

# Jewish American Heritage Month



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## What is Jewish American Heritage Month?

A time to celebrate and uplift the contributions Jewish Americans have made in our country.

In 2006, President George W. Bush declared May Jewish American Heritage Month. Not only is this a time to recognize Jewish Americans and the huge role Jewish people have had in American history but it is also a celebration of resilience.

Jewish people first arrived in the US in 1654 as refugees fleeing discrimination and oppression looking for a new home where they would be free to practice their religion.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Albert Einstein and Ruth Bader Ginsberg are some of the most prominent Jewish Americans.

2

### HOLIDAYS

Hanukkah is the most well known Jewish holiday. Others include, Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

3

### TODAY

7.6 million people in the US identify as Jewish. New York State has the largest Jewish American population in America.



[wvum.com/podcasts](https://www.wvum.com/podcasts)

## JEWISH AMERICANS AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Jewish Americans, especially women, put their lives on the line to fight racism and white supremacy in the Southern civil rights movement in the 1960's.

Jewish Americans participated in the Freedom Rides, sit-ins and marched in Washington DC.

These extraordinary acts remain a relevant inspiration for current events.

"The most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful, and the most tragic problem is silence."

-Rabbi Prinz (March on Washington 1963)

## People to Know

Jewish Americans have contributed to all aspects of American culture and society. There have been contributions in areas such as the arts, science, social justice, law, sports and politics.

- Steven Spielberg, Director, Producer
- Albert Einstein, Physicist
- Bernie Sanders, Politician
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Supreme Court Justice
- Isaac Asimov, Author
- Sandy Koufax, Baseball Player
- Noam Chomsky, Philosopher, Linguist, Historian, Activist
- Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook
- Robin Washington, Journalist and Film maker
- Stan Lee, comic book writer, editor, actor, publisher, television personality and former president and chairman of Marvel Comics
- Ruth Handler, Co-founder of Mattell, created of the Barbie Doll.
- Robert Downey Jr., Actor, producer, screenwriter, singer and songwriter.
- Judy Blume, author of novels such as “Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing”



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## Jewish Communities

Jewish people have a wide variety of culture and beliefs depending on their ancestral place of origin. Generally, Jewish communities are broken up in to 4 main groups.

**Ashkenazi-** Members of this group can usually trace their ancestry back to Germany or other Eastern European countries. The traditions of this culture are the ones most Americans are familiar with.

**Sephardic-** This group originated in Spain, Portugal and North Africa. The first Jewish people in the North American colonies which would later become the United States were Sephardic Jewish people.

**Mizrahi-** This group originated in the Middle East and their earliest communities date back to antiquity. Some of the oldest Mizrahi communities came from what are now modern-day Iraq, Iran and Yemen.

**Ethiopian-** As the name implies, this group originated and still lives in Ethiopia, although in the 1980s and 1990s many immigrated to Israel. Ethiopian Jews have existed for at least 15 centuries.

### DIG DEEPER



Visit: Memorial Art Gallery: Jewish Heritage Celebration Day



Watch: Rabbi Joachim Prinz: The Rabbi Who Spoke Out for Civil Rights in America



Read: Children's Books to Celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month



Visit: Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia OR explore the museums many virtual programs.

