

# A Guide for Personal *Tashlich*, “Casting Away our Sins”

## *Preparation*

**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 or the ocean. Most people prefer natural, flowing bodies of water because it gives the effect of your sins being swept away by the current.

- If you can't access a natural body of water, you can use running water from a hose or faucet.
- It is also acceptable to perform *Tashlich* even if you can only see the water from a distance.

**2 Opt for a body of water that has fish living in it, if you can.** Fish are extremely symbolic for the practice of *Tashlich* for a number of reasons. Fish can sometimes be unintentionally caught in nets, which symbolizes the tendency of humans to unknowingly get caught in bad situations. Jewish tradition also teaches that when you cast your sins into the water, the fish will protect them from resurfacing because they are hidden under the water.

- If you can't find a body of water with fish, or you aren't sure if fish are present, it is still fine to perform *Tashlich*.

**3 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*.

**4 Examine what you've struggled with in the past year.** Rosh Hashanah is a period of self-introspection, and *Tashlich* requires us to review our behavior over the past year before casting away our 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.

**5 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 year to come. Take a walk to think of ways that you can change your behavior and return to God in the coming year. Keep in mind that the goal of *Tashlich* is to move forward in the New Year, rather than to dwell on the past.

**6 Collect your “sins” in your pockets.** Use bread crumbs or bird seed to act as physical symbols of your sins. Doing so helps us to visualize our transgressions being washed away, allowing us to enter the New Year with a clean slate.

- If you're going to a natural body of water, do not use paper or other items to represent your sins. These can cause pollution and damage the natural wildlife in the area.

## *At Water's Edge*

**7** Read the passage that inspires the ritual of *Tashlich*. The source passage for *Tashlich* comes from the last verses of the prophet Micah (7:18-20):

Who is like you, God, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be faithful to Jacob, and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago.

**8** 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.* (O God, my God, I pray that these things never end: The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters, the crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.)
- **Hashiveinu:** *Hashiveinu, hashiveinu Adonai eilecha v'nashuvah, v'nashuvah. Chadeish, chadeish yameinu k'kedem.* (Turn us back, Adonai, to you, and we will turn. Renew our days as before.)
- **Avinu Malkeinu:** *Avinu malkeinu, choneinu va-aneinu ki ein banu ma-asim. Asei imanu tzedakah vachessed v'hoshi-einu.* (Our Father, Our King, favor us and answer us for we have little merit. Deal with us charitably and kindly and save us.)

**9** Offer a prayer about your hopes for the New Year. Talk to God, out loud or in your heart, 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?
- Did I perform the kind deed, or postpone it? Did I say the unnecessary word, or hold it back?
- Did I acquire only possessions? Or did I acquire insights and knowledge as well?
- Did I live fully? If not, how can I?

**10** Cast your sins into the body of water. After your prayer, reach into your pockets and grab the seeds or crumbs (your 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; don't feel rushed.

**11** Finally, take a photo of your *Tashlich* site. And we'd love to see you in it! Share your photo with the congregation by sending it to Irene Gilbert at [irene@kkbe.org](mailto:irene@kkbe.org).