

# A Guide to *Tashliḥ* -- DIY!



**1 When to perform *Tashliḥ*? On *Rosh Hashana* – or not!** Traditionally we cast our sins on the afternoon of the first day, except (like this year) when that falls on Shabbat – so this time around, ideally it's the afternoon of Day Two. That said, if you're unable to perform the ceremony on *Rosh Hashanah*, it can happen *any* day during the 10 days until *Yom Kippur*. Timing hardly matters – it's *kavanah*, intention, that counts!

**2 Where? A natural body of water you can access easily and safely – or not!** At *Tashliḥ* we metaphorically cast our sins into a body of water – preferably a stream or river, where you can watch your deeds being swept away by the current! (Or the sea: see prooftext, below, #5). **SAFELY**, we said – with others, **ONLY** with **masks!**

- If you can't safely and easily get to the water's edge -- or choose to cut your carbon footprint by not driving at all! -- just place a small amount of tap water in any basin or bucket, drop your biodegradable 'sins', and afterward, pour it on the ground. Everywhere on Earth is part of a watershed, after all!

**3 Do a little *Tashliḥ* prep: Examine what you've struggled with this past year.** Each of us faces mistakes, sins, accidents, and more. We're all affected by the careless and/or malicious actions of others. Whatever we find in ourselves isn't solely a moral failing; none of us is beyond repair (that is the whole point of *teshuvah*, this season's focus on introspection, apology/restitution, and repentance!). Have the **courage to be honest** with yourself during this period of review -- as you take a hard look both inside, and at the world around you.

- Pro tip: we call this time *Cheshbon HaNefesh*, literally soul-accounting – a time for real reckoning with what we actually did – how we spent our resources and our time; the impacts of our actions upon others; what we said (or didn't), and how we said it. Be your own accountant, and reckon it right!

**4 Take a meditative walk.** After you've thought about your actions over the past year, take it deeper yet, by taking some sustained time to consider how you can improve in the upcoming year. Try taking a quiet walk (or a reflective quiet sitting time) to meditate on ways you can change your behavior, be the better person you wish to be, and return to a framework of Holiness in the next year. Keep a pad or digital device nearby, to capture insights, and shape them later into firm commitments! This step transforms our work of *Tashliḥ* into a movement forward into the new year, rather than primarily dwelling on the past.

**5 Read the passages of *Tashliḥ*, and check out or use the attached self-paced service.** The source passage for *Tashliḥ* comes from the last verses of the Book of Micah (7:18-20); you'll also find prayers, poetry, song, and meditation to help guide your at-home or "down by the riverside" practice.

Prooftext: יְשׁוּב יְרַחֵמֵנוּ יְכַבֵּשׁ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלֵיךְ בְּמַצְלוֹת יָם כָּל-חַטָּאוֹתֵם: (from Micah 7:19, also in the Shabbat Shuvah haftarah): "God will once again be compassionate to us, and will cover up our misdeeds, and will cast (*tashlich!*) all the people's sins into the depths of the sea."

**6 Collect your "sins".** Old-school: bread. But what a waste of edible food – and an over-burden on already fertilizer-laden watersheds, where new nutrients lead to algal blooms & dead zones! To be one with Creation on the anniversary of Creation, we strongly recommend small bits of dried leaves, tiny twigs, or anything natural you find on the ground (whatever will eventually blow away or drop into the creek of its own accord).

- Pro tip: One fallen leaf, ripped into small pieces with great intention, covers many sins!

- Rabbi Robin Nafshi's New Hampshire shul uses bird seed – throw in just a few; feed the flyers!
- Extra credit: bring a plastic bag & pack out any litter you find – clean up, while casting sins!

**7 Walk to the body of water (basin, yard, etc).** Be intentional. As you're getting there, keep thinking about your past year, and what you'd like (or plan!) to do better in the year ahead.

**8 Sing, if it feels appropriate – or play / stream a thematic song.** Here are some possibilities:

- **Eili, Eili:** *Eili, Eili shelo yigameri l'olam. Haḥol v'hayam, rishrush shel hamayim, b'rak hashamayim, t'filat ha-adam.* [Oh 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. (Hannah Szenes)]
- **Hashiveinu:** *Hashiveinu Adonai eileḥa v'nashuvah. Ḥadeish yameinu k'kedem.* [Cause us to return to you, God, and we will return. Renew our days, as of old. (Lam./Eicha 5:21)]
- **Avinu Malkeinu:** *Avinu malkeinu (or Mekoreinu Eloheinu, Imeinu Malkateinu, etc), choneinu va-aneinu, ki ein banu ma-asim. Asei imanu tzedakah vachesed, v'hoshi-einu.* [Our father-king/source-God/mother-queen etc, be merciful and answer us, though we have few good deeds to show. Treat us with righteousness and loving-kindness; and deliver us].
- **Down by the Riverside:** *I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield -- down by the riverside... I ain't gonna study war no more....* [(Lo Yisa Goi el goi cherev, lo yilmadu od milchamah (Isaiah))]
- **I Want to Hear Somebody Pray:** *I want to hear somebody pray (x2) -- down in the valley or over yonder, I want to hear somebody pray. [...to hear somebody's song... to see justice and love... etc]*
- **Magnificence:** *There is so much magnificence – in the ocean -- the waves are coming in, the waves are coming in || Halleluyah. (2-part round) Or: The river is flowing, growing & flowing; the river is flowing, down to the sea // Mother, carry me; your child I will always be; mother carry me, down to the sea.*
- **Sanctuary:** *Oh God prepare me to be a sanctuary; pure and holy, tried and true. And with thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for You. || V'asu li mikdash v'shaḥanti betoḥam.*

**9 Offer a prayer of your hopes for the new year.** Talk to God (or the Universe) -- out loud, or in your head -- about your past year, and how you plan to do better going forward. Try to be as honest as possible about what has happened during the year, and how you want improve yourself – how you want to walk differently in the world, in the coming year. Some optional guiding questions for this sacred work (which should continue through Yom Kippur, and all throughout the year!):

- Have I used my time wisely, to care for myself and those I love?
- Was I there for people who needed me? Did I allow others to be there for me?
- Do my relationships – with those nearby, and through society and world – 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 mostly possessions -- or did I primarily acquire insights, knowledge, connections?
- Have I done my part? Not solving big problems (like injustice, racism, climate change); but helping?
- Was I a reasonably bold, forward-thinking, meaning-making version of myself? If not, how can I be?

**10 Cast your sins into the water.** After your introspection and your prayer, reach down and grab your metaphorical sins (leaves, twigs, seeds, etc.), and throw them into the water. Intentionally. Reflectively. As you cast each away, one by one, breathe out -- and watch them wash away. Take all the time you need. Then once you're done, there are still 8 more days of repentance, and 363 more of the year – **use them well!!!!**