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History and explanation of Tashlikh

given to us by Joanna Kent Katz and Dori Midnight from the [JVP Tashlich Ritual Guide 5778](#):

“Tashlikh (you shall cast away), from שלך (shalach, to throw or fling) is also related to shalechet, shedding. This time of year, we are invited to ask ourselves: What are we casting away this year? What are we shedding? What must we release in order to stand more fully aligned with our values and our visions?”

Since the late medieval period, Jews have observed the practice of Tashlich, often on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. It is based on several passages in the bible, most notably Book of Micah (7:9): “You will hurl all of our sins into the depths of the sea.”

The practice is to go to a nearby body of water, preferably free-flowing, and cast away that which is no longer serving us, by either throwing bread crumbs or pebbles into the water. Although this is a symbolic gesture, the act of stepping into collective ritual invites us to embody, to live into and to be accountable to the intentions we voice.

During the Days of Awe, the Jewish High Holy Days, we ask an element of the Earth, in this case the element of water, to support us in making individual and collective transitions; releasing habits, unconscious practices, ways of thinking and relating to ourselves, our communities and our world, that are out of alignment with our higher selves and higher vision. The word used here, “khet” has historically been translated as sin, but is actually an archery term that means “to miss the mark”. The idea is not that we suddenly get rid of these mis-steps, but that we set our intentions on transforming them.

We know from experiences in our bodies, and from science, that water is a conductor and that, through cycles of rain and condensation, all water is connected. As we stand alongside this body of water and make these offerings, we must hold that, in many places in the world, water is a site of struggle - in Gaza, for First Nations and Indigenous peoples, and for people of the Global South. As we partner with the element of water in this ritual, we also pray for waters to run free and clear all over the world, from the Cannonball River in North Dakota, to the taps in Flint, Michigan, to all the water sources in Palestine, and we pray that all beings everywhere have access to the water they need to sustain life and thrive.

Find a body of water

We recommend a place next to an ocean, river, or pond. Or, if you’re staying closer to home: a hose, a sink, a bath/shower!

Schedule a time

Traditionally just after Rosh Hashanah (Friday eve 9/18 - Sunday eve 9/20) in preparation for Yom Kippur (Sunday eve 9/27 - Monday eve 9/28), but can be up until Sukkot (begins Friday eve 10/2)

Gather materials & prepare

You will need:

- Bread, challah - 1 loaf per individual (+ extra for eating!) family or small group should be plenty

- Or if you'd like to get creative, depending on your location you may choose bird seed, fish food, or something else! Consider how you may nourish and not harm/pollute with your Tashlich ritual
- Paper, pen, pencils, colors (optional)
- Figure out whose land you occupy, if you don't already know. If you don't know on whose land you occupy, please visit [Native Land Digital](#) for an interactive map.
- Wear your mask(s) if you're outside in public

Tashlikh Ritual

Land appreciation

We offer thanks to natural spirits and energy for bringing us to this precious, good and spacious land, the traditional and unceded territory of the Massachusetts, Wampanoag, and other indigenous peoples. We offer thanks, and ask forgiveness to the people(s) for their generosity towards our ancestors on their land. (Land appreciation adapted from Bracha by Orev Reena Katz, haKohenet)

Opening song

Healing is Possible by Orion Johnstone

<https://soundcloud.com/user-478813445/healing-is-possible-by-orion-johnstone>

Healing is possible, may it be so

Healing is happening, may it be so

and we believe that what we need most is the hearts of each other right here

Group cast away

Tashlikh is an ancient Rosh Hashonah ritual, from the Hebrew word meaning "to cast away" and from the Biblical phrase "cast off our sins into the depths of the seas". We throw crumbs from our pockets into a stream of running water - crumbs that represent our "sins" and those burdens, regrets, disappointments, old thinking, missed opportunities, excuses, or rationalizations that interfere with our living full and meaningful lives. In the shadows of shortening days, on the bright edge of the New Year, we come bearing the heft, the inevitable weight of a full year's decisions and inactions, movements and hesitations.

Tear off a small crumb of bread or piece of whatever you have brought. After each thing we state aloud that we cast away, throw your item into the water and experience it floating away.

*taken from 2019's BWC Tashlikh with JVP, adapted from [2017/5778 ritual guide](#))

*you may want to choose only a few of the below if you are doing this with small children

- We cast away silence and complicity, and lift up our voices and our comradeship.
- We cast away fear, and take on courage.
- We cast away the ways we have been complicit in anti-Black racism, and we renew our commitment to undoing racism and supporting the Movement for Black Lives.
- We cast away doubt, disbelief, and apathy in the face of racism, occupation, and violence, and we take on audacious hope.
- We cast away the violence committed against Palestinian people and the dispossession of their land in the name of safety for the Jewish people, and recommit ourselves to work to end the occupation.
- We cast away any tolerance for hateful speech and actions, and commit to challenging anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia in all its forms, knowing that all forms of oppression are interconnected.
- We cast away the ways in which we have perpetuated and allowed violence against undocumented people, and commit to mobilizing to protect all immigrants.
- We cast away misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia, and we commit to celebrating the beauty of gender diversity, to undermine binaries, and create loving, liberatory spaces for all genders.
- We cast away our complacency under Trump, our normalization of his hatred, and failure to acknowledge the far-reaching impact of his administration, and we commit to building deep relationships and acting bravely together.
- We cast away the ways we act out of internalized oppression, and we take on a vision of ourselves and our communities as whole and holy, strong and enlivened by each other.
- We cast away violence, systemic and personal, which degrades our humanity, and renew our commitment to collective liberation.
- We cast away individualism, isolation, and staking our territory, and we take on connection, the power of humility, and the hope of transformation through building webs of interconnection.
- We cast away pessimism and cynicism, and we lift up the belief that we can be, we are, the change we have been waiting for.

Blessed are You, Shekhinah, Source of Life, Who blesses us by embracing us in living waters.

B'rucha at shekhinah eloteinu ruach ha-olam asher kid-shanu bi-tevilah b'mayyim hayyim.

Individual cast away

Take a few minutes to think about or journal/draw some things that you would like to cast away, that you would like to release from this past year. Consider acknowledging these things as helping work towards being in right relationship with other human beings and the natural world; let the water hold and heal and these things with you.

Perhaps you reflect on the following questions:

When have I let myself or others down this year?

What do I want to let go of from this past year? What is no longer serving me?

What is holding me back from being my best self? From working more effectively towards justice and liberation?

Tear off a small crumb of bread or piece of whatever you have brought. After each thing, state aloud or think about that which we cast away, throw your item into the water and experience it floating away.

For kids: This could be a paper airplane!

- Write down or draw pictures of...
 - Something you want to change or get better at (For example, having more patience with your sibling or friends)
 - Something you are looking forward to in the new year (For example, picking apples! Making a snowperson!)

- Fold into a paper airplane
- Practice launching your intentions into reality!
- Take the airplane with you when you leave the ritual. Be kind to the earth, don't litter :)

If you are unable to get to water this year

We invite you to close your eyes and imagine you are standing on the banks of the Charles River, reaching deep into your pockets. Grab hold of those crumbs, feel them in your hands, and then cast them into the current. With the specks of bread floating away, you are freed of this burden.

With empty pockets, you move lightly, freely, into the New Year. You are ready to rededicate yourself to your ideals.

It is this process of release and recommitment that we honor, and support each other through, today.

With eyes open, together we say:

We cast away doubt, disbelief, and apathy.

We embrace audacious hope.

We cast away inertia and acceptance of things as they are.

We embrace shared humanity and a belief in a better world.

We cast away intolerance.

We embrace bearing witness and raising our voices for equity and freedom.

We cast away separation of families at our borders.

We embrace sanctuary and refuge.

We cast away indifference to the wellbeing of the earth and inaction in the face of the climate crisis.

We embrace inhabiting our world more sustainably
and standing up to Goliath governments with courage and persistence.

We cast away individualism, isolation, self-interest, and distraction,
And we embrace connection, humility, and the hope of transformation.

As a community we cast away pessimism and cynicism,
And we embrace the belief that we can be the change we have been waiting for.

--Adapted from Jews for Racial and Economic Justice

Group sharing

If you are with others, go around in a circle and share anything that you'd like about what you cast away, and/or what that process was like for you

Ending song

From ***The River*** by Coco Love Alcorn

Melody: <https://soundcloud.com/user-478813445/sets>

Water heal my body
Water heal my soul
When I go down, down
To the water
By the water I feel whole

Share with the BWC community and on social media!

Take a photo of your view, your crumbs in the water, or some other image / video

1. Share on social media with hashtag #tashlikhtgether
2. Tag BWC on Facebook and Instagram: @BostonWorkersCircle
3. Send to mjackman@circleboston.org for social media sharing!

Optional poem & reflection from Ritual Well:

<https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/tashlikh-text-based-guided-conversation>

Today is Forever

Malka Heifetz Tussman (trans. Marcia Falk)

I stroll often in a nearby park -
old trees wildly overgrown,
bushes and flowers blooming all four seasons,
a creek babbling childishly over pebbles,
a small bridge with rough-hewn railings -
this is my little park
It's mild and gentle
in the breath-song of the park
and good to catch some gossip from the flutterers and fliers.
Leaning on the railing of the bridge,
seeing myself in clear water,
I ask, Little stream,
will you tumble and flow here
forever?

The creek babbles back, laughing,
Today is forever.
Forever is right now.

I smile, a sparkful of believing,
a sighful of not-believing:
Today is forever.
Forever is right now...

Reflection:

In this poem, water is imagined as an active participant - it babbles and laughs, speaking and communicating with the narrator. Here, water is a peaceful partner - a source of gentleness and wisdom. Yet in the other texts we examined - and in our own individual experiences - water may have played a different role.

As you do the final walk down to the water, ask yourself - what would you want this water to say to you today? What mantra would you need to hear to inspire your repentance, to provide you with comfort, to remind you of your place in the world and in community? As the water comes into view, repeat that mantra to yourself in sync with your footsteps.