

Tashlikh: Casting Our Sins Away

A Tashlikh Prayer

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 greater 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 our people everywhere.

Let us cast away the sins of pride and arrogance, so that we may worship God and serve His purposes in humility and in truth.

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is a remarkable ceremony – symbolic and concrete all at the same time. Whether done together with the congregation, with friends and family, or by oneself, *tashlikh*

allows us to express not only our desire to be free from sin but our continuing hope that we will be forgiven for past misdeeds.

On the afternoon of the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* – or on the second day, if the first day is a *Shabbat* – it is customary to go to a flowing body of water and to recite prayers while “casting” our sins (represented by bread crumbs) into the water. As we read in Micah: “You will cast (*tashlikh*) all your sins into the depths of the sea” (7:19). By performing *tashlikh*, we signify our hope that God will overlook our failings during the past year and grant us favor in the year to come.

The preferred “order” for the bodies of water is (1) the sea, (2) a river, (3) a lake, spring, or fountain. If there is no such water within walking distance, in the case of inclement weather; or if one did not perform the ceremony on *Rosh Hashanah* for any reason, then *tashlikh* may be performed at any time up to *Yom Kippur*.

According to some customs, the body of water we visit should have fish in it. It has been suggested that this helps to remind us of our precarious existence and thus puts us in the mood to repent. It has also been suggested that we may be compared to fish caught in the net of divine judgment.

While it is traditional to shake out the hems of one’s clothing to ensure that all “sins” have been disposed of, *tashlikh* ceremonies differ all over the world. The Jews of Kurdistan had a custom to recite the *tashlikh* prayer near a river and then to jump into the water and swim around, instead of only shaking out the hems of their clothing.

Creating liturgy: The building blocks of a *tashlikh* service

The *tashlikh* ceremony is an ideal family activity, providing an opportunity for parents and children to perform a ritual together. Children may prepare the bread crumbs for “casting” and then distribute them to the various members of the family. Parents can also explain the ritual to the children as they walk to the water’s edge and assign each family member a different reading.

Here are some questions to help enliven a family discussion:

Looking Back

- During the past year, what has made you really happy?
- What do you really regret not doing last year?
- What opportunities did you miss?
- Whom do you wish you had not hurt?
- How might you make up for what you did?
- What was a Jewish high for you this past year?
- What was a Jewish low for you this past year?

Looking Forward

- What new goals have you set for yourself for the coming year?
- How would you like to do things differently in the coming year?
- How will you enhance your life Jewishly during the coming year?

Today is the Birthday of the World

- What two wishes do you have for the world on its birthday?

Let’s Create Our Own Family Blessing

May God bless you with _____

May you be _____

May this *Rosh Hashanah* fill you with _____

And let us say, Amen.

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On Repentance

Do not say that repentance is not necessary except for serious transgressions such as illicit sexual relations, robbery and theft. Just as a person must repent of acts such as these, he is required to examine his bad traits and turn away from such negative characteristics as anger, hostility, jealousy, the tendency to ridicule, pursuit of material possessions and honor, and gluttony. A person must repent of each of these. These offenses are more difficult to deal with than the other ones because such traits affect our actions at all times, and it is difficult for a person to refrain from such habitual behavior.

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*,
Laws of Repentance, 7.3