



## Tashlich: A Rosh Hashanah Ritual to Cast Off Mistakes

*Adapted from Rabbi Robin Nafshi*

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**1 Look for a natural body of water that you can access easily.** *Tashlich* involves casting your sins into a body of water like a river, spring, lake, pond, or well. Most people prefer natural, flowing bodies of water because it gives the effect of your sins being swept away by the current.

- It's acceptable to perform *Tashlich* even if you can see the water only from a distance.

**2 Opt for a body of water that has fish living in it if you can.** Fish are extremely symbolic for the practice of *Tashlich* for a number of reasons. Most importantly, fish can sometimes be unintentionally caught in nets, which symbolizes the tendency of people to accidentally get stuck in bad situations.

- Jewish tradition teaches that when you cast your sins into the water, the fish will protect them because they are hidden under the water.
- If you can't find a body of water with fish, or you aren't sure if fish are present, it is still fine to perform *Tashlich*.

**3 Try performing *Tashlich* on *Rosh Hashanah*.** *Tashlich* is supposed to be performed on the first or second day of *Rosh Hashanah*. If, however, you're unable to perform the ceremony on *Rosh Hashanah*, *Tashlich* can be done any day during the Days of Awe until *Yom Kippur*.

**4 Examine what you've struggled with in the past year before doing *Tashlich*.** *Rosh Hashanah* is a period of self-introspection, and *Tashlich* requires that you review your behavior over the last year before you can cast away your sins. Remember that everyone struggles with mistakes, sins, and accidents, so don't be afraid to be honest with yourself during this period of review.

**5 Take a meditation walk.** After you've thought about your actions over the past year, take some time to consider how you can improve in the upcoming year. Many Jews recommend taking a walk and meditating to think of ways you can change your behavior and return to God in the next year. Keep in mind, however, that the goal of *Tashlich* is to move forward in the year, rather than to dwell on the past. Consider listening to "Guided Tashlich Meditation" by Deanna Neil at <https://soundcloud.com/hebrew-learning-audio/audio-tashlich-finalDoin> while you walk.

**6 Read the passages of *Tashlich*.** The source passage for *Tashlich* comes from the last verses of the prophet Micah (7:18-20). These verses tell why we practice *Tashlich* and will guide your own practice.

*Who is a God like You, Forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression; Who has not maintained wrath forever against the remnant of God's own people, Because God loves graciousness, God will take us back in love; God will cover up our iniquities, You will hurl all our sins Into the depths of the sea. You will keep faith with Jacob, loyalty to Abraham, as You promised on oath.*

**7 Collect your “sins” in your pockets.** We have provided you with breadcrumbs to act as physical symbols of your sins.

- Some people discourage the tossing of items because it stems from superstitious practices. It can be helpful, however, to visualize the sins being washed away, especially for young people.
- If you're going to a natural body of water, never use paper or other items to represent your sins. These can cause pollution and damage the natural wildlife in the area. It's okay to use paper if you're using a small basin in your home.

**8 Walk to the body of water or basin (or if you are unable, see step 11).** As you do, reflect on where you have made mistakes in this past year.

**9 Sing, if it feels appropriate.** Here are some possibilities:

- ***Eili, Eili:*** *Eili, Eili shelo yigameri l'olam. Hachol v'hayam, rishrush shel hamayim, b'rak hashamayim, t'filat ha-adam.*
- ***Hashiveinu:*** *Hashiveinu, hashiveinu adonai eilecha v'nashuvah, v'nashuvah. Chadeish, chadeish yameinu k'kedem.*
- ***Avinu Malkeinu:*** *Avinu malkeinu, choneinu va-aneinu ki ein banu ma-asim. Asei imanu tzedakah vachessed v'hoshi-einu.*

**10 Offer a prayer about your hope for the year.** Talk to God out loud or in your head about your past year and how you plan to do better. Try to be as honest as possible about what has happened during the year and how you want to improve. If you need help with words, try answering some of these questions:

- Did I use my time wisely?
- Was I there for people who needed me?
- Do my relationships reflect *k'dushah*, holiness?
- The kind deed: did I perform it or postpone it? The unnecessary word: Did I say it or hold it back?
- Did I acquire only possessions? Or did I acquire insights and knowledge as well?
- Did I live fully? If not, how can I?

Or perhaps read this beautiful offering by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat:

Here I am again  
ready to let go of my mistakes.

Help me to release myself  
from all the ways I've missed the mark.

Help me to stop carrying  
the karmic baggage of my poor choices.

As I cast this bread upon the waters  
lift my troubles off my shoulders.

Help me to know that last year is over,  
washed away like crumbs in the current.

Open my heart to blessing and gratitude.  
Renew my soul as the dew renews the grasses.

And we say together:  
Amen.

**11 Cast your sins into the body of water.** After your prayer, reach into your pockets and grab the breadcrumbs or metaphorical sins, and throw them into the water, one by one. When you let go of them, breathe out and watch them wash away. Only do this when you feel ready. It might take you longer than some other people to prepare for this moment, but don't feel rushed.

#### **For Those Who Cannot Go to a Body of Water**

- If you don't live near a natural body of water or can't manage to get to one, you can use running water from a hose or faucet. Prepare a bowl of warm water. Speak your deeds onto ice cubes and then place them into the water and watch them as they dissolve<sup>ii</sup>.
- Write your deeds onto a piece of paper and then rip them up, burn them (safely, please), or cross them out vigorously until you can't make out the words.
- Use dissolvable paper and write down misdeeds, regrets, or sins from the past year and dissolve them in running water. If you don't have dissolvable paper, sprinkle salt or sugar into running water as you would bread into a pond.
- Listen to:  
"Tashlich Meditation and Ritual for 5781" by Joanna Dulkan at  
<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1293914/5065103-tashlich-meditation-and-ritual-for-5781.mp3>

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<sup>i</sup> Rabbi Rachel Barenblat, "A prayer for Tashlich," <https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com>

<sup>ii</sup> Rabbi Stephanie Kolin, Union Temple, "Tashlich: Casting Off Our Mistakes and Putting Down Our Burdens: A Ritual for Those Who Can & Cannot Go to a Body of Water."  
<https://uniontemple.org/infopost/tashlich/?fbclid=IwAR1TVvQDdiOXoG3XFePuRqPK6EiGSw59jgS6kGn-qlKcqWxzHpEiIMG-U38I>