



How to...

Fast (or not fast) at home on Yom Kippur

Leviticus 23:27

אֲךָ בְּעֶשְׂרֵי יוֹמֵי חֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים הוּא מְקַרְא־קֹדֶשׁ יְהִיָּה לָכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם
אֶת־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֶשָׁה לַיהוָה:

Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month, it is a day of atonement, a sacred occasion for you, and you shall afflict your souls/selves, and you shall make a fire offering to the Eternal.

Mishnah Yoma 8 (selections)

יום הכפורים אסור באכילה ובשתיה וברחיצה ובסיכה ובנעילת הסנדל ובתשמיש המטה. והמלך והכלה ירחצו את פניהם. והחיה תנעול את הסנדל, דברי רבי אליעזר, וחכמים אוסרין:

1. [On] Yom Kippur, it is forbidden to eat, drink, wash, anoint, put on sandals or have sexual intercourse. The king or a bride may wash their face, and a woman after childbirth may put on sandals. These are the words of Rabbi Eliezer, but the sages forbade them.

אכל ושתה בהעלם אחד, אינו חייב אלא חטאת אחת. אכל ועשה מלאכה, חייב שתי חטאות. אכל אכלין שאינן ראויין לאכילה, ושתה משקין שאינן ראויין לשתיה, ושתה ציר או מוריס, פטור:

3. If [someone] ate or drank in a state of unawareness, they are obligated to bring just one sin offering. If they ate or did work, they are obligated to bring two sin offerings. If they ate foods that are not suitable for eating, or drank liquids unfit for drinking, or if they drank fish brine or fish pickling liquid, they are exempt.

עוברה שהריחה, מאכילין אותה עד שתשיב נפשה. חולה מאכילין אותו על פי בקיאים. ואם אין שם בקיאים, מאכילין אותו על פי עצמו, עד שיאמר די:

5. If a pregnant woman smells [food on Yom Kippur], we feed her until she feels restored. If someone is ill, we feed them according to doctors. If there are no doctors, we feed them according to themselves, until they say, 'enough'.

מי שאחזו בולמוס, מאכילין אותו אפילו דברים טמאים עד שיאורו עיניו. מי שנשכו כלב שוטה, אין מאכילין אותו מחצר כבד שלו, ורבי מתיא בן חרש מתיר. ועוד אמר רבי מתיא בן חרש, החושש בגרונו, מטילין לו סם בתוך פיו בשבת, מפני שהוא ספק נפשות, וכל ספק נפשות דוחה את השבת:

6. If one is seized by a ravenous hunger [bulmus], they may be given to eat even unclean things until their eyes are enlightened. If one is bitten by a rabid dog, do not feed him from the lobe of his liver, but Rabbi Matia ben Harash permits it. And furthermore, it is the opinion of Rabbi Matia ben Harash that if one has a pain in his throat, they may put medicine in him even on Shabbat because there is a doubt for his life and any doubt for a life overrides Shabbat.

Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 83b

ר' יהודה ור' יוסי הוו קא אזלי באורחא אחזיה בולמוס לר' יהודה קפחיה לרועה
'אכליה לריפתא א"ל ר' יוסי קפחת את הרועה כי מטו למתא אחזיה בולמוס לר'
יוסי אהדרוהו בלגי וצעי א"ל ר' יהודה אני קפחתי את הרועה ואתה קפחת את
העיר כולה

Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Yosi were walking on the way and bulmus seized rabbi Yehudah and he forced a shepherd to feed him bread. Rabbi Yosi said to him, 'You forced that shepherd.' When they reached the city, bulmus seized rabbi Yosi, those surrounding him gave him cups of drink and plates of food. Rabbi Yehudah said to him, 'I may have forced the shepherd but you forced the entire city.'

Leviticus 18:5

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאָדָם וְחַי בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה:

You shall observe my statutes and my laws, which people do and live by them, I am the Eternal.

Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 85b

ר' שמעון בן מנסיא אומר ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת אמרה תורה חלל עליו שבת
אחת כדי שישמור שבתות הרבה א"ר יהודה אמר שמואל אי הואי התם הוה אמינא
דידי עדיפא מדידהו וחי בהם ולא שימות בהם

Rabbi Shimon ben Manasya says: 'The children of Israel shall observe Shabbat' (Exodus 31:16) – the Torah says, desecrate one Shabbat in order to observe many Shabbatot.

Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: if I had been there [i.e. if I had been in the forgoing discussion], I would have said that my proof is preferable to their proof: 'live by them' (Leviticus 18:5) and not to die by them

Rabbi Israel Salanter flouts the law by eating on Yom Kippur (1848)

It is Yom Kippur in the afternoon. The rabbi stands on the platform in the centre of the synagogue, tall and venerable. The people are waiting to hear what the rabbi will say, and one is afraid to draw one's breath. And the rabbi begins to speak.

His weak voice grows stronger and higher every minute, and at last it is quite loud. He speaks of the sanctity of the Day of Atonement and of the holy Torah; of repentance and of prayer, of the living and of the dead, and of the pestilence that has broken out and that destroys without pity, without rest, without a pause – for how long? for how much longer?

... and I hear him say: 'And when trouble comes to a man, he must look to his deeds, and not only to those which concern him and the Almighty, but to those which concern himself, to his body, to his flesh, to his own health ... There are times when one must turn aside from the law, if by so doing a whole community may be saved. With the consent of the All-Present and with the consent of this congregation, we give leave to eat and drink on the Day of Atonement.'

(From: Glenn, Rabbi Israel Salanter: Religious-Ethical Thinker (Brooklyn, 2005))

A Prayer for those not fasting on Yom Kippur (Mishkan HaNefesh)

Rofei chol basar – healer of all living creatures:

I thank You for the breath that is in me

For the community of Israel that lives

For the possibilities of today and tomorrow.

May my eating be as a fast;

May it be dedicated to You, to t'shuvah –

To the renewal and restoration of my relationship

To You, to others, and to myself

A Ritual for those eating on Yom Kippur, Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers

[It was important to us to] “bring a kavannah (intention) to the act of eating on Yom Kippur, framing it in a positive, constructive way but also recognizing the religious and personal challenges of the day.”

The ritual is based on various symbolic Jewish ideas, but the starting point is a plate of food set aside as an eruv tavshilin. This plate has a holy purpose in being set aside. The plate/box of food we will create for this ritual will also have a holy purpose, but one which will only be fulfilled if the food is eaten.

Tamar תמר (Date)

The Date palm is a symbol of righteousness (Psalm 92).

I acknowledge that the right path is not always the easiest one and seek that which will nourish me in body and soul, giving me the strength to live righteously in Your world.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheynu Melekh ha'olam boray peri ha'eytz

Blessed are You, our Living God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates the fruit of the trees

Hummus חומוס

The product of the earth calls me to embrace food and hunger as natural, and asks me to allow myself to 'eat and be satisfied' (Deuteronomy 8:12).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה

Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheynu Melekh ha'olam boray peri ha'adamah

Blessed are You, our Living God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth

Mayi_ מים (water)

God, the source of life, provides me with *mayim chayyim* living water.

May it be a source of hope, refreshing my body, comforting my soul.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבָּרוֹ

Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheynu Melekh ha'olam shehakol ni'hiyeh bidvaro

Blessed are You, our Living God, Sovereign of the universe, by whose word all things exist

Challah_ חלה

Challah is an offering to God, and so today my humble offering is to eat this bread in my attempt to return to you, God.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheynu Melekh ha'olam hamotzi lekhem min ha'aretz

Blessed are You, our Living God, Sovereign of the universe, who brings forth food out of the earth

For the full ritual, see: <https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/when-fasting-not-teshuvah-yom-kippur-eating-disorders>