

THE MEANING AND RITUAL OF TASHLICH

High Holy Days 5781/2020

Tashlich is a special ritual that many Jews perform each year during the High Holy Days. The word tashlich in Hebrew means, “casting off.” During this ritual, we are instructed to do just that—we cast off our sins or misdeeds and in doing so begin the process of healing. Water is a symbol of creation and life and traditionally it was seen as a place where we could better sense God’s presence. Tashlich offers an opportunity to begin the year with an open heart and a clean slate. We hope you will consider participating; there is no wrong way to perform Tashlich. Below are some suggestions for how to make this practice meaningful for you and your family.



1. LOOK FOR A NATURAL BODY OF WATER THAT YOU CAN ACCESS EASILY.

Tashlich requires that you cast your sins into a body of water like a river, spring, lake, pond, or well. Most people prefer natural, flowing bodies of water because it gives the effect of your sins being swept away by the current. If you don’t live near a natural body of water or can’t manage to get to one, you can use running water from a hose or faucet. It’s acceptable to perform Tashlich even if you can see the water only from a distance.

2. TRY PERFORMING TASHLICH ON ROSH HASHANAH

Tashlich is supposed to be performed on the first or second day of Rosh Hashanah. If, however, you’re unable to perform the ceremony on Rosh Hashanah, Tashlich can be done any day during the Days of Awe until Yom Kippur.

3. EXAMINE WHAT YOU’VE STRUGGLED WITH IN THE PAST YEAR

Rosh Hashanah is a period of self reflection, and Tashlich requires that you review your behavior over the last year before you can cast away your sins. Remember that everyone struggles with mistakes, sins, and accidents, so don’t be afraid to be honest with yourself during this period of review.

4. TAKE A MEDITATION WALK

After you’ve thought about your actions over the past year, take some time to consider how you can improve in the upcoming year. Many Jews recommend taking a walk and meditating to think of ways you can change and return to God in the next year. Keep in mind, however, that the goal of Tashlich is to move forward in the year, rather than to berate yourself or dwell too much on the past.



TEMPLE SHALOM *of NEWTON*

5. READ THE PASSAGES OF TASHLICH

The source passage for Tashlich comes from the last verses of the prophet Micah (7:18-20). These verses tell why we practice Tashlich and will guide your own practice:

Who is a God like You, Forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression; Who has not maintained wrath forever against the remnant of God's own people, Because God loves graciousness, God will take us back in love; God will cover up our iniquities, You will hurl all our sins Into the depths of the sea. You will keep faith with Jacob, loyalty to Abraham, as You promised on oath.

6. COLLECT YOUR "SINS" IN YOUR POCKETS

If you're going to a natural body of water, never use paper or other items to represent your sins. These can cause pollution and damage the natural wildlife in the area. It's okay to use paper if you're using a small basin in your home. We recommend very small pieces of bread or bird seed.

7. SING, IF IT FEELS APPROPRIATE

Here are some possibilities:

Eili, Eili: *Eili, Eili shelo yigamer l'olam. Hachol v'hayam, rishrush shel hamayim, b'rak hashamayim, t'filat ha-adam.*

Hashiveinu: *Hashiveinu, hashiveinu adonai eilecha v'nashuvah, v'nashuvah. Chadeish, chadeish yameinu k'kedem*

Avinu Malkeinu: *Avinu malkeinu, choneinu va-aneinu ki ein banu ma-asim. Asei imanu tzedakah vachessed v'hoshi-einu.*

8. OFFER A PRAYER ABOUT YOUR HOPE FOR THE YEAR

Talk to God out loud or in your head about your past year and how you plan to do better. Try to be as honest as possible about what has happened during the year and how you want to improve. If you need help with words, try answering some of these questions:

- Am I using my time wisely?
- Was I there for people who needed me?
- Do my relationships reflect k'dushah, holiness?
- The kind deed: did I perform it or postpone it?
- The unnecessary word: Did I say it or hold it back?
- Did I live fully? If not, how can I?

9. CAST YOUR SINS INTO THE BODY OF WATER

After your prayer, reach into your pockets and grab the bread or seeds or metaphorical sins, and throw them into the water. When you let go of them, breathe out and watch them wash away. Only do this when you feel ready. It might take you longer than some other people to prepare for this moment, but don't feel rushed.



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