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Isru Chag - חג אסרו

By Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian)

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**Isru Chag[[1]](#footnote-1)** - **אִסְרוּ** **חַג**‎,[[2]](#footnote-2) which refers to the day after each of the [three](three.html) pilgrimage [festivals](festivals.html) mentioned in the Torah: [Pesach](passover.html), [Shavuot](shavuot.html), and [Succoth](succoth.html). Isru Chag acts as a transition between the holy and the mundane.[[3]](#footnote-3) This is a key pasuk that ties David’s commentary on this chapter of [Psalms](psalms1.html) with our Torah portion. In the Torah we are reading the critical [mitzvot](cmds613.html) that must be absorbed when we transition from [dwelling](dwelling.html) in the wilderness to [dwelling](dwelling.html) in [Eretz Israel](city.html).[[4]](#footnote-4)

*In* [*Eretz Israel*](city.html),[[5]](#footnote-5) Isru Chag would be the [eighth](eight.html) day of [Pesach](passover.html), the second day of [Shavuot](shavuot.html), and the [ninth](nine.html) day of [Succoth](succoth.html).

*In the diaspora*, Isru Chag would be the [ninth](nine.html) day of [Pesach](passover.html), the [third](three.html) day of [Shavuot](shavuot.html), and the tenth day of [Succoth](succoth.html).

On Isru Chag most of the sacrifices that the pilgrims brought with them, for the pilgrimage [festival](festival.html), were offered because the [festival](festival.html) offerings which as individual offerings could not be brought on the [festival](festival.html) itself. On [Pesach](passover.html) and [Succoth](succoth.html), when there were intermediate days between the [Festival](festival.html) days at the beginning and end, it was possible to bring these sacrifices on those days. [Shavuot](shavuot.html), however, is celebrated only for [one](one.html) day.[[6]](#footnote-6) The day following the [festival](festival.html) was therefore set aside for the bringing of these sacrifices and this day, Isru chag, is consequently referred to as “the day of offerings”.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Isru Chag is the day the pilgrims who have [gathered](gather.html) in [Jerusalem](city.html) for the [three](three.html) pilgrimage [festivals](festivals.html)[[8]](#footnote-8) traditionally depart from [Jerusalem](city.html) and [head](body.html) for home.

The origins of the phrase ‘Isru Chag’ is from a [Psalm](psalms1.html) that is part of Hallel[[9]](#footnote-9) which is said on [festivals](festivals.html):

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 118:27*** *God is* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, which hath shewed us light:* ***bind (Isru) the*** [***Festival***](festival.html) ***(Chag)*** [***offering***](korbanot) ***with cords****, even unto the horns of the altar.*

This verse, according to the Sages of the [Gemara](orallaw.html), should homiletically be understood to mean “Whosoever makes an addition to the [festival](festival.html) by [eating](eating.html) and drinking is regarded by the Tanach as though he had built an altar and offered thereon a [sacrifice](korbanot.html)”, as we can see from the following [Gemara](orallaw.html):

[***Succah***](succoth.html) ***45b*** *R. Jeremiah citing R. Simeon b. Yohai, and R. Johanan citing R. Simeon of Mahoz[[10]](#footnote-10) who had it from R. Johanan of Makkuth stated, Whosoever makes an addition to the* [*Festival*](festival.html) *by* [*eating*](eating.html) *and drinking[[11]](#footnote-11) is regarded by Scripture as though he had builded an altar and offered thereon a* [*sacrifice*](korbanot.html)*. For it is said, Make an binding for the* [*Festival*](festival.html)*[[12]](#footnote-12) with fat cattle, even to the horns of the altar.*

This verse, according to the Sages of the [Talmud](orallaw.html) should be understood to mean “Whosoever makes an addition to the [Festival](festival.html) by [eating](eating.html) and drinking is regarded by Scripture as though he had built an altar and offered a [sacrifice](korbanot.html)”.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The [two](two.html) most common interpretations of ”a binding for the [festival](festival.html)” are those cited by Rashi in his commentary to the Talmudic passage:

(1) A group of friends who assemble or “tie themselves together” for [eating](eating.html) and drinking on the [festival](festival.html);

(2) The day after the [festival](festival.html), which is “tied” or appended to the [festival](festival.html) by [eating](eating.html) and drinking on that day as well.

After a [festival](festival.html), we don’t go directly from a joyous [festival](festival.html) back into the mundane [world](worlds.html). We need a day to “cool down” from the joy of the [Holiday](festival.html).[[14]](#footnote-14) Isru Chag is that day. “Isru Chag” literally means “bind or connect the [festival](festival.html)”. That is, take the happiness and meaningfulness of the [festival](festival.html) and bring it with you into the rest of the year.[[15]](#footnote-15) The idea of Isru Chag is that [one](one.html) draws some of the holiness of the [festival](festival.html) celebration into the less [spiritually](physical.html) elevated reality of everyday life. It enables us to transfer the lessons we learned during the [festival](festival.html) into our everyday lives. Since feasting is [one](one.html) of the ways in which [Jews](gen-jew.html) celebrate [festivals](festivals.html), it became customary to [eat](eating.html) and drink a little something extra on Isru Chag to continue the feeling of celebration.

In [Temple](temple.html) times, festive offerings were brought on Isru Chag of the [Shavuot](shavuot.html) [Festival](festival.html). Isru Chag remains a semi-festive day, even today when there is no [Temple](temple.html).

**In Practice**

In practice, Isru Chag has little impact on most [Jews](gen-jew.html).

Some religious schools are closed on Isru Chag.

We omit Tachanun[[16]](#footnote-16) and memorial [prayers](prayer.html) from our [prayers](prayer.html). The Sephardic minhag is not to recite tachanun, lamnatze’ach, or tefillah lidavid from [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html) [Sivan](feasts.html) until the 12th.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Private fast are generally forbidden. An example of a private fast: An Ashkenazi couple who is to wed on Isru Chag will *not* observe the custom of fasting on the day they enter the chuppah.

[One](one.html) final lesson. Rav Elyashiv zatzal[[18]](#footnote-18) writes[[19]](#footnote-19) that on Isru Chag everyone should make sure that the infusion of spirituality that he or she had received during the Yom Tov continue to be tied to the rest of the year. This is the obligation of Isru Chag – the “binding of the [holiday](festival.html).”

**Difficulties**

When Isru Chag [Pesach](passover.html), for Israelis, falls out on [Shabbat](sabbath.html), is there any practical room to say that on that [Shabbat](sabbath.html) [one](one.html) may use his [chametz](chametz.html) that was sold to a non-[Jew](gen-jew.html)? Hakham Ovadiah allowed this.[[20]](#footnote-20) How can the [Jew](gen-jew.html) buy it back or make a kinyan on [Shabbat](sabbath.html) to allow this?

Hakham Ovadiah is lenient in this matter. His main debate is concerning the matter of muktzeh,[[21]](#footnote-21) but he adds that concerning the problem of making a kinyan from a non-[Jew](gen-jew.html), a clause is included in the deed of sale that permits the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) owner to [eat](eating.html) the [chametz](chametz.html) on the [Shabbat](sabbath.html) following [Pesach](passover.html).

For sales of [chametz](chametz.html) that don’t include this clause, the [chametz](chametz.html) (which still belongs to a non-[Jew](gen-jew.html)) cannot be [eaten](eating.html) on the [Shabbat](sabbath.html) following [Pesach](passover.html).

**Conclusion**

[Festivals](festivals.html) are a [time](time.html) of intense [spiritual](physical.html) [connection](connection.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html). The idea of Isru Chag is that [one](one.html) draws some of the holiness of the [festival](festival.html) celebration into the less [spiritually](physical.html) elevated reality of everyday life. Since feasting is [one](one.html) of the ways in which [Jews](gen-jew.html) celebrate [festivals](festivals.html), it has become customary to [eat](eating.html) and drink a little something extra on Isru Chag to continue the feeling of celebration.

# Isru Chag [Events](feasts.html)

[Nisan](feasts.html) **22**

Isru Chag in [Eretz Israel](city.html).

The [Omer](omer.html), day 7, week 1.

Water swells on the earth in the days of [Noah](noach.html). Day 112. ***Genesis 7:24***

[Isaac](isaac.html) is [circumcised](circumcz.html). ***Genesis 21:4,*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***12:40-41***, ***Genesis 18, 19,*** *Rosh HaShannah 10b*

Yocheved hides Moses after a 6 month and [one](one.html) day pregnancy - day 45. Artscroll Mesorah on Shavuos, page 61.

Israelites start crossing the desert of [Etham](stages.html), without any water. **Day 1** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***15:22,*** [***Numbers***](nchart.html) ***33:8***

Joshua begins his march around [Jericho](stages.html), day 1. [*Seder*](haggada.html) *Olam 11*

Zechariah and Elizabeth [circumcise](circumcz.html), and [name](name.html), John the Baptist. [***Luke***](luke.html) ***1:57-63***

[Yeshua](yeshua.html), at 12 years old, stays in [Jerusalem](city.html), [teaching](teacher.html) while look for Him. [***Luke***](luke.html) ***2:41-51***

Paul leaves Phillipi after spending 3 months there. **Day 1** ***Acts 20:6***

[Nisan](feasts.html) **23**

Isru Chag in the diaspora.

The [Omer](omer.html), day 8, week 1 plus 1 day.

Water swells on the earth in the days of [Noah](noach.html). Day 113. ***Genesis 7:24***

Yocheved hides Moses after a [six](six.html) month and [one](one.html) day pregnancy - day 46. Artscroll Mesorah on Shavuos, page 61.

Laban learns that [Jacob](israelja.html) has fled from him. ***Genesis 31:22*** *Book of Jubilees*

Laban pursues [Jacob](israelja.html). Day 1 ***Genesis 31:23*** *Book of Jubilees*

Israelites continue crossing the desert of [Etham](stages.html), without any water. **Day 2** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***15:22,*** [***Numbers***](nchart.html) ***33:8***

Joshua is marching around [Jericho](stages.html), day 2. [*Seder*](haggada.html) *Olam 11*

Some say that on this day were hung the [seven](seven.html) sons of King Shaul, as demanded by the Givonim. ***2 Samuel 21:9***

[Yeshua](yeshua.html), at [twelve](twelve.html) years old, stays in [Jerusalem](city.html), [teaching](teacher.html) while parents go home. [***Luke***](luke.html) ***2:41-51***

Paul leaves Phillipi and travels [five](five.html) days to Troas. **Day 2** ***Acts 20:6***

[**Sivan**](feasts.html) **7**

Isru Chag in [Eretz Israel](city.html)

Moses goes up on [Sinai](stages.html), the [first](one.html) [time](time.html), to receive the Torah - day 1. Rashi 32:1, [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***24:18***

Uriah gives Bathsheba a conditional divorce before going to war. [Shabbat](sabbath.html) 56a

Hosea, the son of Beeri, died.

[**Sivan**](feasts.html) **8**

Isru Chag in the diaspora.

Moses goes up on [Sinai](stages.html), the [first](one.html) [time](time.html), to receive the Torah - day 2. Rashi 32:1, [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***24:18***

[**Tishri**](feasts.html)**23**

Isru Chag in [Eretz Israel](city.html)

        Rebecca’s nurse, Deborah, dies. *Book of Jubilees*

        Moses waged war on Og. *Tanhuma, Hukkat 24*

        Solomon sends the people home, with joyful and glad hearts.***II Chronicles 7:10***

[Yeshua](yeshua.html) rebukes a [demon](demons.html) in a boy and heals him.  [***Luke***](luke.html) ***9:37-45***

        Adulteress brought to [Yeshua](yeshua.html). He says, "let him who is without [sin](sin.html) cast the [first](one.html) stone". ***John 7:27 - 8:11***

[Yeshua](yeshua.html) spends the night on the [Mount of Olives](east.html).  ***John 7:37-53***

        The disciples debate "who will be the greatest in the Kingdom of [Heaven](heaven.html)."  [***Luke***](luke.html) ***9:44-48***

[**Tishri**](feasts.html)**24th**

Isru Chag in the diaspora.

        The Ezra's people fast, in sackcloth and ashes, read the [law](law.html), and rededicate themselves to God.***Neh. 9:1 - 10:39***

        The [Jews](gen-jew.html) under Nechemia cried out to [Hashem](hashem.html) and made a [new](new.html) [covenant](covenant.html) with Him. ***Yoma 69b***

[HaShem](hashem.html) gave theevil inclination of[idolatry](idolatry.html) into their [hands](fourteen.html), and it came flaming out of the Holy of Holies. ***Yoma 69b***

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1. literally “Bind the Festival”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In the Jerusalem Talmud the day is known as bereih de-mo’ada (“the son of the festival”; TJ, Av. Zar. 1:1, 39b). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The concept of Isru Hag is explained in the Yerushalmi as being the day after the holiday that has a part of the holiday itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The ‘Land of Israel’. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Lit. *The Land of Israel* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the Land of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This paragraph is an edited excerpt from: The Book of Our Heritage: The Jewish Year and Its Days of Significance, Volume 2, by Eliyahu Ki Tov [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Shalosh Regalim. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Tehillim (Psalms) 113 – 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. A place in Israel not to be confused with Mahuza in Babylon. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Sc. enjoys himself with better food and drink on the Festival, or, alternatively, enjoys himself in this way on the day following the Festival. The alternative interpretation is the origin of the name *Isru hag* given to the day after a festival. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. issur lahag [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Shulchan Aruch 429:2, [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. In a responsum to a community that had inquired as to the rationale behind the observance of Isru Chag, Rabbi Yosef Hayyim (1832 - 1909), known as the Ben Ish Chai, cited the famous Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534 - 1572), known as the ARI, to the effect that we [Jews] connect the day after the holiday to the holiday itself due to the remaining “light” of the holiday – in other words, so that the sanctity of the holiday will be extended. - Shu”t Torah Lishmah: Orach Chaim, Question 140 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah 1:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. confession of sins [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 445, Chazon Ovadia Yom Tov page 329. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Early on, it was standard to refer to great Rabbis who had passed away with the appellation “Zal” - “zichronah livracha “May his/her/their memory be a blessing” (see here). Over time, people started using the appellation “Zatzal” - zecher tzadik livracha “May the memory of this tzaddik be a blessing” - when talking about great rabbis who have passed away. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Divrei Aggadah p. 458 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Yecheveh Daat 2 Siman 64, and Yabia Omer Orach Chaim 9 Siman 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Yecheveh Daat 2:64) cites many authorities who are lenient concerning this matter, in particular because the chametz has been sold to a non-Jew, and there is no prohibition of muktzeh on a non-Jew’s chametz. Muktzeh (Hebrew: מוקצה; also transliterated as muktzah, and either spelling without the ending -h) is a Hebrew word that means "separated", or "set aside". The generally accepted view regarding these items is that they may be touched though not moved during Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) or Yom Tov (Jewish holiday). These items include things like pen, pencil, and money. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)