



A Guide for Tashlich

Congregation Beth El of Montgomery County
Bethesda, Maryland

Tashlich

Many Jewish traditions link water to purification. We ritually wash our hands before meals. We immerse in the mikvah at moments of transition and transformation. And during Tishrei, the month of the High Holidays, we use water to cast our sins away in a ritual called tashlich.

Tashlich is a simple but powerful ritual. Start by finding a large, natural body of flowing water like a lake, river, sea or ocean. If there's fish in the water, even better. Fish getting unintentionally caught in nets symbolize people getting accidentally stuck in bad situations. Line your pockets with crumbs of bread, flower petals, pieces of leaves or other natural materials that will disintegrate safely in the water. These will symbolize your sins.

As you stand at the water's edge, reflect on where you have made mistakes in the past year. Read some of the poems and psalms in this booklet, or take a moment to meditate and reflect on your actions. Take a walk, sing a song or even wade into the water if it's safe to do so.

Pause for a moment. Look at the water as you take the crumbs or leaves from your pockets. One by one, cast them into the water, exhaling and releasing each sin as you are ready.

"Whatever falls into the deep is lost forever," The Zohar



A Tashlich How-To

What is *Tashlich*?

Tashlich is the ceremony of symbolically tossing one's sins into a body of water.

When does it take place?

Tashlich usually takes place on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, although if the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, it is traditionally done on the afternoon of the second day. *Tashlich* can be performed until Hoshana Raba which occurs at the end of the festival of Sukkot.



How is *Tashlich* done?

The ceremony consists of reciting prayers asking God to treat us with mercy. Some people have the tradition of then throwing pieces of bread, representing one's sins, into the water while others forbid this practice feeling that it is superstitious in nature.

Thoughts about *Tashlich*

- What would you like to throw away this year? What actions or words do you regret?
- How does it feel to rid oneself of regretful actions?
- Do you feel that symbolically tossing out your regrets is enough?

The first paragraph of *tashlich* is below:

מחזור אשכנז לראש השנה, סדר תשליך ג'

מִי אֵל כְּמוֹךָ: נִשָּׂא עֵוֹן: וְעָבַר עַל פְּשָׁע: לְשֵׁאֲרִית נִחְלָתוֹ: לֹא הִחְזִיק לְעַד אַפּוֹ: כִּי חִפֵּץ חֶסֶד הוּא: יָשׁוּב יִרְחַמֵּנוּ:
יִכְבֹּשׁ עֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ: וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בַּמַּצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטָּאתָם: תִּתֵּן אֶמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב: חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם: אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתֵּינוּ: מִימֵי
קֶדֶם: מִן הַמִּצָּר קָרָאתִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי בְּמִרְחַב יְהוָה: ה' לִי לֹא אִירָא מֵהַ יַעֲשֶׂה לִי אָדָם: ה' לִי בְּעֹזְרֵי וְאֲנִי אֶרְאֶה בְּשׁוֹנְאֵי:
טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בְּה' מִבְּטַח בְּאָדָם: טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בְּה' מִבְּטַח בַּנְּדִיבִים:

Machzor Rosh Hashanah Ashkenaz, Tashlich 3

Who is an Almighty like You Forbearer of iniquity, and forgiver of transgression for the remnant of His heritage? He does not maintain His wrath forever, for He desires to do kindness. He will again show us compassion, He will suppress our iniquities; and You will cast into the depths of the sea all their sins. You will grant truth to Yaakov, kindness to Avraham, as You swore to our fathers from the days of old. From the narrowness [of distress] I called [to] God; He answered me with the breadth of Divine relief. Adonoy is with me, I will not fear, what can man do to me? Adonoy is with me, to help me, and I will see my enemies' [defeat]. It is better to take refuge in Adonoy than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in Adonoy than to trust in nobles.

Tashlich - High Holidays Writing Exercise

Adapted from David Wolkin/Custom&Craft

The 10 Days of Repentance represent the window of time in between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, during which time we are meant to repent on the sins of the past year. I've always found it tough to focus on this and properly bring it down to earth so I developed this writing exercise to help me through it. It can work for anyone, irrespective of faith. Read on...

Imagine you had to spend ten days in a room confronted with all of your sins/mistakes/wrongdoings of the past year:



1. What would that room look like? How big would it be?
2. Who or what would be in this room? Would there mostly be people in that room? Actions? Thoughts? Decisions? Ideas?
3. What would you say to them/what would they say to you?
4. What would it feel like to spend ten days there? Could you handle it?
5. What would you do with that time that you had in there? What would you address first? Last?

At the end of the ten days, whatever you do, it's time for you to leave that room and close the door for the next year. But don't close it all the way. Leave it just a little bit ajar. You may have done all you can, but accept the fact that come next year you might re-enter that room and be confronted with some of the same things. And Yom Kippur comes along, you can be the one closing the gates, writing the book. You don't have to let God make all of the decisions since at the end of the day, so much of it is completely in your own hands.

Creative Tashlich for Families with Young Children

If the weather isn't great or you simply can't get to a body of water, here are some ways to still do tashlich at home.

Tashlich #1: The Kiddie Pool

You'll need:

- A kiddie pool (or even just a large bowl) filled with water
- White copy paper
- Washable markers

Have a conversation with your kids about mistakes they've made over the past year. Be honest with them about your mistakes too. Have them draw or write their mistakes on the paper with the washable markers. (And you do it too! Setting an example for both positive behavior and making mistakes is an important part of parenting.) Then float the papers in the water and watch your sins disappear.

Tashlich #2: The Art Project

You'll need:

- Colored cellophane (blue, ideally)
- Construction paper
- Glue
- Markers or crayons

(continued...)

Creative Tashlich for Families with Young Children

(Tashlich #2 - continued) Like in the first project, begin by having a conversation with your kids about mistakes they've made over the past year, and being honest about your mistakes too. Next, have them rip a piece of paper into small pieces and write/draw their mistakes on that paper. Next, glue those pieces of paper to a large piece of construction paper. Finally, glue the blue cellophane to the whole piece of paper so that it looks like the mistakes/sins are under water. This might be a good project to put up in your child's room for a little while—but don't torture them by leaving it up too long! After all, the point of tashlich is that sins are washed away.

Tashlich #3: Beans

You'll need:

- A bag of navy beans (or chickpeas, lima beans, etc.)
- A bag of black beans (or other darker beans)
- A bowl

This activity is great for tactile kids who learn best by holding and touching things. Pour one bag of beans into the bowl. Then give your child and you a few beans. Talk about the ways in which you've each made mistakes that year. After each mistake, throw a bean into the bowl. At the end, point out how, though you can see your mistakes, they do get overwhelmed by the other beans, and it looks like a clean slate. You can also stir up the bowl so you can't see the "mistake beans" to illustrate the point even better.