

Yom Kippur Facts and Observances

- 👉 Yom Kippur falls on the 10th day of the month *Tishrei*.
- 👉 Yom Kippur means “Day of Atonement,” and is a day set aside to think about things we did in the past year that we are sorry for. It is for all the times we weren’t the best version of ourselves.
- 👉 Yom Kippur, like Shabbat, is a day when one refrains from work. Leviticus 23:32 describes Yom Kippur as a *Shabbat Shabbaton* – the ultimate Sabbath; a Sabbath of complete rest.
- 👉 On Yom Kippur, we limit our pleasure in several ways. As always, these restrictions do not apply when someone’s health may suffer. They are intended to enhance and add meaning to Yom Kippur. Some of these restrictions are:

- ✧ Wearing white: Traditionally Jews wear white on Yom Kippur. White is a symbol of purity, and on Yom Kippur we undergo a spiritual cleansing. Some Jews wear a *kittel*, the white robe in which Jews are buried in, symbolizing our mortality and reminding us of the importance of repentance.
- ✧ Fasting: This fulfills the commandment of “self-denial.” Yom Kippur is the one day we ignore our physical desires and instead focus on our spiritual needs. The fast lasts 24 hours (Yom Kippur evening to the following evening), and we are instructed not to eat or drink during this time. If you have never fasted before, try it and be creative, there are many ways to do this – you can give up a favorite food or try to wait until you are really hungry.
- ✧ Not wearing leather: Leather shoes are associated with work and providing for our needs. It’s also a day where we are at one with creation instead of masters over creation. Feel free to wear your favorite keds or crocs to shul for the day.
- ✧ Not anointing ourselves: We are not supposed to brush our teeth, put on make-up, shower, or wear deodorant on Yom Kippur. This is a day we don’t pay attention to our outside appearance.

- 👉 The Erev Yom Kippur service is called *Kol Nidre*, which means “all vows,” and refers to the special words chanted by Jews solely on Yom Kippur. It represents an annulment (or cancellation) of vows, which dates back many centuries. It is actually not a prayer, but a formula that serves to help us avoid the sin of breaking vows made to G-d which we aren’t able to uphold.