

Jewish High Holidays

The High Holiday period actually begins in *Elul*, the Hebrew month preceding Rosh Hashanah. *Elul* is an important period of introspection, of clarifying life's goals, and of coming closer to G-d. Because when the big day of Rosh Hashanah comes, and each individual stands before the Almighty to ask for another year, we'll want to know what we're asking for!

Yom Kippur

Following the Golden Calf, Moses pleaded with G-d to forgive the Jewish people. Finally, on Yom Kippur, atonement was achieved and Moses brought the second set of Tablets down from Mount Sinai. From that day forward, every Yom Kippur has carried with it a special power to cleanse the mistakes of Jews (both individually and collectively) and to wipe the slate clean.

Yom Kippur is thus the holiest day of the Jewish year. In order to help us achieve a high spiritual level, Jews fast unless their doctor prescribes that they not fast due to medical reasons. The sanctity of life comes before all else.

The Yom Kippur fast begins at sundown, and extends 25 hours until the following nightfall.

Though Yom Kippur atones for transgressions against G-d, this does not include wrongs committed against our fellow human beings. It is therefore the universal Jewish custom — sometime before Yom Kippur — to apologize and seek forgiveness from any friends, relative, or acquaintances whom we may have harmed or insulted over the past year.

The High Holidays are followed five days later by Sukkot, a holiday of immense joy, where we express our complete trust in G-d, and celebrate our confidence in having received a "good judgment" for the coming year.

This introduction on the Jewish High Holidays is provided to you by the Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program, a program of Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis. Through the wisdom and traditions of Judaism, the Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program offers comfort, hope and strength to people experiencing loss, life challenges, illness and grief. For information about our resources and volunteer visitors, please call 952-542-4840.

