Making Your Holidays Holy

IDEAS AND RESOURCES FOR HOLIDAY SOCIAL ACTION ACTIVITIES (THAT ARE GOOD FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR!)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Holidays</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God, History, and/or Harvest, personal exploration and improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shabbat</td>
<td>Rest, Rejuvenation, Taking a break from creating, Family, Blessings, Lights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosh Hashanah</td>
<td>New Beginnings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewish New Year</td>
<td><em>Tefilah</em> (Prayer), <em>Teshuvah</em> (Beginning of ten days of Repentance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yom Kippur</td>
<td>End of ten days of repentance-renewal. Yizkor (remembering the dead)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day of Atonement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sukkot</td>
<td>Fragility of life/homes, Welcoming guests (ushpizin), Hospitality, Honoring our ancestors. Harvest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harvest Festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simchat Torah</td>
<td>Ending and beginning of Torah reading. Joy, Learning, The story of the Jewish People. Literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rejoicing over Torah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanukkah</td>
<td>Dedication, Light in darkness, Miraculous events Fighting for personal freedoms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Festival of Lights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu B’Shevat</td>
<td>Environmental concerns, Our relationship to nature, Israel. Jewish Arbor Day</td>
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<td>New year of the trees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purim</td>
<td>Identity, Joy, Responsibility to your Community Speaking out for justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story of Jewish Survival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passover</td>
<td>Slavery/Oppression, Freedom, Welcoming Guests, Modern day plagues and our ongoing responsibility to help others. Harvest. Spring time renewal.</td>
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<td>Festival of Freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yom HaShoah</td>
<td>Remembrance, ensuring a future of justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commemoration of Holocaust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yom HaAtzmaut</td>
<td>Freedom. Independence, Israel. Joy</td>
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<td>Israel Independence Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shavuot</td>
<td>Giving of Torah, learning, Harvest. Jews become a people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commemoration of receiving Torah</td>
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The GIFTS program is supported by the Breakthrough Fund: An Innovation of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, in collaboration with Grandparents for Social Action and InterfaithFamily/Chicago. The contents of this guide to holiday-based social action are based on information from areyvut.org, and from works by USY and Grandparents for Social Action, and have been modified to reflect the GIFTS curriculum.

To learn more about the GIFTS program or to take a class, visit www.juf.org/gifts.
Ideas for Rosh HaShana

a) Organize a *Rosh Hashanah* dinner through your synagogue for people who may not have family or friends to share the holiday with

b) Make a New Year's resolution relating to improving yourself

c) As a family, determine an organization that you would like to support and have everyone in the family make a contribution

d) As the prayers discuss life and death, sign up for a CPR course in your area so that you will have the ability to save someone's life

e) Go apple picking and donate the apples with honey to a homeless shelter or food pantry

f) Make a resolution to stay in contact in closer contact with your grandparents, relatives living overseas, etc.

g) Make *tzedakah* boxes and give *tzedakah* daily in the days starting with *Rosh Hashanah*

h) Apologize to people you might have wronged.

i) Say a special prayer to make the world better

Notes from my Grandchild

As it is said: “*Repentance, Prayer and Charity removes the evil decree.*”  
(Midrash Raba Bereshit 41:15)
Ideas for Yom Kippur

a) Choose one person and do something nice for them everyday for the next week
b) Call an elderly friend after the fast to check in on them
c) Get in touch with your out-of-town friends or reacquaint yourself with old friends
d) Make a resolution for the upcoming year and commit to becoming a volunteer
e) Host a food drive for those who are not only hungry on fast days
f) Contribute the money you would have spent on food for that day to a food pantry
g) Set up a barrel where everyone in your congregation can donate a can of food before the start of Yom Kippur that will later be donated to a food pantry
h) Share a family story from your family’s past

My Notes

Notes from my Grandchild
Ideas for Sukkot

a) Promote homelessness awareness in your community
b) Help a neighbor build their Sukkah
c) Arrange a Sukkah decorating event for your synagogue
d) In the spirit of the Ushpizin, the tradition of inviting biblical people to our sukkah, invite people who would otherwise eat alone
e) Bring fruit and vegetables to a homeless shelter or food pantry.
f) Use this as an opportunity to study environmental issues and encourage recycling
g) Be sure your family recycles, reduces and reuses items

My Notes

Notes from my Grandchild
Ideas for Simchat Torah

a) Dance with the Torah
b) Study the last and first story of the Torah
c) Read Bible stories to young children
d) Donate books to a shelter
Ideas for Chanukah

a) Think of ways that you can add light to the world
b) Buy a present and donate it to a child in a local homeless shelter
c) Give tzedakah each night before lighting your menorah
d) Donate some of your Chanukah gelt to a nonprofit organization
e) Perform Chanukah songs with friends at a nursing home
i) Send a care package anonymously to someone who could use cheering up
j) Instead of giving gifts to your friends and family designate one night of Chanukah and give presents to a family in need
k) Identify “regular people” who do great things but go unnoticed and acknowledge and honor them as “Mitzvah Heroes”
l) When the candles are burning, talk about what you learned this week
m) Discuss why you are lucky to be free
### Ideas for Tu B’Shvat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a)</th>
<th>Host a <em>Tu B’Shvat Seder.</em></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Plant a tree in Israel in someone's honor or memory (JNF is a good resource)</td>
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<td>c)</td>
<td>Plant parsley that you will use at your Passover seder</td>
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<td>d)</td>
<td>Use reusable containers</td>
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<tr>
<td>e)</td>
<td>Avoid using Styrofoam and polystyrene products</td>
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<tr>
<td>f)</td>
<td>Don't leave the faucet running while brushing your teeth</td>
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<td>g)</td>
<td>Use rechargeable batteries</td>
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<tr>
<td>h)</td>
<td>Bring along a reusable cloth bag when shopping</td>
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<tr>
<td>i)</td>
<td>Start a compost pile to use as fertilizer for your grass and garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>j)</td>
<td>Buy products with the least amount of packaging</td>
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<tr>
<td>k)</td>
<td>Use newspaper for wrapping gifts</td>
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<tr>
<td>l)</td>
<td>Use both sides of the paper whenever possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>m)</td>
<td>Use energy-saving light bulbs</td>
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### My Notes

### Notes from my Grandchild
Ideas for Purim

a) Encourage people to give *matanot l'evyonim* (gifts to the poor) as well as *mishloach manot*.

b) Read the *megilah* to people who are unable to leave their houses.

c) Do *Purim* skits at nursing homes and hospitals, or just dress up in costume for friendly visits!

d) Host a *Purim* party where the cover charge goes to *tzedakah*.

e) Have a *Purim* carnival for children with special needs.

f) Bring *mishloach manot* to people in hospitals and nursing homes.

g) Donate food to a local food pantry.

My Notes

Notes from my Grandchild
Ideas for Pesach/Passover

a) In preparation for Pesach help clean the home of a neighbor or family member
b) Research your family history and learn about a story that involves religious freedom
c) Discuss modern day slavery during the seder
d) Invite a family who has recently immigrated or just moved to your area for the Seder
e) Donate clothes and other household items you no longer need to a local charitable organization
f) Prior to the start of Pesach, donate the chametz you are removing from your house to a local food pantry
g) Instead of giving money or a prize for finding the afikoman, let the finder choose a charity to which they will donate the money or gift (or have them keep half and donate half)
h) Invite a college student to your seder

My Notes

Notes from my Grandchild
Ideas for Yom Hashoah

a) Interview a survivor or read a story about the Holocaust
b) Light a candle in memory of those who died in the Holocaust
c) Write a letter to protest injustice
d) Stand up for injustice in your school or community
e) Visit a Holocaust museum
f) Learn about your ancestors

My Notes

Notes from my Grandchild
Ideas for Yom Ha’Atzmaut

a) Write a letter to an Israeli “Lone Soldier”
b) Participate in Israel Solidarity Day
c) Have a barbecue on Yom Ha'atzmaut in the park
d) Promote buying Israeli goods
e) Email the President of the U.S. and voice your support for the state of Israel
f) Wear blue and white
g) Read a book about the history of Israel and/or refugees from all over the world

My Notes

Notes from my Grandchild
Ideas for Shavuot

a) Read ten commandments at the story of Ruth, discuss them with study partners (chavrutot).

b) Have a diary meal with family and friends
c) Stay up all night to study
d) Donate food to a shelter
e) Honor your teachers in some way
f) Focus learning on something relevant and practical to your every day life (such as Jewish ethics and values.)
g) But fresh flowers for hospitals and nursing homes.

My Notes

Notes from my Grandchild