



## **Infertility and The High Holy Days**

### **Tashlikh – Casting Away Our Sins**



Tashlikh is a ritual traditionally performed on Rosh HaShanah that starts the necessary work of mending our ways before Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Tashlikh means to throw or cast and is performed by throwing bread into a body of running water, preferably one with fish, to symbolically cast away sins (ways we miss the mark). Traditional readings include verses from Micah (7:19) where the idea of casting sins into the depth of the seas originates. Readings from Psalms 118 and 130 in particular, are also included as supplications for mercy.

Rabbis initially deemed the tradition superstitious and thought it could lead one away from doing the real work of Teshuva (returning, or changing one's ways). However, over time Jewish communities came to understand that Tashlikh provides a physical expression for the internal spiritual and emotional work we do.

The use of water is symbolic in Judaism. Water is a symbol of life and creation. Life does not exist without it. Water also represents cleansing and change, like a mikvah that purifies our soul.

The symbolism of life, casting away our mistakes, and the connections to mikvah also resonate with the experience of infertility. The High Holidays are full of fertility symbolism and direct stories of infertility. Tashlikh is not a magical remedy. On the other hand, God's response is not based on our merit (Did you throw in enough bread? Did you pray enough?). Infertility is not a punishment and children are not granted on merit..What we seek is God's compassion.

After you cast away the mistakes of the past year, consider the ways in which infertility may have negatively affected you. Give yourself permission to let go of the self-doubt, blame, insecurities, and pain. Those too are missing the mark. Connect with the life-giving power of water and the mercy that God grants. Pour out your heart in search of compassion. You can start the New Year with a sense of wholeness and a connection to the ultimate Source of Life and Compassion.

*Following are selected readings before performing Tashlikh*



## Tashlikh – Casting Away Our Sins

### Hashiveinu – Restore Us (Lamentations 5:21)

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וְנָשׁוּבָה, חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם

*Hashiveinu Adonai eleycha, v'nashuvah, chadesh yameynu k'kedem.*

Restore us to you, Holy One, that we may return; renew our days like a beginning.

### Micah 7:18 - 20

Who is a God like You, a  
forgiver of sin, who overlooks  
transgression of the remnant of  
his heritage? Because he loves  
graciousness, He will take us  
back in love. He will cover up  
our sins, **You will cast away all  
our sins into the depths of the  
sea.** You will keep faith with  
Jacob, loyalty to Abraham, as  
you promised an oath to our  
father in days gone by.

מִי־אֵל כָּמוֹךָ נִשְׂא עֲוֹן וְעֵבֶר עַל־פֶּשַׁע לִשְׂאֲרִית  
נִחֲלָתוֹ

לֹא הִחְזִיק לְעַד אָפוּ כִּי־חָפֵץ חֶסֶד הוּא  
יָשׁוּב יִרְחָמֵנוּ יִכַּבֵּשׁ עֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ

**וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בַּמַּצְלוֹת יָם כָּל חַטֹּאתֵינוּ\***

תַּתֵּן אֱמֶת לִיעֲקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם

אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתֵּינוּ מִיָּמֵי קֶדֶם

We ask you, God, to help us cast away our sins in the depths of the sea.

### A Tashlich Prayer

Let us cast away the sin of deception, so that we will mislead no one in word or deed, nor pretend to be what we are not.

Let us cast away the sin of vain ambition  
which prompts us to strive for goals which bring  
neither true fulfillment nor genuine contentment.

Let us cast away the sin of stubbornness,  
so that we will neither persist in foolish habits  
nor fail to acknowledge our will to change.



## Tashlikh – Casting Away Our Sins

Let us cast away the sin of envy,  
so that we will neither be consumed by desire  
for what we lack nor grow unmindful of the blessings  
which are already ours.

Let us cast away the sin of selfishness,  
which keeps us from enriching our lives  
through wider concerns, and greater sharing, and  
from reaching out in love to other human beings.

Let us cast away the sin of indifference,  
so that we may be sensitive to the sufferings of others and responsive to the needs  
of our people everywhere.

Let us cast away the sins of pride and arrogance,  
so that we may worship God and serve *Divine* purposes  
in humility and in truth.

(From Mahzor Hadash, edited by Rabbi Sidney Greenberg and Rabbi Jonathan D. Levine, c. 1978.)

## **Personal Tashlich Prayers**

While you are at the water casting your mistakes, take time to talk to God. You can  
use the Psalms and words below and/or speak from your heart.

### **Psalm 130 - A Song of Ascents**

Out of the depths I call you, O God.

O God, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

If you O God keep a record of errors, who will survive?

Yours is the power to forgive, therefore you are feared.

I wait for God, my soul waits, and in God's word

I put my hope, more than watchmen for the morning;

yea, more than watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, wait for God; for with God there is unfailing love, and great power to  
redeem.

It is God who will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.



## Tashlikh – Casting Away Our Sins

### Prayer For Compassion

God, you know me better than I know myself. You created me. You know my failings; you know my hopes. I come to You with a broken heart. I have strayed and will work to improve myself in the future. As I cast away my failing of the past year, I am also pouring out my sadness. I want so much to parent a child. I know I have no merit for this blessing, nor does anyone. You are the Creator of all life. You are also the Source of compassion. I seek Your compassion. Help me find a sense of appreciation, wholeness, and hope as I cast away the anger, blame, disappointment, and bitterness from my heart. Wash away my sadness. Please help me know Your compassion.

### **Psalm 118 (Excerpts)**

Praise God, for God is good, God's loving-kindness is eternal.  
Let Israel declare, "God's steadfast love is eternal."  
Let the house of Aaron declare, "God's steadfast love is eternal."  
Let those who fear God declare, "God's steadfast love is eternal."  
In distress I called on God; God answered me and brought me relief.  
God is on my side, I have no fear; what can humans do to me?  
...  
You are my God and I will praise You;  
You are my God and I will extol You.  
Praise God for God is good, God's loving-kindness is eternal.

הודו ליי כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ:  
יֹאמְרוּ־נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ:  
יֹאמְרוּ־נָא בֵּית־אַהֲרֹן כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ:  
יֹאמְרוּ־נָא יְרֵאִי יי כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ:  
מִן־הַמִּצָּר קָרָאתִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי בְּמִרְחַב יְהוָה:  
יי לִי לֹא אִירָא מִה־יַּעֲשֶׂה לִי אָדָם:

...

אֵלֵי אַתָּה וְאוֹדֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי אֲרוֹמָמְךָ:  
הודו ליהוָה כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ: