

YOM KIPPUR 101

Yom Kippur, also known as The Day of Atonement, is the tenth day of Libra. Kabbalistically speaking, it is more of a "day of at-one-ment," meaning we have the opportunity to be unified with the Light of the Creator at the Binah level. This also allows us to be one with all humanity, for during Yom Kippur we are beyond all illusionary aspects of separation—physical, political, religious, social, etc. We are in the realm of the source of Light for our world, and therefore, there is no separation in humanity.

◆ PREPARATION FOR YOM KIPPUR

The two days of Rosh Hashanah, the seven days that follow, and the day of Yom Kippur are known as the Ten Days of Teshuva. The Ari teaches a little-known secret that during the seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we have a very unique opportunity for cleanings. He explains that the spiritual work we accomplish on each day of the week actually cleanses and corrects that same day, every week of every year of my life. For example, if I take my spiritual work seriously enough on the Thursday of that week, I can erase any negativity that I created on any Thursday of my life. Incredible opportunity!

◆ THE FIVE RESTRICTIONS & WHY

Since Yom Kippur is such an elevated day, we restrict five things related to the body: eating, drinking, wearing leather, sexual relations, and bathing. Kabbalists explain that observing these five bodily restrictions during Yom Kippur gives our souls the ability to elevate on this most spiritual of days.

◆ KOL NIDRE

Before Rosh Hashanah, we have an opportunity to erase the vows we made throughout the prior year. In addition, we each made vows on a soul level before we came to this world, like, I'm going to be a righteous person. We have not necessarily fulfilled these vows yet, and they hang over our heads. Through the Kol Nidrei, we are able to cancel out these unfulfilled vows on Yom Kippur.

◆ THE FIVE SPIRITUAL MEALS

One of the main restrictions of Yom Kippur is not eating or drinking. However, the sages established five "spiritual meals," or the five prayer connections of Yom Kippur, to spiritually nourish us for the entire year. Each meal elevates us higher and higher until we reach the level of Binah, the spiritual warehouse of all energy.

◆ NEILA

The Neila is the fifth and final "spiritual meal," the pinnacle of Yom Kippur. The greatest Light of this day arrives at the end of the entire connection. Rosh Hashanah and the seven days between it and Yom Kippur sweeten judgment, and draw blessings into our lives for the year to come. Neila is when we lock in all the blessings for the future.