

LAW ENFORCEMENT GUIDE TO JUDAISM



JEWISH COMMUNITY
SECURITY

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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 15.2 million Jewish people worldwide, 40 percent of whom live in the United States. Michigan's Jewish population is estimated at 87,905, with approximately 70,000 living in Metro Detroit. The Jewish people belong to several 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 contemporary 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. There is a heavy concentration of Orthodox Jews in Oak Park and Southfield.

Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform

Many Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform Jews have different views as to observing the Sabbath, following kosher dietary laws, allowing women to become rabbis, and allowing men and women to 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 DENOMINATIONS 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, as well as other “work” activities described below.*

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 God’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 adequately 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 of 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. In addition, 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 on the evening of the fourth day after the end of Yom Kippur and commemorates the temporary booths that 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 a 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, costumes are traditionally worn by adults and children, even in public places, and alcohol is often consumed.*
- *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 or building 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 how animals are slaughtered and prepared, as well as the types of food that 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.



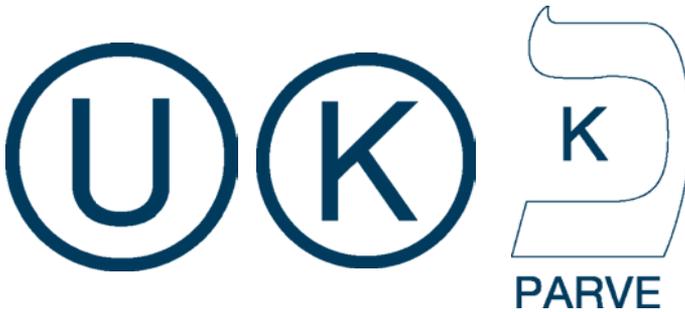
Shellfish such as lobster is forbidden under kosher law

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 many people 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 are also required when eating in restaurants. Most 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.



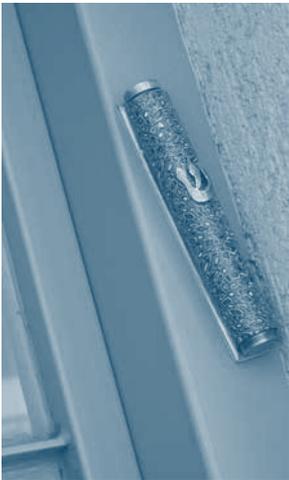
Some common kosher symbols found on manufactured food

5 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.



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.

A mezuzah hanging on a doorpost

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 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

Practical Policing Issues

Mass Casualty Incidents and crime scenes impede the biblical imperative to bury the dead quickly.

- *According to Jewish law, all human remains, including blood, must be buried along with the body.*
- *Chevra Kadisha, a burial society consisting of those knowledgeable in traditional Jewish duties and formalities, will meticulously clean the crime scene. Everything left behind is considered sacred remains, to be preserved and buried with the bodies.*
- *Jewish law also requires that the bodies be watched over or guarded, by members of the Jewish community, until burial.*

Death and Mourning

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 occurs 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.

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.

Medical Treatment

There are religious guidelines governing abortion, organ transplantation and donation, 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.



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

JEWISH COMMUNITY SECURITY, INC.

Jewish Community Security, Inc. (JCSI) was established to ensure the safety and security of the metropolitan Detroit Jewish community.

Headquarters:

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(248) 205-2559
www.jcsdetroit.org



Jewish Community Agency Information

Together with their Partner Agencies, The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, we are feeding the hungry, comforting the sick, caring for the elderly, educating youth, ensuring a Jewish future, bridging cultural divides and supporting Israel. Together with your support, we do all these things and more.

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)

We are the world's leading Jewish humanitarian assistance organization, working in more than 70 countries and Israel to rescue Jews at risk, bring relief to Jews in dire need and renew Jewish community life in areas where it has not been allowed to flourish.

BBYO shapes the community's next generation of leaders by positively impacting the lives of Jewish teens in Metro Detroit, providing them with meaningful Judaic, social justice and leadership development programming.

Farber Hebrew Day School provides a challenging Judaic Studies and college preparatory program in a Modern Orthodox, Zionist environment. The school nurtures personal and intellectual growth, outstanding character, social and moral responsibility, and a strong sense of self for each student.

Frankel Jewish Academy is a rigorous college preparatory high school pursuing academic excellence and Jewish literacy. We inspire students to think critically, creatively, and compassionately; to dedicate themselves to Jewish tradition, peoplehood, and the State of Israel; and to become lifelong learners and leaders. Along with rigorous academics, Frankel Jewish Academy cultivates the whole student, building critical thinking, encouraging creativity, and preparing students for a life of compassion shaped by Jewish values.

Hebrew Free Loan provides interest-free business, educational and personal loans to Jews in need.

Hillel Day School Founded in 1958, Hillel Day School delivers an outstanding general and Jewish education to Jewish children in preschool through eighth grade.

Jewish Community Agency Information



Hillel of Metropolitan Detroit serves college students on six local college campuses with a diverse array of cultural, social and religious programming. Headquartered on the campus of Wayne State University, HMD serves students at Lawrence Technological University, Oakland Community College, Oakland University, University of Detroit Mercy, University of Michigan - Dearborn and Wayne State University.

Jewish Community Center supports Jewish unity, ensures Jewish continuity and enriches Jewish life while conveying the importance of well-being within the Jewish and general communities and the people of Israel. The JCC offers programming for families, children, teens and adults.

Jewish Community Relations Council tells Israel's and the Jewish community's stories through the news media, educating and mobilizing our community's activists and building important relationships with local non-Jewish neighbors.

Jewish Family Service provides a wide range of social services to community members of all ages and backgrounds. Each year, JFS assists approximately 12,000 individuals with case management, mental health and counseling services, healthcare navigation, emergency assistance, Holocaust Survivor and older adult services, volunteer programming and much more.

Jewish Senior Life is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older adults of the Metropolitan Detroit Jewish community through programs and services that support aging with dignity and choice, and with maximum independence. JSL offers housing in Oak Park and West Bloomfield.



Agency Information

JVS is a human services organization with four main locations in Metropolitan Detroit that helps people realize life's potential through a variety of programs to maximize their self-sufficiency. The agency provides counseling, training, support services and comprehensive programs to older adults, at-risk youth, individuals with disabilities, unemployed workers, and people who are economically disadvantaged.

Michigan State University Hillel continues to build dynamic Jewish life on the Michigan State University campus and also creates programming and opportunities for Jewish students through its Hillel Campus Alliance of Michigan (HCAM) program at Central Michigan, Eastern Michigan, Western Michigan, Grand Valley State, Northern Michigan, Michigan Tech, Saginaw Valley State, Albion, Alma and Kalamazoo Colleges.

Tamarack Camps established by the Fresh Air Society, builds a vibrant community by providing enriching Jewish camping experiences for children and families, respectful of financial ability.

University of Michigan Hillel is the second largest student organization at the University of Michigan, housing more student-run programs than any other group except for the University Activities Center.

Yeshiva Beth Yehudah continues to produce thousands of students who are proud to be Jewish and form much of the core of our vibrant Jewish Detroit.

Yeshiva Gedolah educates the next generation of Jewish leaders in our community through a strong curriculum steeped in Jewish learning and tradition.

Yeshivas Darchei Torah provides a stellar Jewish and secular education for hundreds of preschools through high school students.

Calendar of Jewish Holidays

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Jewish holidays begin at sundown on the evening before the dates noted below.

JEWISH HOLIDAY CALENDAR

Holiday	Jewish Year 5783 (2022-2023)
Rosh HaShanah	September 25–27, 2022
Yom Kippur	October 4–5, 2022
Sukkot	October 9–16, 2022
Shemini Atzeret – Simchat Torah	October 16–18, 2022
Hanukkah	December 18–26, 2022
Tu B'Shvat	February 5–6, 2023
Purim	March 6–8, 2023
Pesach (Passover)	April 5–13, 2023
Yom HaShoah	April 17–18, 2023
Yom HaZikaron	April 24–25, 2023
Yom HaAtzmaut	April 25–26, 2023
Lag B'Omer	May 8–9, 2023
Shavuot	May 25–26, 2023
Tisha B'Av	July 28–27, 2023

Law Enforcement Guide to Judaism

Jewish Community Security has produced this booklet 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 provide practical assistance within the context of operational policing and security.

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

For additional information, contact:

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Please see:

Introduction to Judaism for Law Enforcement Officers and
Security Professionals

<https://www.securecommunitynetwork.org/intro-to-judaism>



**JEWISH COMMUNITY
SECURITY**