

JEWISH BOOKLET



2025/2026

SOAS MULTI-FAITH CHAPLAINCY

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A message from the Jewish Chaplain

Dear Students,

Welcome to yet another exciting chapter in your academic journey! Whether you're just beginning or continuing your studies, we're so glad you're here. This university is a place of exploration, growth, and connection, and as the Jewish Chaplain, it's a joy to join you!

University is a time of great discovery—of knowledge, of friendships, and most importantly of yourself. It can also bring its share of challenges, questions, and uncertainties, but, no matter where you find yourself on that journey, know that you are not alone. The University Chaplaincy is here as a space for reflection, support, and encouragement, whether you're celebrating successes or navigating hardships.

Regardless of your faith tradition, spiritual background, or if you're still figuring out what you believe, our doors are open to you. We offer a community where you can explore your spiritual life, seek guidance, or simply find a quiet place to pause in the midst of a busy academic life.

I encourage you to embrace the opportunities that await you here—not only academically, but also in the way you build relationships, grow in character, and pursue your passions. As you do, know that you have a community of support around you, cheering you on.

May this academic year be one of growth, discovery, and peace. I look forward to getting to know you and supporting you in any way I can.

With every blessing,
(Student Rabbi) Rafe Thurstance Jewish Chaplain

THE JEWISH YEAR

The Jewish calendar is a luni-solar system that combines both lunar and solar cycles. Each month is tied to the moon's phases, starting on the new moon, and lasting 29 or 30 days; the year is adjusted to the solar cycle, typically with 12 months. To keep the calendar aligned with the seasons, a leap month is added roughly every three years.



This ensures that holidays, such as Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Pesach (Passover), occur at the correct times of the year – and explains why within the Gregorian calendar system, they appear to move on a yearly basis. In 2025, we will enter the year 5786, a number based on a traditional calculation of the creation of the world from a Jewish and Christian perspective. In the Jewish world this is simply called the 'Jewish year' but to many Christians it is known as 'Anno Mundi'.

Important Dates for Jewish Students

Holiday	Hebrew Date	Gregorian Date
Rosh Hashanah	1-2 Tishrei 5786	September 22-24, 2025
Yom Kippur	10 Tishrei 5786	October 2, 2025
Sukkot	15-21 Tishrei 5786	October 6-13, 2025
Simchat Torah	23 Tishrei 5786	October 15, 2025
Hanukkah	25 Kislev - 2 Tevet 5786	December 14-22, 2025
Tu BiShvat	15 Shevat 5786	February 2, 2026

Important Dates for Jewish Students

Holiday	Hebrew Date	Gregorian Date
Purim	14 Adar 5786	March 2-3, 2026
Pesach	14 Adar 5785 / March 14-15, 2025	April 1-9, 2026
Yom HaShoah	27 Nisan 5786	April 13-14, 2026
Lag BaOmer	18 Iyar 5786	April 13-14, 2026
Shavuot	6-7 Sivan 5786	May 21-23, 2026
Tisha B'Av	9 Av 5786	July 29, 2026

Notes

- Rosh Hashanah marks the Jewish New Year.
- Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement, a solemn day of fasting and reflection.
- Sukkot is a seven-day festival celebrating the Israelites' wandering in the desert.
- Hanukkah commemorates the miracle of the Temple oil.
- Purim celebrates the story of Esther and the survival of the Jewish people.



- Passover marks the Israelites' escape from slavery in Egypt.
- Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

As with all Jewish holidays, observance and specific start/end times may vary slightly based on local customs.

High Holy Days Ticket Scheme

Progressive Judaism High Holy Days ticket scheme is running again this year for those aged 18-26, operating across all Progressive (Liberal/Reform) synagogues. Please fill in the form <https://forms.gle/7FKeFKVXjRV57R8KA> to register by 5th September 2025.

Judaism in the UK

Broadly speaking there are two main 'types' of Judaism in the UK.

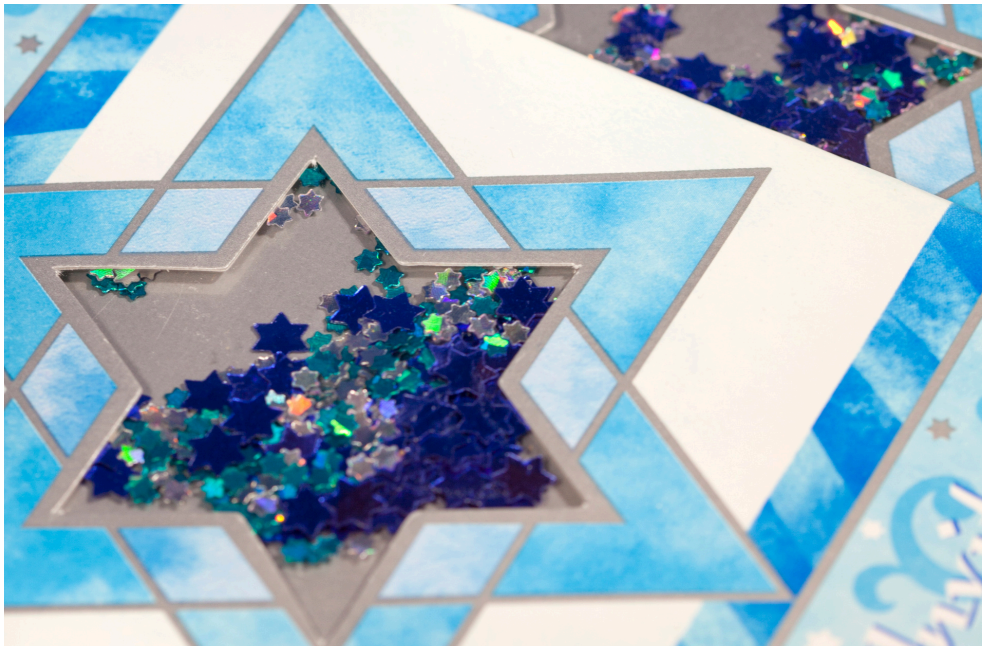
Orthodox Judaism:

Orthodox Judaism is the most traditional branch of Judaism, adhering closely to Jewish law (Halacha). Orthodox Jews observe rituals and commandments as they have been passed down for generations, including strict observance of the Sabbath, dietary laws (kashrut), and daily prayers. Orthodox Jews generally believe that both the written and oral laws were divinely given at Mount Sinai and are unchangeable. Orthodox communities may often be identified by the importance placed on maintaining Jewish traditions, separating gender roles in religious practice, and a deep connection to Jewish scholarship and study.



Progressive Judaism

Progressive Judaism leans towards emphasising individual autonomy and adapting Jewish practices to modern values and lifestyles. Progressive Jews, often called Liberal or Reform in the UK, generally see Jewish law as a guideline rather than a binding set of rules, allowing for flexibility in observance. They often incorporate gender equality in religious leadership and worship, more liberal interpretations of Jewish texts, and an openness to personal choice in ritual practices. Progressive Judaism generally seeks to balance Jewish traditions with contemporary life, with a strong focus on social justice, inclusivity, and a commitment to evolving religious expression.



Resources near SOAS



Synagogues near to SOAS

There are several Progressive, and Orthodox synagogues within five miles of SOAS. Some can be found at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/local-places-worship> but you are welcome to contact the Jewish Chaplain at any time to discuss where you might feel the most comfortable.



Chaplaincy Office

Email the Jewish Chaplain:
rt42@soas.ac.uk

Arrange to meet the Jewish Chaplain: cal.com/studentrabbirafe

Wellbeing Team

SL41, Paul Webley Building



Multi-Faith Room

Available for use in conjunction with members of the Chaplaincy and/or Student Wellbeing team. Egalitarian Jewish prayer services will be held here on selected Thursday afternoons

Finding your way around Campus



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Multi-faith Chaplaincy

Student Advice and Wellbeing

