

# ימים נוראים

## A High Holiday Guide

### Part Two

Laws of the Jewish Holidays  
in a Simple and Concise Language

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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.

Much thanks as well to the Minneapolis Community Kollel for their resources.

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 are drawn from the sefer:  
שליט"א by R' Moshe Mordechai Karp חג הלכות בחג

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## ❖ 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.
- A significant fleishige (meat) meal called the seudah hamafsekes is eaten in the late afternoon before the fast begins<sup>3</sup>. See **Seudah Hamafsekes** later in this pamphlet for more details.
  - Some have a custom to eat a fleishige meal earlier in the day as well.<sup>4</sup>

### Changes in Prayers

- On Erev Yom Kippur, the selichos are very short.
- In the morning, the following are omitted from shacharis: *mizmor lesoda*, *tachanun*, *lamnatzeyach*<sup>5</sup> and *avinu malkeinu*<sup>6</sup>.

### 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>7</sup>

- When using money, kapparos is usually performed on Erev Yom Kippur. If a chicken is used, it is often coordinated with a synagogue or group during an earlier day of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah (Ten Days of Penitence).

### Mikvah

All men and boys over bar mitzvah go to the mikvah today<sup>8</sup>. It is customary for boys under bar mitzvah to go as well.

- Ideally, this should be done before praying mincha<sup>9</sup>.
- If it is difficult for a man to use the mikvah, he should consult a rabbi for a possible alternative<sup>10</sup>.

### General Preparations

- Most Yom Kippur prayers are not found in an ordinary siddur but rather in a book called a machzor. This is a siddur especially formulated for the holidays and it is published in a number of different formats and styles. Taking the time to find one that appeals to you can make all the difference for a meaningful Yom Kippur prayers. Consult with someone knowledgeable to ensure that the one you choose follows the customs of your tradition or synagogue (e.g. Ashkenaz, Sefard, Ari or Eidut Hamizrach).
- 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 as well. An injured person who is approached by someone with apparent regrets should endeavor to be forgiving. Measure for measure, Hashem will be merciful to him or her as well.<sup>11</sup>
- Even if you do not have deceased close relatives, be sure that you have a yahrtzeit candle or two. They will be lit before Yom Kippur.

- Married men will be wearing a “kittel” throughout all the Yom Kippur prayers. This is a simple article of clothing similar to a robe that is made from white, broadcloth material. It can be purchased in any Jewish bookstore.
- If you have time today, it might be wise to review the following particular prayers in your machzor.
  - The **Viduy**- Confession. This prayer is a principal theme of Yom Kippur and it is recited no less than ten times throughout the Yom Kippur prayers<sup>12</sup>.
  - The unique service performed by the Kohein Gadol (High Priest) in the Beis Hamikdosh (Temple) on Yom Kippur is the central focus of the musaf prayers. Be aware that Ashkenaz and Sefard traditions use two completely different passages to describe this service.

### Mincha

Mincha is recited prior to the **Seudah Hamafsek**<sup>13</sup> and it is scheduled earlier than usual.

- It is proper to be dressed in Shabbos clothing when praying mincha.<sup>14</sup>
- At the conclusion of the individual Shmoneh Esrei **Viduy**- Confession is recited<sup>15</sup> and it is recommended to bring a machzor. (Rules for this prayer are detailed below)
- It is customary to give much charity before mincha<sup>16</sup> and many synagogues have charity plates set out for this purpose. Some people do **Kapparos** at this time.

### Seudah Hamafsek- The Dividing Meal

There is an obligation to eat a festive meal before Yom Kippur begins. It is extremely important to conclude this meal well before sunset.<sup>17</sup>

- The Seudah Hamafsek consists of light, easily digestible foods. (For example, chicken is served instead of beef.)<sup>18</sup> Additionally, we are careful not to overeat.<sup>19</sup>
- It is customary to eat *kreplach* (meat-filled dumplings) during this meal.
- If one still intends to eat or drink after the Birchas Hamazon is recited, it is preferable to express this intent<sup>20</sup>. Nonetheless, as long as there was no positive intent to begin fasting, eating and drinking remain permitted.<sup>21</sup>

### Final Preparations

- Our homes are cleaned, the beds made and the tables are covered with tablecloths in honor of Yom Kippur.<sup>22</sup>
- Clean, respectable Shabbos clothing is worn on Yom Kippur.<sup>23</sup> It is inappropriate to wear flashy jewelry or clothes during this solemn day.<sup>24</sup>
- Fathers and mothers bless their children<sup>25</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>26</sup>.
- In addition, all married men light a “yahrtzeit candle” as a *ner habari* (a Kabbalistic concept). Kabbalah teaches that this flame should not be deliberately extinguished. If it has gone out prematurely on Yom Kippur, it should be relit after the holiday and burned all the way down.<sup>27</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>28</sup>

- In every home, at least one of the yahrtzeit candles should be lit with the additional intent of using it for havdalah at the conclusion of Yom Kippur<sup>29</sup>. At that time, specifically a flame that was burning throughout Yom Kippur is required.
  - Many yahrtzeit candles may not last until after Yom Kippur. To extend the life of one, simply add some olive oil to it before lighting it.
- Candles are lit before Yom Kippur as they are lit before Shabbos. Their appropriate blessings are in the machzor.<sup>30</sup>
  - Women recite a Shehechyanu blessing when lighting candles. They do not repeat it when the congregation recites it during Kol Nidrei.
- Yom Kippur begins at sunset. There is obligation to verbally accept the holiday with all of its restrictions at least a couple of minutes before then.<sup>31</sup>
  - Men accept this while reciting the prayer *tefilas zakah* at the synagogue (see below in **Yom Kippur Prayers**).
  - Women accept this when they light the candles. If this poses a difficulty, a woman must verbally stipulate that she does not want to accept it with candle lighting. A verbal acceptance should then be made a few minutes before sunset.<sup>32</sup>

### **Kittel and Tallis**

Married men wear a kittel (see above) and a tallis over their clothes throughout every one of the Yom Kippur prayers.<sup>33</sup>

- Custom vary whether a kittel is worn during the year of mourning.<sup>34</sup>
- The tallis and kittel are removed before entering a bathroom.<sup>35</sup>
- When the tallis is put on before Kol Nidrei, its blessing is recited as long as it is still before sunset<sup>36</sup>.
- The following laws pertaining to a tallis apply all year round:
  - If a tallis is deliberately removed with the intent of putting it back on a short time later, no blessing is recited when replacing it. An example of this is replacing a tallis after using the bathroom.<sup>37</sup>
  - If a tallis inadvertently slips off, it depends on the circumstance. If it fell off completely, a new blessing is required when replacing it. If it partially remained on, no blessing is recited.<sup>38</sup>
    - On Yom Kippur, synagogues have a break some time in the afternoon. If the tallis was removed during the break, a blessing is usually required when replacing it. The blessing is not necessary if the tallis was removed for less than two hours and one did not sleep during that time.<sup>39</sup>

### **❖ Yom Kippur Restrictions**

On Yom Kippur, it is prohibited to eat or drink; unnecessarily wash any part of the body; apply creams or oils to the body; wear leather shoes; and have marital relations.<sup>40</sup> In addition, one must rest from all the activities that are forbidden on Shabbos.<sup>41</sup>

- Any Yom Kippur prohibition is violated to aid someone whose life is at risk<sup>42</sup>.
- All of the restrictions apply to men and women over bar/bas mitzvah<sup>43</sup>.

- These obligations begin before sunset the night leading into Yom Kippur<sup>44</sup> and conclude the following night no less than fifty minutes after sunset<sup>45</sup>.

### Eating and Drinking

It is forbidden to eat or drink even the smallest amount of food on Yom Kippur<sup>46</sup>.

- One who is sick, weak or needs to take medication should consult a rabbi (preferably before Yom Kippur -if the need is anticipated).
- One may not rinse out his or her mouth on Yom Kippur<sup>47</sup>.
- Children are trained to keep a partial fast. The age appropriate to begin this fast is nine years old for physically healthy children and ten for weak children.<sup>48</sup>
  - The standard partial fast is as follows: Fast throughout the night. Then, for the first year of the regimen, eat breakfast an hour later than usual, for the second year, two hours later and so on.<sup>49</sup>
  - A child that becomes extremely hungry or thirsty is not required to fast at all.<sup>50</sup>
- A child younger than nine may not fast any longer than through the night.<sup>51</sup>

### Washing

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

- Children over the age of nine must also be taught to restrict washing themselves<sup>52</sup>.
- In the following exceptions, it is permitted to wash.

Note that even when washing is permitted, it remains forbidden to use hot water from the tap, bar soap or an absorbent material.

- It is permitted to clean off dirt or germs but the washing must be limited to where it is dirty. If it is spread over an area, the general affected area may be washed.<sup>53</sup>
- Washing for a significant medical necessity is also allowed.<sup>54</sup>
- In the morning, hands are washed in the usual alternating manner but only up to the joints where the fingers attach to the palm.<sup>55</sup> The usual blessing is not recited until after washing from using the bathroom.<sup>56</sup>
- A kohen's hands are washed before reciting the priestly blessings. This may be done up until his wrists.<sup>57</sup>
- When washing off an object (such as food for a child), one does not need to worry about inadvertently getting his or her hands wet.<sup>58</sup>

### Leather Shoes

On Yom Kippur, it is forbidden to wear footwear that contains leather.<sup>59</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>60</sup>.
- Children over the age of nine must be trained in this regard<sup>61</sup>.
  - In addition, adults may not assist nor encourage children of any age to wear leather footwear<sup>62</sup>. If a young child wears it on his or her own, it does not need to be removed<sup>63</sup>.

**Applying Creams or Oils**

On Yom Kippur, it is forbidden to spread oils, alcohol, lotions, creams or perfumes on any part the body<sup>64</sup>.

- The prohibition is to apply these items on Yom Kippur. There is nothing wrong with applying them on the body before Yom Kippur so that they remain on for the holiday.
- If this is necessary for a medical purpose, speak to a rabbi (preferably before Yom Kippur if the need is anticipated)<sup>65</sup>.
- This restriction should prohibit applying deodorant or anti-perspirant on Yom Kippur.

**Marital Relations**

One may not have marital relations on Yom Kippur. The same interactive limitations that apply during the year when relations are forbidden, apply throughout Yom Kippur.<sup>66</sup>

**❖ Yom Kippur Prayers**

Following, are highlights of a few prayers:

**Viduy- Confession**

It is a Torah commandment to confess our sins on Yom Kippur<sup>67</sup> and viduy is one the most important prayers said on this day.

- Our thoughts during viduy must focus on regret for the wrongs that that are mentioned.<sup>68</sup>
- While reciting viduy, all who are physically able stand without leaning on anything. It is also proper to be in a slightly bowed position until after the list of sins is mentioned<sup>69</sup>.
- As each sin is mentioned, we lightly tap our chests with our right fists<sup>70</sup>.
- The viduy text must be understood in order fulfill the obligation properly. Any additional sins that one is aware of should be mentioned after those in the text.<sup>71</sup>
- Viduy can be said in any language.

**Tefilas Zakah A Prayer of Purity**

This confession 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. If you are unable to recite it all, be sure to verbalize (even in your own words) two additional aspects that it contains:
  - To voluntarily accept the Yom Kippur holiday while it is still before sunset
  - To forgive anyone and everyone that may have wronged you

**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...". (In the Artscroll siddur this point is indicated with a reference to insert verses pertaining to one's name.) The requests should be said with sincerity and they may be said in any language<sup>72</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" out loud<sup>73</sup>. (The rest of the year, this verse is recited quietly.)

**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 rush through all of them quickly and thoughtlessly. If you will be saying just a few, ask someone knowledgeable to show you 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>74</sup>. The ark is opened throughout the chazzan's repetition<sup>75</sup> and it is ideal to remain standing while the ark is opened<sup>76</sup>.

- It is particularly appropriate to cry during ne'ilah prayers<sup>77</sup>.

**❖ Yom Kippur Conclusion**

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>78</sup>.

- Yom Kippur is a Biblical obligation and it is proper to err on the side of caution regarding when nightfall is determined. It is virtuous to consider nightfall as seventy-two minutes after sunset but if this is difficult, one may safely assume that it is fifty minutes after sunset.<sup>79</sup>
- After ma'ariv prayers, kiddush levanah is recited on the new moon<sup>80</sup>. If possible, men should leave their kittel and tallis on while reciting it<sup>81</sup>.

**Havdalah**

Havdalah is recited over a cup of wine or grape juice at the conclusion of Yom Kippur. Eating and drinking only become permitted after listening to it.

This year Yom Kippur falls on a weekday and therefore its procedure is as follows:

1. The usual introductory phrases are omitted and one begins with the blessing of *Ha'gafen*<sup>82</sup>.
  2. The blessing over spices is skipped.<sup>83</sup>
  3. The blessing over fire is recited if a fire that had been burning throughout Yom Kippur is available. Otherwise, this blessing is skipped.<sup>84</sup> (A flame lit from such a fire is also allowed<sup>85</sup>.)
  4. The final blessing *hamavdil bein kodesh lechol* is recited and the wine is drunk.
    - If at least three ounces of wine have been drunk, the after-blessing *al hagefen* is recited. This is true even if a bread meal is about to begin<sup>86</sup>.
      - The only exception to this rule is if more wine will be drunk during the meal. Then, no *al hagefen* is said.<sup>87</sup>
      - One who forgot to recite the *al hagefen* and already started to eat a bread meal should intend while reciting Birchas Hamazon that it cover the wine as well.<sup>88</sup>
- A celebratory fleishige Yom Tov meal is eaten after Yom Kippur<sup>89</sup>.
  - It is customary to build the sukkah immediately after Yom Kippur.<sup>90</sup>



<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 608  
<sup>4</sup> Mishna Berura 608:16  
<sup>5</sup> Shulchan Aruch and Rema 604:2  
<sup>6</sup> See Rema 604:2  
<sup>7</sup> Shulchan Aruch 605  
<sup>8</sup> Shulchan Aruch 606:4  
<sup>9</sup> Mishna Berura 606:18  
<sup>10</sup> Rema 606:4 Mishna Berura ad loc.  
<sup>11</sup> See Shulchan Aruch 606:4 Mishna Berura ad loc.  
<sup>12</sup> See Chayei Adam 143:1  
<sup>13</sup> Shulchan Aruch 607:1  
<sup>14</sup> Mateh Efrayim 607:1  
<sup>15</sup> Shulchan Aruch 607:1  
<sup>16</sup> Mateh Efrayim 607:1  
<sup>17</sup> Shulchan Aruch 608:1  
<sup>18</sup> Shulchan Aruch and Rema 608:4 Mishna Berura ad loc.  
<sup>19</sup> Elyah Rabba 608:9  
<sup>20</sup> Shulchan Aruch 608:3; Mishna Berura 608:12  
<sup>21</sup> Mishna Berura 608:15  
<sup>22</sup> Rema 610:4; Mateh Efrayim 610:7  
<sup>23</sup> Rema 610:4  
<sup>24</sup> Mishna Berura 610:16  
<sup>25</sup> Mateh Efrayim 619:2  
<sup>26</sup> Rema 610:4  
<sup>27</sup> Rema 610:4 Mishna Berura 610:11  
<sup>28</sup> Mishna Berura 610:14  
<sup>29</sup> Mishna Berura 624:13  
<sup>30</sup> Rema 610:2  
<sup>31</sup> See Mishna Berura 608:2  
<sup>32</sup> Mateh Efrayim 610:5  
<sup>33</sup> Rema 610:4  
<sup>34</sup> Mishna Berura 610:18  
<sup>35</sup> Mishna Berura 21:14; see Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder  
<sup>36</sup> Mishna Berura 619:4  
<sup>37</sup> Mishna Berura 8:37  
<sup>38</sup> Shulchan Aruch 8:15  
<sup>39</sup> see Shiurey Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder  
<sup>40</sup> Shulchan Aruch 611:1  
<sup>41</sup> Shulchan Aruch 611:2  
<sup>42</sup> Mateh Efrayim 611:6; see Shulchan Aruch 328 and 618;  
<sup>43</sup> Shulchan Aruch 616:2  
<sup>44</sup> Shulchan Aruch 611:1  
<sup>45</sup> Iggros Moshe Volume 3 #62 (page 94)  
<sup>46</sup> Shulchan Aruch 612:5  
<sup>47</sup> Rema 613:4  
<sup>48</sup> Shulchan Aruch and Rema 616:2 see Mishna Berura ad loc.

<sup>49</sup> Shulchan Aruch 616:2  
<sup>50</sup> Children in Halacha Chapter 24 A1  
<sup>51</sup> See Shulchan Aruch and Rema 616:2; see Mishna Berura 616:14; see Hilchos Chag B'chag chapter 24 note 7  
<sup>52</sup> Rema 616:2  
<sup>53</sup> Mishna Berura 613:1  
<sup>54</sup> Mishna Berura 613:10  
<sup>55</sup> Shulchan Aruch 613:2  
<sup>56</sup> See Mishna Berura 554:21  
<sup>57</sup> Rema 613:3 Mishna Berura ad loc.  
<sup>58</sup> See Mishna Berura 554:19  
<sup>59</sup> Shulchan Aruch 614:2  
<sup>60</sup> Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasa (new) 39:37  
<sup>61</sup> Rema 616:2  
<sup>62</sup> Shulchan Aruch 616:1  
<sup>63</sup> Mishna Berura 343:3  
<sup>64</sup> Shulchan Aruch 614:1  
<sup>65</sup> See Shulchan Aruch 614:1 and 327; Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa (new) 39:35  
<sup>66</sup> Shulchan Aruch 615:1 Mishna Berura ad loc.  
<sup>67</sup> Rambam Hilchos Teshuvah 2:7  
<sup>68</sup> See Hilchos Chag B'chag 21 note 93  
<sup>69</sup> Shulchan Aruch 607:3 Mishna Berura 607:10  
<sup>70</sup> Mishna Berura 607:12  
<sup>71</sup> Shulchan Aruch 607:2; see Chayei Adam 143:1  
<sup>72</sup> Mishna Berura 122:8  
<sup>73</sup> Shulchan Aruch 619:2  
<sup>74</sup> Mishna Berura 623:3  
<sup>75</sup> Mishna Berura 637:7  
<sup>76</sup> See Iggros Moshe Orach Chayim volume 5, 38:4  
<sup>77</sup> Hilchos Chag B'chag 27:88  
<sup>78</sup> Shulchan Aruch 624:2  
<sup>79</sup> Iggros Moshe Volume 3 #62 (page 94)  
<sup>80</sup> Rema 426:2  
<sup>81</sup> Mateh Efrayim 624:4  
<sup>82</sup> Mateh Efrayim 624:5  
<sup>83</sup> Shulchan Aruch 624:3  
<sup>84</sup> Biur Halacha 624 "V'yeish Omrim"  
<sup>85</sup> Rema 624:5  
<sup>86</sup> See V'zos Habracha page 84  
<sup>87</sup> See Mishna Berura 299:26 and 174:8  
<sup>88</sup> See V'zos Habracha page 84  
<sup>89</sup> Rema 624:5  
<sup>90</sup> Rema 624:5