

The Ten Days between *Rosh HaShanah* (Jewish Civil New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (The Day of Atonement) is often called the **10 days of Awe**. It is considered by the Jews to be the holiest and most important days of the year.

The holy day of *Yom Kippur* was instituted in Leviticus 16
It is to be a permanent regulation for you that on the tenth day of the seventh month you are to deny yourselves and not do any kind of work, both the citizen and the foreigner living with you. For on this day, atonement will be made for you to purify you; you will be clean before Adonai from all your sins. It is a Shabbat of complete rest for you, and you are to deny yourselves. This is a permanent regulation. Lev. 16:29-31 CJB

It begins before sunset the night before, and includes a 25 hour fast from both food and water, and ceasing of all work.

Fasting and praying are important ingredients of *Yom Kippur*. It is a day set aside to “afflict the soul,” to ask for atonement for the sins of the past year. But it is only a sign of repentance for sins against God. *Yom Kippur* does not provide atonement for sins committed against human beings.

Yom Kippur comes at the end of the ten “Days of Awe”. During these ten days people are to examine themselves and repent of their sins. They are to go to each other to confess and be forgiven, because they believe God calls us first to make things right with each other before being right with Him.

Maimonides teaches (Laws of Repentance, 2:9): “Repentance and the Day of Atonement only atone for sins between human beings and God, but interpersonal sins are never forgiven until a person has made restitution and appeased the one whom he has wronged.... Even if one merely belittled a person with words, he must appease him and go to him until he is granted forgiveness.”

Rabbinic tradition has it that a person can expect to be judged by God with the same standard of judgment that a person applies to others. If a person is mean-spirited and unfair in treatment of fellow human beings, these same qualities will be applied to him by the Heavenly court.

The traditions of the day are rich and moving. When the temple was standing, special sacrifices were offered, and the high priest laid the sins

of the nation on a scapegoat that was driven into the wilderness and killed there.

Throughout the ages, there has been a clear understanding of the need for a means of atonement, even after the Temple was destroyed and the decision was made that prayers alone were sufficient.

To Christians, we see the obvious need for the atonement that comes from the death and resurrection of Jesus (*Yeshua*). As the Jewish people celebrate *Yom Kippur*, it is very appropriate for us to remember that Jesus’ sacrifice is now God’s answer for our sins.

{There are many things to be aware of during the Days of Awe as well as during the rest of the year. For a list of many of them, request the full study paper from the Scripture Study Group paper by the same title at llogue1@cox.net}

It is customary among pious Jews to pay their debts on time, and certainly in advance of *Yom Kippur*. It is customary to make peace with those whom one has mistreated, disrespected, maligned or betrayed. It is customary to increase charitable contributions to those institutions that foster proper Torah values and that provide assistance to the needy. These things are important in themselves; but are especially important when we seek atonement from the Almighty. We need to come before God with clean hands.

We ask forgiveness and atonement from God and rightly so, but it is just as important to give forgiveness to those who seek it from us.

Maimonides in his Laws of Repentance (2:10):

“It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and to withhold forgiveness. Rather, one should be easy to pacify and difficult to anger. When a sinner asks forgiveness, one should grant it with a full heart and willing soul. Even if the other had sinned greatly against him and caused him much anguish, he should not take revenge or bear a grudge.”

For the way you judge (and forgive) others is how you will be judged (and forgiven) — the measure with which you measure out will be used to measure to you. {Inserted comments mine} Matthew 7:2 (CJB)

Yom Kippur can be just another external show of piety; or it can be a transformative occasion. The decision is completely up to the individual.