

Flight Options
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These instructions were designed for our brothers and sisters traveling to Israel for the Feasts from Grand Rapids, Michigan area. The same tactics can be applied when flying from anywhere. Enjoy and thank you for reading the guide!

Flying to Israel, over the past few years, has become increasingly difficult. Hopefully, with both strong and sensible people leading our Country, those difficulties should wane. However, with there being uncertainties, we have compiled a few options for those who would like to make their travel plans themselves, exploring many different ways to get to Israel and the various costs associated with those different routes.

Sarah and Tom will be offering a group purchase for everyone else. The following information may be good for everyone to read, but you do not have to read beyond this point if you will be traveling with the group.

All of the following options assume an El Al flight into Tel Aviv, Israel. The differences are where in the world that the El Al flight is picked up.

Option 1.
Chicago - Europe - Israel

Because of the tensions in the Middle East – to save about \$1500 it is best to endure a slight inconvenience associated with choosing a flight with any airline to a city in Europe such as Vienna, Cypress, Paris, Athens, Lanarka, etc. Then, buy a separate ticket to Tel Aviv Israel (Ben Gurion) via El Al Airlines ONLY. The inconveniences lie in the manual layover process, which is explained here soon.

Instructions--Go to flights.google.com – type in the departure city and date, but leave the arrival city open. Search. A global map should pop up. Use the map to see which are the least expensive cities to fly to in Europe. List the options you prefer. Then, find the prices from that city in Europe (or anywhere really) to Tel Aviv using only El Al airlines. Do this for each of the cities you listed.

Be sure to give yourself at least 3 hours (or more) layover time to handle switching airlines manually, getting your bags manually, re-entering terminal after getting your bags (going through security again) etc.

I suggest writing down all departure and arrival times as you buy, to be absolutely sure that you book flights that connect. NOTE: There is no public

transport in Israel from about noon on Friday to Sundown on Saturday, so ensure your arrival is before 9am on a Friday – unless you want to risk the added expense associated with paying for a taxi or a rental car upon arrival.

Option 2.

Grand Rapids to Europe to Israel

This is the same as Option 1, but flies from GRR instead of CHI. Average cost to fly from Chicago to Vienna is \$600 – 1,200, while flying out of Grand Rapids can add anywhere from \$0 to \$1000. A recent purchase proved to add only about \$175 for this convenience.

Flying out of Chicago is usually the least expensive compared to Grand Rapids, though, depending on train ticket cost. Sometimes it is worth the extra \$100 - \$500 for convenience, to fly from Grand Rapids. It is free to park your car at the Train Station, but not at the Airport.

Option 3.

Chicago to Israel

El Al does not fly out of Grand Rapids, but they do fly out of Chicago and JFK. Getting a direct El-Al flight from one of these Airports is much more expensive, but the manual layover inconvenience is foregone.

Instructions--Sort out your travel from home to Chicago or JFK. Ensure you are using El-Al to fly from Chicago or JFK. Note the manual layover process in Chicago or JFK.

Generally speaking, the earlier flights are purchased, the less expensive they will be. Buying airline tickets three to six months ahead of time is best.

Getting to Chicago

An enjoyable morning adventure to start the trip

You can ride the train to Chicago but you can also drive. If you choose to ride the train it will cost about \$60 - \$140 round trip to ride the train from Grand Rapids or Holland to Chicago Union Station. <https://www.amtrak.com/home.html> is where you can purchase train tickets. The train leaves at 6am in the morning and gets to Chicago between 9 and 10am. You will need a flight that leaves Chicago in the late afternoon (after 4pm should be safe, after 3pm is do-able but a bit stressful) because it takes at least an hour to get from the Amtrak train station in Chicago to the ORD Airport. You want to arrive at the airport about 3

hours before take-off.

For the way home it is similar, but the train leaves at 6:30pm to go from Union Station in CHI to GRR. It arrives in GRR between 11p and 12a.

The trip from home will look like a 6am ride on amtrak from GRR to CHI, then an hour subway ride from Amtrak to ORD. The subway costs about \$6, from the train station to Chicago O'Hare International Airport. The ride back home is simply the reverse with the change in Union Station departure time.

If this is the option the group chooses, we will all be traveling together so the navigation from stop to stop will be guided.

BAGS-

If you are choosing a manual layover, you can forego collecting your bag, which entails leaving and re-entering the terminal, by packing light – a personal item and a carry on only. This way there are no checked bags to collect. I have done both. With a checked bag, if you have a guide, the inconvenience is minor, but does take an extra hour or two to collect the checked bag, recheck the bag, and re-enter the terminal through security.

If you find a travel option you like but the layover is short, an hour or two only – you can make it work with the carry on options. MOST tickets offer a free carry on and a free personal item, and many flights offer a free checked bag as well.

No matter your choice- be sure to bring plenty of water for your trip. Look up long haul flight best practices and travel hacks – you'll be glad you did! It will make your journey more of a fun adventure and less of a stressful learning experience.

Most Cost Effective Option (\$600 - \$1500)

- Take the train to Chicago
- Take the subway to Chicago airport
- Fly with any airline to Israel (cancellation possibilities are moderate)

Most Reliable & Cost Effective Option (\$900 - \$1700)

- Take the train to Chicago
- Take the subway to Chicago airport
- Fly with any airline to city near Israel
- Fly with El Al from that nearby city to Tel-Aviv, Israel (cancellation possibilities are nearly non-existent)

Most Reliable and Convenient Option (\$1700 - 3000)

- Fly from Grand Rapids to Chicago
- Fly with El Al straight out Chicago or JFK (cancellation possibilities are nearly non-existent)

We encourage first timers to stick with the group. For our older friends, if they are worried about the travel being too strenuous, a direct flight, with EL Al from Chicago is enjoyable – there is free personal entertainment on the planes and plenty of meals. It is also a good time to study and pray.

We will meet THIS YEAR in Jersusalem!