

RESOURCES

General Etiquette for Entering a Jewish or Muslim Home

- Remove your shoes when you enter a Muslim home. There is usually a special place reserved just outside the door or in the entryway for shoes. It is fine to enter the home wearing socks.
- Bringing a gift to your Muslim or Jewish host is a nice touch. So, what should you bring? If you are invited for tea, coffee or a meal, dessert is a highly appropriate gift. Be sure to ask about any dietary restrictions before bringing food into a home. Other appropriate gifts include flowers, vases, and housewares. Never bring a bottle of wine or other alcohol to a Muslim home.
- Whether you are bringing food to your host's home, or you are the host, dietary guidelines should be followed. Ensure that no food products are made with alcohol, lard, gelatin, or any pork product. If you are going to a Jewish home, be sure the product is marked Kosher, unless you have been told that non-Kosher products are allowed to be brought into the household. Alcohol of any kind should never be served. If there is a need for the Jewish blessing over wine, use grape juice instead. Do not serve a dish or bring a dish that mixes dairy products with meat products and do not serve or bring a dish that contains shellfish.
- Attire is important. Shorts, sleeveless tops, short dresses/skirts and anything that is too revealing is inappropriate. Pants or a long skirt are totally acceptable.
- Avoid scheduling a get-together over the Jewish Sabbath (Friday an hour before sundown through Saturday night when 3 stars are present). Check the calendar to learn which Muslim and Jewish holidays should be avoided for meeting. This is a great group learning discussion!
- Lock up dogs/cats during any get-together in your home. The saliva from animals, especially dogs, can make one unclean for prayer. In addition, many people are frightened of animals and/or are allergic to them.

NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF YOUR OVERALL OBJECTIVE: BUILD TRUST, RESPECT AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR MUSLIM AND JEWISH SISTERS!

Common Phrases and Expressions

It is nice to be able to use appropriate vocabulary when meeting someone of another culture or faith. If you are ever unsure of a word, phrase or expression, do not use it. Instead, ask for pronunciation or an appropriate phrase to use, or, rely on generic language you're comfortable using. Avoid using insider language that would leave others out of the conversation.

Common Islamic phrases

When starting to do something: "Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem." (In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.)

When mentioning something that will be done in the future: "Insha'llah." (If Allah wills.)

When praising something say: "Subhanullah." (Glory to Allah.)

When in pain or distress: "Ya Allah." (O Allah.)

When appreciating something say: "Masha-Allah." (As Allah willed.)

When thanking someone: "Jazakullah khair." (Allah reward you.)

When you see something bad: "Nowthdhubillah." (Allah protect us.)

After sneezing or when you're happy about something: "Alhumdulillah." (Praise Allah.)

When meeting someone: "Assalamu 'alaykum." (Peace be upon you.). When replying to the above greeting: "Wa 'alaykum assalam." (And upon you be peace.)

When hearing about a death or tragedy: "Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajiun." (To Allah we belong and to Him we return.)

When taking an oath: "Wallah." (I Swear to Allah.)

If someone sneezes and they say: "alhumdulillah," you reply with: "Yarhamakullah." (Allah have mercy upon you.) The sneezer will reply back: "Yehdikumullah" which means, "Allah guide you."

Common Islamic Holiday Greetings:

Muslims observe two major holidays: Eid al-Fitr (at the end of the annual fasting month of [Ramadan](#)), and Eid al-Adha (at the end of the annual [pilgrimage](#) to Mecca). During these

holidays the most traditional or common Arabic greetings are:

- "Kul 'am wa enta bi-khair!" ("May every year find you in good health!")
- "Eid Mubarak!" –This can be used for the majority of Islamic holidays, even the minor ones ("Blessed Eid!")
- "Eid Saeed!" ("Happy Eid!")
- "Taqabbala Allahu minna wa minkum." ("May Allah accept from us, and from you.")

Common Jewish Expressions:

Sabbath-Related Greetings

Shabbat Shalom (shah-BAHT shah-LOHM) Hebrew. Literally, Sabbath peace or peaceful Sabbath. This is an appropriate greeting at any time on [Shabbat](#), although it is most commonly used at the end of a shabbat [service](#).

Gut Shabbes (GUT SHAH-biss; gut rhymes with put) Yiddish. Literally, good Sabbath. Like Shabbat shalom, this is a general, all-purpose Shabbat greeting. In my experience, gut Shabbes is more likely to be used in general conversation or when greeting people, while Shabbat shalom is more commonly used at the conclusion of a service.

Shavua Tov (shah-VOO-ah TOHV) Hebrew. Literally, good week. This greeting is used after [Havdalah](#) (the ceremony marking the conclusion of Shabbat), to wish someone a good forthcoming week.

Common Jewish Holiday Greetings

Chag Sameach (KHAHG sah-MEHY-ahkh) Hebrew. Literally, joyous festival. This is an appropriate greeting for just about any holiday, but it's especially appropriate for [Sukkot](#), [Shavu'ot](#) and [Pesach \(Passover\)](#), which are technically the only festivals (the other holidays are holidays, not festivals).

Gut Yontiff (GUT YAHN-tiff; gut rhymes with put) Yiddish. Literally, good holiday. This greeting can be used for any holiday, not necessarily a festival.

L'Shanah Tovah (li-SHAH-nuh TOH-vuh; li-shah-NAH toh-VAH) Hebrew. Lit. for a good year. A common greeting during [Rosh Hashanah](#) and [Days of Awe](#). It is an abbreviation of L'shanah tovah tikatev v'taihatem (May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year).

Have an easy fast

This is the proper way to wish someone well for [Yom Kippur](#). Please, don't wish people a Happy Yom Kippur; it's not a happy holiday.

Other Expressions

Shalom (shah-LOHM) Hebrew. Literally, peace. A way of saying "hello" or "goodbye."

Shalom Aleikhem (shah-LOHM ah-ley-KHEM) or **Sholem Aleikhem** (SHOH-lehm ah-LEH-khem) Hebrew and Yiddish. Peace upon you. A traditional greeting. The second version (the Yiddish version) is more common, at least in America. It is related to the common Arabic greeting, salaam alaikum (not surprising, because Hebrew and Arabic are in the same family of languages). The traditional response to the greeting is Aleikhem Shalom (and upon you, peace).

Mazel Tov (MAH-zl TAWV) Yiddish/Hebrew. Literally, good luck. This is the traditional way of expressing congratulations.

Yasher koach (YAH-shehyr KOH-ahkh) Hebrew. Literally, straight strength. Figuratively, may you have strength, or may your strength be increased. A way of congratulating someone for performing a [mitzvah](#) or other good deed. In essence, you are wishing this person the strength to continue doing this good thing, and you are also recognizing the effort that the person put into doing this good thing. It is most commonly used in [synagogue](#), to congratulate someone after he or she has participated in some aspect of the [service](#). Strictly speaking, this is a masculine form. Some people use the feminine form when expressing the same sentiment for a woman, but that is unusual.

Gesundheit (g'-SUND-hahyt) Yiddish. Literally, health. This is the normal response when somebody sneezes.

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Descriptions of Common Holidays

(Written in alphabetical order, green text represents Islamic holidays and blue text represents Jewish holidays)

For an updated holiday calendar, [please visit the Resources section](#) of our website.

A

Al-Hijra/Muharram – New Year

Al-Hijra - the Islamic New Year - is celebrated on the first day of Muharram, the month in which Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE (known as the Hijra). The holiday is also known simply as Muharram. Unlike the important holidays of Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul- Adha, there are few rituals associated with Islamic New Year. There are no prescribed religious observances. Most Muslims regard the day as a time for reflection on the Hijira and on the year to come. In modern times, some Muslims exchange greeting cards to celebrate the holiday.

(<http://www.religionfacts.com/al-hijra>)

Ashura

Ashura is celebrated on the ninth and tenth day of Muharram in the Islamic Calendar. Ashura is an Arabic word meaning "ten", and it is a day of optional fasting. This is the day on which God saved Moses and the Israelites from Pharaoh in Egypt as he

crossed the Red Sea (the Exodus day). Jews in the city of Madina fasted only one day (on Yom Kippur)

so the Prophet Muhammad would fast two. According to Islamic tradition Prophet Muhammad recommended fasting on the 9th and 10th of Muharram.

This is also the day on which Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussain ibn Ali, was martyred by the forces of a corrupt and cruel governor in the Battle of Karbala. For both Sunni and Shia Muslims, 10th of Muharram marks a day of remembrance of Hussain's martyrdom. For Shia Muslims in particular, this is a day of mourning, expressed in a more dramatic fashion than the Sunnis.

(<http://www.ciogc.org/index.php/aboutislam/islam-101/67-muslim-celebrations>)

E-H

Eid ul-Adha

Eid ul-Adha, which occurs approximately seventy days after Eid-ul-Fitr, commemorates the Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail (Ishmael) for Allah. Eid ul-Adha celebrations continue for three days. The day it begins is the day after the pilgrims in Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia by Muslims worldwide, descend from Mount

Arafat. Like Eid ul-Fitr, Eid ul-Adha begins with a short prayer followed by a sermon (Khutba). Men, women, and children are expected to dress in their finest clothing. Muslims, who can afford to, sacrifice their best domestic animals (usually sheep, but also camels, cows, and goats) as a symbol of Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) sacrifice. This sacrificial act and the meat are called "Udhiya" or "Qurbani". A large portion of the meat is given to the poor and hungry so they can all join in the feast. The remainder is cooked for the celebrations in which relatives and friends participate. The spirit of giving and charitable gestures in the Muslim community is heightened during Eid ul-Adha as Muslims ensure that no impoverished person is left without sacrificial food during this period.

(<http://www.ciogc.org/index.php/aboutislam/islam-101/67-muslim-celebrations>)

Eid ul-Fitr

Eid-ul-Fitr is an Islamic holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting. Fitr means "to break the fast" and therefore symbolizes the breaking of the fasting period. On the day of Eid-ul-Fitr, which is the first day of the month of Shawwal, a typical Muslim family is awake very early. After praying the daily morning (Fajr) prayer, they enjoy a light breakfast, symbolizing the end of Ramadan.

Many Muslims dress in fancy traditional clothes early in the morning and then head to special prayers in congregation held only on this occasion in mosques or in large open areas, stadiums or arenas. The prayer is generally short and is followed by a sermon (Khutba). Worshippers greet and embrace each other in a spirit of peace and love after the congregational prayer. Festivities then follow that involve visiting the homes of relatives and friends.

On Eid ul-Fitr, Muslims celebrate the achievement of enhanced piety. It is a day of forgiveness, moral victory, brotherhood, fellowship, and unity. Muslims celebrate not only the end of fasting, but also thank God for the strength He gave them throughout the month of Ramadan to help them practice self-control. It is a time of giving and sharing.

(<http://www.ciogc.org/index.php/aboutislam/islam-101/67-muslim-celebrations>)

Hanukkah

Hanukkah (alternately spelled Chanukah), meaning "dedication" in Hebrew, refers to the joyous eight-day celebration during which Jews commemorate the victory of the Maccabees over the armies of Syria in 165 B.C.E. and the subsequent liberation and "rededication" of the Temple in Jerusalem. The modern home celebration of Hanukkah centers around the lighting of the hanukkiyah, a 9-branched candelabra or oil lamp. One candle is lit first every night, and is then used to light the number of candles corresponding to the night of the holiday, with an additional candle lit each night. Foods prepared in oil including *latkes* (potato pancakes) and *sufganiyot* (jelly doughnuts) are eaten, and special songs and games are played.

(<http://www.reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/hanukkah>)

L

Lag B'Omer

Lag B'Omer is a minor holiday celebrated on the 33rd day of the *omer*. The *omer* is the 49-day period in between Passover and Shavuot. The *omer* is a period of time in which some mourning practices are traditionally observed, such as not cutting one's hair. Lag B'Omer, though, is a festive day, and is often celebrated with a bonfire. One explanation for the mourning during the *omer* and the celebrations on Lag B'Omer is that students of Rabbi Akiva, a great Jewish leader during the 1st-2nd century, were struck by a plague during the *omer* period, but the plague ended on the 33rd day of the *omer*, Lag B'Omer.

Lailat ul Bara'ah

Lailat ul Bara'h (Night of Forgiveness) takes place two weeks before Ramadan. It is the time when Muslims seek forgiveness for their sins and believe that on this night one's destiny is fixed for the year ahead. On this night, Muslims pray and ask God for forgiveness either at the mosque or at home. Many spend the entire night praying. Muslims may also visit the graves of relatives, and giving to charity is traditional.

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/lailatulbarah.shtml>)

Lailat ul Kadr

Lailat ul Kadr is considered the holiest night of the year for Muslims, and is traditionally celebrated on the 27th day of Ramadan. It is known as the "Night of Power," and commemorates the night that the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, beginning with the exhortation, "Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists)," in Surat Al-Alaq (Muhsin Khan translation).

Muslims observe this occasion with study, devotional readings, and prayer, as the night's holiness is believed to make it a very good time for prayers to be answered. The last ten days of Ramadan are considered a particularly spiritually important time, as any of the days may be Lailat ul Kadr, and thus worshippers strive to be especially observant during this period. Some Muslims participate in a spiritual retreat called *itikaf*, where they spend all ten days in the mosque reading the Quran and praying.

(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/what-is-laylat-al-qadr-the-night-of-power_us_55a3d9c9e4b0ecec71bc7069)

Lailat al Miraj

Lailat al Miraj commemorates the Prophet Muhammad's nighttime journey from Mecca to the 'Farthest Mosque' in Jerusalem where he ascended to heaven, was purified, and given the instruction for Muslims to pray five times daily.

Today Lailat al Miraj is observed by Muslims as one of the most important events in the history of Islam. Muslims may attend special prayer services at a mosque, or they may commemorate

the holiday privately at home by telling the story to children or reciting special nighttime prayers.

(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/05/lailat-al-miraj_n_885922.html)

M-P

Mawlid an Nabi

Mawlid an-Nabi (also known as Milad an-Nabi) celebrates Prophet Muhammad's birthday. This occasion was not celebrated in the early times of Islam and is therefore unevenly celebrated today, with great and festive celebrations in many Muslim countries (e.g. Egypt, Pakistan, and Turkey) and none in others (e.g. Saudi Arabia). Poetry in praise of God and the Prophet are recited with love and devotion. Since the early Muslim community didn't celebrate the birthday of the Prophet, many scholars consider these festivities as Bid'ah (innovation). Other scholars justify it as it is an opportunity to bring Muslims together and highlight the message, mission, character, and life of Prophet Muhammad.

(<http://www.ciogc.org/index.php/aboutislam/islam-101/67-muslim-celebrations>)

Pesach/Passover

Pesach, or Passover, is the first of the three major festivals with both historical and agricultural significance (the other two are Shavuot and Sukkot). Passover celebrates the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt after 400 years of slavery. Agriculturally, it represents the beginning of the harvest season in Israel. Passover lasts for seven days (eight days outside of Israel). The first and last days of the holiday (first two days and last two days in communities outside of Israel) are days on which traditionally-observant Jews refrain from work. Work is permitted on the intermediate days.

Throughout Passover, Jews eat *matzah* -- flat, cracker-like unleavened bread made from only flour and water, and cooked very quickly -- and they refrain from eating *chametz*, or leavened grain products like typical bread. Many clean their homes thoroughly before the holiday begins, to completely remove all chametz from their possession. The removal of *chametz* and the eating of *matzah* commemorate that the Jews left Egypt in a hurry and did not have time to let their bread rise.

On the first night of Passover (first two nights in communities outside Israel), Jews have a *seder*, a festive meal that involves eating symbolic foods and reading texts to tell and discuss the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The *seder* is one of the most widely observed Jewish rituals.

(<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/holiday.html>)

R

Ramadan

Ramadan is celebrated during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Fasting for the month of

Ramadan is one of the 5 pillars of the Islamic faith. Ramadan is regarded as a commemoration of the Prophet Mohammed's (peace be upon him) first revelation of the Qur'an. The Muslim calendar is a lunar calendar, which means that Ramadan shifts by about 10 days every year. During Ramadan, observing Muslims refrain from food, drink and intimate relations from dawn until dusk. During Ramadan, Muslims are encouraged to increase their worship, spirituality, volunteering, compassion, charity, and gift giving.

The daily life of a Muslim in Ramadan involves waking up before dawn to eat, prepare for the fast and make morning prayers. While the sun is up, Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, and sexual relations. Throughout the day, Muslims continue to worship as much as possible while fulfilling their daily obligations like work. Reading the Qur'an every day during Ramadan is a big part of worship for most Muslims. After sunset, the evening prayers are recited and the fast is broken in a meal known as iftar. Communal iftar meals are often held.

(<http://www.ciogc.org/index.php/aboutislam/ramadan>)

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, is both a time of rejoicing and of serious introspection, a time to celebrate the completion of another year while also taking stock of one's life. Families often gather for festive meals on Rosh Hashanah. Many go to synagogue in the mornings, and some in the evenings as well, for prayer services that include special liturgy. The *shofar*, a ram's horn that makes a trumpet-like sound, is blown during Rosh Hashanah morning services as a wake-up call to introspect and repent. Rosh Hashanah is portrayed in traditional liturgy as the day in which God examines one's deeds and inscribes one's fate for the upcoming year. Another traditional theme of Rosh Hashanah is God's sovereignty. Traditionally-observant Jews refrain from work on Rosh Hashanah. The two days of Rosh Hashanah usher in the Ten Days of Repentance, also known as the Days of Awe, which culminate in the major fast day of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

(<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/rosh-hashanah-101/>)

S

Shavuot

Shavuot is the Hebrew word for "weeks" and refers to the Jewish festival marking the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which occurs seven weeks after Passover. Shavuot, like many other Jewish holidays, began as an ancient agricultural festival that marked the end of the spring barley harvest and the beginning of the summer wheat harvest. In ancient times, Shavuot, along with Pesach and Sukkot, was a pilgrimage festival during which Israelites brought crop offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem. Today, it is a celebration of Torah, education, and actively choosing to participate in Jewish life. Traditionally-observant Jews refrain from work on Shavuot. Many go to synagogue in the mornings, and some in the evenings as well, for prayer services. It is traditional to eat dairy foods on Shavuot. Another common Shavuot practice is to stay up all night on the first night of the holiday studying Torah.

<http://www.reformjudaism.org/shavuot>

Shemini Atzeret

Shemini Atzeret takes place on the eighth day after the beginning of Sukkot, and is a day on which traditionally-observant Jews refrain from work and travel. In synagogue services, Jews recite a prayer for rain on Shemini Atzeret.

Simchat Torah

On Simchat Torah, which immediately follows Shemini Atzeret, Jews celebrate the completion of the annual cycle of reading the Torah publically in synagogues, and begin the cycle anew. As part of the celebration, the Torah scrolls are taken from the ark where they are stored, and carried around the synagogue seven times as congregants dance and sing around them. This is done both in the evening and the morning of the holiday. During prayer services on Simchat Torah morning, the concluding section of the Torah, from the book of Deuteronomy, is chanted, and immediately following, the opening section of the Torah, from the book of Genesis, is chanted. Simchat Torah is a day on which traditionally-observant Jews refrain from work.

<http://www.reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/simchat-torah-and-shmini-atzeret>

Sukkot

Sukkot, a Hebrew word meaning "booths" or "huts," commemorates the 40 years that the Israelites wandered in the desert after the giving of the Torah atop Mt. Sinai, and is also an agricultural festival to give thanks for the fall harvest. Prior to Sukkot, Jews erect a *sukkah*, a small, temporary booth or hut, in which they eat festive meals and sometimes sleep in during the holiday. Dwelling in these temporary structures is reminiscent of the temporary dwellings used while wandering through the desert. Inviting guests to meals in one's *sukkah* is a common practice. Sukkot is the only Jewish festival associated with an explicit commandment to rejoice. During the first two days of Sukkot (first day only in Israel), traditionally-observant Jews refrain from work and travel. Many attend synagogue services in the mornings that involve special festival prayers, including rituals in which four plant species—three kinds of leaves, and a citron fruit – are held and shaken together. This ritual act is performed each day of the holiday, and is often seen as symbolic of fertility and of unity.

www.reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/sukkot

T

Tisha B'Av

Tisha B'Av is a day of mourning and a fast day, which primarily commemorates the destruction of the first and second ancient Temples in Jerusalem, which were the focal points of Jewish life

until their destructions. Both were destroyed on the ninth day of the Hebrew calendar month of Av, the first by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E., and the second by the Romans in 70 C.E. The book of Lamentations is chanted in synagogues on the evening of Tisha B'Av.

(<http://www.jewfaq.org/holidayd.htm>)

Tu B'Shvat

Tu B'Shvat or the "New Year of the Trees" is Jewish Arbor Day. The holiday is observed on the 15th (*tu*) of the Hebrew month of Sh'vat. Scholars believe that originally Tu B'Shvat was an agricultural festival, marking the emergence of spring. In the 17th century, Kabbalists (Jewish mystics) created a ritual for Tu B'Shvat known as a Tu B'Shvat *seder*, which involves eating symbolic foods and reading and discussing texts, similar to a Passover *seder*. Today, many Jews hold a modern version of the Tu B'Shvat *seder* each year. The holiday also has become a tree-planting festival in Israel, in which Israelis and Jews around the world plant trees in honor or in memory of loved ones and friends.

(<http://www.reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/tu-bishvat>)

W

Waqf al Arafa – Hajj Day

This day is the culminating event of the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Day of Arafat falls on the 2nd day of pilgrimage rituals. At dawn of this day, nearly 2 million Muslim pilgrims will make their way from Mecca to a nearby hillside and plain called Mount Arafat and the Plain of Arafat. It was from this site that the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, gave his famous Farewell Sermon in his final year of life.

During the entire day, from dawn until sunset, Muslim pilgrims stand in earnest supplication and devotion, praying for God's abundant forgiveness. Tears are shed readily as those who gather make repentance and seek God's mercy, recite words of prayer and remembrance, and gather together as equals before their Lord. Muslims around the world who are not participating in the pilgrimage often spend this day in fasting and devotion.

(<http://islam.about.com/cs/hajj/f/dayofarafat.htm>)

Y

Yom Kippur means "Day of Atonement" and refers to the annual Jewish observance of fasting, prayer and repentance. Part of the High Holidays, which also includes Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur is considered the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. Fasting on Yom Kippur enables one

to put aside their physical desires to concentrate on spiritual needs through prayer, repentance and self-improvement. In the days leading up to Yom Kippur, Jews ask forgiveness from those whom they have wronged throughout the past year. Yom Kippur is a time dedicated to reconciliation with God, fellow human beings, and oneself. Many attend prayer services on the evening of Yom Kippur, and during the entire next day of Yom Kippur. Prayer services conclude with a blast of the *shofar*, or ram's horn, at sundown at the end of the holiday. Traditionally-observant Jews refrain from work on Yom Kippur.

(<http://www.reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/yom-kippur-day-atonement>)

Yom Hashoa

Yom Hashoa, Holocaust Remembrance Day, is dedicated to memorializing Holocaust victims and remembering the atrocities of the Holocaust. It falls on the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Many Jewish communities hold commemorative programs.

Twelve Keys of Spiritual Activism¹

Humanity Healing's Twelve Keys of Spiritual Activism

The embrace of the path of Spiritual Activism enables individuals or groups to develop the noble qualities of compassion, wisdom, and gratitude. It is in itself a Path of Transformation - a Spiritual Blueprint for living. We can shift our perspectives of reality through seeking service beyond self by practicing the Gifts of Service. The core dynamics behind the Spiritual Keys of Activism are creativity, adaptability, understanding and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

"Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin." ~ Mother Theresa

The 12 Keys of Spiritual Activism

1. All Action MUST be based on Compassion.

When championing a cause, the mindset must be altruistic, and the motivating emotion must be positive. Spiritual Activism is an action for the benefit of something, not against something.

"When you have a pro-peace rally, I will be there." ~Mother Teresa's response to a question about why she did not attend an anti-war rally.

2. Compassion flows from the understanding of the connection between all living beings.

We are all connected through our shared humanity. When you learn to see that our differences are superficial and our similarities manifest, sympathy (or worse, pity) gives way to compassion. Our actions shift from one of "us helping them" to one of "for the good of All." We become one.

"The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another." ~Thomas Merton

3. Compassion must be applied with wisdom.

There are more causes that exist than an individual or group can be involved with. It is important to choose your causes carefully. Learn to act instead of react.

"That is true wisdom, to know how to alter one's mind when the occasion demands it." ~Terence

4. Apply synergy and teamwork to accomplish goals.

¹ Humanity Healing - permission to reprint granted. <http://humanityhealing.net/guiding-principles/12-keys-spiritual-activism/>

Synergy is the process where two or more actions combine to produce an effect greater than the sum of its individual parts. Like ripples in a pond, spiritual actions combine and build on each other to magnify an effect beyond what each could do individually. Whenever possible, team up with others to acquire a multifaceted and more holistic approach.

"The whole is greater than the sum of the parts." ~Unknown

5. Spiritual Activism is the pursuit of service for the good of all, not for the advancement or benefit of individuals or selected communities

The mindset behind your actions must be noble, holistic, universal and non-partisan. Be mindful that ego and self-service have no place in Spiritual Activism.

"Common folk, not statesmen, nor generals nor great men of affairs, but just simple plain men and women, can do something to build a better, peaceful world. The future hope of peace lies with such personal service." ~Henry Cadbury

"Reverence for Life affords me my fundamental principle of morality, namely, that good consists in maintaining, assisting, and enhancing life and that to destroy, harm, or to hinder life is evil. Affirmation of the world -- that is an affirmation of the will to live, which appears in phenomenal forms all around me -- is only possible for me in that I give myself out for other life." ~Albert Schweitzer

6. Pursue Integrity, Honesty and Dignity in the conduct of your Actions

Embrace mindfulness in the application of your activities and be aware of how your actions may be perceived by others. Machiavelli's "The ends justify the means" has no place in Spiritual Activism. If our methods are not noble, our results will not be either. Practice Spiritual Transparency, allowing negative energies to bypass your system without harming it.

"Integrity is doing the right thing even if no one is watching." ~Unknown

7. Do not defame your detractors or those who doubt you

A confrontational approach leads to a defensive reaction. Approach others with openness and compassion in your heart. Build on the commonalities between you instead of focusing on the differences. As much as possible, detach yourself from the results of your actions. Aspire to always be a peacemaker.

"Honest differences are often a healthy sign of progress." ~Mahatma Gandhi

"An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." ~Mahatma Gandhi

8. Raising another up raises you up as well

Helping another becomes a form of self-love as well as an expression of outward love. This becomes an upwardly spiraling cycle of increasing awareness, connection, compassion, involvement, capacity, and back to increasing awareness.

“Oh, Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; To be understood, as to understand; To be loved, as to love; For it is in giving that we receive, It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.” ~Saint Francis Prayer

“Compassionate action involves working with ourselves as much as working with others.” ~ Pema Chodron

9. Learn to listen to your heart and not your mind

You mind may only see the problem. Your heart will always feel the solution. Learn to act with Faith and cultivate a loving perception when facing collective problems.

“Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase.” ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

10. Search out viable and sustainable solutions

Seek out solutions that maintain or restore the dignity of individual humans and their communities. The goal of Spiritual Activism is to raise another up, not make them dependent.

“Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he eats for a lifetime.” ~Jesus

“We have not inherited the world from our forefathers. We have borrowed it from our children.” ~Kashmiri proverb

11. Do not judge yourself simply by the results of your actions

Maintain a sense of detachment as to overall results. Embrace mindfulness as you intentionally diminish a judging attitude while keeping watchfulness on the gates of your heart. The ultimate goal of Spiritual Activism is to unconditionally raise the understanding and support of Humanity, with no exceptions. This achievement is larger than any individual. While individual projects can be completed, the sum is so much greater than its parts. Learn to see yourself not on where you have reached, but on the Path; you are traveling. There is real fulfillment in just being called to serve humanitarian and spiritual causes.

“The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers.” ~Thich Nhat Hanh

12. Let Metta be the motivation for your Actions

If you cultivate Metta (the practice of loving-kindness) in your heart, you will succeed. The intention that is the motivating force behind your actions is paramount. Start from a position of pure and altruistic love.

*“A positive future cannot emerge from the mind of anger or despair” ~HH, the Dalai Lama
“Kindness in giving creates Love.” ~Lao Tzu*

Suggested Readings on Interfaith Dialogue

- Aslen, Reza and HahnTapper, Aaron J. *Muslims and Jews in America*. PALGRAVE MACMILLIAN, 2011. A book that contains case examples in Muslim & Jewish relationship building programs.
- Michelle LeBaron. *Bridging Cultural Conflicts: A New Approach for A Changing World*. Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Michelle LeBaron and Venashri Pillay. *Conflict Across Cultures: A Unique Experience of Bridging Differences*. Intercultural Press, 2006.
- Roger A. Lohmann & Jon Van Til. *Resolving Community Conflicts and Problems. Public Deliberation and Sustained Dialogue*. Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Lisa Schirch & David Campt. *The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects. A Practical, Hands-On Guide*. Good Books, 2007.
- Anderson, Leona M and Pamela Dickey Young. *Women & Religious Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. A text that examines the world's major religious traditions from the perspective of women. Includes nine chapters and four case studies. An excellent study resource for women's groups.
- Eck Diana & The Pluralism Project. *On Common Ground: World Religions in America*. 3RD Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University, 2008. This CD-ROM provides the history, beliefs, and current practices of 15 religious traditions. Includes an anthology of documents for further study, as well as a geographic protract of the American religious landscape.
- Hackman, Bud and Rori Picker Neiss. *Interactive Faith. The Essential Interreligious Community-Building Handbook*. Woodstock: Skylight Paths, 2008. A practical guide to the methods and resources of the interfaith movement.
- Lonsdale, Akasha. *Do I Kneel or Do I Bow?* London: Kuperard, 2010. Ideal for those who visit houses of worship or travelers, this book is a guide to interfaith etiquette that gives concise information on values, customs, and beliefs, as well as the cultural practices of various religious traditions.
- MacKenzie, Don, Ted Falcon, and Jamal Rahman. *Getting to the Heart of Interfaith*. Wood- stock: Skylight Paths, 2009. From the perspective of their own faith commitment, a pastor, a rabbi, and a sheikh, explore their differ-ences and interfaith cooperation.
- Mays, Rebecca Kratz, ed. *Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots*. Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 2008. This book is a practical handbook on interfaith dialogue for congregations. Each section has reflection questions and offers further resources.

- McCarthy, Kate. *Interfaith Encounters in America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007. The chapters in this book explore the many ways people in the United States experience interfaith encounter, through faith communities, families, community groups, online discussions, etc.
- Patel, Eboo. *Acts of Faith. The Story of an American Muslim. The Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007. The spiritual autobiography of the founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, and a leading visionary of religious pluralism.
- Sacks, Jonathan. *The Dignity of Difference. How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*. London: Continuum, 2002. Now a classic, this book is one of the first major statements by a Jewish leader on the ethics of globalization. A bold statement for supporting the need to make a space for difference; even--and especially--at the heart of the monotheistic imagination.
- Swidler, Leonard, Khalid Duran, Rueven Fire-stone. *Triologue. Jews, Christians and Muslims in Dialogue*. New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim professors present the challenges of interfaith dialogue from their perspectives.

Workbooks

- **For One Great Peace Study Guide** [abrahamicfaithspeacemaking.com/.../For-One-Great-Peace-Study-Guide](http://www.abrahamicfaithspeacemaking.com/.../For-One-Great-Peace-Study-Guide)
http://www.academia.edu/2713616/For_One_Great_Peace_Study_Guide_A_Peacemaking_Curriculum_from_the_Perspective_of_the_Abrahamic_Faiths
- **For Encountering Other Faiths** An Introduction to the Art of
<http://www.interfaithcenterpa.org/documents/workbook.pdf>
- **Children of Abraham** Jews and Muslims in Conversation-A dialogue curriculum prepared in partnership by the Union for Reform Judaism and the Islamic Society of North America http://www.isna.net/uploads/1/5/7/4/15744382/children_of_abraham.pdf
- **Dialogues Across Divides** <https://whatisessential.org/resource/fostering-dialogue-across-divides-nuts-and-bolts-guide-essential-partners>
- **Speak Up! Southern Poverty Law Center Guide**
http://www.riseupandcallhername.com/wp-content/uploads/splcspeak_up_handbook_0.pdf
- **Speak Up at School! Southern Poverty Law Center**
<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/speak-up-at-school>

Suggested Books on Religious Themes

- Ali, Tariq. *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*
- Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran*
- Abdul-Ghafur, Saleemah *Living Islam Out Loud*
- Zobair, Jennifer *Painted Hands-A Novel*
- Wilsom. G. Willow *The Butterfly Mosque: A Young American Women's Journey to Love and Islam*
- Rehman, Sabeeha *Threading my Prayer Rug*
- Pogrebin, Letty Cottin *Deborah, Golda and Me*
- Steinberg, Milton *As a Driven Leaf*
- Diamant, Anita *The Red Tent*
- Potok, Chaim *The Chosen*
- Kates, Judith *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*
- Idliby, Ranya Tabari *The Faith Club: A Muslim, A Christian, A Jew—Three Women Search for Understanding*
- Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck *Daughters of Abraham: Feminist Thought in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*
- Feiler, Bruce *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*
- Dysert Zobair, Levin: *Faithfully Feminist: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Feminists on Why We Stay*

Films

Chapters interested in showing films for public educational purposes need to check out the licensing requirements in advance. Special rules and pricing may apply. Your faith community may already be part of a licensing agreement through conferences, jurisdictions, dioceses, affiliated organizations, or some other organizational structure.

- **Amreeka.** Directed by Cherien Dabis. National Geographic Society, Virgil Films, 2009. 96 minutes. Life in America from the perspective of Palestinian immigrants; a single mother and her teenage son.
- **America's New Religious Landscape,** Bob Abernathy, Executive Producer. Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2003. 60 minutes. Through stories, interviews, and images, this documentary showcases the “new religious landscape” of the United States, including communities of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Hasidum.
- **Arranged.** Diane Crespo & Stefan Schaefer, Directors. Film Movement, 2007. 89 minutes. This film enters on the friendship between an Orthodox Jewish woman and a Muslim woman who meet as first-year teachers at a public school in Brooklyn. Over the course of the year they learn they share much in common - not least of which is that they are both going through the process of arranged marriages. Available at www.filmmovement.com
- **Elie Wiesel,** Produced and directed by Robert Gardner. Lives and Legacies Films, 2002. 60 minutes. Elie Wiesel reflects on his life, work, and the future of humanity in this film that re-visits many of his experiences, including the horrors of the Holocaust.
- **Fremont U.S.A.,** Produced and directed by Rachel Antell and Elinor Pierce. Narrated by Diana L. Eck. The Pluralism Project, 2002. 57 minutes. This film documents civic engagement and interfaith action in the city of Fremont, California; a city where the religious landscape was transformed through immigration.
- **The Imam & the Pastor.** Directed by Alan Channer. FLTfilms, 2006. 40 minutes. The moving story of the peace-building efforts between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, this film depicts the commitment of religious men to end killing and bring healing to their communities, village by village.
- **The Jewish People: A Story of Survival.** Directed by Andrew Goldberg. Two Cats Productions, 2008. 60 minutes. The story of the survival of the Jewish people from slavery to the loss of their homeland; from exile to anti-Semitism.
- **Little Mosque on the Prairie.** Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), 2006...present. This CBC comedy television series focuses on the relationships between

the Muslim and Christian communities in the fictional town of Mercy, Saskatchewan. A humorous look at relationships, faith, values, family, and love in a local community. Available from the CBC shop: www.cbeshop.ca or on the show's website, www.cbc.ca/littlemosque.

- **New Muslim Cool.** Film by Jennifer Maytorena Taylor. Specific Pictures, 2009. 83 minutes. A film centered around the life of Puerto-Rican American Muslim hip-hop star Hamza Perez, as he reaches for a deeper understanding of his faith and confronts the realities of the post 9/11 world. His spiritual journey unfolds as he builds a family, works as a prison chaplain, and finds way to serve his community.
- **The Power of Forgiveness.** A Film by Martin Doblmeier. Journey Films, 2007. 78 minutes. A documentary on the process of forgiveness and reconciliation featuring Elie Wiesel, Thich Nhat Hahn, Thomas Moore,
- **Desmond Tutu, and other religious leaders from a variety of traditions.** The film follows people who testify to the personal and spiritual transformation (and the challenges) that accompany true forgiveness at Ground Zero, Northern Island, the Amish countryside, and in other contexts.
- **Renewal. Stories from America's Religious-Environmental Movement.** Produced by Marty Ostrow and Terry Kay Rockefeller, Fine Cut Productions, for the Renewal Project, 2007. 110 Minutes. A film featuring 9 different stories about religious environmental action and stewardship. It is possible to show one, several or all of the stories. The film is designed to engage people of faith in dialogue about environmental action and break down the barriers between secular activists and people of faith. Available from the Renewal Project: www.renewalproject.net.
- **A Son's Sacrifice.** A film by Yoni Brook and Musa Syeed. Foment Films, 2006. 26 minutes. The story of a young American Muslim who struggles to take over his father's slaughterhouse in New York City. The young man must confront his mixed heritage and his father's traditional community.
- **Stand Up: Muslim American Comics Come of Age - America At A Crossroads.** Produced by Jeff Bierber and Dalton Delan. WETA Washington, 2007. 1 hour. The film explores the emergence of Muslim American and Arab American comedians and how they use humor to take on stereotypes about religion and politics.
- **Standing Together.** The Christian-Muslim Consultative Group of Southern California, 2009. This manual and DVD program provides a comprehensive program on Muslim-Christian dialogue for local communities. The kit has easy to follow facilitator instructions. Available from www.thecmcg.org.
- **Three Faiths, One God. Judaism, Christianity, Islam.** A documentary by Gerald Krell & Meyer Odze. Auteur Productions, LTD, 2005. 120 minutes. A poignant documentary that discusses the differences and similarities of the Abrahamic faith traditions. Scenes include different voices from each faith group, as well as settings. Includes a study guide.

- **Ties That Bind.** Ann E. Feldman, creator and executive producer. Artistic Circles, 2006. 59 minutes. This documentary and outreach curriculum features seven women spiritual leaders from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions who reach across the boundaries of faith, race and nationality. The film also addresses the emerging role of women in interfaith dialogue. The package includes a detailed study guide for use with local groups. Contact artisticcircles@aol.com.

- **Welcome to Shelbyville.** Kim Snyder, Director and Producer. Be.BeCause Foundation ACTIVE VOICE, 2010. 67 minutes. The film offers a glimpse of America at a crossroads. In one town in the heart of the bible belt, a community grapples with rapidly changing demographics. Longtime African-American and White residents are challenged with how to integrate with a growing Latino population and the more recent arrival of hundreds of Somali refugees of Muslim faith. Through the vibrant and colorful characters of Shelbyville, the film explores the immigrant integration and the interplay between race, religion and identity. Ultimately, the story is an intimate portrayal of a community's struggle to understand what it means to be American.

Suggested Websites

There are many websites related to interfaith dialogue. Those listed here are a few of those most commonly cited.

- 9/11 Unity Walk, www.911UnityWalk.org
- Auburn Theological Seminary, www.auburnseminary.org
- Beyond Tolerance, www.BeyondTolerance.org
- Center for Interfaith Inquiry, www.centerforinquiry.org
- Center for Interfaith Relations, www.interfaith.org
- Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations, www.merrimack.edu/JCM
- Center for World Thanksgiving, www.thanksgiving.org
- Claremont School of Theology, www.cst.edu
- The Dialogue Project, www.thedialogueproject.org
- Essential Partners, <https://www.whatisessential.org>
- Facing History, www.facinghistory.org
- Faith House, www.faithhousemanhattan.org
- Family Promise (formerly the Interfaith Hospitality Network), www.familypromise.org
- Hartford Institution for Religion Research, www.hirr.hartsem.edu
- Intercultural & Interfaith Calendar (Developed by a Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom Member), <https://www.interfaith-calendar.org/index.htm>
- The Interfaith Alliance, www.interfaithalliance.org
- Interfaith Center at the Presidio, www.interfaith-presidio.org
- Interfaith Center of New York, www.interfaithcenter.org
- Interfaith Youth Core, www.ifyc.org
- The Islamic Center of North America, www.isna.net
- Judaism 101, www.jewfaq.org

- Kaleidoscope Institute, www.kscopeinstitute.org
- Multifaith Action Society, www.multifaithaction.org
- Multifaith Calendar, <https://multifaithaction.jimdo.com/multifaith-calendar/>
- Museum of World Religions, Taiwan, https://www.mwr.org.tw/mwr_en
- National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, www.ncdd.org
- North American Interfaith Network, www.nain.org
- PBS Religion & Ethics Newsweekly, www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics
- Pluralism Project, www.pluralism.org
- Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, <https://acmcu.georgetown.edu>
- Public Conversations Project, <https://civicus.org>
- Religions for Peace, www.rfp.org
- Sacred Space International, <https://sacredspace.world>
- Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom, www.sosspeace.org
- State of Formation, www.stateofformation.org
- Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, www.tanenbaum.org
- Teaching Tolerance, www.tolerance.org
- Temple of Understanding, www.templeofunderstanding.org
- United Communities of Spirit, www.origin.org
- United Religions Initiative, www.uri.org
- United States Conference of the World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/north-america/united-states-of-america>
- United States Institute of Peace, www.usip.org
- World Congress of Faiths, www.worldfaiths.org

Be sure to become part of the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom Facebook group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/516079245151121/>