



U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Prisons
Reentry Services Division

Washington, DC 20534

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

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SUBJECT: Guidelines for High Holy Days 2020

The fall High Holy Days include the holiest time of the Jewish calendar, and we must meet legal requirements to ensure these religious observances occur even during the pandemic. As community volunteers will not be entering facilities to assist with these observances, Wardens need to ensure adequate staff coverage is available.

To the extent possible, congregant observances with proper social distancing and other precautions should take place. When these practices cannot occur due to COVID, the High Holy Days observances for Jewish and Messianic/Sabbatarian inmates will be modified to protect the health and safety of staff and inmates. This memo delineates specific requirements for each holiday.

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah observances begin at sunset on Friday, September 18, 2020, and conclude approximately one hour after sunset on Sunday, September 20, 2020. Jewish inmates may request work proscription starting on the evening of September 18th, as well as full days on September 19th and 20th. If there are no

current lab-confirmed or clinically probable COVID cases at a facility, inmates may be escorted to the chapel in small groups to light candles, be provided with prayer books, matzo or challah, grape juice, and given apple and honey to accompany the congregant prayers. Chaplaincy departments will secure enough Machzors (High Holy Day prayer books) for each individual participant for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

On Sunday, September 20, observant inmates must be able to hear the Shofar being blown. When it is not safe for inmates to congregate, Wardens must consult the Chaplaincy Services Branch for options including purchasing additional horns and/or sounding the ram's horn outside housing units.

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is observed by a complete and total fast, beginning before sunset, local time, on Sunday, September 27, 2020, and concluding after dark on Monday, September 28, 2020. If there are no current lab-confirmed or clinically probable COVID cases, inmates may be escorted to the chapel for congregant Yom Kippur services. In locations with active inmate COVID cases, chaplains must distribute prayer books for individual inmate Yom Kippur observance.

Work proscription is authorized throughout the Yom Kippur fast. Due to the length of the fast, inmates must be provided a substantial pre-fast meal, as well as a meal at the close of the fast equal in nutrition to the missed meals. Grape juice must also be provided to end the observance.

Participating inmates are permitted to wear non-leather shoes or slippers during this fast.

Sukkot

Sukkot is a harvest festival that begins at sunset Friday, October 2, 2020, and concludes approximately an hour after sunset on Friday, October 9, 2020. Because the end of the Sukkot then runs into the weekly Sabbath observance, the holiday will extend until Sunday, October 11, 2020. Work proscription is therefore authorized in the evening on October 2nd, as well as full days on October 3rd and 4th. Work proscription is also authorized starting on the evening on October 9th as well as full days on October 10th and 11th.

Due to the biblical commandments to dwell in a temporary shelter known as a Sukkah, inmate requests to construct a Sukkah outside must be accommodated. Inmates will be allowed to consume challah

or matzoh and grape juice for the blessing known as the Kiddush in the Sukkah, either individually or in small groups. Since Sukkahs must be constructed in an area that is open to the sky, the use of portable "pop-up" Sukkahs is recommended. Wardens must plan ahead to ensure there are sufficient sukkahs for each unit or individual practitioners and place them outside housing units.

Holding the "Four Species," (a mixture of citron, palm, at least three myrtle branches and two willow branches) during the Sukkot morning services is another distinct feature of this festival. Given potential mail delays, advance ordering is recommended to ensure timely delivery of the four species for the morning service on October 3, 2020. Securing additional sets of the four species to accommodate the increase in individual inmate observance is also advisable if the inmates will not be able to safely congregate and share the branches as a group.

Additional guidance on these observances is located in the Judaism chapter of the Manual of Inmate Beliefs and Practices located on the Central Office Chaplaincy Services Branch's (CSB) Sallyport page. Specific concerns or questions may be directed to Heidi Kugler, Chaplaincy Administrator.