

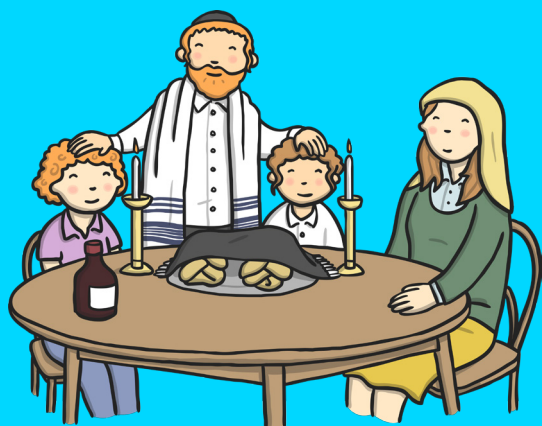
Yom Kippur

Also known as the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur is one of the most important days of the Hebrew year. Yom Kippur falls in September or October on the eve of the 10th day of the Jewish New Year. The first day of the New Year is Rosh Hashanah. According to the Jewish faith, this is the day when God decides each person's fate. Between the first and tenth day of the year, Jews confess their guilt and ask friends and enemies for forgiveness. Jews also ask God for forgiveness.

During the 25 hours of Yom Kippur, Jewish families spend most of the day praying in the synagogue. Adults fast from sunset the night before Yom Kippur, until nightfall the following day. A large feast is served the day before. This makes fasting easier. Children under 9 do not have to fast and neither do pregnant women or people with illnesses. Children between 9-12 eat and drink less than usual. Besides not eating and drinking, Jews are not allowed to wear leather shoes, bathe or wear perfumes or lotions on Yom Kippur. In Israel, where the majority of Jewish people live, there is no TV, no radio and no public transportation in use on this day. Most Jews also don't work or drive that day.

Jewish people look forward to this holiday every year. Yom Kippur is an annual opportunity to make peace with God. After following the rituals, Jews feel a sense of peace and optimism. Married Jews are supposed to wear a special robe on Yom Kippur called a Kittel. This is also the robe that Jews are buried in. Some Jews just wear white clothing on Yom Kippur. White is symbolic of angels. Jews who have confessed their guilt are like angels in heaven.

According to the Jewish faith, every Jew is responsible for the sins of others in the Jewish family. When they pray for forgiveness and confess their sins, Jewish people use "we" instead of "I". The Yom Kippur prayer service includes a prayer of thanks for blessings, followed by a promise to observe the rituals of Yom Kippur, and finally a confession of sins. Stories of God's forgiveness are shared and the Ark in the synagogue is opened. The Ark symbolises the gates of heaven being open for the Jewish people.



Did you know?

Refraining from drinking caffeine is recommended before fasting. A caffeine withdrawal can cause headaches and make it more difficult to observe the fast.