



JEWISH WOMEN'S CENTER OF PITTSBURGH

SHALECHET  שֵׁלֶכֶת

♫

הַלִּיחָה לְקִיסְרְיָה (אֵלִי אֵלִי) / HALIḤAH LEKEYSARYAH
(ELI, ELI)

אֵלִי שֶׁלֹּא יִגְמַר לְעוֹלָם	Eli shelo yigamer le'olam
הַחֹל וְהַיָּם	haḥol vehayam
רִשְׁרוּשׁ שֶׁל הַיָּמִים	rishrush shel hamayim
בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם	berak hashamayim
תְּפִלַּת הָאָדָם.	tefilat ha'adam.

This translation can be sung to the same melody as the Hebrew.

My God, my God, I pray that these things never end.
The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
the crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.
The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
The crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.

Hannah Szenes

**We introduce ourselves by our English and/or Hebrew names
and the names of our mothers/grandmothers.**



Coming up on September

**White butterflies, with single
black fingerprint eyes on their wings
dart and settle, eddy and mate
over the green tangle of vines
in Labor Day morning steam.**

**The year grinds into ripeness
and rot, grapes darkening,
pears yellowing, the first
Virginia creeper twining crimson,
the grasses, dry straw to burn.**

**The New Year rises, beckoning
across the umbrellas on the sand.
I begin to reconsider my life.
What is the yield of my impatience?
What is the fruit of my resolve?**

**I turn from frantic white dance
over the jungle of productivity
and slowly a niggun slides
cold water down my throat.
I rest on a leaf spotted red.**

**Now is the time to let the mind
search backwards like the raven loosed
to see what can feed us. Now,
the time to cast the mind forward
to chart an aerial map of the months.**

**The New Year is a great door
that stands across the evening and Yom
Kippur is the second door. Between them
are song and silence, stone and clay pot
to be filled from within myself.**

**I will find there both ripeness and rot,
What I have done and undone,
What I must let go with the waning days
and what I must take in. With the last
tomatoes, we harvest the fruit of our lives.**

Marge Piercy

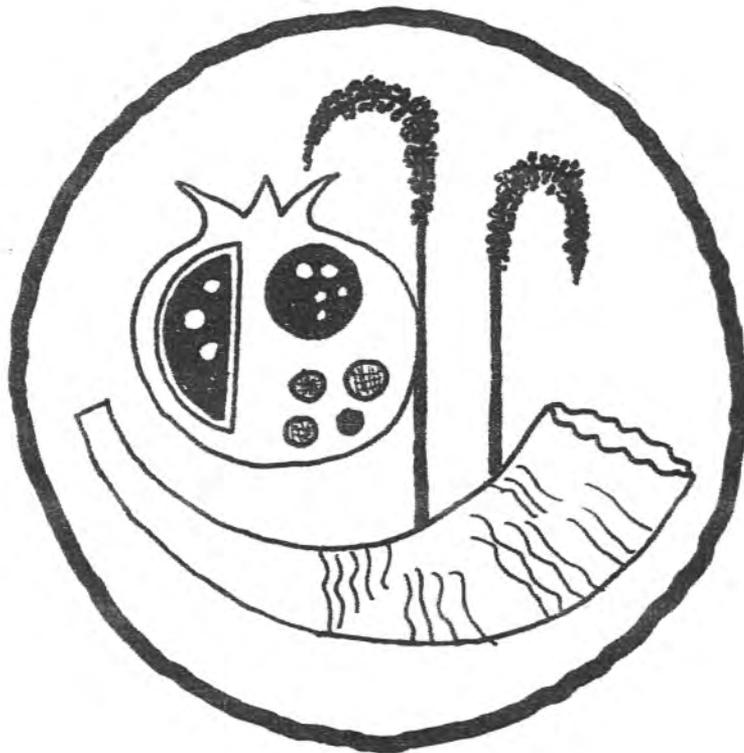


Guided Meditation for Shalechet

We are going to do a meditation which focuses on this past year. You may want to augment your remembering when you return home or at another appropriate time by going through your calendar from this past year - your meetings, appointments, classes, travels. In this way, your years become an extended fulfilling journey, one intersecting into the other, rather than a single venture with no connections.

We begin this meditation by standing in mountain pose. Check that:

- your feet are about shoulder-width apart
- your feet are pressing evenly into the ground
- your knees are relaxed
- your shoulders are loose and your arms are dangling by your sides
- your facial muscles are softened
- your spine makes a straight line from your stomach to your neck, pulling up to a point above your head



Take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth to secure this position. With each breath afterwards, see if you can notice tiny adjustments you can make to deepen the posture.

In these next breaths, begin to imagine roots growing from all different parts of your feet, reaching deep into the ground. Imagine that these roots are pulling your feet down flat into the soil, supporting you—see if you can feel them from your toes, your heels, your arches, and the ball of your feet. Relax your arms, straighten your spine and breathe.

Now that we're in a relaxed position, start to think back through this past year. Let images enter and exit your mind—small moments, meaningful moments, smells, pictures, and faces. Think back now to last *Tishrei*, last September: where were you at the last High Holiday cycle? What promises had you made? What goals did you have for the coming year?

Move now into late September and October, the middle of fall, the holiday of *Sukkot* and the time for harvesting. What kinds of benefits did you reap this year? Financial? Educational? Experiential? See if you can recall them now.

Think now about last November, roughly the month of *Cheshvan*. Late fall, colder weather. The natural world slowly moving from bountiful to barren as the winter moves in, so that the cycle can begin again in the spring. Think now about changes that you made in your life this year. What patterns did you break? What new work did you take on?

Move slowly from November into December, the month of *Kislev*, the month that holds *Chanukah*, the holiday of lights and miracles. In what ways did you bring light or goodness into the world this year? What miracles happened in your life this year?

Now think back to last January and February; first, the month of *Tevet*, the conclusion of *Chanukah*. Then, the month of *Shevat*, the month that contains *Tu B'Shvat*, the festival of the trees, a time for planting. Think about new projects that you started this year, new plans that you made, “seeds” that you planted for your future or your family's future.

Move from late February into March, the month of *Adar* and the ending of winter. During *Adar*, we celebrate *Purim*, a festival of fun and revelry. Think about the joy that came into your life this year. In what ways were you silly? Can you think of moments when you laughed?

From March to April, from *Adar* to *Nisan*, the month of spring. The time we celebrate *Pesach* and think about renewal, rebirth and newfound freedom. What struggles concluded in your life this year? Were there issues or difficulties in your life that you were able to overcome?

Next, think back to last May, the month of *Iyar*. In the secular year, a time for closings and endings. Think about endings that occurred in your life this year. What issues, relationships, situations came to a close during the past 12 months?

Move from May into June and into the month of *Sivan*, the month that holds the holiday of *Shavuot*, the holiday that celebrates our receiving of the Torah. Think about learning that you did during the year. What new things did you learn this year, and what effect did they have on you?

From June into July and August; through the months of *Tammuz* and *Av*; hot and humid weather; slowing of activity and some time for rest; in the Hebrew calendar, these months are a time to think about history and loss; think about losses in your life this past year. In what ways did you grieve?

Now remember Elul, the harbinger of the new year. Our bodies feel that it is still midsummer, but our souls begin the process of *teshuvah*, repentance, that will come to its climax on *Yom Kippur*. How did you prepare for *Yamim Nora'im*, the Days of Awe?

And here we are again in the month of *Tishrei*, making new promises and setting new goals. So before we do that, take a few moments and deep breaths to remember the journey of the past year.

When you are ready, open your eyes and shake out your body - your arms, shoulders, head, legs, fingers, stomach, toosh.

If anyone would like to share thoughts, memories, feelings, please do.

Tashlich - you shall cast out - is the practice of metaphysically transferring our wrong-doings to bits of bread and casting them into a flowing body of water. Tashlich comes from the Hebrew root letters shin-lamed-kaf, meaning "casting out."

Shalechet is another word that comes from the same three root letters. It means "shedding," as the trees that drop their leaves in autumn. Rather than viewing this ritual as throwing the "bad" things into the water, we are instead like trees, shaking free of what has dried up and no longer healthy or nourishing to us. Shalechet is a feminine noun. For women, the concept of letting go is a part of our natural ongoing cycle.

Tradition teaches that tashlich is a cyclical ritual. When we throw the bread pieces into the water, they are eaten by the fish and recycled back into the food chain. The act of shalechet follows a similar process. The fallen leaves fertilize the soil around the tree, helping new plants and trees to sprout in the spring.

Thus, what is no longer useful, what we shed or cast off, can become sustenance to something else. What each of us would like to release for ourselves might be exactly what another person is looking to bring into her life.

Before we perform this ritual, let us recycle our "sheddings." On a card, write in one or two words an understanding about yourself that you learned this past year that you would like to recycle, to give to another. For example, on one of the cards from last year was written, "heart-opening - shed - knowing that is only intellectual; allow feelings, emotions, intuition to come forward."

We will collect them in the basket. Later, you can pick the card which you need.

Let these flower petals/bread crumbs that we are casting away remind us of our fragility, our beauty, and our vulnerability.

Cast away from me all that I wish to shed
And create within me a new heart and a new spirit.

Adapted from Ezekiel 18:31

Each person finds a private place by the pond for reflection.

Following the ritual -

Today we will hear the sound of the shofar. However, the shofar is not always available to us. So listen to the sound of your inner shofar, calling you to reflect and to make the changes you need to become a better you.

A Prayer for the Journey

May God bless and keep us like the radiant warmth of the sun
guiding the cycles of darkness and light - a sacred dance that
reveals we're all one.

May God shine within us like a full moon on the winter snow,
as we open our hearts, we see God in all things and
bless ourselves with shalom.

May we walk in beauty, and love songs of harmony sing.
We are enough and there is enough when we taste the
sweet joy of Being.

May our dreams of peace all come true as the soul-breath
praises God's name.

With courage we choose to face who we are.

Hanna Tiferet Siegel

L'Shanah Tova u'Metukah A Good and Sweet Year

Sources

Guided Meditation by Erika Katske

Personal Reflections on Teshuvah & Tashlich by Janice Rous

Ritualwell.org