

# Yom Kippur

## Watch overview videos:

- **Crash Course on Yom Kippur (6:06)**  
[http://www.aish.com/h/hh/video/Crash\\_Course\\_on\\_Yom\\_Kippur.html](http://www.aish.com/h/hh/video/Crash_Course_on_Yom_Kippur.html)
- **The Meaning of Kol Nidre (5:30)**  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW-cSrxQ1IU>

## Basics:

**Pronunciation:** YOHM ha-kee-poorEEM (♫ <http://bit.ly/16aBUDI>)

**Meaning:** Day of Atonement

**Jewish Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei

**Secular Date:** Generally falls around mid-to-late September

**Length:** 25 Hours

## Themes:

- Atonement
- Prayer, Repentance, Charitable Acts
- Angel for a Day
- Sovereignty of the Holy One
- Sin as “Missing the Mark”
- Being inscribed in the Book of Life
- Releasing of Vows
- Closing of the Gates

## History:

Read: <http://bit.ly/1boL0jC>

- Yom Kippur is a holiday that is mentioned in the Torah – Leviticus 16:29 (<http://bit.ly/GVHC6p>)
- Ancient observances, as outlined in the Torah, involved the purification of the High Priest so he could enter the “Holy of Holies” and the sacrifice of animals as “sin offerings” for the people. Among the sacrifices were two goats, one for the priest and one for the people’s sins. One goat was sacrificed and the other “set free” into the wilderness to “Azazel.” This is the origin of the idea of a “scape goat.”

## Halakhah

Read: <http://bit.ly/18bhYUX>

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Healthy able adults are required to fast for 25 hours

- Children do not fast
- The elderly or infirm do not fast
- Pregnant women may not fast

Five aspects of Fasting on Yom Kippur

1. Eating and drinking
2. Washing for pleasure
3. Applying oils or lotions to the skin
4. Sexual relations
5. Wearing leather shoes

To truly atonement (teshuva) one must:

1. Acknowledge Errors
2. Stopping Harmful Actions
3. Verbally Admit Errors
4. Commit to Change

Shabbat:

- The Avinu Malkeinu is not said in traditional communities on Shabbat, with the exception of the Neilah service.

## Customs

Read: <http://bit.ly/19xg1AA>

- Greetings:
  - G'mar Chatimah Tovah
    - Lit: a good final sealing
    - Idiomatic: May you be inscribed for Good
  - Tzom Kal
    - Lit: easy fast
    - Idiomatic: Have an easy Fast

- **Preparatory Customs**

Read: <http://bit.ly/1hOzFLv>

- **Mikvah:** traditional for men to partake in a Mikvah (ritual immersion)
  - Traditional being adopted by men and women in many egalitarian communities
- **Feasting before Fasting**
  - It's considered a mitzvah to eat a festive meal before fasting, two meals are traditionally eaten. One in early afternoon and then the Seudah

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Hamafseket, right before sunset to separate the regular week from Yom Kippur

- **Karparot:**

Read: <http://bit.ly/162K4mM>

- Ritual of “substitution” for atonement, expiation, forgiveness
- Folk custom, rarely practiced outside of ultra-orthodox communities. Strong rabbinic opposition since the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE.
- Involves sacrificing a chicken or rooster as “substitution” for person, so that person may live – reflects the ancient “scape goat” ritual of the Torah. “A life for a life.” Rooster is swung about the person’s head three times and then slaughtered. Meat is shared with the less fortunate.
- Some modern communities have re-adopted the custom, but substitute a bag of money for the animal, which is then given as Tzedakah.

- **Day of Customs**

- **Wearing White:** traditional to wear white during Yom Kippur services to symbolize purity and humility, from Isaiah (1:18) that our sins shall be made, "as white as snow." Until recently this was an Orthodox custom, but it is being more and more widely adopted in other communities.
- **Kittel:** Men often wear a white kittel, a shroud or tunic, also worn at weddings and that men are traditionally buried in.
- **Tallitot:** traditionally only worn for morning prayers (Shacharit) are worn throughout Yom Kippur, including Erev Yom Kippur services.
- **Break Fast Meal** – celebratory meal with family, friends and community to break the fast.

## Liturgy

Read: <http://bit.ly/1cLoDss>

- Both Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah use a prayer book that is called a Machzor, which means, “cycle.”
- Much of the liturgy is a modified version of the standard daily prayer cycle, with the additions of several unique services, prayers, melodies, liturgical prayers (piyyut), recitation of Avinu Malkeinu (our father our king), blowing of the shofar, special verses on the Holy One’s sovereignty, remembrance of the Jewish people, past and promised redemption
- Prayer Services in Chronological Order:
  - **Hatarat Nedarim** – personal release of vows, done in small groups before the start of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Not generally a synagogue service. This is not a common practice, but one that is seeing resurgence of popularity in some communities.

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- **Maariv:** Erev Yom Kippur modified version of the traditional service featuring Kol Nidre prayer. Service is often just referred to as “Kol Nidre” due to the power and popularity of the key prayer.

- Kol Nidre: (Lit: all vows)  
Read & Listen: <http://bit.ly/1ajEYhQ>

Ancient prayer written in Aramaic, which releases petitioners from all vows made to the Holy One either – “from the last Day of Atonement until this one” (original) or “this Day of Atonement until the next” (12<sup>th</sup> Century)

- Absolves individuals from vows made to the Holy One that they could not/cannot keep.
- Prayer took on unique significance during the Spanish Inquisition when many Conversos (Jews forced to convert) would use this prayer to release them from vows they may be forced to make under duress.
- Prayer is repeated three times to ensure the ancient formula is stated perfectly, at least once.
- The most commonly known melody for Kol Nidre is the Ashkenazic (Eastern European) one that was developed between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century in Germany. The current arrangement is widely credited to 18<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant composer Max Bruch.
- The Torah is removed from the ark during the prayer.
- Vidui & Selichot
  - Vidui: The confessional prayers (Ashamanu & Al Cheyt) are also included in the Erev Yom Kippur Maariv service.
  - Selichot: Prayers of repentance are included as well
- **Yom Kippur Day:**
  - **Shacharit:** Traditional morning prayers with the inclusion of Vidui, Selichot, Avinu Malkeinu and other unique prayers.
    - **Torah Portions:** The Torah portion is Vayikrah (Leviticus) Chapter 16, verse 1-34. There are 6 aliyot and Maftir (BaMidbar (Numbers) Chapter 29, verse 7-11), which only happens on Yom Kippur. If Yom Kippur falls on Shabbat, then there are 7 aliyot. The Torah portions primarily focus on the biblical observance and sacrifices of Yom Kippur.
      - In non-orthodox communities there is some variation on the number of aliyot and exactly which parts of the Torah portion are read.
    - **Haftarah:** Yeshayahu (Isaiah) Chapter 57: verse 14 until Chapter 58, verse 14. These verses focus on the importance of Tefilah, Teshuvah, and Tzedakah.

- **Yizkor:** Special memorial service to commemorate loss of personal loved ones. Some non-orthodox communities also include prayers for Jewish martyrs, if they are not holding a Musaf service. Generally, those in mourning are the ones who attend this service.
- **Musaf:**  
Generally practiced in Orthodox & Conservative communities. In other communities, these prayers are often included in Yizkor or Minchah services.
  - Avodah: Recounts the service in the Temple in ancient times.
  - Martyrology: remembers the torture and murder of Talmudic sages by the Romans
- **Minchah:**
  - Similar to standard festival Minchah, with inclusion of book of Jonah, as Haftarah.
  - Smaller communities sometimes either skip Minchah and offer a study session on Jonah and include all other parts into the Neilah service.
- **Neilah:** (lit: locking) The concluding service of Yom Kippur is the final moments for repentance.
  - The service title symbolizes of the closing and sealing of the Book of Life, and probably from the closing of the Temple gates before the fall of the Temple, the imagery of the closing of the “heavenly courts” for another year.
  - The service includes a final recitation of the Vidui (confession), Avinu Malkeinu (Our Father, Our King), Selichot, and the Priestly Blessing.
  - The final element of Neilah is a final blast of the shofar, a Tekiah Gedolah.

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- The Rosh Chodesh Table: Foods at the New Moon, Judith Solomon
- Seasons for Celebration, Karen L. Fox and Phyllis Zimbler Miller
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