

TASHLICH PRAYERS

"You will cast all your sins into the depths of the sea"

We begin by reciting the special verses from the Bible which have inspired our people, for hundreds of years, to gather upon the shore to imagine another self--a better self:

The prophet Micah proclaimed:

"Who is a God like You, forgiving mistakes and erasing our wrong-doing ... You have not maintained anger forever ... You will take us back in love You will hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea."

The author of the Psalms comforts us:

"In stress I called on Adonai; and Adonai answered me and brought me relief. Adonai is on my side, I have no fear; what can others do to me ? ... It is better to seek shelter in Adonai than to trust in the great."

On this afternoon of Rosh Hashanah, a time set aside for renewal of the spirit and renewal of life's purpose, we look upon the waters and consider our reflection. We bring to mind the myriad waters of our history and the role of water in our lives:

We remember Abraham and Isaac, walking together toward Moriah and toward their destiny, when Satan the Adversary became before them a great and raging river blocking their path. Girding themselves with faith, the two leapt into the rapids, praying to God for courage and rescue. God heard their call, dried the river, and their journey continued.

We remember our exiled people, sitting beside the rivers of Babylon, weeping to a God who had forsaken them, longing for a life and a land for which they had become unworthy. Through the power and the force of teshuvah--the entire community pleading for forgiveness and vowing to change--God turned exile into return, desperation into hope.

We imagine the life that teems beneath the water's surface--fish who swim and eat, breath and bear young in the cool depths. But we also remember the captured fish--struggling in a net, their fate unknown. We, too, are struggling today, in a net of our own making. Give us the strength to break free--to cast aside the weaknesses

and limitations which bind us and prevent us from becoming our best selves.

And now, we will shake our clothes together. Our sins--our mistakes--the pain we have inflicted and the damage we have done--to ourselves and to others--are cast into the waters. But the mere shaking of garments does not cleanse us. It is a symbol--a token of our intention--a process--begun this day--to purge the wrong and the bad--to embrace the right and the good. May this process find ultimate fulfillment in the days to come--culminating as the gates of neilah draw slowly to a close.

Shake garments as we look at the river.

י, אנחנו משליכין את החטאים שלנו על הנער

Adonai, anachnu mash-li-chim et he-chata'im she-lanu al ha-na'har.

Adonai, we cast our sins upon the river.

We stand at the boundary between dry land and water, reminded of the first acts of creation, when God brought order out of chaos, separating the earth from the sea. We are thankful to our Creator. And so, though those who came before us would cast bread upon the waters, we shall not, for humanity has cast too many sins upon the waters, polluting and despoiling God's greatest gifts. Rather, if any remnants of our consumption or construction lie about us, we shall take them with us as a sign of our appreciation, a mark of our concern, proof of our changing attitudes.

We say together:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא הכל

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei ha-kol.

Blessed are you Adonai, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of all things.

