

Facts for Yom Kippur

- (1) Jews fast on Yom Kippur because the Torah says you should “afflict your souls”, which the rabbis interpreted to mean fasting.**
- (2) Yom Kippur can never be on Friday because it would be impossible to prepare for Shabbat. If Yom Kippur were on Sunday, it would be impossible to prepare for Yom Kippur with the restrictions of Shabbat. If Yom Kippur were on Tuesday, Hashana Rabbah would fall on Shabbat, and the ritual of beating the willows impossible to do.**
- (3) Boys under the age of 13 and girls under the age of 12 do not fast because they are not yet responsible for observing the commandments that apply to adults.**
- (4) Some Jews wear sneakers on Yom Kippur because leather shoes are not to be worn on that day. The wearing of leather was thought to be a luxury in ancient times.**
- (5) A person who is sick or who is advised by a doctor to eat cannot fast on Yom Kippur. The commandments are to live by, and can be broken for reasons of health.**
- (6) Kol Nidre is a special night in the Jewish calendar. It is the only night when tallit is worn to emphasize its holiness.**
- (7) There are five services on Yom Kippur. Kol Nidre, Shacharit, Musaf, Minchah and Neila. Kol Nidre is the service on the evening of Yom Kippur and begins before sunset. Kol Nidre is a legal formula, not really a prayer, but we ask G-d not to hold us to any promises we make to Him from one Yom Kippur to the next.**
- (8) We chant Kol Nidre three times so that those who come late can hear it. The hazzan (cantor) chants quietly the 1st time, then louder the 2nd time, and even more loudly the 3rd time.**
- (9) There are two types of “confessionals” (listings of a person’s sins), a short confessional and a long confessional.**
- (10) On Yom Kippur we must ask for forgiveness from G-d and from people we have wronged. To gain forgiveness from people we have wronged we must approach them personally and say we are sorry. If the wronged person does not forgive, we are required to approach him/her 2 more times.**
- (11) We read on Yom Kippur about a ceremony that the High Priest performed when the Temples were in Jerusalem. The High Priest would put his hands**

on a goat, and put all the sins of Israel on the goat and send the goat out into the wilderness. The goat is called the scapegoat in English.

- (12) The fast on Yom Kippur lasts 25, not 24 hours. It begins 18 minutes before the sunsets and ends with the appearance of three stars in the sky, or 42 minutes after the sun sets.
- (13) On Yom Kippur we say out loud the verse Sh'ma Yisrael and Barnch Shem Kavod, whereas on all other days we just say Sh'ma Yisrael out loud. There are several reasons: one is that on Yom Kippur we are like angels; we don't eat or drink. Moses learned Baruch Shem Kavod from the angels and taught it to the Jews. Ordinarily, only the angels would sing it, but since we are like angels on Yom Kippur we are able to sing it too.
- (14) When repenting or asking G-d for forgiveness we must make a verbal confession, that is we must say we are sorry out loud. Just thinking about what we have done wrong is not enough. Said a famous rabbi that you have to say it out loud so you can picture what you did wrong.
- (15) The last service on Yom Kippur is called Neilah, which means closing. The closing refers to the closing of the gates of heaven, when the day's prayers are over. It is the service where we ask G-d one last time for Him to be kind to us. For much of the service the ark in the synagogue is open and we stand.
- (16) From the start of Rosh HaShanah we ask G-d to write us in the Book of Life for a good year; during the Neilah service, we ask G-d to seal us in the Book of Life for a good year.
- (17) At the end of Yom Kippur the shofar is sounded to say that all those who observed Yom Kippur have prayed hard and are ready to lead a better life . . .during the coming year.
- (18) Yom Kippur is considered by some rabbis to be the holiest day of the year. Most however say that Shabbat is the most important because in the Torah the punishment is harsher for those who break Shabbat than those who break Yom Kippur. However great Yom Kippur is, the Jewish people would not have survived without Shabbat.