

Halachos of Yom HaKippurim

Eating on Erev Yom HaKippurim

There is a mitzvah from the Torah to eat and drink on Erev Yom HaKippurim. While it appears that the mitzvah applies only to eating something the volume of a fig (approximately 30 grams of water; 1/8 of a cup) and drinking a minimum of a cheekful, some have the custom to be continuously eating all day by sucking on a candy or the like.

The widespread custom is to eat at least one meal with bread in addition to the seudah hamafsekes (last meal before Yom HaKippurim).

Kaparos

Although Rav Yosef Karo (the author of the Shulchan Aruch) writes that the custom of Kaparos with a chicken should be done away with, the Ramo validates it as a legitimate custom.

The Mishnah Berurah quotes the custom to use only money to be given to tzedakah instead of a chicken, out of concern for improper slaughter due to the volume of chickens and state of mind of the slaughterers.

Asking for forgiveness from others

Yom HaKippurim only atones for interpersonal sins if the sinner has appeased the one whom he has offended (or at least attempted to appease on three different occasions). Therefore, one should ask for forgiveness before Yom HaKippurim.

Mikveh

The custom is to go to the Mikveh erev Yom HaKippurim.

Confession erev Yom HaKippurim

One must confess his sins after the Shmonah Esrei of Minchah prior to his last meal before Yom HaKippurim (Seudah hamafsekes) – for this reason, Minchah is earlier than usual.

According to many poskim, one is obligated to confess immediately prior to Yom HaKippurim so that he enter the day with Teshuvah. For this reason, one should make a point to say “Tefillas Zaka” (found in the beginning of the Yom Kippur Machzorim) before Kol Nidrei. Since it is being said as a form of confession, it should preferably be said standing in a submissive posture.

Even though many sins are categorized generally in the “Al Cheit” confession – one should also specifically confess any sins that he has done.

Seudah HaMafsekes

There is a Mitzvah from the Torah to begin the prohibitions of Yom HaKippurim before sunset. Therefore, one should complete his seudah hamafsekes with some time left before sunset, and make a verbal declaration that he intends to accept upon himself the mitzvah of adding to Yom HaKippurim.

If one intends on eating or drinking after he ends his seudah hamafsekes, he should preferably declare out loud before benching (or at least have in mind), that he will eat or drink more.

When a woman makes the blessings on lighting the candles, she is accepting Yom HaKippurim upon herself. She must therefore remove her shoes beforehand, and be aware that she is thereby automatically adding to Yom HaKippurim.

The minhag is to eat easily digested food that is not heavily spiced or fatty (chicken as opposed to red meat) for the seudah hamafsekes. One should also refrain from eating warm milchigs.

Extra Candles

In addition to the Yom Tov candles, and Yahrzeit candle (if applicable), an extra (24 hour) candle is lit for each married man in the household.

One should also prepare a 24 hour candle and add a bit of extra oil to it, to assure that he has a flame that was burning all of Yom HaKippurim with which to make the blessing on fire for havdalah.

There is also a custom to leave a light on, or shining into the bedroom of a husband and wife, to remind them that sexual relations are prohibited (all regular harchakos also apply).

Special Clothing

Married men wear a kittel even at night. The widespread custom is for a mourner in the twelve months after a parents death to also wear a kittel. There are varying customs regarding a choson in his first year of marriage.

One should not defecate while wearing his kittel, as it is an article of clothing used specifically for prayer. Urinating while wearing a kittel is allowed.

The custom is for women as well to wear white clothing, but it should not have gold objects embroidered on it.

Due to the nature of the day, women should only wear jewelry that they wear daily. This jewelry may be made of gold.

Prohibitions of Yom HaKippurim

All melachah that is prohibited on Shabbos is prohibited on Yom HaKippurim. In addition, eating, drinking, washing for pleasure, applying ointments and creams, wearing leather shoes and having sexual relations are prohibited. The punishment for eating, drinking, or doing melachah on Yom HaKippurim is kareis.

If one, God forbid, has a debilitating headache or other illness that is effecting his entire body, he may swallow an unflavored pill without water.

Only washing for pleasure is prohibited. Therefore, one is allowed to wash actual filth off of his body.

One should wash upon waking up in the morning, but only his fingers up to the palm.

A kohen should wash his hands normally, all the way to the wrist before he duchens.

So too, one who must eat bread should wash normally, all the way to the wrist.

One should not rinse out his mouth with water or even mouthwash.

One is not allowed to put on scented deodorant or perfume/cologne.

Yom HaKippurim is not a sad day, but rather a joyous one. Therefore, children that are not fasting should be given special foods and treats and not limited to a minimum amount of food.

One who eats on Yom HaKippurim does not make kiddush.

Baruch Sheim Aloud

One says Baruch Sheim aloud in Shema before bed.

Havdalah

Havdalah after Yom HaKippurim includes wine, but only the blessing on fire, not besamim. This blessing may only be recited on a fire that was burning on Yom HaKippurim. For this reason, before Yom HaKippurim begins, one should light a 24 hour candle with some extra oil added. If one does not have such a flame, he makes havdalah anyway, but leaves out the blessing on the fire.

Havdalah When Yom HaKippurim Was On Shabbos

When Yom HaKippurim was on Shabbos, Ashkenazim also make the blessing on besamim; Sefaradim do not.

If one does not have a flame that was burning on Yom HaKippurim, he should light one for Havdalah.