



TASHLICH L'TZEDEK 2014/5775

A RITUAL OF REFLECTION & RECOMMITMENT

And among all the sins we hurled into the ocean, the sin of self-hate and the sin of failing to feel compassion for others mingled, as indeed they should, for they are the same sin.

- Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz

Welcoming & Introductions

Song: Hinei Mah Tov

Hi-nei mah tov u-mah-na-im, she-vet a-chim gam ya-chad

How good it is, and how pleasant when we dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1)

History of Tashlich

Tashlich (you shall cast away), from שלך (shalach, to throw or fling) is also related to *shalechet*, shedding. What are we throwing away this year? What are we shedding?

Since the late medieval period, Jews have observed the practice of Tashlich, often on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. It is based on several passages in the bible, most notably Book of Micah (7:9): "You will hurl all of our sins into the depths of the sea."

The practice is to go to a nearby body of water, preferably free-flowing, and symbolically cast away our sins by either throwing bread crumbs or pebbles into the water while reciting biblical verses. Water has continually served as a significant symbol in Jewish life and practice.

In Jerusalem and in Egypt, Tashlich was always observed on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, even when it fell on Shabbat. In Jerusalem, where there are no lakes or rivers, Tashlich was performed at cisterns. In Safed, Jews would go up to the roofs on their homes and look down upon the Sea of Galilee. The Jews of Yemen observed Tashlich in a mikvah, a ritual bath. Kurdish Jews leapt into the water and swam to cleanse themselves of sin. Chassidim in Galicia sent little floats of straw out on the water, set them afire with candles, and rejoiced as their sins were either burned or washed away.

Today, people "cast away" different things. You may cast off pieces of bread, pebbles, rose petals, thoughts written on a piece of paper, or anything else that seems meaningful to you. The idea is not that we suddenly get rid of our sins, but that we set our intention to transform them.

Jewish Voice for Peace

קו ל יהודי לשלום



What we "cast" into the water are our own prejudices, which we can think of as a husk around our best selves. We want the water to soak off the husks, revive the holy part of ourselves, which we can think of as a seed, and help us recommit to something bigger than ourselves. We are not throwing "away" our sins. We are transforming their energy in order to renew our commitment to the struggle for justice.

Casting Out Sins

Read this section aloud. Each paragraph can be read by a new voice, or all can be read by the ritual leader.

Today we are casting off two types of sins: personal sins and collective sins, including the ongoing Israeli occupation of and violence in Palestine, and injustice within our local communities. We recommit ourselves to end the occupation of Palestine, to support self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians and to fight for racial and economic justice.

Jewish tradition teaches us to pursue justice, and we face this obligation openly, freely, and sincerely. While it is false to claim that all Jews are guilty of the sins committed by the Israeli government, as Jews we acknowledge that these acts are being done in our name. We choose to be responsible for all of these transgressions. We choose to carry them as a burden. And today, in this hour, we choose to cast them into the water.

The casting off comes at the New Year, when we reflect upon the year gone by and dedicate ourselves to the new one before us. So, as we symbolically cast off these transgressions, we prepare ourselves for the coming year in which we will take them up again.

We take up a renewed commitment to pursue justice. If we are not prepared to embrace this commitment, then our act of casting off is but an empty gesture. Let us not unburden ourselves of these sins—and of our responsibility for these injustices—today, unless we are prepared to burden ourselves again tomorrow.

Individual Casting Away of Sins

Take time for an internal accounting of your soul, your self, to see what transgressions you would like to cast away in preparing for this new year. You may think about what you want to cast off, what you hope to keep, and what you need to reclaim. You can think about different realms of your life—your political work, your community, your work or career, your relationships, your body and health, your visions and hopes for the year to come.



Collective Casting Away of Sins

Read the items in italics responsively

1. Attacking, starving and strangling Gaza while claiming it is no longer occupied.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
2. Allowing fear, instead of compassion, to dictate our actions.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
3. Becoming pessimistic about the ability of lasting and peace and justice to be built in Palestine and Israel.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
4. Allowing violence against Palestinians to be committed in our name.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
5. Not speaking out against anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
6. Not learning about the diverse experiences of Palestinian peoples.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
7. Feeling powerless in the face of the theft of Palestinian land and the destruction of Palestinian homes.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
8. Not fighting for the rights of Israeli Palestinians.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
9. Elevating anti-Semitism above other oppressions and refusing to see its interconnectedness with racism, classism, transphobia, homophobia, and xenophobia in our communities.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
10. Forgetting that Jews come from multiple cultural traditions.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
11. Invisibilizing and marginalizing Jews of color around the world, including Israel where they are the majority of the population.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
12. Being afraid to speak because of stigmatization in our communities.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
13. Distancing ourselves from religious practice or religiously observant Jews due to assumptions about what they stand for.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.
14. Hardening our hearts instead of remembering what it means to be oppressed and dispossessed.
We take responsibility and will work to make it stop.

Jewish Voice for Peace

קו ל י הו ד י ל ש ל ם



Silent Moment of Reflection

“May we turn from these sins in full *teshuvah* (repentance), with fervent prayer, and with eagerness to carry out acts of *tzedakah*, so that our own actions will transform this world, from a world of harshness to a world of compassion, from a world of ignorance to a world of enlightenment, from a world of death to a world of life renewed, and from a world where sin destroys us to a world where we destroy sin.”

from the Un'taneh Tokef prayer

Song: Oseh Shalom Bimromav

Ohseh shalom bimromav, hu ya'sei shalom aleinu
v'al kol yisrael, vimru, vimru amein
y'asei shalom, y'asei shalom, shalom aleinu v'al kol yisrael (x2)

Collective Moment of Reflection for the New Year

Sharing reflections

Casting of Final Stone

Instead of a transgression, we throw this final stone together to symbolize our commitment to building our relationships and working with each other for social justice in the New Year.

Commitments

This new year allows us to re-imagine our roles, and make new commitments, within our communities and in the ongoing struggle to create a lasting peace and justice in Palestine and Israel.

We decide to cast away any fear or shame which can keep us isolated or silent and instead:

- We commit today to dreaming that what sometimes feels impossible, will indeed be possible, and to do all we can to live into that future. We will take on new responsibilities and relationships that will sustain us in this coming year.
- We commit today to disengage from destructive patterns, in preparation for re-engaging in constructive work.
- We commit today to unburden ourselves from that which is beyond our control, in preparation to define and take on intentional burdens we can address as individuals and as communities.
- We commit today to refuse to allow our communities to speak for us when they speak for bigotry, fear or chauvinism.
- We commit today to acknowledge that while silence does not always equal consent, it often implies permission, and we promise to speak out, make our voices heard and become vital forces in our communities.

Jewish Voice for Peace

קו ל י הו ד י ל ש ל ם



- We commit today to give space to others so they can do their own reckoning, growth and justice work.
- We commit today not to assume that all members of certain communities conform to fabricated stereotypes:
 - Not all Jews are Zionists, nor do they all believe that Jews are more worthy than non-Jews.
 - Not all Arabs want to banish Jews from Palestine.
 - Not all Americans agree with supporting Israel's apartheid state, nor do they all accept the injustices and inequalities in the US.
- Most importantly, we commit to ask the key questions, help ourselves and each other hear the voices we haven't yet heard, and take action to further the cause of justice.
- Other? *Open space for participants to voice their commitments.*

If your Tashlich observance is also a vigil or an action, move into that part of your programming, otherwise, skip to Closing Comments.

Song: Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu

Od Ya-vo sha-lom aleinu (3x) Ve al ku-lam

Od Ya-vo sha-lom aleinu (3x) Ve al ku-lam

Sa-lam! Al-lei-nu ve-al Kol ha-o-lam Sa-lam, Sha-lom (2X)

May peace find its way to us- to us and to the whole world. Peace. (in Arabic and Hebrew)

Closing Comments

Invite everyone to wish each other a Shana Tova, a Happy New Year!

May your year be filled with love and justice.

Shana Tova (Happy New Year)

L'shalom (Toward peace)

Song: Lo Yisa Goi

Lo yisa goi el goi cherev, lo yimeldu od milchamah

And everyone beneath their vine and fig tree shall live in peace and unafraid. And into plow shares turn their swords. Nations shall learn war no more.