

Late Summer/Autumn

Winter

Spring

Summer



Rosh Hashana



Yom Kippur



Sukkot



Shemini Atzeret



Hannuka



Tu B'Shvat



Purim



Pesach



Omer Counting



Shavuot



9th B'av

Harvest

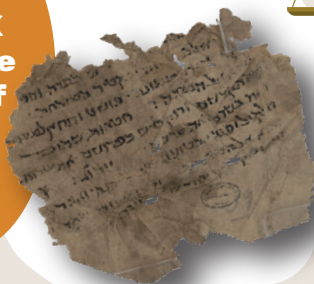
Pray for Rain

Soil preparation / planting

Pray for Dew

First Fruits / Harevst

This is an almost **1000-year-old** fragment from a YK prayer book from the **Cairo Geniza**, one of the **oldest prayer manuscripts in the entire world.**



What is Yom Kippur?

Yom Kippur (YK), the "Day of Atonement," is considered the holiest day of the Jewish year—a sacred 25-hour period of fasting, prayer, and **seeking forgiveness** from God and others. It is a **day of deep reflection** and seriousness but also joy and hope for a **fresh start.**

Signed, Sealed, Delivered: YK concludes the "Ten Days of Awe" that begin on Rosh Hashana. According to Jewish tradition, God writes what is decreed for each person for the coming year on Rosh Hashana, seals it on Yom Kippur, and delivers it on Hoshana Raba, the seventh day of Sukkot.

Today in Israel – Modern Connections

The **Kotel plaza** in Jerusalem fills with **tens of thousands of worshippers** for Kol Nidre and the YK prayers, right next to the site where the Kohen Gadol once performed the Yom Kippur service.

On YK the entire country comes to a complete standstill: all roads are empty of cars, airports close, television and radio go silent, and even secular Israelis observe the day in their own way. **Children ride bicycles freely on the empty highways.**

After the fast ends, Israelis **celebrate the break-fast at family gatherings.** There is a widespread custom in Israel to begin building the sukkah immediately after Yom Kippur ends.



Yom Kippur יום כיפור

Hebrew Date:
10 Tishrei

Different names for Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur
English

יום כיפור
Hebrew

The Day of
Atonement

יום הכיפורים
Yom
Ha'Kippurim

The Sabbath
of Sabbaths

שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן
Shabbat
Shabbaton

Yom Kippur in Biblical Texts

Leviticus 16 – This entire chapter **describes the original Yom Kippur service performed by the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) in the Temple.** This chapter is the heart of the holiday's biblical foundation.



In 2011, a small golden bell was found beneath the road leading to the Temple Mount, where the High Priest would have walked. Golden bells adorned the hem of his robe.

Leviticus 23:26-32 – *"On the tenth day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement... you shall afflict yourselves (fasting)... it is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls."*



Why Yom Kippur Matters

✓

Forgiveness and Spiritual Cleansing: Yom Kippur offers every Jew a chance to wipe the slate clean. Through sincere confession (*vidui*) and prayer, God forgives sins against Him, while wrongs against others require seeking their forgiveness directly.

✓

Communal responsibility: During our prayers, we say *"We have sinned, we have transgressed."* This teaches that the Jewish people are responsible for one another, and that the community stands together before God.

✓

Justice and mercy: Yom Kippur expresses the Jewish belief that God is both just and merciful. While we are judged for our actions, genuine regret and repentance – feeling sorry for our sins – have the power to change strict judgments.

Key Rituals

1 Kol Nidre – YK begins at sunset with Kol Nidrei, a declaration **nullifying personal vows** made to God. Its ancient, haunting melody is one of the most recognizable sounds in Jewish prayer.

2

The Fast (*Ta'anit*) – For 25 hours, from sunset to nightfall the next day, Jews abstain from food, water, bathing, leather shoes, and lotions—not as punishment, but to set aside physical needs and focus on the spiritual.

3

Ne'ilah and the Final Shofar Blast – Yom Kippur's five prayer services culminate with *Ne'ilah* ("closing") when the **heavenly gates are about to close**. Synagogues overflow with people and prayer reaches its peak. The prayer finishes with the congregation proclaiming *Shema Yisrael* and "The Lord is God" seven times, followed by a single long *tekiah gedolah* shofar blast. Most congregations then sing "Next Year in Jerusalem!"

The Neila prayer from the 600-year-old Catalan Mahzor (YK Prayer Book) that survived the Spanish Expulsion of 1492, traveled across Europe, and endured Nazi Germany.



Is there someone in your life you owe an apology to? Yom Kippur teaches that forgiving others and asking for forgiveness are two of the bravest things a person can do. Who would you apologize to and what would you say?



Yom Kippur in Ancient Israel

On YK, the **Kohen Gadol** changed several times between his elaborate garments and simple white linen garments while **performing a series of rituals** to atone for himself and all Israel. It was the **only day in the year that he entered the Holy of Holies**, the Temple's most sacred chamber, as the nation waited outside in hopeful prayer.



A Machtha (incense shovel) used during the Yom Kippur service.

The **Temple (Beit HaMikdash)** was the **exclusive site for the Yom Kippur service**; no equivalent ceremony could be performed anywhere else.

In the dramatic ritual, the Kohen Gadol cast lots over two goats: one goat was sacrificed to God, while **the scapegoat carried Israel's sins into the wilderness**. When it was thrown over a high cliff, tradition says a crimson strip at the entrance of the Temple turned white, signaling Israel's forgiveness. Today, you can visit the mountain peak in the Judean Desert where this ritual took place.



A person sits at the edge of the Mountain (outside Jerusalem close to Ma'aleh Adumim), where the scapegoat was thrown over the cliff.



For more information
on Yom Kippur

