

# Yom Kippur

A Basic Summary of Holiday Laws  
In a Clear and Simple Style

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Basic

Detailed

By Rabbi Yochanan Schnall

## ❖ Erev Yom Kippur- The Day Preceding Yom Kippur

### Mitzvah to Eat

There is a Torah obligation to eat and drink on Erev Yom Kippur.<sup>1</sup>

- This obligation applies to men, women<sup>2</sup> and children over bar/bas mitzvah.<sup>3</sup>
- A significant fleishige (meat) meal called the seudah hamafsekes is eaten in the late afternoon before the fast begins<sup>4</sup>. (See below for more information regarding this meal.)
  - Some have a custom to eat a fleishige meal earlier in the day as well.<sup>5</sup>

### Changes in Prayers

- On Erev Yom Kippur, very few selichos are recited.
- Furthermore, in the morning, the following prayers are omitted from shacharis: *mizmor lesoda*, *tachanun*, *lamnatzeyach*<sup>6</sup> and *avinu malkeinu*<sup>7</sup>.
  - If Erev Yom Kippur falls on a Friday, *avinu malkeinu* is recited during Shacharis.<sup>8</sup>

### General Preparations

- As the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah climax, it is incumbent upon us to make amends for what we have done wrong. Since Hashem only forgives interpersonal sins if the injured party also grants forgiveness, it is essential for people to seek forgiveness from each other. An injured person who is approached by someone with apparent regrets should endeavor to be forgiving. Measure for measure, one who is forgiving, will surely receive mercy from Hashem.<sup>9</sup>
- All married men - even those who do not have deceased close relatives - should obtain a 24 hour ("yahrtzeit) candle. It will be lit before Yom Kippur.
- Married men will be wearing a "kittel" throughout all the Yom Kippur prayers. This simple article of clothing is similar to a robe and is often made from white, broadcloth material. It can be purchased in any Jewish bookstore.
- Reading through the Yom Kippur prayers in preparation for the Holiday is quite worthwhile. Two particular prayers one may want to look at are Vidui and the rendition of the Kohein Gadol's service in the Beis Hamikdosh (found in the chazzan's repetition of mussaf)

### Kapparos

Kapparos is an ancient custom that involves a live chicken or its monetary substitute that symbolically serves as atonement. More on the custom's procedure and its prayer can be found in a machzor.<sup>10</sup>

- When using money, kapparos is usually performed on Erev Yom Kippur. If a chicken is used, it is often performed with a synagogue or group sometime between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

### Mikvah

Men and their sons go to the mikvah today.<sup>11</sup>

- Ideally, this should be done before praying mincha.<sup>12</sup>
- If one finds it difficult to go to the mikvah, he should consult a rabbi for a possible alternative.<sup>13</sup>

### Mincha

Mincha is recited prior to the **Seudah Hamafsekes**<sup>14</sup> and it is scheduled earlier than usual.

- It is proper to be dressed in Shabbos clothing when praying mincha.<sup>15</sup>

- At the conclusion of the individual Shmoneh Esrei, the **Viduy**- Confession is recited.<sup>16</sup> It is recommended to bring a machzor for this reason. (This prayer is described below in ❖ **Yom Kippur Prayers**)
- It is customary to give much charity before mincha<sup>17</sup> and many synagogues have charity plates set out for this purpose. Some people do **Kapparos** at this time.

### Seudah Hamafsekes- The Dividing Meal

There is an obligation to eat a final, festive meal before Yom Kippur begins. (Mafsekes means “of separation” for, this meal separates between Erev Yom Kippur and Yom Kippur).

- It is extremely important that this meal is concluded well before sunset.<sup>18</sup>
- Dairy is not eaten during the Seudah Hamafsekes.<sup>19</sup>
- This meal consists of light, easily digestible foods. (For example, chicken is served instead of beef.)<sup>20</sup> One also must be careful not to overeat.<sup>21</sup>
- Some have a custom to eat *kreplach* (meat-filled dumplings) during this meal.
- One who does not want to accept the fast with the conclusion of the meal should preferably express this intent before reciting Birchas Hamazon.<sup>22</sup>

### Final Preparations

- Our homes are cleaned, the beds made and the tables are covered with tablecloths in honor of Yom Kippur.<sup>23</sup>
- Clean, respectable Shabbos clothing is worn on Yom Kippur.<sup>24</sup> It is inappropriate to wear flashy jewelry or clothes during this solemn day.<sup>25</sup>
- Fathers (and in some communities, mothers as well,) bless their children during this time.<sup>26</sup> The texts for these blessings can be found in a machzor.
- It is customary to light yahrtzeit candles in memory of deceased close relatives.<sup>27</sup>
- In addition, all married men light a 24 hour (“yahrtzeit”) candle as a *ner habari* (a Kabbalistic concept). If the *ner habari*'s flame was extinguished on Yom Kippur, it should be relit after the holiday so that it can burn all the way down.<sup>28</sup>
  - In some communities, these candles are lit at the synagogue in a random order so that it is not apparent whose candle is whose.<sup>29</sup>
- In every home, a 24 hour (“yahrtzeit”) candle should be lit with the intent of using it for havdalah at the conclusion of Yom Kippur.<sup>30</sup>
  - Tip: Many yahrtzeit candles do not last until after Yom Kippur. To extend a candle's life, add some olive oil to it before lighting.
- Candles are lit before Yom Kippur as they are lit before Shabbos. Their appropriate blessings are in the machzor.<sup>31</sup>
  - Women who have a custom to recite Shehechyanu when lighting candles do not repeat it with the congregation during Kol Nidrei.<sup>32</sup>
- Although Yom Kippur automatically begins at sunset, there is obligation to accept the holiday with all of its restrictions at least a couple of minutes before then.<sup>33</sup>
  - Men accept this while reciting the prayer *tefilas zakah* at the synagogue (see ❖ **Yom Kippur Prayers** below).
  - Women accept this during candle lighting.
    - If accepting Yom Kippur at this time poses a difficulty, a woman verbalize her intent not to accept Yom Kippur with this candle lighting.<sup>34</sup>

In this case, she must make a conscious acceptance of Yom Kippur a few minutes before sunset. In addition, even those who have the custom to recite Shehechyanu when lighting the candles, wait to recite it until accepting Yom Kippur.<sup>35</sup>

### Kittel and Tallis

Married men wear a kittel (see ❖ **Erev Yom Kippur** above) and a tallis over their clothes throughout all of the Yom Kippur prayers.<sup>36</sup>

- Customs vary whether a kittel is worn by someone who is within the period of mourning for a parent or close relative.<sup>37</sup>
- The tallis is put on before Kol Nidrei. A blessing is recited when putting it on as long as it is still before sunset.<sup>38</sup>
- The tallis and kittel are removed before entering a bathroom.<sup>39</sup>
- The following laws apply whenever a tallis is worn:
  - A tallis that was deliberately removed with the intent of replacing it on a short while later (such as in order to use the bathroom) does not require a blessing when it is replaced.<sup>40</sup>
  - If a tallis accidentally slipped off and none of it remained on, some opinions require a new blessing when replacing it.<sup>41</sup>
- On Yom Kippur, most synagogues have a break. If the tallis was removed at that time, a blessing is usually required when replacing it. The only instance in which a blessing is unnecessary is if the tallis was removed for less than 2-3 hours and one remained awake throughout that time.<sup>42</sup>

### ❖ Yom Kippur Restrictions

There are five restrictions particular to Yom Kippur. It is prohibited to:<sup>43</sup>

1. Eat or drink
2. Unnecessarily wash any part of the body
3. Apply creams or oils to the body
4. Wear leather shoes
5. Have marital relations

Each of these restrictions will be clarified below. In addition, all activities that are forbidden on Shabbos are forbidden on Yom Kippur as well.<sup>44</sup>

- These restrictions apply to men and women over bar/bas mitzvah.<sup>45</sup>
- Any Yom Kippur prohibition is violated to aid a life that is at risk.<sup>46</sup>
- These obligations begin before sunset the night leading into Yom Kippur<sup>47</sup> and conclude the following night no less than fifty minutes after sunset (for those living in North America<sup>48</sup>).

### Eating and Drinking

- It is forbidden to eat or drink even the smallest amount of food on Yom Kippur.<sup>49</sup> Even rinsing out one's mouth is not allowed.<sup>50</sup>
- One who is sick, weak, or needs to take medication should consult a rabbi (preferably before Yom Kippur if the need is anticipated).
- Children are trained to keep a partial fast.<sup>51</sup>
  - The appropriate age to begin this fast is nine years old for healthy children, and ten years old for weak children.<sup>52</sup>

- The partial fast protocol is as follows: It begins the same time as for adults, continuing throughout the night. For the first year of the regimen, breakfast is eaten an hour later than usual, for the second year of the regimen, two hours later, and so on.<sup>53</sup>
- A child under bar or bas mitzvah that is very hungry or thirsty may immediately break his or her fast.<sup>54</sup>

### Washing

It is forbidden to wash any part of one's body on Yom Kippur.

- In some instances washing is permitted. These are detailed below.

Note that in all circumstances it remains forbidden to use hot tap water<sup>55</sup>, bar soap<sup>56</sup> or the aid of absorbent materials<sup>57</sup> (such as a washcloth or sponge).

- It is permitted to wash away dirt but the washing must be limited to the affected area. If the dirt is spread out, the general area may be washed.<sup>58</sup>
- Washing for a significant medical necessity is also allowed.<sup>59</sup>
- In the morning, hands are washed in the usual alternating manner but only up to the joints where fingers attach to the palm.<sup>60</sup> The usual blessing is not recited until after one washes from using the bathroom.<sup>61</sup>
- A kohen's hands are washed before reciting the priestly blessings. This may be done up until his wrists.<sup>62</sup>
- If it is necessary to wash an object (such as food for a child), one does not need to worry about inadvertently getting his or her hands wet.<sup>63</sup>
- Children are taught to restrict washing themselves starting from when they turn nine years old.<sup>64</sup>

### Leather Shoes

On Yom Kippur, it is forbidden to wear footwear that contains leather.<sup>65</sup> This is true whether the leather is part of the sole, upper, or strap.

- Leather inserts that are necessary for a medical reason are permitted.<sup>66</sup>
- Children over the age of nine must be taught to keep this restriction.<sup>67</sup>
  - In addition, adults may not assist nor encourage children of any age to wear leather footwear<sup>68</sup>. If a young child puts one on by himself, it does not need to be removed.<sup>69</sup>

### Applying Creams or Oils

On Yom Kippur, it is forbidden to apply oils, alcohol, lotions, creams or perfumes on any part the body.<sup>70</sup>

(Note that even without this prohibition it is forbidden to spread most creams and lotions on Shabbos or Yom Tov.<sup>71</sup>)

- This restriction prohibits using deodorant or anti-perspirant.
- It is perfectly acceptable to apply these items on the body before Yom Kippur even though they will remain there during the holiday.
- If there is a medical need for an ointment or cream, one must consult a rabbi (preferably before the holiday if the need is anticipated).<sup>72</sup>

### Marital Relations

Marital relations are forbidden on Yom Kippur. All associated limitations which apply when a woman is a niddah are likewise forbidden throughout Yom Kippur.<sup>73</sup>

## ❖ Yom Kippur Prayers

Many of the Yom Kippur prayers are unique. Here are some laws which pertain to them:

### Viduy - Confession

There is a Torah commandment to confess sins on Yom Kippur and the Viduy text that is incorporated in our prayers is the vehicle through which this is done.<sup>74</sup> This prayer contains alphabetical lists of sins that span improper thoughts, speech and deeds. As each sin is mentioned, one (lightly) taps the chest with his or her right fist.

- One's thoughts while reciting viduy are to be centered on regret for each wrong as it is mentioned.<sup>75</sup>
- While reciting viduy, all who are physically able to stand without leaning on any means of support, must do so. It is also proper to be in a slightly bowed position until after the list of sins is mentioned.<sup>76</sup>
- Viduy may be said in any language. The most important aspect for the obligation to be fulfilled properly is that one understands what is being said. Any additional sins that one is aware of should be mentioned (in any language) after those in the text.<sup>77</sup>

### Tefilas Zakah - A Prayer of Purity

This special prayer is recited before Kol Nidrei. Since it is not recited as a congregation, it is often not listed on the synagogue's schedule.

This prayer is not short and it can be quite intimidating. At the very least one should be sure to verbalize (even in one's own words) the following two important aspects that it contains:

- To forgive anyone and everyone that may have wronged you
- To voluntarily begin the Yom Kippur holiday a little earlier than it automatically begins (this is said shortly before sunset – see above ❖Erev Yom Kippur - Final Preparations).
- Between Tefilas Zakah and Kol Nidrei, many synagogues have the custom that all the Torah scrolls are carried through the synagogue by venerated leaders of the community. All who are in proximity kiss each scroll as it passes by and ask Hashem for forgiveness for any possible sins that they may have committed against the Torah's honor.<sup>78</sup>

### Boruch Shem

After the first verse of Sh'ma we recite the statement: "*Boruch shem k'vod malchuso l'olam va'ed*, Blessed is His great name for all eternity". Throughout the year this phrase is recited quietly, but on Yom Kippur, it is said out loud.<sup>79</sup>

### Selichos

Throughout Yom Kippur prayers, many additional prayers (called selichos) are recited. It is more virtuous to recite fewer of these with understanding and meaning than to say more of them rushed and thoughtlessly. Those who cannot recite all of them at the same pace as the congregation, should ask someone knowledgeable which ones should be given priority.

### Ne'ilah

The Ten Days of Penitence climax with Yom Kippur and Yom Kippur climaxes with Ne'ilah. This intense prayer is our final chance to affect the judgment of the coming year.<sup>80</sup> The ark is opened throughout the chazzan's repetition<sup>81</sup> and it is ideal to remain standing the entire time.<sup>82</sup>

- It is particularly appropriate to cry during ne'ilah.<sup>83</sup>

### Personal Requests

It is always appropriate to make personal requests during *Shmoneh Esrei* (the Amidah) and on Yom Kippur, this is especially true. The correct place to insert them is towards the end of *Shmoneh Esrei* just before the final verse of "*Y'hyu l'ratzon imrei fee...*"- "*May the expressions of my mouth...*". (This is the point where many people have a custom to recite verses pertaining to their names.) The requests may be said in any language – the main point is that they be said with sincerity.<sup>84</sup>

## ❖ Conclusion of Yom Kippur

Technically, Yom Kippur concludes at nightfall but it is an obligation to wait a few moments after nightfall before reciting havdalah and resuming normal weekday activity.<sup>85</sup>

- When is nightfall? Since Yom Kippur is a Biblical obligation, it is proper to err on the side of caution regarding when nightfall is determined. Therefore, although in North America, one may safely assume that nightfall is fifty minutes after sunset it is virtuous to wait until after seventy-two minutes have passed which is the time that meets all mainstream opinions.<sup>86</sup>
- After ma'ariv prayers, kiddush levanah is recited if the moon is visible.<sup>87</sup> Men should ideally leave their kittel and tallis on while reciting it.<sup>88</sup>

### Havdalah

Havdalah is recited over a cup of wine or grape juice at the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

- This year, Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos and Havdalah is said as usual.
  - If a fire that has been burning throughout Yom Kippur is available, it should be used for havdalah. Otherwise, a new flame may be lit.<sup>89</sup>
- The following laws apply whenever Havdalah is recited and are particularly pertinent when it is recited after Yom Kippur.
  - Although general eating and drinking remain prohibited until after listening to havdalah, drinking water is permitted.<sup>90</sup>
  - If bread is on the table that will be eaten immediately following havdalah, it must be covered - similar to what is done for Kiddush.<sup>91</sup>
- If at least three ounces of wine have been consumed, the after-blessing *al hagefen* is recited – even when a bread meal is about to begin.<sup>92</sup>
  - The only exception to this rule is if more wine will be consumed during the meal. Then, no *al hagefen* is said.<sup>93</sup>
  - One who forgot to recite the *al hagefen* and already started to eat a bread meal should intend that the Birchas Hamazon after the meal cover the wine as well.<sup>94</sup>
- A celebratory fleishige Yom Tov meal is eaten after Yom Kippur.<sup>95</sup> (This does not have to be the break-fast).
- It is customary to build the sukkah immediately after Yom Kippur.<sup>96</sup>

אשירה לד' כי גמל עלי

I am indebted to my wife for all the patience and support she continues to have for me.

Thank you my dear reader, for without your interest this pamphlet would not exist.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to be a quick review of some pertinent laws relevant to this time of year.

It was formulated for those who do not have the opportunity or resources to study the laws in detail.

Many of these laws and sources are from the seforim:

שליט"א by Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Karp הלכות חג בחג

קונטרס שיעורי הלכה מתוך שיעורים של רב שמואל פעלדער

Please share your feedback with me at [TimelyTorah@gmail.com](mailto:TimelyTorah@gmail.com).

Feel welcome to make copies of this pamphlet for free distribution

Ellul 5777

- <sup>1</sup> Shulchan Aruch 604:1 See Mishna Berura ad loc.
- <sup>2</sup> See Hilchos Chag B'chag chapter 21 note 17
- <sup>3</sup> Shulchan Aruch 604:1 See Mishna Berura ad loc.
- <sup>4</sup> Shulchan Aruch 608
- <sup>5</sup> Mishna Berura 608:16
- <sup>6</sup> Shulchan Aruch and Rema 604:2
- <sup>7</sup> Rema 604:2
- <sup>8</sup> Rema 604:2
- <sup>9</sup> See Shulchan Aruch 606:4 Mishna Berura ad loc.
- <sup>10</sup> Shulchan Aruch 605
- <sup>11</sup> Shulchan Aruch 606:4
- <sup>12</sup> Mishna Berura 606:18
- <sup>13</sup> Rema 606:4 Mishna Berura ad loc.
- <sup>14</sup> Shulchan Aruch 607:1
- <sup>15</sup> Mateh Efrayim 607:1
- <sup>16</sup> Shulchan Aruch 607:1
- <sup>17</sup> Mateh Efrayim 607:1
- <sup>18</sup> Shulchan Aruch 608:1
- <sup>19</sup> Rema 608:4
- <sup>20</sup> Shulchan Aruch and Rema 608:4 Mishna Berura ad loc.
- <sup>21</sup> Elyah Rabba 608:9
- <sup>22</sup> Mishna Berura 608:15
- <sup>23</sup> Rema 610:4; Mateh Efrayim 610:7
- <sup>24</sup> Rema 610:4
- <sup>25</sup> Mishna Berura 610:16
- <sup>26</sup> Mateh Efrayim 619:2
- <sup>27</sup> Rema 610:4
- <sup>28</sup> Rema 610:4 Mishna Berura 610:11
- <sup>29</sup> Mishna Berura 610:14
- <sup>30</sup> Mishna Berura 624:13
- <sup>31</sup> Rema 610:2
- <sup>32</sup> Sha'ar Hatziyun 619:7
- <sup>33</sup> Shulchan Aruch 608:1

- <sup>34</sup> Mateh Efrayim 610:5
- <sup>35</sup> See Mishbetzos Zahav 608:1
- <sup>36</sup> Rema 610:4
- <sup>37</sup> Mishna Berura 610:18
- <sup>38</sup> Mishna Berura 619:4
- <sup>39</sup> Mishna Berura 21:14; see Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
- <sup>40</sup> Mishna Berura 8:37
- <sup>41</sup> Shulchan Aruch 8:15
- <sup>42</sup> See Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
- <sup>43</sup> Shulchan Aruch 611:1
- <sup>44</sup> Shulchan Aruch 611:2
- <sup>45</sup> Shulchan Aruch 616:2
- <sup>46</sup> Mateh Efrayim 611:6; see Shulchan Aruch 328 and 618;
- <sup>47</sup> Shulchan Aruch 611:1
- <sup>48</sup> Igros Moshe Volume 4 #62 (page 94)
- <sup>49</sup> Shulchan Aruch 612:5
- <sup>50</sup> Rema 613:4
- <sup>51</sup> Shulchan Aruch and Rema 616:2
- <sup>52</sup> Shulchan Aruch and Rema 616:2 see Mishna Berura ad loc.
- <sup>53</sup> Shulchan Aruch 616:2
- <sup>54</sup> Children in Halacha Chapter 24 A1
- <sup>55</sup> Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa 14:4
- <sup>56</sup> Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa 14:18
- <sup>57</sup> Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa 14:15
- <sup>58</sup> Mishna Berura 613:1
- <sup>59</sup> Mishna Berura 613:10
- <sup>60</sup> Shulchan Aruch 613:2
- <sup>61</sup> See Mishna Berura 554:21
- <sup>62</sup> Rema 613:3 Mishna Berura ad loc.
- <sup>63</sup> See Mishna Berura 554:19
- <sup>64</sup> Rema 616:2
- <sup>65</sup> Shulchan Aruch 614:2
- <sup>66</sup> Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasa 39:37
- <sup>67</sup> Rema 616:2

- <sup>68</sup> Shulchan Aruch 616:1
- <sup>69</sup> Mishna Berura 343:3
- <sup>70</sup> Shulchan Aruch 614:1
- <sup>71</sup> See Shulchan Aruch 314:11, Shulchan Aruch 328:26 and Mishna Berura there
- <sup>72</sup> See Shulchan Aruch 614:1 and 327; Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa (new) 39:35
- <sup>73</sup> Shulchan Aruch 615:1 Mishna Berura ad loc.
- <sup>74</sup> Rambam Hilchos Teshuvah 2:7
- <sup>75</sup> See Hilchos Chag B'chag 21 note 93
- <sup>76</sup> Shulchan Aruch 607:3 Mishna Berura 607:10
- <sup>77</sup> Shulchan Aruch 607:2; see Chayei Adam 143:1
- <sup>78</sup> Mateh Efrayim 619:10
- <sup>79</sup> Shulchan Aruch 619:2
- <sup>80</sup> Mishna Berura 623:3
- <sup>81</sup> Mishna Berura 637:7
- <sup>82</sup> See Igros Moshe Orach Chayim volume 5, 38:4
- <sup>83</sup> Hilchos Chag B'chag 27:88
- <sup>84</sup> Mishna Berura 122:8
- <sup>85</sup> Shulchan Aruch 624:2
- <sup>86</sup> Igros Moshe Orach Chayim Volume 4 #62 (page 94)
- <sup>87</sup> Rema 426:2
- <sup>88</sup> Mateh Efrayim 624:4
- <sup>89</sup> Mishna Berura 624:7
- <sup>90</sup> Shulchan Aruch 299:1
- <sup>91</sup> Shulchan Aruch 299:9
- <sup>92</sup> See V'zos Habracha page 84
- <sup>93</sup> See Mishna Berura 299:26 and 174:8
- <sup>94</sup> See V'zos Habracha page 84
- <sup>95</sup> Rema 624:5
- <sup>96</sup> Rema 624:5