

***The Shul of New York Tashlich  
A Ritual for Casting-Away 5781  
Rabbi Eva Sax-Bolder***



***Dear Friends,***

***L'shana Tova! At these unprecedented times of the corona-virus pandemic, we are all inventing ways to honor the rituals and traditions of the Holy Days. The principle in Jewish law of 'pikuach hanefesh,' instructs us that the preservation of human life overrides any other religious rule. This year, to maintain this concept of saving a life by social distancing, in lieu of gathering we provide you with a DIY tashlich packet, filled with suggestions for a meaningful tashlich experience.***

***You may find ideas that resonate for you and perhaps are inspired to create your own. The most important aspect of this ritual is your 'kavannah,' your intention to reflect, cast away and purify your heart to begin this new year with a clean slate. May you receive yourself with compassion, knowing it is human to make mistakes and then breathing into self-forgiveness, trusting that you will be given a long life to refine your soul traits.***

***May our prayers be heard with compassion, lovingkindness and forgiveness by the One who hears our pleas.***

***Blessings on your journey, with love,***

***Rabbi Eva***

*For hundreds of years, Jews have gathered by the water's edge on the afternoon of Rosh HaShanah to symbolically cast off our misdeeds. Today, as did generations before us, we too stand by the water's edge, poised between the year now gone and the year that is yet to be. Tashlich is a time to recognize that we can change the quality of our relationships with others. There are two great bodies of water according to our tradition: The lower waters – mayim – which include the oceans, rivers and lakes; and the upper waters – shamayim – waters which are found in the heavens above. Today, standing at the edge of the lower waters, we will release our misdeeds into the waters and face the year ahead with dignity, with courage, and with faith.*

We come to this river seeking to cast away our mistakes, in the spirit of Ezekiel's words: "Cast away from yourselves all your transgressions and create within yourselves a new heart and new spirit!" (Ezekiel 18:31)

### ***A Prayer for Tashlich***

by Rabbi Rachel Barenblatt

*Here I am again ready to let go of my mistakes.*

*Help me to release myself from all the  
ways I've missed the mark.*

*Help me to stop carrying the karmic  
baggage of my poor choices.*

*As I cast this bread upon the waters  
lift my troubles off my shoulders.*

*Help me to know that last year is over,  
washed away like crumbs in the current.*

*Open my heart to blessing and gratitude.  
Renew my soul as the dew renews the grasses.*

*And we say together: Amen.*

## ***Casting Away our Misdeeds:***

*Recite the following as you cast your misdeeds into a body of living water:*

In my distress I cried out to God; God answered me and set me free. Who is like You, O God, forgiving iniquity and pardoning the transgression of the remnant of Your people! You do not retain Your anger forever, for You delight in loving-kindness. You will again have compassion upon us, subdue our iniquities, and cast all our misdeeds into the depths of the sea.

### **Return Again**

Return again, Return again  
Return to the land of your soul (2x)  
Return to who you are  
Return to what you are  
Return to where you are born and reborn again

## ***Meditations: To Everything There Is A Season***

And there is an appointed time for every purpose under heaven. Now is the time for turning. The leaves are beginning to turn from green to red and orange. The birds are beginning to turn and are heading once more towards the South. The animals are beginning to turn to storing their food for the winter. For leaves, birds and animals, turning comes instinctively. But for us turning does not come so easily.

–Ecclesiastes

## ***It Takes an Act of Will***

It takes an act of will.  
For us to make a turn.  
It means breaking with old habits.  
*It means admitting that we have been wrong; And*  
this is never easy.  
It means losing face;  
It means starting all over again; *And*  
this is always painful.  
It means saying: “I am sorry.”  
It means admitting that we have the ability to change; *And*  
this is always embarrassing.  
These things are terribly hard to do.  
But unless we turn, we  
will be trapped forever  
In yesterday’s ways.

## ***God, Help Us To Turn***

From callousness to sensitivity,  
From hostility to love,  
From pettiness to purpose,  
From envy to contentment,  
From carelessness to discipline,  
From fear to faith.  
Turn us around, O God, and  
bring us back toward You.  
Revive our lives, as at the beginning.  
And turn us towards each other, God,  
For in isolation there is no life.

*Let us cast away vain ambition, which prompts us to strive for goals that bring neither true fulfillment nor genuine contentment.*

*Let us cast away stubbornness, so that we will neither persist in foolish habits nor fail to acknowledge our will to change.*

*Let us cast away indifference, so that we may be sensitive to the sufferings of others and responsive to the needs of our people everywhere.*

*Let us cast away pride and arrogance, so that we can worship God and serve God's purposes in humility and truth.*

*Let us cast away envy, so that we will neither be consumed by desire for what we lack nor grow unmindful of the blessings that are already ours.*

*Let us cast away the sin of selfishness, which keeps us from enriching our lives through wider concerns, and greater sharing, and from reaching out in love to other human beings.*

## ***Pause and Reflect***

### ***Gesher Tzar Meod~ The World is a narrow place***

*Kol ha-o-lam ku-lo gesher tzar me'od  
V'ha-i-kar lo l'fached klal*

The whole world is a narrow bridge and the important thing is not to be afraid.

## **Tashlich Crumb List**

*A variation on a theme of breads for Tashlich by Richard Israel.*

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|--|--|
| <b>For</b> ordinary misdeeds - White Bread                                   | <b>For</b> over-eating - Stuffing Bread                  |
| <b>For</b> dark misdeeds - Pumpernickel                                      | <b>For</b> pride - Puff Pastry                           |
| <b>For</b> twisted misdeeds – Pretzels                                       | <b>For</b> recurring slip ups - Banana Bread             |
| <b>For</b> misdeeds committed in haste - Matzah                              | <b>For</b> impetuosity - Quick Bread                     |
| <b>For</b> misdeeds committed in less than eighteen minutes - Shmurah Matzah | <b>For</b> auto theft - Caraway Bread                    |
| <b>For</b> misdeeds of chutzpah - Fresh Bread                                | <b>For</b> risking one's life unnecessarily - Hero Bread |
| <b>For</b> substance abuse/marijuana - Stoned Wheat                          | <b>For</b> excessive use of irony - Rye Bread            |
| <b>For</b> substance abuse/heavy drugs - Poppy Seed                          | <b>For</b> exotic misdeeds - French Bread                |
| <b>For</b> arson - Toast   | <b>For</b> complex misdeeds - Multi-grain                |
| <b>For</b> high-handedness - Napoleons                                       | <b>For</b> misdeeds of indecision - Waffles              |
| <b>For</b> not giving full value - Short bread                               | <b>For</b> timidity - Milk Toast                         |
| <b>For</b> jingoism - Yankee Doodles   | <b>For</b> being sulky - Sourdough                       |
| <b>For</b> being money-hungry - Enriched Bread or Raw Dough                  | <b>For</b> silliness - Nut Bread                         |
| <b>For</b> telling small lies - Fudge  | <b>For</b> telling bad jokes - Corn Bread                |
| <b>For</b> promiscuity - Hot Buns  | <b>For</b> war-mongering - Kaiser Rolls                  |
| <b>For</b> unfairly up-braiding others - Challah                             | <b>For</b> racism – Humble Pie                           |
| <b>For</b> provocative dressing - Wonton Wrappers                            | <b>For</b> being holier-than-thou - Bagels               |
| <b>For</b> indecent photography - Cheese Cake                                | <b>For</b> snobbery - Upper Crusts                       |
| <b>For</b> trashing the environment – Dumplings                              | <b>For</b> being hypercritical - Pan Cakes               |
| <b>For</b> the sin of laziness - Any Very Long Loaf                          | <b>For</b> political skullduggery - Bismarcks            |
|  | <b>For</b> gambling - Fortune Cookies                    |
|  | <b>For</b> being snappish - Ginger Bread                 |
|  | <b>For</b> davening off tune - Flat Bread                |
|  | <b>For</b> silliness - Nut Bread                         |

## **Tashlich Meditation**

Click to play a 15-minute guided  
[Tashlich Meditation with Rabbi Eva.](#)

## *A Personal Tashlich*

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### **1. Look for a natural body of water that you can easily access.**

Traditionally, *Tashlich* requires that you cast your “sins” into a body of water like a river, spring, lake, pond, or well. We know this may be difficult this year. If you are lucky enough to be near a natural, flowing body of water, it will give 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. Opt for a body of water that has fish living in it if you can.**

If you cannot find a body of water with fish, or are not sure if fish are present, you can still perform *Tashlich*. Fish are symbolic for the practice of *Tashlich* for a number of reasons. Most importantly, since fish can sometimes be unintentionally caught in nets, they are symbolic of the human tendency to unknowingly get caught in bad situations.

Jewish tradition teaches that when you cast your “sins” into the water, the fish will protect them because they are hidden under the water.

### **3. Try performing *Tashlich* on *Rosh Hashanah*.**

Traditionally, *Tashlich* is 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 before doing *Tashlich*.**

*Rosh Hashanah* is a period of self-introspection, and *Tashlich* is a ritual to review your behavior over the last year before you can cast away your sins. Remember that everyone struggles with misdeeds 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 upcoming year. Many Jews recommend taking a walk and meditating to think of ways you can change your behavior 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 dwell on the past.

## **6. 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.*

## **7. Collect your “sins” or mistakes in your pockets.**

Consider using bird seed to act as physical symbols of times you have missed the mark. The early rabbis were opposed to the practice of tossing breadcrumbs into the water. Bird seed is a more ecological alternative to tossing bread, which can cause harm to fish and birds.

It is traditional, however, for one to shake out one's pockets.

Some people discourage the tossing of items because it stems from superstitious practices. It can be helpful, however, to visualize the “sins” or mistakes being washed away, especially for young people.

If you're going to a natural body of water, never use paper or other items to represent your misdeeds. 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.

## **8. Walk to the body of water or basin.**

As you do, take the time to think about your past year and what you'd like to do better in the upcoming year.

## **9. 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.*

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

## **10. Offer a prayer about your hopes for the year.**

Talk to The Creator out loud (*hitbodedut*) 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 acquire only possessions or did I acquire insights and knowledge as well?
- Did I live fully? If not, how can I deepen my commitment to living more wholly in body, mind, spirit and heart?

**11. Cast your “sins” or misdeeds into the body of water.** After your prayer, reach into your pockets and grab the 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.

**12. Optional Prompts for your walk:** My friend, Rabbi Jan Salzman created these cards to take with you on your walk. She has focused on 13 primary soul traits (known as *middot* in the *mussar* tradition) for reflection. I suggest stopping every 5 minutes to take another card and meditate on the question related to each quality.

[Mussar Cards by Rabbi Jan Salzman](#)

## Conclusion

### B'sefer Chaim – High Holy Day liturgy

*B'sefer chayim brachah v'shalom ufarnasah tovah,  
Nizacher v'nicatev lefanecha  
Anachnu v'chol amcha, Beit Yisrael (v'chol yoshvey teyvel)  
L'chayim tovim, l'chayim tovim, ul'shalom.*

In the Book of Life of blessing and peace,  
and great abundance/prosperity,  
May we be remembered and may we be written before You;  
Us and all Your People Israel (and all people everywhere),  
For a good life and for peace and wholeness.