



A Guide to the Jewish Community of Florida's Gulf Coast



Jewish Federation
of Florida's Gulf Coast

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Introduction to This Guide

The Jewish Federation of Florida's Gulf Coast is your starting point for answers to questions regarding all things Jewish. We have created this guide to serve as a convenient go-to document when you need reliable information regarding Judaism and issues pertaining to Israel. Included in this guide are short descriptions of the three major Jewish denominations, some of the more well-known national Jewish organizations, as well as contact information for our local Jewish organizations. Also included is a calendar of Jewish holidays and a short description of each. This calendar can be consulted when scheduling important events and is useful for teachers and the Board of Education to avoid scheduling exams during the High Holidays, as well as the holidays of Sukkot, Pesach, and Shavuot.

Need accurate information about Israel or the U.S.-Israel relationship? Questions about Jewish identity? Antisemitism? The Holocaust? The next page will help direct you to a local expert.

If you have further questions after reading this guide, our executive director Maxine Kaufman will be happy to speak with you at **(727) 530-3223** or info@jewishgulfcoast.org. Maxine can also direct you to other experts, if you require more detailed information or need a comment from another local Jewish leader. We hope you will find this guide helpful. Thanks for using it!

About the Jewish Federation of Florida's Gulf Coast

The Jewish Federation of Florida's Gulf Coast is part of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), which represents 146 Jewish Federations and a network of over 300 communities. JFNA raises and distributes more than \$2 billion annually through planned giving and endowment to support social welfare, social services and educational programs. The Federation movement, collectively among the top ten charities on the continent, protects and enhances the well-being of Jews and others worldwide, through the values of **Tikkun Olam** (repairing the world), **Tzedakah** (charity and social justice) and **Torah** (Jewish learning).

About the Jewish Community Relations Council

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) is a standing committee of the Jewish Federation of Florida's Gulf Coast. Its primary purpose is to develop and carry out a unified community relations program to broadly represent the interests of the local Jewish community in Pinellas, Pasco and Hernando Counties, to fight antisemitism in all its forms, and to support and promote Israel advocacy and education for the local community.

Contact Information Based on Specific Topics

Jewish Life Events

Questions concerning key lifecycle events such as birth, circumcision, bar/bat mitzvah, mourning/burial practices, holidays and Sabbath
Rabbi Ed Rosenthal, Pinellas County Board of Rabbis | Email: rabbied@repairthesea.org | Phone: 813-765-6364

Antisemitism

Emily Bernstein, Tampa Bay Community Manager at ADL Florida | Phone: 727-946-6748 | Email: emilybernstein@adl.org

Jewish Issues on Local College Campuses

Issues include Jewish life on campus and questions about BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions)

Mindy Rosenthal, Executive Director of Hillel at Eckerd College | Phone: 813-765-6364 | Email: rosentms@eckerd.edu

Sylvie Feinsmith, Executive Director of Hillels of the Florida Suncoast | Phone: 727-864-8012 | www.suncoasthillels.org/contact-us

Holocaust Questions

Eric B. Stillman, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Florida Holocaust Museum
Phone: 727-820-0100 | Email: estillman@thefhm.org

Jewish Genealogy

Bruce Hadburg, President of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Tampa Bay | Phone: 727-796-7981

Kashrut/Kosher Questions

A set of dietary laws dealing with the foods that Jews are permitted to eat and how those foods must be prepared according to Jewish religious law

The Jewish Federation of Florida's Gulf Coast | Phone: 727-530-3223 | Email: info@jewishgulfcoast.org

Family and Community Services

Issues pertaining to today's families, senior citizens, vulnerable children, and persons needing assistance because of behavioral or mental health issues

Dr. Sandra Braham, President/CEO of Gulf Coast JFCS | Phone: 727-479-1800 | Contact Page: gulfcoastjfcs.org/contact-us

Synopsis of the Major Jewish Denominations

Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism emphasizes the evolving nature of the faith, the superiority of its ethical aspects to the ceremonial ones and belief in a continuous revelation, closely intertwined with human reason and intellect. It is a form of Judaism, initiated in Germany, that has reformed or abandoned aspects of Orthodox Jewish worship and ritual in an attempt to adapt to modern changes in social, political and cultural life. Many rabbis of the Reform movement will officiate at interfaith marriages and same-sex marriages. The vast majority of Reform Jews support the secular Zionist movement.

urj.org

Conservative Judaism

Conservative Judaism seeks to conserve essential elements of traditional Judaism but allows for the modernization of religious practices. Following Orthodoxy, many Conservatives insist on the sacredness of the Sabbath. Dietary laws are generally respected and observed. Starting in 1985, Conservative Judaism drew farther away from Orthodoxy by ordaining women rabbis. Many Conservatives, stressing Jewish nationalism as inseparable from the culture of the Jewish people, encourage the study of Hebrew and support the secular Zionist movement.

uscj.org

Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Judaism is the branch of Judaism that most strictly adheres to traditional beliefs and practices. Jewish Orthodoxy believes that the Bible and other sacred Jewish writings contain not only eternally valid moral principles, but also historically and culturally conditioned modern adaptations and interpretations of the Law. In Orthodox Judaism, both the Written Law and the Oral Law remain the basis of religious observance.

ou.org

Chabad

Chabad, or Chabad-Lubavitch, is a major Hasidic movement and worldwide Jewish organization within Orthodox Judaism known for its extensive outreach (shluchim/emissaries) and welcoming, non-judgmental approach. Founded in 1775 in Russia, its philosophy emphasizes understanding God through intellectual study (Chochmah, Binah, Da'at) combined with emotional love and joy in serving.

chabad.org

Please note that Jews consider Messianic Judaism a Christian sect, not a form of Judaism. When needing answers or statements from the Jewish community, please refer to the individuals and organizations contained within this guide.

National Jewish Organizations

For additional resources, please visit JewishGulfCoast.org/JCRC

ADL - Anti-Defamation League is a leading anti-hate organization. Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of antisemitism and bigotry, its mission is to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. ADL is a global leader in exposing extremism and delivering anti-bias education. It is a leading organization in training law enforcement to recognize bias against Jews and others. ADL is the first call when acts of antisemitism occur. www.adl.org

AIPAC - American Israel Public Affairs Committee exists to strengthen and expand the U.S.-Israel relationship in ways that enhance the security of both countries. AIPAC brings together pro-Israel Americans—Democrats and Republicans alike—of every race, religion and background, to pursue a shared mission: keeping Israel safe and America strong. www.aipac.org

AJC - American Jewish Committee is a leading global Jewish advocacy organization. From city halls to Capitol Hill, at the United Nations and in world capitals, AJC works to impact policy and opinion on some of the most important issues facing the Jewish people: fighting antisemitism and all forms of hate, strengthening Israel's place in the world, and defending democratic values. www.ajc.org

B'nai B'rith International is a staunch defender of the State of Israel, advocates for global Jewry and champions the cause of human rights. It is recognized as a vital voice combatting anti-Semitism, promoting Jewish unity and continuity. B'nai B'rith is also a leader in disaster relief and assisting communities in crisis. It is a provider of safe and affordable housing for low-income older adults and a tireless advocate on behalf of seniors. www.bnaibrith.org

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, is a volunteer organization that seeks to inspire a passion for and commitment to the land, the people and the future of Israel. Through education, advocacy, and youth development, and its support of medical care and research at Hadassah Medical Organization, Hadassah enhances the health and lives of people in Israel, the United States and worldwide. www.hadassah.org

Hillel International engages with and inspires the leadership of Jewish college students. With a rich and diverse Hillel network, Hillels are present at more than 550 colleges and universities. www.hillel.org

Israeli Consulate in Miami - The mission of the Consulate is to promote the interests of the State of Israel. The Consulate fosters cooperation and partnerships with the citizens and government of Florida and Puerto Rico, in the realms of policy, economic affairs, public information, media, culture and other aspects of community relations. embassies.gov.il/miami/en

JNF - Jewish National Fund strives to bring an enhanced quality of life to Israel's residents and the world beyond. JNF is "greening" the desert with millions of trees, thousands of new Israeli parks, new communities and cities, bolstering the water supply, helping develop innovative arid agriculture techniques and educating young and old about the founding and importance of Israel and Zionism. www.jnf.org

Jewish Virtual Library is the most comprehensive online encyclopedia of Jewish history, politics and culture. With nearly 25,000 entries, the JVL is a one-stop shop for students of all ages interested in anything from anti-Semitism to Zionism. The Library has a vast global audience, reaching more than 30 million visitors—nearly 900,000 per month—from more than 200 countries and territories. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org

United Nations Watch is a non-profit organization, based in Geneva, Switzerland, that is dedicated to holding the United Nations accountable to its founding principles. Its areas of interest include: UN management reform, the UN and civil society, equality within the UN, and the equal treatment of member states. UN Watch notes that the disproportionate attention and unfair treatment applied by the UN toward Israel over the years offers an object lesson (though not the only one) in how due process, equal treatment, and other fundamental principles of the UN Charter are often ignored or selectively upheld. www.unwatch.org

5-Year Calendar of Major Jewish Holidays, Religious Observances and Cultural Commemorations

Holiday	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031
Rosh Hashana — Marks the beginning of the Jewish year and the period considered the High Holy Days	Sep 23-24 Tues-Wed	Sept 12-13 Sat-Sun	Oct 2-3 Sat-Sun	Sept 21-22 Wed-Thurs	Sept 10-11 Mon-Tues	Sept 28-29 Sat-Sun
Yom Kippur — Day of Atonement and the holiest day of the Jewish year	Oct 2 Thurs	Sept 21 Mon	Oct 11 Mon	Sept 30 Fri	Sept 19 Wed	Oct 7 Mon
Sukkot — Harvest and thanksgiving festival observed for eight days	Oct 15-16 Tues-Wed	Sept 26-27 Sat-Sun	Oct 16-17 Sat-Sun	Oct 5-6 Thurs-Fri	Sept 24-25 Mon-Tues	Oct 12-13 Sat-Sun
Shemini Atzeret — 8th and final day of Sukkot	Oct 22 Tues	Oct 3 Sat	Oct 23 Sat	Oct 12 Fri	Oct 1 Mon	Oct 19 Sat
Simchat Torah — Celebrates completion of the yearly cycle of reading the Torah (Hebrew Bible) and beginning a new cycle	Oct 23 Wed	Oct 4 Sun	Oct 24 Sun	Oct 13 Sat	Oct 2 Tues	Oct 20 Sun
Chanukah — Festival of lights observed for eight days	Dec 15-22 Mon-Mon	Dec 4-11 Fri-Fri	Dec 24-31 Fri-Fri	Dec 12-20 Wed-Wed	Dec 1-8 Sat-Sat	Dec 12-20 Fri-Sat
Purim — Festive holiday celebrates the events in the Book of Esther	Mar 3 Tues	Mar 23 Tues	Mar 12 Sun	Mar 1 Thurs	Mar 19 Tues	Mar 9 Sun
Pesach — Passover is an 8-day festival that celebrates the exodus of the Jews from slavery, in Egypt, to freedom.	Apr 2-3 Thurs-Fri	Apr 22-23 Fri-Sat	Apr 11-12 Tues-Wed	Mar 31-Apr 1 Sat-Sun	Apr 18-19 Thurs-Fri	Apr 9-10 Tues-Wed
Concluding Days of Pesach	Apr 8-9 Wed-Thurs	Apr 28-29 Fri-Sat	Apr 17-18 Tues-Wed	Apr 6-7 Fri-Sat	Apr 25-26 Wed-Thrus	Apr 14-15 Mon-Tues
Yom Hazikaron — Israel Memorial Day	Apr 21 Tues	May 11 Tues	May 1 Mon	Apr 18 Wed	May 7 Tues	Apr 28 Mon
Yom Haatzmaut — Israel Independence Day	Apr 22 Wed	May 12 Wed	May 2 Tues	Apr 19 Thurs	May 8 Wed	Apr 29 Tues
Yom Yerushlayim — Reunification of Jerusalem Day	May 15 Fri	June 4 Fri	May 24 Wed	May 13 Sun	May 31 Fri	May 21 Wed
Shavuot — Commemorates the receiving of the Torah by the Israelites at Mount Sinai	May 22-23 Fri-Sat	June 11-12 Fri-Sat	May 31-June 1 Wed-Thurs	May 20-21 Sun-Mon	June 7-8 Fri-Sat	May 28-29 Wed-Thurs

For specific holiday restrictions please contact one of the community's rabbis (see page 8) or the Federation Office.

Respecting Jewish Holiday Observance

Labor is traditionally prohibited during Jewish High Holy Days and major biblical festivals, so Jewish people may be absent from work and school.

All holidays in **RED** are High Holy Days: Expect most Jewish students and staff to be absent. All holidays in **BLUE** are Holy Days: Expect *some* Jewish students and staff to be absent. The holidays listed in **BLACK** are Israeli cultural holidays. Few, if any,

students or staff will be absent.

Please note: Jewish holidays, determined by the lunar calendar, begin at sunset **the day before** the listed start dates.

So as not to penalize students or workers for their religious observance, we ask that scheduling of events, tests, preparation for exams, assignments, assemblies, sports events, etc. on Jewish holidays and the Jewish

Sabbath be avoided. If such dates cannot be avoided, please consider the opportunity for reasonable makeups.

Understanding Shabbat

The Jewish Sabbath is observed **every Friday night and Saturday**. It reflects God's rest on the seventh day and is traditionally dedicated to prayer, reflection and rest. Observant Jews will not participate in secular events between sunset Friday and sunset Saturday.

Local Congregations & Synagogues Contact List

Synagogue	Address	Leadership	Website	Phone
Chabad of Clearwater	2280 Belleair Rd. Clearwater, FL 33764	Rabbi Levi Hodakov (Co-Director) Mrs. Miriam Hodakov (Co-Director)	jewishclearwater.com	727-265-2770
Chabad of Pinellas County	3696 Fisher Rd. Palm Harbor, FL 34683	Rabbi Pinchas Adler (Director) Rebbetzin Mushky Adler (Youth Director)	yichabad.com	727-789-0408
Chabad Jewish Center of Greater St. Petersburg	4010 Park St. N. St. Petersburg, FL 33709	Rabbi Alter Korf (Executive Director) Mrs. Chaya Korf (Program Director)	chabadsp.com	727-344-4900
Chabad Jewish Center of West Pasco (Orthodox)	10733 Maple Creek Dr. Suite 101 Trinity, FL 34655	Rabbi Yossi Eber (Co-director) Mrs. Dina Eber (Co-director)	chabadwp.com	727-376-3366
Congregation Beth Shalom (Conservative)	1325 S. Belcher Rd. Clearwater, FL 33764	Rabbi David Weizman Rabbi Danielle Upbin	cbclearwater.org	727-531-1418
Congregation B'nai Israel (Conservative)	300 58th St. N. St. Petersburg, FL 33710	Rabbi Philip Weintraub	cbistpete.org	727-381-4900
JCC of West Pasco, Home of Congregation Beth Tefillah (Reform)	9841 Scenic Dr. Port Richey, FL 34668	Ron Becker (Spiritual Leader) Elliot Shapiro (Co-Spiritual Leader)	JCCWestPasco.com	727-847-3814
Temple Ahavat Shalom (Reform)	1575 Curlew Rd. Palm Harbor, FL 34683	Rabbi Matt Berger	ahavatshalom.org	727-785-8811
Temple Beth David (Reform)	13158 Antelope St. Spring Hill, FL 34609	Rabbi Jen Goldberg	tbdfi.org	352-686-7034
Temple Beth-El (Reform)	400 Pasadena Ave. S. St. Petersburg, FL 33707	Rabbi Amy Morrison	templebeth-el.com	727-347-6136
Temple B'nai Israel (Reform)	1685 S. Belcher Rd. Clearwater, FL 33764	Rabbi Michael Birnholz	tbclearwater.org	727-531-5829

Local Community Partners Contact List

Organization	Website
American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)	aipac.org
Anti-Defamation League (Florida Region)	adl.org
Benjamin Tower Foundation/Philip Benjamin Tower 55+ independent living	philipbenjaminsite.org
Empath Health (Hospice, Senior Care, Home Health, Palliative Care, HIV/STD Care/Support)	empathhealth.org
Florida Holocaust Museum	thefhm.org
Gan Chaya Preschool	yichabad.com/templates/section_cdo/aid/4776041/jewish/Preschool.htm
Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services	gcjfcs.org
Israel Bonds	israelbonds.com
Jewish Agency for Israel	jafina.org
Jewish Burial Society of Pinellas County & Chapel Hill Memorial Park	chapelhillmemprk.org
Jewish Educational Loan Fund (JELF)	jelf.org
Jewish Federations of North America	jewishfederations.org
Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay (JGSTB)	jgstb.org
Jewish National Fund: Tampa Bay Region	jnf.org
Jewish Press of Tampa Bay – Florida’s Gulf Coast Edition	jewishpressgulfcoast.com
Jewish Women International (JWI)	jwi.org
Jo-El’s Kosher Deli	stpetedeli.com
Lylah Pinellas Chapter of Hadassah	facebook.com/HadassahLylahPinellas
MASA Volunteer Initiative	masaisrael.org
Menorah Life (Nursing home and assisted living)	menorahlife.org
Partnership2Gether US Hadera-Eiron SE Consortium	jewishagency.org/partnership2gether
PJ Library of Florida’s Gulf Coast	jewishgulfcoast.org/pjlibrary
St. Pete Jewish Academy	stpetejewishacademy.com
St. Petersburg Chapter of Hadassah	hadassah.org/chapter/st-petersburg
“The Sunday Simcha” Radio Program on WMNF 88.5 FM	wmnf.org/events/sunday-simcha
Tamim Academy	tamimpinellas.org
Tampa Bay Job Links	gulfcoastjfcfs.org/tbjl
Tampa Bay Jewish Film Festival	tbjff.org
Temple Beth-El Early Childhood Center	templebeth-el.com/earlychildhoodcenter
TOP Jewish Foundation	topjewishfoundation.org
World ORT	ort.org