

YOM KIPPUR

INTRODUCTION TO YOM KIPPUR

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Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement. In ancient times, it was more festive than now and unmarried people of both genders would meet and try to find their future spouses.

Yom Kippur is a serious but also a happy day, since all Jews who repent (do teshuvah) have their sins forgiven on that day.

Teshuvah has four main parts:

- Charata Regretting what we have done and feeling bad about it.
- Vidui Recognizing and admitting that we have done something wrong.
- Kabala Resolving not to repeat that mistake.
- Azivat hachet Being in the same situation as before but avoiding doing the sin.

The Torah tells us that there is an inherent property to Yom Kippur that causes spiritual purification and removes sins.

All Jews can become like angels on Yom Kippur. In order to imitate angels (which are spiritual beings), we abstain from five activities that are associated with physical beings. We do not wash, anoint our bodies, eat or drink, have intimate relations, or wear leather shoes. To further imitate angels, when we say the shema, we say Baruch shem kevod malchuto l'olam va'ed out loud, as opposed to the rest of the year, when we say it quietly.

For more on fast days, see [Fast Days](#).

PRE-YOM KIPPUR

PRE-YOM KIPPUR: ASKING FORGIVENESS

Asking Forgiveness

- If you know you have offended or otherwise injured someone, ask for forgiveness before Yom Kippur (if doing so will bring up bad feelings from the past, you may not do so--but you might not be forgiven for that injury).
- If you may have offended, ask for forgiveness.
- If you are certain that you did not, don't ask for forgiveness.
- If you did not ask someone for forgiveness (whom you should have asked) before Yom Kippur, you should do so afterward.
- If a person wrongs you intentionally, you do not need to forgive him or her unless the person repairs the wrong and is genuinely regretful for having done the evil.

PRE-YOM KIPPUR: NULLIFYING VOWS (HATARAT NEDARIM)

Nullifying Vows (Hatarat Nedarim)

Hatarat nedarim (nullification of vows) should be done before Rosh Hashana (but it may be done any time of the year) in front of three adult male shomer-Shabbat Jews. You may make a condition that you never want to make a vow of any type, but this might not be effective or valid. The formula may be said in English or any other spoken language.

PRE-YOM KIPPUR: KAPAROT

Kaparot

Kaparot with a chicken or money should be done before Yom Kippur, but you may do it before then or any other time. This is a universal Jewish custom.

PRE-YOM KIPPUR: MEAL (SE'UDA HAMAFSEKET)

Meaning of pre-Yom Kippur Meal (Se'uda HaMafseket)

We eat a festive meal for the final meal before Yom Kippur to celebrate that we will be forgiven for our previous sins on Yom Kippur.

Mezuman/Minyan at pre-Yom Kippur Meal (Se'uda HaMafseket)

A mezuman or minyan is permitted at the pre-Yom Kippur meal (se'uda ha'mafseket).

REASON It is a festive meal.

Challa Dipped in Honey for pre-Yom Kippur Meal (Se'uda HaMafseket)

Eating challa dipped in honey is a non-binding custom for the pre-Yom Kippur festive meal (se'uda ha'mafseket).

Pre-Yom Kippur Meal: Shir HaMa'alot

Shir ha'ma'alot should be said before birkat ha'mazon at the final meal (se'uda ha'mafseket) before Yom Kippur (and also at a meal after Yom Kippur ends).

Wishing Easy Fast

You may wish “an easy fast” for Yom Kippur since, although Yom Kippur is supposed to be a day of afflicting our souls, there are degrees of affliction!

PRE-YOM KIPPUR: YAHRZEIT CANDLE

Pre-Yom Kippur: Yahrzeit Candle

On Yom Kippur, it is a universal custom to light one candle if one or both parents are deceased. Every married couple also lights one candle for themselves and their children (if any).

YOM KIPPUR

YOM KIPPUR: WHEN TO START

Yom Kippur: Starting Fast

Yom Kippur fasting starts with candle lighting for women and at least 7 minutes before sunset for men.

Yom Kippur: Delaying Start Past Candle Lighting

Lighting the candles starts the holiday of Yom Kippur. If you want to start the holiday later, you must:

- Make a condition when lighting candles that you are not yet starting the holiday (by saying “I am lighting Yom Kippur candles but not starting Yom Kippur until 7 minutes before sunset”-this may only be done in urgent situations) and
- Omit the she'hecheyanu blessing at candle lighting. Men say she'hecheyanu later (in kol nidre).

NOTE Women then say she'hecheyanu at least 7 minutes before sunset! (One may not make a condition for she'hecheyanu!)

NOTE If a woman lit candles for Yom Kippur more than 7 minutes before sunset (as is normally done at 18 or even 40 minutes before sunset), but made a condition (tenai) that she would still eat or do melacha until somewhat later, she must still stop eating and doing melacha by no later than 7 minutes before sunset.

YOM KIPPUR: WHAT TO WEAR

Yom Kippur: What To Wear: Leather Shoes

You may not wear leather shoes on Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur: What To Wear: Kittel for Men

All married men should wear a kittel on Yom Kippur during all prayer services (this is a universal custom). Some men do not wear a kittel during the first year of marriage.

YOM KIPPUR: IF YOU MUST EAT

Yom Kippur: No Kiddush If You Must Eat

If you must eat on Yom Kippur (for health reasons), **do not** make kiddush and do not use two loaves of bread, even if Yom Kippur coincides with Shabbat.

Yom Kippur: Birkat HaMazon If You Must Eat Bread

If you must eat a meal including at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of bread on Yom Kippur, say birkat ha'mazon afterward. Add ya'aleh v'yavo (and if Yom Kippur coincides with Shabbat, also add retzei).

YOM KIPPUR: WASHING

Yom Kippur: Washing To Remove Tum'a

On Yom Kippur (as on Tish'a b'Av), if you must wash your hands to remove:

- Tum'a: You may wash your hands only up to the knuckle that connects your fingers to the rest of your hand (thumb: second knuckle; fingers: third knuckle).
- Dirt from your hand: You may wash wherever the dirt is on your hand.

YOM KIPPUR: PRAYERS

YOM KIPPUR: TORAH READING

Yom Kippur: Torah Reading: Forbidden Relationships

On Yom Kippur, at mincha, we read in the Torah about forbidden relationships to remind ourselves that even on the holiest day of the year, we may be subject to temptations and sins.

YOM KIPPUR: BOWING

Yom Kippur: Bowing for Musaf Alenu

For how to bow at Yom Kippur Musaf Alenu, see [Waist-Bowing and Knee-Bowing](#).

YOM KIPPUR: ENDING

Yom Kippur: Ending: Havdala

After Yom Kippur, say the full havdala.

NOTE You must light a candle from a flame that was burning since before Yom Kippur began. If you do not have one, skip the blessing on the flame.

If Shabbat coincides with Yom Kippur, you should light the candle from a flame that was burning from before Shabbat began. If you do not have one, you may light a new flame after Shabbat and Yom Kippur are over. Don't say the blessing on spices.

Post-Yom Kippur Meal: Shir HaMa'alot

Shir ha'ma'alot should be said after eating a meal that you began after Yom Kippur ended.

See [Fast Days](#).