



### **Aseret Yemei Teshuvah**

**Teshuvah** – During this period we continue to examine our lifestyles and actions in a process known as *cheshbon hanefesh*, a spiritual accounting of our relationship with Hashem as well as with other people. We practice teshuvah, acknowledging our mistakes, expressing regret, repairing the harm done, and committing to improve in the future. It is customary to prepare a personal *viduy* text to accompany the “Ashamnu” paragraph on Yom Kippur, listing particular sins we recall from the past year.

Sins involving harming other people require that we apologize to them and gain their forgiveness. However, we are required to avoid harming our victims with our apology. Therefore, one who genuinely believes that describing the sin would upset the victim should only apologize in general terms, without explaining the sin in detail.

**Changes in Shemoneh Esreih** – Beginning on the night of Rosh Hashanah and continuing through Yom Kippur, we make certain changes in shemoneh esreih; all of these are labeled in siddurim and machzorim. However, one who misses the changes need not repeat shemoneh esreih, other than the change at the end of the third berachah of shemoneh esreih, saying *HaMelech HaKadosh*. One who misses that change must repeat shemoneh esreih.

**Selichot** – Selichot continue until Yom Kippur. It is preferable to say them early in the morning, if possible.

**Pat Yisroel** – It is customary to eat bread and baked goods baked by Jews throughout the period from Rosh Hashanah until Erev Yom Kippur.

### **Tzom Gedalyah**

**Why** - We fast on the day after Rosh Hashanah; this year the fast starts at 5:15 AM and ends at 7:34 PM, on Monday September 18. This fast commemorates the murder of Gedaliah ben Achikam, the Jew who served as Governor of Judea after the Babylonians destroyed the Beit HaMikdash. Gedaliah was killed by other Jews; for more on this tragic story see Melachim II 25 and Yirmiyahu 40-41.

**Eating Before Dawn** – One who intends to wake up before dawn to eat should declare that intention, at least mentally, before going to sleep. One who did not declare it may still drink before the fast begins. Note that one who is having a meal of bread or *mezonot* products should begin more than 30 minutes before the fast begins.

**Fast Day Activities** – One may use inedible mouthwash. We do not bathe for pleasure on fast days. One who has difficulty swallowing necessary medication without water may drink the minimum amount of water needed to swallow the medication. One who mistakenly ate on a fast day should still complete the fast.

**Davening** - One who is not fasting does not say *aneinu*. *Avinu malkeinu* is recited even when davening without a *minyan*.

### **Erev Yom Kippur**

**Mikvah for Men** – Many men use the mikvah on Erev Yom Kippur; this practice is at least 1200 years old. Reasons include formal ritual purification, spiritual elevation, and immersion as an act of repentance. Some recite *viduy* before immersing, while in a space where people are clothed. We do not recite a berachah for this immersion.

**Kapparot** – There is a custom of reciting the *Kapparot* paragraph (found in machzorim) while holding money over one’s head; some use chickens, and ancient versions of the practice included using a plant. One then donates this to the needy for their meal.

**Minchah** – One recites *viduy* at the end of shemoneh esreih, whether davening with a minyan or alone. The final meal should be after minchah, if possible.

### Other Practices

- There is a mitzvah of eating on Erev Yom Kippur.
- Parents bless their children, with a blessing found in machzorim.
- Even those who do not light yahrtzeit candles still light a long-lasting candle to use for Havdalah (see below).

### Yom Kippur

**The Mood** – The mood of Yom Kippur is simultaneously happy and serious. We rejoice because Hashem promises to forgive us, and we are serious as we recall our sins, and feel and express sincere regret.

**Candle Lighting** – One who plans to drive to shul after lighting candles must state before lighting that they are not accepting Yom Kippur yet. They should not recite Shehechyanu until it is recited in Kol Nidrei.

**Viduy** – The teshuvah process requires that we recite *viduy* acknowledging our sins, expressing regret, and determining not to replicate them. One should customize the *viduy* text to include their personal sins (but not so loudly that others will hear them). One should say the *viduy* in whatever language they understand.

### Prohibitions

- Any melachah prohibited on Shabbat is also prohibited on Yom Kippur. This includes transporting items outside the *eruv*. One may not handle *muktzeh* items.
- We do not eat or drink; wash; pour oils, creams and lotions on our skin; wear shoes with leather in them; or engage in marital relations.
- Cosmetics may be applied before Yom Kippur, but many do not use makeup for Yom Kippur because of the mood of the day.
- Many do not wear gold, or jewelry that is normally worn on Shabbat or Yom Tov.

### Skincare

- We wash with cold water as needed to clean soiled parts of the body
- In the morning and after a nap we wash *negel vasser* to the point where the fingers and hand meet.
- We wash our fingers to the point where the fingers and hand meet after touching parts of the body that are normally covered.
- We wash our hands before preparing food for those who need it.
- Kohanim wash before birkat kohanim.
- Those who are required to eat bread on Yom Kippur should wash first.
- We do not brush our teeth or use mouthwash, and we do not use deodorant.

### Fasting

- Anyone whose life might be endangered by fasting is halachically required to eat. Often, one can avoid danger by eating very small quantities of food at intervals; there is an excellent three-minute video by Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4ue0\\_Xhxao](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4ue0_Xhxao) explaining how to do this; the video is in Hebrew, but there are clear English subtitles. **For any practical questions, please reach out to me at 516-456-1721 ASAP.**
- Pills taken for medicinal necessity may be dry-swallowed on Yom Kippur. If one needs to take them with water, ideally one should add some lemon juice or vinegar so that the water is bitter. If the medicine is sweet, it would be good to wrap it in a little bit of tissue, if possible. **NEVER discontinue or skip medication without consulting the prescribing physician.**

- Healthy children should begin briefly delaying breakfast on Yom Kippur approximately three years before reaching bat/bar mitzvah. There is no mitzvah of training them in full fasting; therefore, there is no sin in feeding them, and one may give them food directly once it is time for them to eat.
- Healthy children should try to complete the fast in the year before reaching bat/bar mitzvah. There is a mitzvah of training them in full fasting at this age; therefore, one should not give them food directly if they do wish to eat. One should instruct them to take for themselves. [Of course, if anyone, child or adult, were in any possible danger, one would be obligated to feed them directly and without hesitation.]

### **Yom Kippur Night**

- We try to arrive in shul early enough to say *tefillat zakah*, which includes an acceptance of Yom Kippur. It is found in machzorim.
- Men generally wear a *kittel* on Yom Kippur, and wear a *tallit* even at night. It is preferable to put on the *tallit* before sunset, so that one will be able to recite a berachah on it. Some women wear white as well.
- We recite Kol Nidrei before sunset. Everyone recites the berachah of Shehechyanu, other than those who recited it when lighting candles.

### **The End of Yom Kippur**

- One may not eat until after Havdalah.
- For the berachah of *borei meorei ha'eish* we use a fire, or at least an incandescent bulb with a visible filament, that burned throughout Yom Kippur. A fire that was lit from such a fire may be used as well, if need be. One who does not have such a flame skips this berachah, unless Yom Kippur and Shabbat coincide.
- After Yom Kippur we recite *kiddush levanah*, but those who are concerned for bad weather may do it earlier in the month.
- It is customary to start building the succah after Yom Kippur, but one who needs to build it before Yom Kippur may do so.

### **After Yom Kippur**

- It is commendable to start davening earlier than normal on the day after Yom Kippur, demonstrating our commitment.
- From the day after Yom Kippur until the end of Tishrei, we do not say Tachanun. However, *Kel erech apayim* is said on Mondays and Thursdays before the Torah is removed from the *aron kodesh*.

*Thank you to Rabbi Efreim Schwalb for his Halachagrams, which informed this Guide.*