

A group of people are seen from behind, celebrating on a hillside at sunset. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light. One person in the center has their arms raised in a gesture of joy. The background shows rolling hills and a clear sky. The overall mood is one of happiness and accomplishment.

# SIMCHAT TORAH: A TIME TO EXPLORE JOY

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



# A DAY OF PURE JOY

On *Simchat Torah* we are commanded to embrace joy: the joy of life, community, tradition, and the continuous gifts of learning within the Torah.

Following the celebration of the new year, we mark the renewal of our sacred text as we roll the scroll back to when our story began, a powerful reminder that we too can turn around and begin again.

This resource holds reflections on joy, creative activities, engaging prompts and holiday trivia. Download, print, or flip through this virtual card deck, and celebrate with us Jewish-Latino/x joy! Grab a partner or call your familia; joy is increased when people laugh together.

# WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY?

Recall a time when you were fully immersed in a joyous experience.  
Who were you with? What were you doing? Where did this take place?  
What about that moment filled you with happiness?

# FAMILIAL JOY

How does your family express joy?

What family traditions do you hold that bring about collective joy?

# SHARING JOY WITH OTHERS

Take a moment to think about those close to you.

How do you share joy with those you love?

Now consider those you don't know.

How can you share joy with strangers?

# THE SCIENCE OF JOY

**DID YOU KNOW?** According to researchers, happiness can help boost our immune systems and improve overall well-being.

- Happiness is linked to lower blood pressure and healthier heart-rate variability.
- Research published in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine* found people who have more positive emotions are less likely to develop the common cold.
- Floral scents, listening to music, being outdoors and bright colors support happiness.
- Research that was done around the globe found that the world's happiest children lived in Mexico, Spain, and Brazil — places in which close family relationships tend to be prioritized.

**We're seeing a trend here!**

# JEWISH-LATINO/X JOY

What does Jewish-Latino/x joy look like for you?

A combination of cultures created the incredible human that you are.

When examining your multicultural identity, what do you appreciate the most? How do you express Jewish-Latino/x joy?

# JOY IN ADVERSITY

Think about a time when you found joy in adversity.

How did you discover joy in that moment?

What was your light amongst the darkness?

Reflect on and share this moment with a loved one.



# JOY IN PRACTICE

Name one practice that makes you happy.  
How will you incorporate more of that practice in this new year?

# LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND SMILE

What are three words to describe your smile?

# SHEMINI ATZERET

Before we say goodbye to *Sukkot*, we make sure to mark the last night of our harvest festival with significance. In both the book of Leviticus, *Vayikra*, and Numbers, *Bamidbar*, the divine commands that the eighth (*shemini*) day is sacred as well as solemn (*atzeret*). This experience is much like savoring the last bite of a delicious meal. While you might be sad it's over, there is also joy in knowing that dessert is on the way. *Shemini Atzeret* gets us ready for the ultimate treat and the greatest celebration of joy in Jewish tradition, *Simchat Torah*.

# SIMCHAT TORAH

Literally meaning "the joy of Torah," *Simchat Torah* marks the end of the annual cycle of weekly Torah readings and continuity of Jewish tradition. We read the final portion of the Torah in Deuteronomy, *Devarim*, aloud for all to hear and immediately begin a new cycle from the beginning of the first book Genesis, *Beresheet*. Why? To remember that each ending is a beginning, and each beginning is an opportunity to learn and grow again. Furthermore, this day is all about the people and the scrolls - people dancing with the Torah, walking with the Torah, and basking in the light of generational knowledge from our sacred text. After all, we are known as the people of the book, so we are commanded to be extra proud and happy on this day.

# THE 7 HAKAFOT - THE 7 CIRCLES

The pinnacle moment of celebration on this holiday is when we sing and dance with the Torah around the synagogue. During this time, the Torah scrolls are taken from the ark and circled around the community seven times. In connection to this practice, name or write down seven things (people, places, things, activities, etc.) that bring you joy. Remember them, celebrate them and commit to enjoying and loving them in the new year.

**"NEVER AGAIN DID THERE ARISE IN ISRAEL  
A PROPHET LIKE MOSES."**

*DEUTERONOMY (DEVARIM) 34:10*

What are the qualities you admire in a leader?  
Which of these qualities exist in you?

# "LET THERE BE LIGHT."

GENESIS (BERESHEET) 1:3

What or who shines light in your life?

Take a moment to share your light with them this *Simchat Torah* by writing them a letter, sending them a text or picture, or mailing them a gift.

# JEWISH WISDOM ON HAPPINESS

שִׂמְחַת בְּחַגֶּיךָ וְהָיִיתָ אֲךָ שִׂמְחָה

V'SAMACHTA B'CHAGECHA V'HAYITA ACH SAME'ACH

*YOU SHALL REJOICE ON YOUR FESTIVALS, AND SHOULD BE FULLY HAPPY.  
DEUTERONOMY 16:14, 15*

On *Simchat Torah*, we are instructed to exude joy and share it with others in our immediate families and greater communities. We take delight in our communal affirmation of joy through song, prayer, learning, and of course, dancing.



# JEWISH WISDOM ON HAPPINESS

There is a specific commandment that obligates us to rejoice with what we have, and that is the verse that states, “And you shall rejoice with all of the good that God has given you” (Deuteronomy/Devarim 26:11).

*SEFER HAKUZARI 3:11*

# JEWISH WISDOM ON HAPPINESS

When a person is happy he can bring life to other people. Most people are full of worries and troubles, and when someone comes along with a beaming countenance he can literally revive him. This is a great thing.

*LIKUTEI EITZON (REBBE NACHMAN), SIMCHAH, 38-SEFER HAKUZARI 3:11*

# JEWISH WISDOM ON HAPPINESS

And the principle: Make every effort to maintain a happy, positive outlook at all times. It is a natural human tendency to become discouraged and depressed because of the hardships of life: everyone has their full share of suffering. That is why you must always attempt to bring yourself to joy.

*LIKUTEI MOHARAN II, 24*

# JEWISH WISDOM ON HAPPINESS

Who is the rich one? One who is happy with their lot, as it says, “When you eat [from] the work of your hands, you will be happy, and it will be well with you” (Psalms 128:2). “You will be happy” in this world, and “it will be well with you” in the world to come.

*PIRKEI AVOT 4:1*

# WITH LOVE, FROM US

May you, your loved ones and your community be blessed with an abundance of love, good health, and joy this Simchat Torah!

JEW TINA Y CO. IS AN ANTI-RACIST, ANTI-OPPRESSIVE JEWISH ORGANIZATION ON A MISSION TO CELEBRATE, EXPLORE, AND RAISE AWARENESS OF THE JEWISH-LATINO/X COMMUNITY AND EXPERIENCE. THROUGH OUR PROGRAMS, JEWISH LEARNING RESOURCES AND STORYTELLING PROJECT, COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO EXAMINE AND CELEBRATE THEIR MULTIETHNIC, MULTIRACIAL AND MULTICULTURAL JEWISH-LATINO/X IDENTITY, WHILE ALSO CONNECTING TO SOCIAL ISSUES AFFECTING THE JEWISH AND LATINO/X COMMUNITIES.

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