in oil such as doughnuts and potato pancakes, giving presents, and holding parties.



A traditional menorah

Practical Policing Issues on Hanukkah

- *It is traditional for families to display the (often expensive) candelabra in their front windows, causing potentially increased likelihood of burglaries and fires.*
- *Many Jewish communities hold menorah-lighting Hanukkah ceremonies in public places.*

Purim

This one-day festival recalls the story of Esther, a Jewish queen in Persia, who foiled a plot by one of the king’s advisors to kill all the Jews. As well as the story being read in synagogue from a special scroll called a *megillah*, it is a day for parties and communal celebrations.

Practical Policing Issues on Purim

- *This is a day of joy and fun, and costumes are traditionally worn, even in public places.*
- *It is traditional for young children to walk through the local neighborhood collecting and distributing treats to friends and strangers alike.*

4

Food

Practical Policing Issues

- *Kosher food should always be offered when inviting a Jewish guest to a meeting.*
- *Food should not be brought into a Jewish home without permission as it may not meet the kosher requirements (rules of kashrut).*
- *Pre-packaged kosher meals should be made available at the request of a detainee or a prisoner.*
- *On all matters of kashrut, a rabbi or reliable authority should be consulted.*
- *As with all Jewish laws and customs, there are Jews who observe these laws in various degrees or not at all.*

The Jewish dietary laws, known as kashrut or kosher, cover the way in which animals are slaughtered and prepared, as well as the types of food which can and cannot be eaten.

Jewish people are only permitted to eat meat or poultry which has been slaughtered in a ritual manner. This process is known as *shechita*, and is similar to, although not the same as, the requirements of the Muslim religion regarding *halal* meat.

What is considered kosher?

Meat: According to Jewish law, a kosher animal is required to “chew the cud” and have cloven hooves. Therefore, products from cows or sheep are permitted, but those from pigs are prohibited.

Poultry: Most poultry, including chicken, turkey, duck, and goose are kosher. Birds of prey are not.

Fish: To be considered kosher, fish must have fins and scales. Shellfish, octopus, and oysters are not kosher.



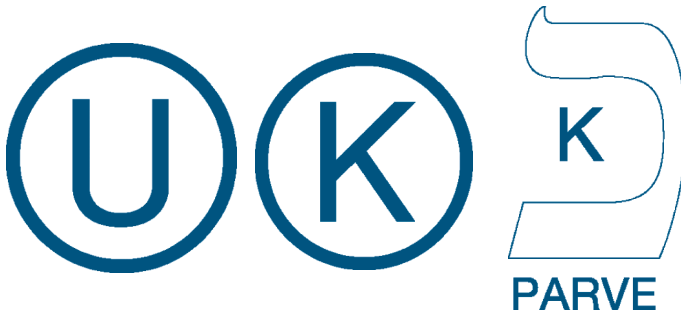
Shellfish such as lobster is forbidden under kosher law

Separating meat and milk

Jewish law forbids the consumption of milk and meat together. It is therefore traditional to wait three hours after eating meat or poultry before consuming any dairy products, although some people may wait up to six hours. Separate utensils and cooking equipment are also required.

Kosher shopping and restaurants

To accommodate kosher Jewish customers, manufacturers often produce a range of products that are specially supervised by a rabbinical authority. This is because, even if the product is marked as vegetarian, the food may still have been made on the same factory line as non-kosher foods. Special care and attention is also required when eating in restaurants. Many Orthodox Jews will only eat in a restaurant which is supervised by a Jewish authority. However, others may eat in an unlicensed restaurant. It is therefore appropriate to ask your dining partner about their level of observance.



Some common kosher symbols found on manufactured food

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Clothing and Home

Practical Policing Issues

- *There is no particular way to behave or dress in a Jewish home, and visitors are not required to follow Jewish practices.*
- *Orthodox Jewish men and women may not shake hands with officers of the opposite sex, and any such gesture will be politely refused. However, no offense will be taken.*

Observant Jewish men cover their heads at all times, usually with a small skullcap known as a *yarmulke* or *kippah*. Some may also wear a tasseled garment, called *tzitzit*, which is identified by knotted threads hanging below the shirt.



A mezuzah hanging on a doorpost

Married Orthodox Jewish women may cover their hair or wear a wig at all times as a sign of modesty. They will only wear modest clothing and many will not wear trousers, short skirts or short sleeves.

All traditional Jewish homes can be identified by looking for a *mezuzah*. This is a small box containing two biblical texts, which is affixed to the right-hand doorpost of most rooms in a Jewish home including the front door.

Synagogue and Prayer

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Practical Policing Issues

- *It is not necessary for a male police officer to wear a skullcap or alternative head covering when entering a synagogue. However, this gesture will be appreciated, especially when prayer services are taking place.*
- *Discretion should be used if taking pictures or videos, or using tape recorders in a synagogue during the Sabbath and holiday services. It's best to ask permission.*

Orthodox men and boys over the age of 13 are required to pray three times a day. While this can be performed individually, most prefer to attend synagogue where at least ten other men are present. Such a prayer group, called a *minyan*, is particularly important when a person is in a period of mourning.

- The morning prayers service takes place between 6 and 9 a.m., and lasts about 45 minutes. Phylacteries (small leather boxes containing biblical texts known as *tefillin*) and a prayer shawl are worn during prayer.
- Afternoon and evening prayers usually take approximately 15 minutes.



Children wearing prayer shawls during school prayers

Orthodox women can also pray, but they are not required to wear shawls or phylacteries during prayers. Synagogue etiquette varies depending on the denomination of Judaism.

- In Orthodox synagogues, women sit separately from the men, either upstairs in a gallery or behind the men.
- At non-Orthodox synagogues, men and women usually sit together during the service.

Hebrew is the traditional language of Jewish prayer and is used to varying degrees in the services and celebrations of each denomination.

7

The Jewish Life Cycle

Death and Mourning

When a Jewish person dies, it is crucial that the body is treated with care and extreme reverence at all times. There are special rules for the preparation of the body for burial, and the body should not be left unattended at any time.

Autopsies are not permitted in Jewish law except where required under civil law. Cremation is also not permitted according to Jewish law. After the funeral, the immediate family of the deceased mourns at home for seven days. This is known as the *shiva* period, when mourners receive visitors.

Birth

Every Jewish boy is required to be circumcised in a ceremony called *brit milah*. This takes place when the baby is eight days old, or as soon as possible thereafter if there are medical reasons for a delay. The circumcision is performed by a *mohe*, a trained Jewish practitioner who may also be a registered medical doctor. In the Orthodox community, the boy's name is frequently not announced until the circumcision. Girls are usually named in the synagogue, often on the Sabbath following the birth.



A Jewish wedding takes place under a chuppah, which represents the home

Bar Mitzvah/Bat Mitzvah

Boys are recognized as full adult members of the community at age 13, when they celebrate their *bar mitzvah* (literally “son of the commandments”). Girls reach this stage at 12 or 13, depending on the denomination, when they celebrate their *bat mitzvah*. Both boys and girls have a period of intense Jewish study preparing for the occasion.

Weddings

Jewish weddings can occur any day of the week except the Sabbath, Jewish holidays, and particular mourning periods in the Jewish calendar. A Jewish wedding may take place in any location.

Welfare Issues

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Medical Treatment

There are religious guidelines governing abortion, organ transplantation and donation, and fertility treatment and contraception. Apart from these, all treatments necessary to save a life, particularly in an emergency, should be carried out without question or delay.

According to Jewish law, blood transfusions are permitted. Indeed, they are mandatory if required to ensure a person's good health.

Domestic and Child Abuse

As in other communities, abuses are often hidden and not spoken about within families. Any concerns should be reported to social services and/or the police.

In case of non-emergency questions, contact Jewish Family Service MetroWest at (973) 765-9050.

JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER METROWEST NJ

is the largest Jewish philanthropy in New Jersey, encompassing Essex, Morris, Sussex, Union, and parts of Somerset County.

All of Federation's work is made possible by the generous contributions of Greater MetroWest community members to our UJA Annual Campaign and through the planned giving and endowment functions of our Jewish Community Foundation.

Headquarters:

901 Route 10, Whippany, New Jersey 07981

Regional Office:

1391 Martine Avenue, Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076

(973) 929-3000 • Fax: (973) 884-7361

www.jfedgmw.org



Helpful Contact Information

Following is a list of the partner agencies of the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ, as well as the types of services they provide.

DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL

Plafsky Family Campus

(973) 731-5100 • www.daughtersofisrael.org

THE FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

(973) 251-0200 • www.fcnj.com

GOLDA OCH ACADEMY

Lower School (grades N-5)

(973) 602-3700

Upper School (grades 6-12)

(973) 602-3600

www.goldaoacademy.org

GOTTESMAN RTW ACADEMY

(973) 584-5530 • www.grtwacademy.org

HEBREW FREE LOAN OF NEW JERSEY

(973) 765-9050 • www.jfsmetrowest.org

HILLEL OF GREATER METROWEST

(973) 929-2943

JCC OF CENTRAL NJ

(908) 889-8800 • www.jccnj.org

JCC METROWEST

(973) 530-3400 • www.jccmetrowest.org

JESPY HOUSE

(973) 762-6909 • www.jespyhouse.org

JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER METROWEST NJ

(973) 929-3060 • www.jcfmetrowest.org

Helpful Contact Information



JEWISH COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION

(973) 731-2020 • www.jchcorp.org

JEWISH EDUCATIONAL CENTER

(908) 355-4850 • www.thejec.org

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

(908) 352-8375 • www.jfscentralnj.org

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE OF METROWEST

(973) 765-9050 • www.jfsmetrowest.org

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

(973) 929-2994 • www.jhsmw.org

JEWISH SERVICE FOR THE

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED OF METROWEST

(973) 325-1494 • www.jsddmetrowest.org

JEWISH VOCATIONAL SERVICE OF METROWEST NJ

(973) 674-6330 • www.jvsnj.org

JOSEPH KUSHNER HEBREW ACADEMY/RAE KUSHNER

YESHIVA HIGH SCHOOL

(862) 437-8000 • www.jkha.org

NJY CAMPS

(973) 575-3333 • www.njycamps.org

RACHEL COALITION

(973) 765-9050 • www.rachelcoalition.org

RUTGERS HILLEL, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

(732) 545-2407 • www.rutgershillel.org

SINAI SCHOOLS

(201) 833-1134 • www.sinaischools.org

YM-YWHA OF UNION COUNTY

(908) 289-8112 • www.uniony.org



Helpful Contact Information

OVERSEAS PARTNERS

AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

www.jdc.org

JEWISH AGENCY FOR ISRAEL

www.jewishagency.org

WORLD ORT

www.ort.org

FEDERATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF
GREATER METROWEST**

(973) 929-3087

COMMUNITY SECURITY INITIATIVE

(973) 929-2921

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

(973) 929-3070

GREATER METROWEST ABLE

(973) 929-3129

GREATER METROWEST CARES

(973) 929-3051

HOLOCAUST COUNCIL OF GREATER METROWEST

(973) 929-3066

**JOINT CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE OF
GREATER METROWEST**

(973) 929-3168

Calendar of Jewish Holidays



Jewish holidays begin at sundown on the evening before the dates noted below. For example, in the table below, Rosh Hashanah 5783 is listed as Sept. 26-27. The holiday begins at sundown on September 25, and ends at sundown on September 27.

Jewish Year:	5783	5784	5785	5786
Civil Year:	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Rosh Hashanah	Sept. 26-27	Sept. 16-17	Oct. 3-4	Sept. 23-24
Yom Kippur	Oct. 5*	Sept. 25*	Oct. 12*	Oct. 2*
Sukkot	Oct. 10-11* Oct. 12-16	Sept. 29-30* Oct. 1-6	Oct. 16-17* Oct. 18-23	Oct. 6-7* Oct. 8-13
Shemini Atzeret/ Simchat Torah	Oct. 17-18*	Oct. 7-8*	Oct. 24-25*	Oct. 14-15*
Hanukkah	Dec. 19-26	Dec. 8-15	Dec. 25-Jan. 2	Dec. 14-22
Purim	Mar. 7	Mar. 24	Mar. 14	Mar. 3
Passover (Pesach) beginning days intermediate days concluding days	Apr. 6-7* Apr. 8-11 Apr. 12-13*	Apr. 23-24* Apr. 25-28 Apr. 29-30*	Apr. 13-14* Apr. 15-18 Apr. 19-20*	Apr. 2-3* Apr. 4-7 Apr. 8-9*
Shavuot	May 26-27*	June 12-13*	June 2-3*	June 22-23*

*The dates in bold are holier and carry with them restrictions on work.

Law Enforcement Guide to Judaism

This booklet has been produced by Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ to provide information to the police and others concerning the requirements of practicing Jews.

It has been designed to further your knowledge and understanding of the Jewish community and to provide you with some practical assistance within the context of operational policing.

This is not a definitive guide, but offers introductory insight into some of the customs, laws, and traditions of members of the Jewish community.

For additional information contact:

Thomas Michaels
Director of Community Security Training
(973) 929-3162 | Cell (201) 600-3049
tmichaels@jfedgmw.org



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