



Congregation Emanu El

A Personal Tashlich

“Tashlich” means casting off. During this service we cast off our mistakes from the previous year by tossing them into a body of water and watching them disappear. This way our mistakes are symbolically washed away. By doing this we are declaring our intention to return to our best selves and start the year off with a fresh start, a clean slate.

This year, we are asking our congregational family to celebrate Tashlich safely on your own. Follow the instructions below for a fulfilling Tashlich service that you can do yourself!

1. Look for a natural body of water that you can access easily.

Tashlich requires that you cast 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. You can go to Ford Park in Redlands, or to any place safe and close to you. 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 humans to unknowingly get caught in bad situations. 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.

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4. Examine what you've struggled with 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.

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.

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.

Our friends at PAWS... have graciously donated duck food which you can use as a representation of your sins.

8. Walk to the body of water or basin.

As you do, take the time to think about your past year and what you'd like to do better next 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.

11. Cast your sins into the body of water.

After your prayer, reach into your pockets and grab the seeds or metaphorical sins, and throw them into the water. 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.