

Tashlich – Casting Off to Start Anew

WHAT IS TASHLICH?

Tashlich means “casting away” and is traditionally observed on *Rosh HaShanah* afternoon when Jews gather near a body of flowing water, offer prayers of the heart, and “cast out” their shortcomings (symbolically in the form of lint or bread crumbs).

This year Temple Israel of Hollywood once again gathers as a community to fulfill this beautiful tradition. For some of us this might be new--others of us have gathered with friends, family or by ourselves in past years for this special time of introspection.

The term *tashlich* comes from the last verses of the book of Micah:

Who is a God like You, Who forgives iniquity and passes over the transgression of the remnant of Your inheritance? You do not remain angry forever, for You desire to express loving-kindness.

מִי אֵל כְּמוֹךָ נִשְׂא עֲוֹן וְעָבַר עַל פְּשָׁע
לְשִׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלְתּוֹ לֹא הִחְזִיק לְעַד אַפּוֹ כִּי
הִפָּךְ חֶסֶד הוּא

You will again grant us compassion; You will hide our iniquities, and You shall cast into the depths of the sea all their sins.
(*v'tashlich bim'tzulot yam kol chatotam*)

יָשׁוּב יְרַחֲמֵנוּ יִכְבֹּשׂ עֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ
וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בְּמַצְלוֹת יָם כָּל חַטָּאתָם

You will give the truth to Jacob, loving-kindness to Abraham, as You swore to our ancestors from days long ago.

תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתֵּינוּ מִיָּמֵי קֶדֶם

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

Please sit quietly for a moment and think of one action, one mistake that you would like to cast away as you begin the new year. What do you need to do to truly get rid of this from your life? With whom do you need to speak? What do you need to say? How will you make this become a reality?

When the shofar sounds, please take your “sin” and silently walk to the sand wall, and write the sin that you want to cast off into the wall.

WHAT CAN I SAY?

Afterwards you may walk to the water and recite any of the following verses or poems, or speak from your heart.

During the *Yamim Noraim*, the Days of Awe, we read that God is a judge sitting on a majestic throne, witnessing and recording all of our actions and then determining our fate. This God can seem overwhelming, threatening, and distant.

During *tashlich* we remember that God is full of love and compassion. God knows that we are flawed and God still wants to forgive us. As Micah reminds us, "Who is a God like You, Who forgives iniquity and passes over the transgression...for You desire to express loving-kindness."

Where can we find God's compassion? In the faces of our neighbors and loved ones as we seek forgiveness. In the reflection of our own faces in the water as we forgive ourselves.

Water *is* the embodiment of change--always rippling, always moving. Water is a sign of purification and transition. As we throw our sins into the water, we create ripples that change the water, that change our reflections, and that change the reflections of each other.

Psalm 137

By the rivers of Babylon
Where we sat down
And there we wept
when we remembered Zion

Psalm 19

So may the words of our mouth
And the meditations of our hearts
Be acceptable in your sight, Adonai

Oh how the wicked carried us away in captivity
Required from us a song
How can we sing the Eternal's song in a strange land?

Eli, Eli

Sh'lo yi-ga-meir l'o-lam
Ha-chol v'ha-yam, rish'rush shel ha-ma-yeem
B'rak ha-sha-ma-yeem t'fi-lat ha-a-dam

My God, my God, I pray that these things never end:
The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
the crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.

אֱלֹהִים, אֱלֹהִים
שָׁלֹא יִגְמַר לְעוֹלָם
הַחֹל וְהָיִים,
רִשְׁרוּשׁ שֶׁל הַמַּיִם,
בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם,
תְּפִלַּת הָאָדָם.

*Avinu malkeinu, honneinu va-aneinu
ki ein banu ma-asim,
aseih immanu tz'dakah va-hesed
v'hoshi-einu.*

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, חֲנֻנוּ וְעֲנֵנוּ, כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים,
עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.

Avinu Malkeinu, have mercy on us, answer us, for our deeds are insufficient; deal with us charitably and lovingly, and redeem us.

"Stale Bread and Old Sins" by Stacey Zisook Robinson

The ducks grow fat on my sins.
The ravens, too.
I saw a flock of them--
A murderous gaggle,
as they swooped down in tight formation,
fat black missiles,
just after we stood on the bridge over the creek
emptying our pockets and plastic bags
overflowing with
stale bread and old sins.

Of course, not all the bread was stale
nor all the sins old.
I'm sure I collected a few
as I drove to our afternoon gathering
at the creek.
And, possibly,
if I'm being quite honest
(and now, I'm guessing, would be the time for
honesty)
I believe there is the possibility
that I racked up several more
while wandering the wooded path
that led to the creek.

While wandering back and forth along the
wooded path.
Several times—assuming sarcasm is a sin.

But for a moment,
as my bread arced through leafy boughs
and landed in clear and cluttered water
that moved in a stately rhythm
toward some other stream
that leads to some other lake
that leads to oceans and streams
and rivers and lakes
from here to the ancient shores of Phoenicia
to rain-laden clouds, pregnant and
billowing—unless imagination is a sin.

But for a moment.
in that delicate and wobbly arc
of bread and sin combined,
there is a moment of
Lightness.
Of Emptiness
that stretches from my fingertips
to stale bread
and old sins
to that small point of infinite
that pinprick of forever,
carried away on sweetly rushing water
that fills me with light.
And breath.
And God.