

YOM KIPPUR

4 - 10 Tishrei 5785
6 - 12 October 2024

MORNING

Torah: Leviticus 16:1-34;
Numbers 29:7-11

Haftorah: Isaiah 57:14-58:14

AFTERNOON

Torah: Leviticus 18:1-30

Haftorah: Jonah 1:1-4:11

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalms Daily

Psalms Daily
Psalms 117
1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

Hayom Yom
On the eve of Yom Kippur, one should focus on regret over the past; on Yom Kippur itself, one should focus on commitment for the future.

The Day of Essences

On Yom Kippur, we set aside the external trappings of what it means to be a human being and we return to the essence of who we are - G dly beings that existed long before our bodies came into being. In kind, or more aptly stated, as the impetus for our transformation, G d also shows us His essence and relates to us directly, without the regular buffers in place. In other words, Yom Kippur is the day when we get real.

The rest of the year we wear many hats, and we are busy doing. Doing what a parent does; doing what a spouse does; doing what a breadwinner does; doing what a member of a community does. On Yom Kippur, we strip down to our true selves, and we just be.

The Mechanics of Atonement
Indeed, this getting down to essences is how atonement works. When we have faltered, it is because of our lack of ability to deal with the world. We were supposed to interact with the world in one way, and we chose to interact with it in another, whether in how we eat, do business, engage in intimate relations and so on.

But when we get down to our essence - an essence which has no need to be bogged down in the trappings of this mundane world - we arrive at a place within ourselves that remains completely above the fray. Our essence cannot be sullied for it stands aloof from the incidental matters in which our rest-of-the-year selves are embroiled.

And so, on Yom Kippur, we divorce ourselves from the world and join G-d in a true state of Oneness. On Yom Kippur, we don't need a world and we don't have to figure out how to deal with it. We don't work, we don't eat, we don't engage in marital relations. We don't do anything. We be.

Affliction or Transcendence
On Yom Kippur we are denied five bodily needs: eating, marital relations, bathing, anointing and

the wearing of leather shoes. On a basic level, these five modes of abstention are called "afflictions," but the inner dimension of the Torah sees them in a very different light, not (only) as self-denial, but as self-transcendence. We do not deprive our bodies on Yom Kippur; we return to our essence and rise above our bodies. Whereas the rest of the year, we are nourished by eating, on Yom Kippur we are nourished directly from the Source of All Sustenance without need for the intervening medium of food.

During the rest of the year, the soul engages in the task of interacting with the world through the body, taking the mundane and making it holy. This is known as the task of elevating the sparks of G dly energy that are encumbered within the physical world. This task is necessary for the refinement of the world and the ultimate transformation of the physical plane into a heaven-on-earth. The whole year round, the soul's mission in this world is to find G d within the trappings of this world; but on Yom Kippur, when we and G d reveal our essences, we relate directly to one another without the usual game of hide-and-seek.

Taking Off Your Shoes

The fact that we do not wear leather shoes on Yom Kippur is a symbol of the rare and unique relationship with G d that exists on Yom Kippur. Leather soles represent a barrier between man and the earth upon which he stands. In macrocosm, this signifies the buffer that exists between G d and His world. Creation is a dynamic, on-going process, a vast apparatus composed of various planes of existence. Normally, the creative energy filters its way down through this system before reaching us. On Yom Kippur, however, G-d removes the scaffolding which connects the highest heavens to the earth and "takes off His shoes," so to speak, placing Himself in direct contact with the lowest plane of existence. Our removing our shoes is simply meant to mirror this state.

The rest of the year, we interface with the world in order to reveal its

latent G-dliness. On Yom Kippur we interface directly with G-d and thereby reveal our own G-dly nature. In other words, in the normal mode of conduct, we are G-d's emissaries, embodied souls which need to eat, work, procreate, manage households and so on, all so we can express the G-dly intent in these things. On Yom Kippur we step back from these roles and return to our true, eternal essence which is directly at One with G-d.

Anti-Asceticism

So, if our true essential state is to be aloof from worldly needs, does this somehow imply that dealing with the physical world the rest of the year is little more than a necessary evil? To the contrary. We spoke about the buffer between our physical existence and G d being like the sole of a great universal shoe. On Yom Kippur we remove our leather shoes to indicate that this barrier has been removed. In truth, however, this physical representation is not an exact counterpart. In truth, the leather soles have not been removed but have become so refined that they cease to act as a barrier.

During the rest of the year, we are enjoined to deal with the physical worlds as our mission as servants of G-d. The Hebrew word for servant, "Eved", shares the same root as the word for "tanning [hides]." A tanner takes tough leather and makes it soft and pliable. The "Eved" of G-d is thus one who takes the unfinished hides of physical existence and works them over until they become almost transparent to the G-dly intent that lies within them. Yom Kippur is not an escape from our year-round task of grappling with the material but the net result and culmination of it. Whenever we have acted mindfully and deliberately in our dealings with the world, when we have partaken of our bodily needs for the sake of heaven, we have actually been softening tough leather so that on Yom Kippur, when the essence of this project is revealed, we catch a

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glimpse of the sum total of our work that will ultimately be realized with the coming of Moshiach.

By Shais Taub

Yom Kippur

History of Yom Kippur

Just months after the people of Israel left Egypt in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), they sinned by worshipping a golden calf. Moses ascended Mount Sinai and prayed to G-d to forgive them. After two 40-day stints on the mountain, full Divine favor was obtained. The day Moses came down the mountain (the 10th of Tishrei) was to be known forevermore as the Day of Atonement—Yom Kippur.

That year, the people built the Tabernacle, a portable home for G-d. The Tabernacle was a center for prayers and sacrificial offerings. The service in the Tabernacle climaxed on Yom Kippur when the High Priest would perform a specially prescribed service. Highlights of this service included offering incense in the Holy of Holies (where the ark was housed) and the lottery with two goats—one of which was brought as a sacrifice, the other being sent out to the wilderness (Azazel).

While the High Priest generally wore ornate golden clothing, on Yom Kippur, he would immerse in a mikvah and don plain white garments to perform this service.

This practice continued for hundreds of years, throughout the time of the first Temple in Jerusalem, which was built by Solomon, and the second Temple, which was built by Ezra. Jews from all over would gather in the Temple to experience the sacred sight of the High Priest performing his service, obtaining forgiveness for all of Israel.

When the second Temple was destroyed in the year 3830 from creation (70 CE), the Yom Kippur service continued. Instead of a High Priest bringing the sacrifices in Jerusalem, every single Jew performs the Yom Kippur service in the temple of his or her heart.

How Yom Kippur Is Observed

Like Shabbat, no work is to be done on Yom Kippur, from the time the sun sets on the ninth of Tishrei until the stars come out in the evening of the next day.

On Yom Kippur, we afflict ourselves by avoiding the following actions:

- > Eating or drinking (in case of medical need, consult a medical professional and a rabbi)
- > Wearing leather shoes
- > Applying lotions or creams
- > Washing or bathing

There are five prayer services we hold on Yom Kippur:

- > Maariv, with its solemn Kol Nidrei service, on the eve of Yom Kippur;
- > Shacharit, the morning prayer, which includes a reading from Leviticus followed by the Yizkor memorial service;

> Musaf, which includes a detailed account of the Yom Kippur Temple service;

> Minchah, which includes the reading of the Book of Jonah;

> Neilah, the “closing of the gates” service at sunset, followed by the shofar blast marking the end of the fast.

Beyond specific actions, Yom Kippur is dedicated to introspection, prayer and asking G-d for forgiveness. Even during the breaks between services, it is appropriate to recite Psalms at every available moment.

After Yom Kippur

After night has fallen, the closing Neilah service ends with the resounding cries of the Shema prayer: “Hear O Israel: G-d is our L-rd, G-d is one.” Then the congregants erupt in joyous song and dance (a Chabad custom is to sing the lively “Napoleon’s March”), after which a single blast is blown on the shofar, followed by the proclamation, “Next year in Jerusalem.”

We then partake of a festive after-fast meal, making the evening after Yom Kippur a Yom Tov (festival) in its own right.

Indeed, although Yom Kippur is the most solemn day of the year, it is suffused with an undercurrent of joy; it is the joy of being immersed in the spirituality of the day and expresses confidence that G-d will accept our repentance, forgive our sins, and seal our verdict for a year of life, health and happiness.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, 4 Tishrei 5785 – 6 October 2024

Assassination of Gedaliah (423 BCE)

Today is a fast day mourning the assassination of the Jewish royal Gedaliah ben Achikam, governor of the Land of Israel for a short period following the destruction of the First Temple. Gedaliah's killing spelled the end of the small remnant of a Jewish community that remained in the Holy Land after the destruction. They soon fled to Egypt. (According to many opinions, the assassination of Gedaliah actually occurred on Rosh Hashanah, but the commemoration of the event is postponed to the day after the festival; when the day after Rosh Hashanah is a Shabbat - as it is this year - the fast is postponed to Tishrei 4.)

Monday, 5 Tishrei, 5785 – 7 October 2024

Rabbi Akiva martyred (134 CE)

The great Talmudic sage, Rabbi Akiva, was taken captive by the Romans on Tishrei 5 of the year 3894 from creation (134 CE). His subsequent torture and execution is recalled in the stirring Eleh Ezkarah poem of the Yom Kippur service.

Birth of Naftali (1564 BCE)

Naftali, the son of Jacob and Bilhah, sixth of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, was born on the 5th of Tishrei. He lived to be 133 years old.

Hamas Pogrom (2023)

The Hamas pogrom (massacre) of 5784 (2023), in which nearly 1,200 Israelis were massacred, took place on Simchat Torah, which in 2023 was the 7th of October.

Tuesday, 6 Tishrei 5785 – 8 October 2024

Birth of Zebulun (1562 BCE)

Zebulun, the son of Jacob and Leah, tenth of the Twelve Tribes, was born on the 7th of Tishrei. He lived to be 110 years old.

Thursday, 8 Tishrei 5785 – 10 October 2024

Temple Dedicated (826 BCE)

The 14-day dedication festivities, celebrating the completion of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem built by King Solomon, commenced on the 8th of Tishrei of the year 2935 from creation (826 BCE). The First Temple served as the epicenter of Jewish national and spiritual life for 410 years, until its destruction by the Babylonians in 423 BCE.

Massacres at Babi Yar (1941)

On the 8th & 9th of Tishrei (29–30 September) 1941, German forces aided by Ukrainian

collaborators massacred over 30,000 Jews in the Babi Yar ravine near Kiev, Ukraine.

Shabbat, 10 Tishrei 5785 – 12 October 2024

Rebecca Born (1677 BCE)

Birth of Rebecca (1677-1556 BCE), wife of Isaac, mother of Jacob and Esau, and one of the Four Matriarchs of Israel.

2nd Tablets (1313 BCE)

On the 10th of Tishrei of the year 2449 from creation, 82 days after the people of Israel betrayed their newly entered covenant with G-d by worshipping a Golden Calf and after Moses twice spent 40 days atop Mount Sinai pleading on their behalf, "G-d restored His goodwill with the Jewish people gladly and wholeheartedly, saying to Moses 'I have forgiven, as you ask', and gave him the Second Tablets" - thereby establishing the day as a time for atonement, forgiveness and teshuvah for all generations.

Start of Yom Kippur War (1973)

A coalition of Arab forces, led by Egypt and Syria, launched a surprise attack against Israel in what became known as the Yom Kippur War. Although Israel suffered tremendous casualties, the war ultimately resulted in a miraculous Israeli victory.