

EITZ CHAYIM HALACHAGRAM -- YOMIM NORAIM AND SUKKOS

ROSH HASHANA

1. **Erev Rosh HaShana** – Many men go to the *mikva* (ideally after one hour before midday). It is customary to perform *hataras nedarim* (annulment of vows). The text, which is found at the beginning of the *machzor*, should be recited in front of a tribunal of three men (even relatives are OK, but preferably the members of the tribunal should not be related). All people who are involved in the procedure should be acquainted with the concept of *hataras nedarim*. If one does not understand the original text, then one should say the formula in English. **Extra long selichos** are recited. The ideal time for *selichos* is from *halachic* midnight until sunrise. Although many have the custom to stand during the entire *selichos*, at a minimum, one should stand for *Keil Melech, Hashem Hashem* and *Vidui* (i.e., *ashamnu, bagadnu*).

2. **Shecheyanu** – is recited on both nights. A **new fruit** is eaten or new garment worn on the second night of *Yom Tov*. Should one not have a new item, *shecheyanu* is still recited.

3. **The Apple, New Fruit and Other Simanim** -- The new fruit is eaten on the 2nd night of Rosh HaShana. Most assume that it should be eaten after washing and eating the *challah* dipped in honey (after eating the *challah*, many recite the traditional *yehi ratzon* found in the *machzor*). One should then recite *borei pri ha'eitz* on the new fruit, but not *shecheyanu* because the *shecheyanu* recited in *kiddush* already satisfies the obligation for the new fruit. This is followed by an apple dipped in honey. The *yehi ratzon* is not recited until after swallowing the first bite. Many eat foods with positive symbolism. A list of *yehi ratzon* prayers corresponding to these foods can be found in a *machzor*. Some avoid foods with negative symbolism (such as nuts, sour and bitter items).

4. **Greetings** -- On *Rosh HaShana* evening, it is customary to greet others with the blessing “*L’Shana Tovah Ticasev v’Techasem (Lealter Lechaim Tovim U’Leshalom)*.”

5. **Tashlich** -- *Tashlich* is customarily recited on the first day of *Rosh HaShana*, except when *Rosh HaShana* falls on *Shabbos*. One empties his or her pockets, symbolically throwing away all sins. On *Rosh HaShana*, **bread** should not be thrown into the water. *Tashlich* can be recited up to *Hoshana Rabbah*, but should preferably be recited before *Yom Kippur*.

6. **Shofar** – There is a biblical obligation to hear the *shofar* blasts on *Rosh HaShana*. To fulfill the *mitzvah*, the listener must have **conscious intent** to fulfill the *mitzvah*, and the *shofar* blower should intend to permit others to fulfill their obligation with his *shofar* blowing. Prior to blowing the *shofar*, the *shofar* blower recites **two berachot** (“*lishmoa kol shofar*” and “*shecheyanu*”). By answering “*Amen*” to those *berachot*, it is as if the community also said them. Our custom is to stand during the *berachot* and for all of the *shofar* blasts. If one hears only part of a *shofar* blast, he has not fulfilled his obligation. One should not speak from the beginning of the first *beracha* until after the final *shofar* blast at the end of *Mussaf* (with the exception of things related to the *davening* itself). We do not recite the small prayers that are printed in many *machzorim* in between the first thirty *shofar* blasts. According to Ashkenazic custom, if a man is blowing *shofar* for a woman, and the man has already fulfilled the *mitzvah*, the woman should recite the *berachot* herself. The *shofar* is not blown on *Shabbos* and is *muktzeh*.

7. **The Second Night of Yom Tov** -- One may not prepare for the *Yom Tov* evening meal or light candles on the second night until at least 45 minutes after sunset. **When the first day of Rosh HaShana is on Shabbos**, one should recite *boruch hamavdil bein kodesh l’kodesh* before performing any second day preparations, and the *kiddush* on the second night includes *borei meorei haeish* (using the *Yom Tov* candles or an electric [preferably clear] incandescent light) and *havdalah*.

ASERES Y'MEI TESHUVA

1. Additions in *Shemoneh Esreh* -- Remember (a) *zachreinu*, (b) *mi kamocha* (c) *u'chesov*, (d) *b'sefer chaim*, (e) *hamelech hakadosh*, (f) *hamelech hamishpat*, (g) *oseh hashalom* (according to some customs). If forgotten, the only addition that requires one to repeat the *shemoneh esreh* is *hamelech hakadosh*.

2. Added Stringencies -- The *Shulchan Aruch* quotes the custom to be more careful about one's observance of *mitzvos* during this time period. Thus, many only eat *pas yisroel* and *cholov yisroel*. It goes without saying that we should be extra careful with respect to *mitzvos bein adam le'chaveiro* as well.

3. *Teshuva* (Repentance) -- If one transgressed any of the commandments, he or she must repent. There are four steps in the repentance process: (a) regretting one's actions; (b) resolving that one will not revert to the practice in the future; (c) verbally expressing that one has sinned ("*vidui*") and (d) ceasing from doing the particular wrong. For sins against another person, there can be no atonement until the penitent has gained the other's forgiveness.

4. *Selichos* -- We begin to recite *selichos* the week before *Rosh HaShana*. When *selichos* are said at night, the *chazan* should wear a *tallis* without reciting a *beracha*. In this case, it is best that the *chazan* borrow a *tallis* from someone else, with the intention not to acquire it as his own.

YOM KIPPUR

1. *Erev Yom Kippur* -- *Vidui* is recited in *mincha*, and the final meal before the fast is eaten after *mincha*. Many men go to the *mikva* before the holiday (preferably before *mincha*). There is a **special *mitzvah* to eat** on *Erev Yom Kippur*. It is customary to take some money (some maintain the ancient custom of utilizing chickens), recite an atonement formula, and then give the money to charity ("*kapparos*"). Parents customarily **bleed their children**.

2. *Candle Lighting* -- Candles should not be lit with the *beracha* of *shehecheyanu* if one intends to drive to *shul* afterward. *Yahrzeit* candles are lit. Some also light a candle for the living. An extra candle is lit to prepare for *havdala* after *Yom Kippur*.

3. *Yom Kippur Night* -- It is proper to arrive at *shul* early so that one can recite *tefillas zakah*. It is customary for men to wear a *kittel* and *tallis* throughout the davening and for women to wear a **white garment**. A man should preferably put on his *tallis* before sunset so that he can recite a *beracha*. *Kol Nidrei* is preferably recited (both by the *chazan* and the congregation) **before sunset**. *Shehecheyanu* is recited by the *chazan* and congregation (except for those who already recited it when they lit candles) after *Kol Nidrei*.

4. *Prohibited Activities* -- All activities prohibited on *Shabbos* are prohibited on *Yom Kippur*. The **five special abstentions** of *Yom Kippur* are: (i) eating and drinking; (ii) washing; (iii) anointing (e.g., using creams and lotions); (iv) wearing (even partially) leather shoes; and (v) marital relations. Cosmetics are customarily not used (but may be put on before the fast begins). Many women have the custom not to wear fancy or gold **jewelry**.

5. *Exceptions to Prohibitions* --

A. Eating and Drinking are permitted for (1) one for whom there is even a remote possibility that fasting will endanger their life; (2) a woman up to 72 hours after giving birth [after that, consult a Rabbi]; (3) children under the age of 11 (although many train children from the age of 9 or 10 to fast part of the day); and (4) prescribed **medication** in pill or capsule form.

B. Washing is permitted for: (1) soiled hands or other parts of the body; (2) to rinse off any discharge (e.g., in the eye); (3) upon awakening in the morning, one should wash 3 times on

each hand, but only until the knuckles [after the hands are wiped but remain slightly damp, they may be passed over the eyes]; (4) after using the bathroom and/or after touching a part of the body that is normally covered, until the knuckles; (5) if one is preparing food for children; (6) medical reasons; (7) washing for bread, for those who are allowed to eat on *Yom Kippur*; (8) washing a baby; and (9) *kohanim* for duchening. **Note** – one should not rinse one's mouth with water, **toothpaste** or **mouthwash**; nor should **perfume** be used.

C. Anointing is permitted for: (1) medical needs in certain circumstances [consult a Rabbi]; and (2) using baby powder to remove a bad odor is permitted, but not **deodorant**.

D. Leather shoes are permitted for (1) a person who has to walk a long distance over stones or mud, and no other suitable footwear is available; and (2) medical needs. Special non-leather shoes should be purchased before the holiday for both adults and children (of all ages).

6. Davening – There are many changes. The *Artscroll Machzor* is highly recommended. *Vidui* (“*ashamnu, bagadnu* and *al cheit shechatanu, etc.*”), in which we confess our sins to G-d, should be recited while one is standing. It is customary to smell *besamim* on *Yom Kippur* so that one will be able to recite 100 *berachos* on the day.

7. Havdala -- One may not eat until after *havdala*. The blessing ***borei meorei ha'eish*** may only be recited on a fire (or an electric [ideally clear] incandescent bulb) that burned the entire *Yom Kippur* (or was lit from such a fire). If such a flame is unavailable then the *beracha* should be skipped, except when *Yom Kippur* falls on *Shabbos*. On ***Motzaei Yom Kippur***, it is customary to recite *kiddush levana*, eat a festive meal, and start building the *Sukkah*.

8. The Morning After -- *Davening* begins earlier than usual on the morning after *Yom Kippur* to show that we have not left our “commitments in the synagogue.”

SUKKOS

1. Erev Yom Tov -- One should not eat a meal (of bread or cake) in the afternoon after approximately 3pm, and preferably starting from noon, in order to eat the evening meal in the *sukkah* with a good appetite. Snacks (e.g., fruit, vegetables, and meat) are allowed.

2. Yom Tov Candles should preferably be lit in the *sukkah*. However, if the candles cannot be guarded properly, resulting in fire concerns, one should light indoors. Although there are some authorities that consider a **silver *leichter*** to be *muktzeh* on *Yom Tov*, most authorities allow it to be moved on *Yom Tov* (on *Shabbos*, they can only be moved after they are out and only if the space is needed and they are resting on a tray that contains a *challah* or some other *non-muktzeh* significant item -- but not just to prevent them from getting wet or being stolen).

3. The Second Night -- see *Rosh HaShana* laws section 7 above, concerning candles and *kiddush*. Some switch the order of *shehecheyanu* and *leishev basukkah* on the second night.

4. Building the Sukkah -- Ideally, the *sukkah* should have four complete walls. Since the laws of constructing a *sukkah* with less than four walls are complicated, one who wishes to construct such a *sukkah* should consult a Rabbi. The **walls** should be sturdy enough to withstand an ordinary wind, which, in practice, means that if one is using a **canvas *sukkah***, one should tie the walls down securely. If the walls of your *sukkah* flap significantly, a Rabbi should be consulted. The ***sechach*** should not rest directly on metal polls or be nailed down with nails. One should be careful not to have **empty air spaces** running across the entire length or width of one's *sukkah* (whether in the middle or the side) and therefore one should place some bamboo poles at right angles to the rest of the *sechach*. For tree issues, consult a Rabbi. ***Sukkah decorations*** should not hang below 13 inches from the *sechach*.

5. Living in the Sukkah -- Every adult male is obligated to reside in the *sukkah* during the seven days of *Sukkos*, which includes eating, learning and sleeping. In **colder climates**, however, one need not sleep in the *sukkah* if the weather causes undue hardship. Although women are technically exempt from the *mitzvah*, when they reside in the *sukkah*, the *mitzvah* is fulfilled and according to *Ashkenazic* custom a *beracha* is recited (see details below). One only recites the *beracha* of "*leishev basukkah*" before eating a meal (not when sleeping, spending time or learning), which is defined as eating a minimum of **two slices of bread**, or according to some authorities when one eats a similar amount of **non-bread products** made from food of the five grains (wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt). In the case of non-bread grain products, if one intends to say the *beracha*, one should remain for a short time in the *sukkah* after eating and perform some other activity to remove oneself from the controversy concerning whether a *beracha* may be recited. **Grain snacks (less than the size of two slices of bread), fruits, vegetables, non-grain snacks and drinks** may be eaten outside the *sukkah*, although it is praiseworthy to eat all foods in the *sukkah*. **Meals** even without grain products and *havdala* should preferably be eaten in the *sukkah*, but in extenuating circumstances may be eaten inside one's home. One need not recite a new *beracha* if one leaves one's own *sukkah* to **visit a friend's sukkah** for dessert. On **Shmini Atzeres** (outside Israel), the more prevalent custom is to eat (but not sleep) in the *sukkah* without reciting *leishev basukkah*. However, there are many other customs, with most authorities recommending that family custom be maintained.

6. First night -- One should eat a *k'zayis* (one slice) or according to some a *k'beitza* (two slices) of *challah* in the *sukkah* on the first and second nights of *Sukkos* (with the intent to fulfill the *mitzvah* of living in the *Sukkah* as our forefathers did in the desert. The *k'zayis* of *challah* [and the *kiddush* that precedes it] should not be eaten until it is night. If it is **raining** steadily on the first night with no end in sight, one should make *kiddush* [without *leishev basukkah*, but with *shehecheyanu* -- having in mind on the first night along with the new holiday, the construction of the *sukkah*] and eat a slice of *challah* in the *sukkah*. The rest of the meal is eaten inside the house. If there is a possibility that the rain will stop, it is proper to wait an hour for the rain to subside (unless delaying is impossible, e.g., hungry or tired children). If the **rain stops** even after the meal has finished, one should eat a *k'beitza* of bread in the *sukkah*.

7. Sukkah Exemptions include (a) one who feels discomfort when sitting in the *sukkah* because of sickness; and (b) if it is raining or so cold that it interferes with the comfortable use of the *sukkah*. Individuals who are traveling on **family trips** are not exempt from *sukkah*. One who is on a **business trip** should consult a Rabbi about their obligation.

8. The Four Species -- The four species are utilized during the first seven days of *Sukkos*. On the **first two days** of *Sukkos*, the *mitzvah* must be fulfilled with **species belonging to the person**. Therefore, if one does not own a set, one may ask a friend to give him his set as a gift on the condition that they be returned. According to *Ashkenazic* custom, women shake the four species with a *beracha*. In **arranging the four species**, the *lulav's* backbone should be facing the person, *hadasim* (myrtles) to the right and *aravos* (willows) to the left. The backbone of the *lulav* should be higher than the *hadasim* by 3-4 inches, with the *hadasim* arranged slightly higher than the *aravos*. **Righties** hold the *esrog* in the left hand and the *lulav* in the right. **Lefties** do the opposite. There should be nothing that **separates** the hands from the four species (e.g., rings). For questions concerning disqualifications relating to the four species, one should contact a Rabbi.