

THE JEWISH FESTIVAL OF YOM KIPPUR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Ten days after Rosh Hashanah, Jews observe the holiest and most solemn day in their religious year. This day is called Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

Why do Jews observe Yom Kippur?

- Jews are commanded to keep Yom Kippur by God. The book of Leviticus states - *"The 10th day of the 7th month is the day when the annual ritual is to be performed to take away the sins of the people. On that day do not eat, but come together for worship Do not work on that day"* (23:26).
- Atonement means to "make amends" and on this day Jews seek God's forgiveness.

What happens on the eve of Yom Kippur?

- People give money to charity.
- In the afternoon, men will visit the **mikveh** (immersion pool) in the synagogue. Men only have to visit the mikveh on this day. By immersing themselves in the water, men are spiritually cleansed.
- Jews eat a hearty evening meal because Yom Kippur is a fast day.
- The wife will light two candles just before sunset to welcome Yom Kippur into the home.



How do Jews observe Yom Kippur?

- Jews do not wear jewellery or leather. By doing this they are showing their rejection of personal comfort and luxury.
- No eating or drinking during Yom Kippur. Jews are not allowed to have sex on this day. This shows God that they sincerely want forgiveness and that they can discipline their body to concentrate on sexual matters.



- No make up or perfume is worn so that Jews come before God as they really are.
- White clothes are worn to show purity. Women wear white dresses and men wear a white robe called a **kittel**. Even the Torah scrolls are covered with a white mantle.
- Jews remember the dead; special yahrzeit candles are lit and burn throughout Yom Kippur.



- All Jews try to attend the synagogue at Yom Kippur, even those who do not usually go to the synagogue regularly.
- Before the evening synagogue service on Yom Kippur the **Kol Nidrei** is spoken. The **chazan** asks God to release the Jews from

any false promises. It was written during the Spanish Inquisition when Jews were forced on pain of death to convert to Christianity.

- Jews listen to readings from Leviticus and the Book of Jonah.
- Jews will confess their sins quietly to God because it is regarded as disrespectful to God to let other people hear that a person has sinned against Him.
- Jews pray 5 times at Yom Kippur.
- The final service is the **Neilah**. During this service the doors of the **ark** remain open to symbolise the Jews openness to repentance.
- The Neilah ends with the first line of the **Shema** – “*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One*”. A final blast from the shofar lets everyone know that Yom Kippur has ended. Jews can now break their fast.

