

# AT-HOME TASHLICH

A JEWISH RITUAL FOR  
CLEANSING & CLEARING

prepared for Rosh Hashanah 5781  
by Jake Ehrlich, Congregation T'chiyah  
[www.tchiyah.org](http://www.tchiyah.org) Detroit, MI



@CongTchiyah



@Tchiyah



(you are free to share, edit,  
adapt, remix this ritual...  
with attribution, please!)

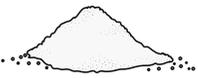
what you need:



**BOWL / BASIN, ABOUT HALF FULL WITH WATER**



**ICE CUBES (ABOUT A HALF DOZEN) IN A BOWL**



**SALT (OPTIONAL)**



**HUMILITY & HONEST SELF-INQUIRY**

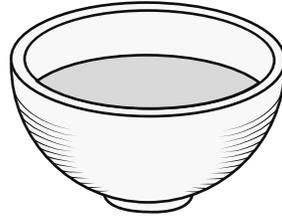
The ritual of **tashlich** ("cast off") is a centuries-old Jewish practice (a minhag, "custom," rather than a religious obligation or commandment) involving the symbolic casting away of breadcrumbs, stones, seeds, etc. into the sea. This custom is said to draw upon a verse from the book of the prophet Micah: "You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl [*v'tashlich*] all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19). This embodied practice of physically casting away our sins to enact our cleansing for a new year has been a favorite of Jews through the ages, much to the embarrassment of certain authorities who see it as a merely superstitious custom. (We may choose to relish in this and celebrate its status as a custom that comes from the people rather than the elites!)

Various sources tell us go to the sea or somewhere with fish in it, to remind us that we are akin to fish who are trapped in the net of judgment, and that we should be more like fish, who, according to the Talmud, are not impacted by the evil eye (Berakhot 55b). The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch also suggests that perhaps this is because fish have no eyelids and so their awareness is more attuned to the Divine!

Tradition notes that "if there is no river that contains fish you may go to any river, or to a well." (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:21) **In this time of shelter-in-place and at-home holidays, we are called to make a further substitution, following the time-honored practice of adapting our rituals to fit contemporary circumstances and values.**



**In lieu of a river or well, we fill a large bowl or basin about half-way with water and recite the following words,** which come from the *Kapparah* ritual, in which a chicken is slaughtered in emulation of the ancient practice of the sacrificial scapegoat, which itself is said to personify the sins of the collective. (The more humane substitution of a bundle of money has become accepted as an authoritative in many communities.)



**RECITE OVER  
THE BOWL:**

**זֶה חֲלִיפָתִי, זֶה תְּמוּנָתִי, זֶה כַּפָּרְתִי**

**"ZEH CHALIFATI, ZEH TEMUNATI, ZEH KAPARTI"**

"This is my exchange, this is my substitute, this is my atonement."

**In lieu of bread crumbs, we gather a bowlful of ice cubes,** which will serve as our "sins" for this ritual. We invoke the words of the Psalms that proclaim, "**God sends out [mashlikh] Their ice like crumbs:** *who can stand before Their cold?*" (Psalms 147:17). Holding the ice in your hand, recite again the words from *kapparah* to permit this ritual substitution.



**RECITE:**

**זֶה חֲלִיפָתִי, זֶה תְּמוּנָתִי, זֶה כַּפָּרְתִי**

**"ZEH CHALIFATI, ZEH TEMUNATI, ZEH KAPARTI"**

"This is my exchange, this is my substitute, this is my atonement."

**Together, with ice in our hands, we recite the Ashamnu\***, voicing our prayers in the first-person plural to recognize that we have all, at some point, done wrong and knowingly or unknowingly committed transgressions ranging from the everyday to the extreme.

[Included below is a contemporary adaptation of the traditional prayer, but you are welcome to draw on any liturgy you see fit.]

As much as we may wish to draw distinction between the failings and harms caused by ourselves and others, the High Holidays invite us to come together as one community, one body seeking healing and harmonious interdependence between each of its cells.

**We recite the words of this Ashamnu to acknowledge how we must all do better:**

## **AN ASHAMNU FOR THE MINDSET OF PRIVILEGE**

- ELLIOT BAT TZEDEK OF FRINGES: A FEMINIST, NON-ZIONIST HAVURAH (PHILADELPHIA)

### **RECITE:**

We have **a**bandoned, we have appropriated, we have analyzed, we have arbitrated. We've **b**elittled, we have broken faith, we have turned our backs, we have believed the unbelievable. We have **g**rown numb, we've given too little, we've given too late, we have given up. We have **d**enied, we have distorted, we have **h**esitated, we have held our tongues. We have **v**ictim-blamed, we have **z**oned out, we have **ch**ided, we have chastised. We have **t**aken, we have turned away, we have **y**ielded, we have yet to act. We have **k**ept to ourselves, we've been **c**omplicit, we have **l**aughed off, we have relied on the law, We've **m**ade excuses, we have minimized, we've made light of, we have mocked. We have **n**ot noticed, we have neglected, we have negated, we have **s**ent our regrets. We've **a**verted our eyes, we have **f**orsaken, we have **p**itied, we've failed to imagine new possibilities. We have **e**xplained, we've **c**riticized, we have **r**ationalized, we've refused responsibility. We've **s**hamed the innocent, we have **s**ilenced, we have suppressed, we have failed to support. We have **t**alked, we have talked, we have talked, but we have not listened. We have not sought the truth, we've theorized, we have told ourselves lies, and we have believed them.

As the ice begins to melt in our hands, so may we dissolve the patterns of thought and action that allow us to harm one another. As the ice melts in our hands, so may we soften our judgements of ourselves and one another. As the ice melts in our hands, returning to its identity as water, so may we too make *teshuvah*, a return to a state of receptivity,

adaptation, and potential for healing.

We come back together to recite verses from the prophet Micah, which have accompanied this ritual for hundreds of years, invoking the 13 Attributes of Mercy:

**RECITE:**

**"Who is a God like you? -- Forgiving sin, absolving the transgressions  
Of the remnant of your heritage, You who do not cling to anger,  
But desire only kindness, You who act mercifully once again,  
Subduing the effects of our transgressions,  
Casting to the ocean waters all our wrongs.  
You show faithfulness to Jacob, love to Abraham,  
as you have sworn to Abraham from days of old."**

(Micah 7:18-20)

**THROUGH OUR TASHLICH, WE IMAGINE THAT A TRUE AND COMPLETE  
SENDING-OFF IS POSSIBLE. JUST AS WE IMAGINE AT PASSOVER  
THAT OUR HOMES MAY BE DEVOID OF CHAMETZ, SO TOO DO WE  
IMAGINE THAT OUR LIVES MAY ONCE AGAIN BE DEVOID OF HARM.**

We recite these lines, an adaptation of the formula that concludes the process of *biur chametz* (the elimination of leavened products) at Passover time:

**RECITE:**

**כָּל עֲבֵרָה וְחַטָּאָה דְאִכָּא בְרִשְׁוֹתִי,  
דְּלֹא חֲמִיתָהּ וְדְלֹא בְעֲרִיתָהּ וְדְלֹא יְדַעְנָא לֵיהּ,  
לְבַטֵּל וְלֵהֵוֵי הֶפְקֵר כְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.**

**KOL AVEIRAH V'CHATA'AH D'IKA VIRSHUTI,  
D'LA HAMITEIH UDLA VIARTEIH UDLA Y'DANA LEIH,  
LIBATEIL V'LEHEVEI HEFKEIR K'AFRA D'ARA.**

Let each transgression & mistake for which I am responsible, which I have not seen or removed, or of which I am unaware, be hereby nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth.

**IN A TRADITIONAL TASHLICH, WHAT WE CAST OFF IS SWEEPED AWAY. TODAY, WHAT WE CAST OFF SITS BEFORE US, DISSOLVING AND CHANGING, BUT HERE ALL THE SAME.**

**You are invited to reflect on how you will move forward from this act of tashlich** -- both spiritually (how will you move forward with your transgressions, wounds and baggage?) and physically (how will you deal with this water?).

Perhaps you will choose to imbibe the water to signify integration, to dispose of it by pouring it into your plumbing to remove it from your domain, or to use it to water your plants to suggest growth coming from hardship.

Below, we present a Biblical ritual to help us send away that which we wish to be rid of, using salt to spiritually purify our waters. *[We recommend not using the salted water to water your plants, as it can damage and kill them!]*

**TO HELP US MAKE OUR TASHLICH AN EFFECTIVE "SENDING-OFF," WE RECALL AND RE-ENACT A MIRACLE FROM OUR TRADITION.**

"The men of the town said to Elisha, "Look, the town is a pleasant place to live in, as my lord can see; but the water is bad and the land causes bereavement.." He responded, "Bring me a new dish and put salt in it." They brought it to him; **he went to the spring and threw [va-yishlach] salt into it. And he said, "Thus said the LORD: I heal this water; no longer shall death and bereavement come from it!"** The water has remained wholesome to this day, in accordance with the word spoken by Elisha." (2 Kings 2:19-22)

**TAKE A HANDFUL OF SALT, AND CAST IT INTO THE WATER AS YOU RECITE THE FOLLOWING WORDS, ADDING ANY EXTRA PRAYERS FOR CLEANSING YOU HOLD:**

**RECITE:**

**כְּהֵאמַר יְהוָה: דִּפְּאַתִּי לַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה  
לֹא־יִהְיֶה מִשָּׁם עוֹד מוֹת וּמִשְׁכָּלֶת:**

**KOH AMAR ADONAI:  
"RIFITI LA-MAYIM HA-ELEH,  
LO YIHYEH MISHAM OD MAVET U-MISHAKALET."**

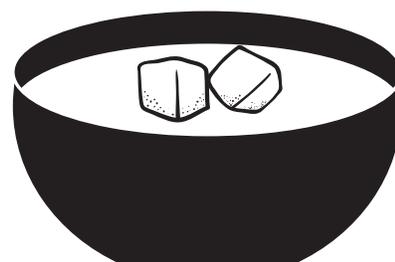
*"Thus said the Lord: I heal this water;  
no longer shall death and bereavement come from it"*

**TASTE A BIT OF THIS WATER. AS YOU MOVE THROUGH THE REMAINDER OF THESE HIGH HOLY DAYS, REMEMBER YOUR TASHLICH INTENTIONS AS CLEARLY AS YOU CAN TASTE THE SALT ON YOUR LIPS.**



You may wish to leave this water in its bowl as a kind of altar or object for meditation through the duration of the High Holidays, or perhaps you may wish to dispose of it by emptying it into your plumbing, invoking the verse from Zohar:

**“Whatever falls into the deep is lost forever”**  
(Zohar, Vayikra 101a).



As you “sweeten” this water through the addition of salt, so may your days and new year be sweetened through the combination of the interventions you make and the response of the world around you.

**MAY 5781 BE A YEAR OF GLOBAL REPARATION, HEALING & JUSTICE, AND MAY WE ALL BE INSCRIBED IN THE BOOK OF LIFE.**

FOR MORE PROGRESSIVE, JUSTICE-SEEKING, INTERGENERATIONAL JUDAISM, FOLLOW:

 @CONGTCHIYAH  @TCHIYAH

SUPPORT OUR WORK WITH A DONATION AT:

**WWW.TCHIYAH.ORG/GIVE**