

About Yom Kippur: (From the Mishnah)

On Yom Kippur it is forbidden to eat, to drink, to wash, to anoint oneself, to put on sandals, or to have marital intercourse.

If one says: I shall sin and repent, sin and repent -- no opportunity will be given to him to repent. [If one says]: I shall sin and Yom Kippur will procure atonement for me – Yom Kippur procures for him no atonement.

For transgressions as between man and God, Yom Kippur procures atonement, but for transgressions between man and his fellow, Yom Kippur does not procure any atonement, until he has pacified his fellow. (*Mishnah Yoma*)

Fasting on Yom Kippur: From Jewish Law

"In the case of a sick person who needs food, if there is a recognized doctor present, who says, 'If he is not fed, his illness may become more serious,' we are careful to feed him, lest his life be in danger.

If a sick man says, 'I do not need to eat,' and the doctor says he does, we rely on the doctor. This is true even if the sick man is a recognized doctor himself; we consider that his illness may have caused him to lose his sense of judgment. If a man says, I need to eat, though a hundred doctors say he does not need to eat, we take his word for it. Even if he says simply that he needs to eat -- though he does not say that if he is not fed his life will be endangered - he is fed.

Where the law allows a sick man to eat, and he does not wish to, that is a foolish kind of piety, of which it is said, 'Be not righteous overmuch' (Eccles. 7:16); so the sick man is fed against his will. (*Mateh Efrayim* - 18th c. Ukrainian Jewish law code)

The Gaon Rabbi Hayyim of Brisk [19th century] used to be lenient with the sick in the matter of eating on Yom Kippur. He was asked, "How is it that the master is so lenient when it comes to Yom Kippur?" Said he, "Not that I am lenient when it comes to the commandment of Yom Kippur, but that I am strict about the commandment of saving a life." (Agnon, S.Y., *Days of Awe*)

Moses Maimonides (Egypt, 12th century):
Excerpts from Laws of Repentance (*Teshuvah*)

1. If a person transgresses any of the *mitzvot* of the Torah, whether a positive command or a negative command - whether willingly or inadvertently - when he repents, and returns from his sin, he must confess before God, blessed be He.....

How does one confess? He states: "I implore you, God, I sinned, I transgressed, I committed iniquity before You by doing the following.... Behold, I regret and am embarrassed for my deeds. I promise never to repeat this act again."

2. Who has reached complete *Teshuvah*? A person who confronts the same situation in which he sinned when he has the potential to commit [the sin again], and nevertheless, abstains and does not commit it because of his *Teshuvah* alone and not because of fear or a lack of strength.

3. It is very praiseworthy for a person who repents to confess in public and to make his sins known to others, revealing the transgressions he committed against his colleagues. When does this apply? In regard to sins between man and man. However, in regard to sins between man and God, it is not necessary to publicize one's transgressions. Indeed, revealing them is arrogant. Rather, a person should repent before God, blessed be He, and specifically mention his sins before Him, and in public, he should merely make a general confession.

4. Even though repentance and calling out to God are desirable at all times, during the ten days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, they are even more desirable and will be accepted immediately...

5. *Teshuvah* and Yom Kippur only atone for sins between man and God; for example, a person who ate a forbidden food or engaged in forbidden sexual relations, and the like. However, sins between man and man; for example, someone who injures a colleague, curses a colleague, steals from him, and the like, will never be forgiven until he gives his colleague what he owes him and appeases him.

[It must be emphasized that] even if a person restores the money that he owes [the person he wronged], he must appease him and ask him to forgive him.

If his colleague does not desire to forgive him, he should bring a group of three of his friends and approach him with them and request [forgiveness]. If [the wronged party] is not appeased, he should repeat the process a second and third time. If he [still] does not want [to forgive him], he may let him alone and need not pursue [the matter further]. On the contrary, the person who refused to grant forgiveness is the one considered as the sinner.

Prayer on the High Holidays: Terms and Concepts

Rosh HaShanah (Jewish New Year):

majestic melodies

Kittel (white ceremonial robe worn by prayer leaders); white mantles for Torah scrolls

Service for Blowing the Shofar

Additional service:

God is sovereign over us (*Malkhuyot*)

God remembers us and our deeds (*Zikhronot*)

God is our Redeemer, past and future (*Shofarot*)

Adoration (*Aleinu*); full-body bowing

Torah reading: Stories of Abraham and Isaac

Tashlikh (ceremony on Rosh HaShanah afternoon; symbolically casting sins into the water)

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement):

solemn, haunting melodies

Kol Nidrei (“All our vows”): prayer recited on Yom Kippur Eve; nullification of unfulfilled vows

Confessional (*Ashamnu / Al Chet*): alphabetical lists of sins; recited several times over the course of Yom Kippur; recited in plural (“We have sinned”) rather than singular.

Torah reading: Orthodox and Conservative: sacrificial service for Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16); Reform: Moses’ final oration (Deuteronomy 29)

Haftarah (Prophetic reading): Jeremiah; Book of Jonah

Yizkor (Memorial service) - opportunity to recite individual prayers in memory of loved ones

Service of the High Priest (*Avodah service*) (only in more traditional congregations): Re-enactment of portions of the Yom Kippur service performed in the Temple in Jerusalem until its destruction 2000 years ago; in many congregations, prayer leader and some congregants bow to the ground.

Martyrology (*Eleh Ezkerah*) Service for remembering Jewish martyrs; in contemporary congregations, this is a communal opportunity to recall the Holocaust.

Neilah (Closing of the Gates) Late on Yom Kippur afternoon; in traditional congregations, the Ark is opened and the congregation remains standing for the entire service. The service, and the fast of Yom Kippur, conclude with a Shofar blast.