



The Sea

Throwing bread into the water and reciting the biblical passage mentioning “the deep” is a reminder of the deep out of which the days of creation were formed. Thus, by going to the sea on Rosh Hashanah, we celebrate creation and are led to think of our own place in God’s scheme of creation. When we contemplate these matters and repent from our sins, then they are truly thrown away, into the water, and we feel renewed on this Day of Judgment.

—MOSES ISSERLES

Before the bread is cast into the water, the following may be recited:

Is there any divinity save You who forgives the sins and pardons the transgressions of the remnant, Your people? You do not maintain anger forever, for You delight in love. You will return to us compassionately, overcoming the consequences of our sin, hurling our sins into the depths of the sea. You will keep faith with Jacob, showing enduring love to Abraham, as You promised our ancestors in days of old. *Micah 7:18-20*

The following may be added:

In my trouble I called to ADONAI, who answered me; from the belly of Sheol I cried out, and You heard my voice. You cast me into the depths, into the heart of the sea, the floods engulfed me; all Your breakers and billows swept over me. I thought I was driven away out of Your sight: Would I ever gaze again upon Your holy Temple? The waters closed in over me, the deep engulfed me. Weeds twined around my head. I sank to the base of the mountains; the bars of the earth closed upon me forever. Yet You brought my life up from the pit, O my God ADONAI! When my life was ebbing away, I called ADONAI to mind; and my prayer came before You, into Your holy Temple. *Jonah 2:3-8*

After the bread is cast into the water, one of the following may be recited:

א

None shall hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the love of ADONAI shall fill the earth as the waters fill the sea.

Isaiah 11:9

ב

For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for just as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more flood the earth; so have I sworn that I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains may move and the hills shake; but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be taken away—says ADONAI, who has taken you back in love. *Isaiah 54:9-10*

INTRODUCTION. Tashlikh is a ceremony performed near a body of water, preferably one that flows into a larger body of water. It takes place on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, except when the first day falls on Shabbat, in which case it takes place on the second day. The origin of Tashlikh is shrouded in mystery. The first direct mention can be found in the halakhic work of Rabbi Jacob Moellin (Maharil, 15th century), who approved of

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מִי־אֵל כְּמוֹךָ נִשְׂא עֵוֹן וְעֵבֶר עַל־פְּשָׁע לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נַחֲלָתוֹ,
לֹא הֶחְזִיק לְעַד אָפוּ כִי הִפִּיץ חֶסֶד הוּא. יָשׁוּב יִרְחַמְנוּ
יִכְבֹּשׂ עֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בְּמַצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטָּאתָם. תַּתֵּן
אֲמַת לְיַעֲקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
מִיָּמֵי קֶדֶם. מִיכָה ז יח-כ

The following may be added:

קָרָאתִי מִצָּרָה לִי אֱלֹהֵי הוּהוּ וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִבֶּטֶן שְׂאוֹל שְׁוַעֲתִי
שָׁמַעְתָּ קוֹלִי. וְתִשְׁלִיכְנִי מִצֹּלָה בְּלִבֵּב יָמִים וְנָהָר
יִסְבְּבֵנִי כָּל־מִשְׁפָּרֶיךָ וְגִלְיָךְ עָלַי עֲבְרוּ. וְאֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי
נִגְרַשְׁתִּי מִנְּגִד עֵינַיִךְ אַךְ אוֹסִיף לְהִבִּיט אֶל־הַיִּכַּל קִדְשֶׁךָ.
אֲכַפּוֹנֵי מַיִם עַד־נִפְשׁ תַּהוּם יִסְבְּבֵנִי סוּף חֲבוּשׁ לְרֵאשִׁי.
לְקַצְבֵי הָרִים יִרְדְּתִי הָאָרֶץ בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ בְּעַדִּי לְעוֹלָם וְתַעַל
מִשְׁחַת חַיִּי יְהוּה אֱלֹהֵי. בְּהַתְּעַטֶּף עָלַי נִפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוּהוּ
זְכַרְתִּי וְתָבוֹא אֵלַיךְ תְּפִלָּתִי אֶל־הַיִּכַּל קִדְשֶׁךָ. יוֹנָה ב ג-ח

After the bread is cast into the water, one of the following may be recited:

א

לֹא־יִרְעוּ וְלֹא־יִשְׁחִיתוּ בְּכָל־הָרַק קִדְשֵׁי כִּי־מְלֹאָה הָאָרֶץ
דַּעַה אֶת־יְהוּהוּ כַּמַּיִם לַיָּם מְכַסִּים. יִשְׁעִיָּה יא ט

ב

כִּי־מֵי נַח זֹאת לִי אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִעֵבֶר מִי־נַח עוֹד עַל־
הָאָרֶץ כִּן נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִקְצָף עָלַיךָ וּמִגְעַר־בָּךְ. כִּי הָהָרִים
יִמוּשׁוּ וְהַגְּבָעוֹת תִּמוּטֶינָה וְחִסְדֵי מֵאֲתָךְ לֹא־יִמוּשׁ
וּבְרִית שְׁלוֹמִי לֹא תִמוּט אָמַר מִרְחֹמֶיךָ יְהוּהוּ. יִשְׁעִיָּה נד ט-י

the custom of going to the water to recite particular biblical verses and prayers on Rosh Hashanah, but specified that it is inappropriate to throw bread in the water to represent the sins that are being cast away. Clearly, both the custom and the bread-throwing preceded him; but we do not know when this tradition began.

The ceremony of Tashlikh survived and grew in popularity, despite significant rabbinic opposition. Some rabbis opposed Tashlikh because it makes the complex process of separating sin from our lives seem too facile, as if it is simply a matter of casting bread from our hands. But Tashlikh survived because it fulfilled a popular need. Most of what we do on Rosh Hashanah depends on verbal expression or on listening. Tashlikh, the symbolic casting away of our sins, constitutes one of the few active rituals of the day.

Tashlikh has been understood in a variety of ways. Throwing bread into the water can be understood as a symbolic casting away of our sins, marking the purification that takes

place on these days. Moreover, just as fish eat our bread and what is cast away becomes nourishment, so we pray that even our sins will eventually be turned to good effect in the world. Lastly, just as the waters of the sea go around the world, so too can we, at this moment, become conscious of how we are connected to all that is around us.