

A DIY-Guide to Tashlich (aka “Ye Ole’ Sin Toss”)

The Backstory

This ceremony has roots in both Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities. The practice was inspired by the prophet Micah 7:19, which reads, “God will take us back in love, will cover up our iniquities, and will hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea,” and represents casting off our sins to begin the new year.

What You Need

A Body of Water

Traditionally: A natural body of water that contains fish

Why? Because the flowing body of water keeps things moving, sweeps away and cleanses everything it.

A Few Stones or Pebbles (an adjustment for the health of our ecosystems!)

Traditionally: We shake out the pockets of our clothing, or toss out bread that will be eaten by fish and birds

Why? One idea is that because just as fish can at times be unintentionally caught in nets, we as humans can unknowingly get caught in bad situations, and Tashlich is an opportunity to recognize and forgive ourselves of those moments.

Intention (on the backside of this card)

Traditionally: Jews have a prayer for everything, even going to the bathroom.

Why? Because in everything is an opportunity to find meaning, connection to a higher purpose, and the possibility of transformation. Even in throwing bread, or pebbles, into water.

The Ritual

Go to your chosen body of water.

As you travel, we recommend you take the time to meditate on, even journal about, the past year.

Set your intention.

Try this one, by Rabbi Rachel Barenblatt:

Here I am again, ready to let go of my mistakes. Help me to release myself from all the ways I've missed the mark. As I cast this bread/these pebbles into the waters, help me release the troubles I carry on these shoulders. Help me to know that last year is over, washed away like crumbs in the current. Open my heart to blessing and gratitude. Renew my soul like the dew renews the grass.

Gather your stones.

Take a moment to speak to God out loud or in your head about the past year and how you plan to do better. Take all the time you need to honestly reflect.

Cast off your sins one by one.

With each stone you cast into the water, name, aloud or to yourself, an aspect of your behavior you want to cast away. Don't worry about perfection, this is a time to cast away your sins with self-love, and commitment to trying your best in the coming year, knowing that God's got your back. (And if that's not your thing, knowing that the universe is supporting you in changing your life).

Take a deep breath.

Exhale the sins you are leaving behind, and inhale your hope for the year to come.