

DIY *Tashlich*

CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE'S GUIDE AND SERVICE

Are you a relative newcomer to the ceremony of *Tashlich*? Have you seen Jews go to the river on Rosh HaShanah and wondered what that was all about? Are you a veteran *Tashlich* observer, but want to brush up on your *Tashlich* knowledge? If so, our *Tashlich* FAQ below might be right for you.

If, you know everything you need to know about *Tashlich*, and are just looking for the ceremony, scroll down to the next the page.

Tashlich FAQ

What is *Tashlich*?

Tashlich is a ritual for the first day of Rosh HaShanah. It is not a mandatory part of the holiday. Rather, it is a custom that arose in the late middle ages. (That's really new by Jewish standards). Like so many rituals, *Tashlich* is all about symbols. What happens? Jews go to a body of running water, empty their pockets of crumbs, and throw the crumbs into the water while reciting special passages of scripture and prayers. Sounds kinda weird? Well, it is if we don't understand the symbolic meaning. The crumbs from our pockets are meant to represent the sins we've been carrying around with us. We take them out of pockets and throw them into the water to represent our hope that we can take our sins, ask forgiveness of God and one another, and then cast them away. We find a running body of water to represent our desire that once we cast our symbolic sins away, we will not return to our old ways. Our wrong actions should be swept away, never to return.

Why is the ceremony called *Tashlich*?

Tashlich is a Hebrew verb that means "You will cast." The ceremony gets its name from the biblical verses that inspired the custom. In the prophetic book of Micah, we read about God's forgiveness culminating in the verse, "God will take us back in love; God will cover up our iniquities, You will cast [*tashlich*] all our sins Into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). Just as God is described as casting our sins into the depths, we concretize this act through the ritual of *Tashlich*.

What do I need?

Tashlich can be performed in a small group or alone. While communities sometimes gather together, this year we are encouraging everyone to perform the ritual in small groups or alone to encourage safe social distancing. Bring the service texts found on the next page. If you have a garment with a pocket full of schmutz [crumbs] that is perfect (No judgment!). If you recently did laundry, and your clothes are crumb free (good for you!) you can bring a bit of stale bread to crumble and cast off. Don't bring a whole loaf. We aren't feeding the fish; we're casting off our sins. No need to ruin ecosystems to do it.

Where can I perform the ritual?

Tashlich can be performed at any flowing body of water: rivers (Hudson River), streams, canals (Gowanus), straits (The Narrows), creeks, estuaries (East "River" and Long Island Sound), bays (New York Bay or Newark Bay), oceans. Can't find a flowing body of water but still want to perform *Tashlich*? Well, it is a pretty new custom that isn't mentioned in the Torah or Talmud. Get creative: ponds, lakes... we aren't checking.

Tashlich Service

CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE

We come to this place with God's words in our ears...

לְכוּ אִישׁ כְּדַרְכּוֹ אֲשַׁפֵּט אֶתְכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִהְיֶה לְבַבְכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה שׁוּבוּ וְהָשִׁיבוּ
מִכָּל-פְּשָׁעֵיכֶם וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה לְכֶם לְמַכְשׁוֹל עֲוֹן: הַשְׁלִיכוּ מֵעַלְיֶיכֶם אֶת-כָּל-
פְּשָׁעֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר פָּשַׁעְתֶּם בָּם וַעֲשׂוּ לְכֶם לֵב חֲדָשׁ וְרוּחַ חֲדָשָׁה...

“Be assured, O House of Israel, I will judge each one of you according to God’s ways -- declares *Adonai* God. Repent and turn back from your transgressions; let them not be a stumbling block of guilt for you. *Cast away* all the transgressions by which you have offended, and get yourselves a **new heart** and a **new spirit...**”

To cast away our sins, we must acknowledge them. Like the crumbs in our pockets, we need to take the sins we are carrying around with us, the ones that are weighing us down, and bring them out into the light. We must take them in our hands, evaluate them, and evaluate ourselves. Only then, can we consider casting them away and making a concerted effort to change our behaviors and to change our hearts.

Psalm 130

מִמַּעְמָקִים קָרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה...

A song of ascents.

Out of the depths I call You, *Adonai*!

Adonai, hear my cry. Pay heed to my plea for mercy.

If You kept a record of sins, *Adonai*, who would be able to stand upright?

Yours if the power to forgive. You are held in awe.

With all my heart I wait for *Adonai*; I put my hope in God’s word.

I am more eager for *Adonai* than the night-watch for the dawn.

O Israel, put your hope in *Adonai*, because *Adonai*’s love never fails. God will set us completely free.

It is God who will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Let us Cast Away

Let us **cast away** the sin of **deception**, so that we will mislead no one in word or deed, nor pretend to be what we are not.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Personal Silent Meditation

On this Rosh HaShanah, I take account of my life and relationships during the last year. Of some things I am proud. Of others, I am disappointed or ashamed. I resolve to strengthen and sustain the many mitzvot I have performed: love in relationships, honesty in business, engagement in the repair of the world. And I resolve to cast off the blemishes – those actions and words I regret. God, help me preserve the good and cast off the bad. Inscribe me for a year of goodness and blessing in the Book of Life. Support me as I strive for a new heart and a new spirit in the year ahead.

*(Take time to think of the regrets and sins you wish to cast off and when you are ready, read the verses below as you **cast** your breadcrumbs into the water)*

Micah 7:18-20

מִי־אֵל כְּמוֹךָ נִשְׂא עוֹן וְעִבֵּר עַל־פְּשָׁע לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחְלָתוֹ לֹא־הִתְזַיֵּק
לְעַד אֲפֹ כִי־תִפֹּץ חַסְדְּךָ הוּא: יָשׁוּב יִרְחַמֵּנוּ יְכַבֵּשׁ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלִיךְ
בְּמַצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטָּאוֹתֵם: תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב חַסְדְּךָ לְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־
נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם מִיְמֵי קֶדֶם:

Who is like You God? Forgiving guilt and pardoning sins for the remnant of Israel. You do not persist in anger forever, but instead delight in love and kindness! You will take us back in love, cover up our iniquities and *cast away* all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will keep faith with Jacob, loyalty to Abraham, as You promised an oath to our ancestors in days gone by.