



TASHLICH L'TZEDEK

A RITUAL OF REFLECTION & RECOMMITMENT

By Kohenot Dori Midnight and Joanna Kent Katz - with inspiration and language adapted from Jewish Voice for Peace, Seattle, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, JOCSM caucus, and the work of Sins Invalid's Skin, Tooth, and Bone disability justice primer.

Welcome.

We are so grateful to gather together together to bring in the new year of 5778.

Jewish tradition offers us several opportunities for deep reflection throughout the High Holidays. The ritual of Tashlich offers us the chance to recognize, feel in our bodies, and release ways in which we have missed the mark this year, both personally and collectively. Tashlich is an opportunity to ritualize and deepen our personal and collective commitments to justice in the coming year.

As we reflect on the past year, we can see the ways in which, as writer Adrienne Maree Brown says, “things are not getting worse, they are getting uncovered. We must hold each other tight and continue to pull back the veil.”

As the veil is pulled back, we are seeing a rise in overt expressions of white nationalism, white supremacy, anti-black racism, and antisemitism, more people being detained at borders and deported, increased racist and ableist state violence, continued occupation and violence towards the water protectors at Standing Rock, increased vulnerability of black and brown and indigenous peoples, poor people, disabled people, queer and trans people, and Muslim people, and our hearts are heavy as we witness the continued occupation and violence, including the withholding of water and cutting off electricity in the West Bank and Gaza.

Leaders: Offer participants a brief overview of what will happen during our time together.

We begin by acknowledging and extending gratitude to First Nations/ancestors of the land we are on.

Leaders: Fill in the blank spaces below with the names of the Native American/First Nations people whose land you are on, as well as any relevant treaties.

Land appreciation Bracha by Orev Reena Katz, haKohenet

We offer thanks to You, Creator, for bringing us to this precious, good and Spacious land, the traditional territory of the _____ peoples, protected and defended by the _____ people(s). We offer thanks, and ask forgiveness to the _____ people(s) for their generosity towards our ancestors on their land.

Traditional knowledge, governance and cultural practices were lost in order for our people to settle here. Though this land provided redemption to our ancestors, their presence created bondage for the Indigenous people whose stewardship and respect had kept it for millennia. On our traditional holy days of fasting and at-one-ment, we commit to coming into wholeness with our fractured history. We commit to repairing the damages of colonization in the ways we are able.

Through relationship-building and direct political engagement in solidarity with Indigenous peoples across the country we now call the United States (or Canada.)

As wanderers, migrants, settlers, generations of immigrants, and mixed peoples, we honour your covenant in our hearts. Just as we hold the covenant of the rainbow with you every time we see it in the sky, we hold the covenant of the _____ people every time we feel gratitude for our home.

Thank you, Creator/Breath of Life/ Source of Life for revealing to us on this day, the history and present of this sacred, living land on which we are blessed to live.

*based on concepts in the 2nd paragraph of Birkat Hamazon/Grace After Meals

Pair share. *Leaders: Invite participants to find a partner and take a few minutes to talk together about why they chose to attend this Tashlich ceremony today. Let them know they will be called back together with song.*

Leaders: Sing to call the group back together.

Hinei mah tov umahnaim, shevet achim gam yachad

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

Introduction Round. *Leaders: Invite participants to share their names, gender pronouns and a brief thought about why they chose to be here together today for Tashlich*

History and Explanation of Tashlich

Tashlich (you shall cast away), from שָׁלַח (shalach, to throw or fling) is also related to *shalechet*, shedding. This time of year, we are invited to ask ourselves: What are we casting away this year? What are we shedding? What must we release in order to stand more fully aligned with our values and our visions?

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 cast away that which is no longer serving us, by either throwing bread crumbs or pebbles into the water. Although this is a symbolic gesture, the act of stepping into collective ritual invites us to embody, to live into and to be accountable to the intentions we voice.

During the Days of Awe, the Jewish High Holy Days, we ask an element of the Earth, in this case the element of water, to support us in making individual and collective transitions; releasing habits, unconscious practices, ways of thinking and relating to ourselves, our communities and our world, that are out of alignment with our higher selves and higher vision. The word used here, “*chet*” has historically been translated as sin, but is actually an archery term that means “to miss the mark”.

The idea is not that we suddenly get rid of these mis-steps, but that we set our intentions on transforming them.

We know from experiences in our bodies, and from science, that water is a conductor and that, through cycles of rain and condensation, all water is connected. As we stand alongside this body of water and make these offerings, we must hold that, in many places in the world, water is a site of struggle - in Gaza, for First Nations and Indigenous peoples, and for people of the Global South. As we partner with the element of water in this ritual, we also pray for waters to run free and clear all over the world, from the Cannonball River in North Dakota, to the taps in Flint, Michigan, to all the water sources in Palestine, and we pray that all beings everywhere have access to the water they need to sustain life and thrive.

Blessed are You, Shekhinah, Source of Life, Who blesses us by embracing us in living waters.

B'rucha at shekhinah eloteinu ruach ha-olam asher kid-shanu bi-tevilah b'mayyim hayyim.

“We are made of water: Salty rivers run in our veins, lymph ebbs and swells, saliva and tears leak into the air and dry. We are always changing: wide seas into clouds, rain into puddles, rivers into muddy fields that run along ditches into the sea. We flow, freeze, boil, rise, disperse, are hurled this way and that. We declare that we are the blue edge of glaciers, the great ocean swell, stagnant teeming ponds, months long tropical downpours, the delicate tracery of frost on a dry leaf, rusty drip of a faucet. We are the shape of what’s happened to us. We are caught up in doing, and whirl through our lives, suffering, joyful, filled with doubt. And yet we return to ourselves again and again, to the Self that is all there is. We are made of water, called to find our true level by that great force of love we call gravity. We are made to trust our destination. We are not lost.”

-Aurora Levins Morales

CASTING OFF

“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.”

- Wendy Elisheva Somerson (previously mistakenly attributed to melanie kaye kantrowitz)

Today we have the opportunity to cast off both personal and collective transgressions. We will begin with ways we have collectively ‘missed the mark’. Together, we will read the following statements, throwing bread or rocks into the water with each statement. And then there will be an opportunity for people to add, aloud or silently, anything you want to release in order to fully return to wholeness and to recommit to working towards justice.

Leaders: Pass out copies of the Casting Off Statements. Encourage everyone to take a moment to read through these statements, and join in on the ones that are particularly resonant. Explain that some of the statements will resonate, and some may not. For example disabled folks may wish to remain quiet while others are reading a statement on ableism or Jews of Color may choose not to join in with the statements specifically about acknowledging white privilege. Some statements may have a chorus, while others may be quieter- let your group self determine who reads what.

Explain that that statements will be read aloud, following by tossing of bread or stones into the water. You might encourage the group to allow for a quiet pause between each statement- there are a lot of words and a lot of meaning- we can take our time and feel them.

Leaders: Pass out bread. Gather along the water’s edge. Take a breath.

For the ways in which we, and our ancestors, have benefitted from and survived because of the occupation of stolen land - here on the land that we call North America and in Israel/Palestine - and for our participation in the violations of indigenous land sovereignty and treaties.

For the ways in which we, and our ancestors, have benefitted from and survived because of colonialism and the enslavement of African and indigenous people.

For allowing fear, overwhelm, or indifference to keep us numb, passive, and silent in the face of white supremacy and racism.

For colluding with anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia by not speaking up in our local communities or as we move through the world; for prioritizing our own comforts and privileges over the rights and safety of Muslim lives.

For not following the lead of Black, brown, and indigenous organizers and heeding the call for reparations for past and continuing harms, from colonialism and slavery to mass incarceration, police violence and surveillance.

For allowing violence against Palestinians to be committed in our name, including the relentless attacks on the people of Gaza, the control and withholding of water, the continuous theft of Palestinian land and the destruction of Palestinian homes and olive groves.

For remaining ignorant to the insidious faces of the Israeli occupation, including the repression and targeting of Palestinian poets, artists, educators, activists, and cultural workers and not recognizing tactics to divert our attention from the violence of the occupation including pinkwashing and greenwashing.

For turning away from the realities and dangers of the relationship between Israeli military personnel and U.S. police departments and state agencies, a relationship which institutionalizes Islamophobia and perpetuates a shared racist ideology and lethal and predatory policing practices.

For remaining silent on issues of racism, white supremacy and the occupation of Palestine in our synagogues, in our communities, in our families, and in our homes and for allowing mainstream Jewish institutions to speak on behalf of all American Jews.

For not challenging white supremacy within white Jewish communities, eclipsing the presence of, and keeping us from centering, Jews of Color, Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews; and for not challenging the mainstream narrative of Jews as necessary “white allies” to Black struggle, thereby erasing the strong presence and leadership of Black Jews.

For refusing to see anti-Semitism as interconnected with racism, classism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, and xenophobia and allowing Jews to use claims of antisemitism to justify racism and violence.

For not gifting ourselves with the opportunity to deepen into and imagine a Judaism free from nationalism and white supremacy; for allowing shame or internalized antisemitism to drive us to participate in Christian dominance and disconnect us from our rich traditions and histories.

For participating in cultural or spiritual appropriation, spiritual bypassing, and neoliberalism; for the ways in which we collude with capitalism, imperialism, and the dishonoring of our earth and the misuse and abuse of resources in our daily lives.

For not honoring all bodies as unique, essential, whole, and sacred; for not centering the rights and access needs of disabled people in our movements, especially those who live at the intersections of oppression; for the ways in which we allow our ableism to get in the way of working towards real collective liberation.

For not listening to young people and to our elders and for not honoring young people and elders’ power and wisdom within Jewish communities and beyond.

For not honoring the wisdom, power, and self-determination of queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people within Jewish communities and beyond.

For dulling our outrage at the current distribution of wealth and refusing to see the ways in which we participate in classism and resource hoarding; for not working towards all people's rights to clean air, water, housing and restored land.

For allowing our money to fund the building of walls, increased policing and militarization, mass incarceration, and the exploitative privatization of natural resources.

And for.....(*Leaders: Invite participants to call out their own. You may wish you begin.*)

ALL TOGETHER:

We cast away silence and complicity, and lift up our voices and our comradeship.

We cast away fear, and take on courage.

We cast away the ways we have been complicit in anti-Black racism, and we renew our commitment to undoing racism and supporting the Movement for Black Lives.

We cast away doubt, disbelief, and apathy in the face of racism, occupation, and violence, and we take on audacious hope.

We cast away the ways we act out of internalized oppression, and we take on a vision of ourselves and our communities as whole and holy, treasured and strong, inspired and enlivened by each other.

We cast away violence, systemic and personal, which degrades our humanity, and we renew our commitment to collective liberation.

We cast away individualism, isolation, and acts of staking our territory, and we invoke connection, the power of humility, and the hope of transformation through building webs of interconnection.

We cast away pessimism and cynicism, and we lift up the choice to believe- in ourselves and in one another- that we can be, we are, the change we have been waiting for.

We cast away narrow thinking and hopelessness and we commit to nourishing our collective imaginations and wild dreamings of justice and liberation; we open our heart-minds to dream, vision and work towards what we have been told is impossible.

Personal Casting Away, Alone or in pairs:

For the next few minutes, you will have the opportunity--alone or in pairs--to consider two questions: What more do you want or need to cast off, personally, in order to fully recommit to working towards social justice? And what are you committing to take on, renew, and lift up in the coming year? Please spend this time both offering personal tashlich as well as speaking your personal commitments for the new year. We will call you back with song.

Leaders: Call everyone back with song

*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)*

Sharing apples and honey

We take a moment now to thank the water for allying with us, as water has done for us and our people for centuries, for receiving the energy of our transgressions and transforming it, so that that which we release becomes life-giving, fortifying, and sustaining for all beings.

Leaders: Pass out apples and a jar of honey for everyone to share.

As we close our ritual today, we invite you to share one thing you are grateful for during our time together and/or something you are calling in or committing to in the coming year. After you have spoken, you are invited to take a bite of your apple dipped in honey and enjoy the sweetness!

Thank yous and announcements of upcoming chapter and community events.

May your year be filled with love and justice.

L'Shana Tova!