

ABOUT YOM KIPPUR



What is *Yom Kippur*?

Yom Kippur is a day of forgiveness. Leading up to *Yom Kippur*, it is customary to seek forgiveness from those you have hurt, intentionally or unintentionally. It is also a time to grant forgiveness to others, acknowledging that none of us is perfect. This day of reflection empowers us to strive to be better and make fewer mistakes in the coming year. *Yom Kippur* is commonly translated as the Day of Atonement.

When is it?

Yom Kippur is on the tenth day of Tishrei, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, which falls in autumn. It comes at the end of a 10-day period that begins with *Rosh HaShanah* (the Jewish New Year), a period known as the Jewish High Holy Days.

How do I celebrate *Yom Kippur*?

As one of the High Holy Days, *Yom Kippur* is traditionally celebrated by attending services in a synagogue or temple, though there are customs that are observed at home. Here are some things to know about the festival:

G'mar Khatimah Tovah or **G'mar Tov** The customary greeting said on *Yom Kippur* and towards the end of the 10 days, meaning “*May you be sealed in the book of life!*”

The Book of Life The liturgy for this holiday refers to God as a judge who determines who will live and die based on our deeds and treatment of others. While this is traditional imagery, modern Jewish theologies no longer adhere to this concept. The imagery is accepted as symbolism and encouragement for us right our wrongs.

Fasting Since physical rituals help us find meaning in our holidays, fasting is observed on this day to spiritually purify ourselves from our misdeeds.

Isaiah's Fast The prophet Isaiah rebukes the people for fasting when they do not also strive to improve themselves. Isaiah's message is to take care of those who are vulnerable in our society, to seek justice for all people, and to free the oppressed. This biblical passage is read during services.

Mitzvot To honor the themes of Isaiah's fast, many congregations will hold food drives to donate nonperishable items to local food banks. Other *mitzvot* (good acts to fulfill the Jewish commandments) may be performed, as well.

Shofar A ram's horn that is blown like a trumpet at the end of *Yom Kippur*. Sounding the *shofar* makes us attentive to the imperfections in our world and reminds us to look inward and strive to be our best selves in the coming year.

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Still have questions?

For more information about *Yom Kippur*, jHUB and interfaith programs or Jewish culture, contact us at jHUB@jecc.org, 216-371-0446.