



Authentic Kabbalah - Sephardic Studies
Benei Noah Studies - Anti-Missionary/Anti-Cult Materials

The Question of Tashlikh on Shabat

by Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok
Copyright © 2002 by Ariel Bar Tzadok. All rights reserved.

Question:

The minhag of tashlikh is normally observed on the first day of Rosh HaShana. However, when Rosh HaShana falls on Shabat many postpone Tashlikh until the second day. What is the proper minhag according to the Sephardim and according to the Mekubalim?

Answer:

The minhag (tradition) of tashlikh is of recent origins. The RaMaH mentions it briefly in his glosses to the Shulkhan Arukh (Orah Haim 583:2), saying that the minhag originated with Rabbi Yaakov Moellin (the Maharil, died 1427). It did not become standard Sephardic practice until it was adopted by the Ari'zal, not too many years after the RaMaH wrote his glosses.

Rabbi Haim Vital mentions the minhag of tashlikh in his Sha'ar HaKavanot (90b). Summarizing the view of his teacher, the Ari'zal, Rabbi Haim writes: *"the matter of the minhag that the Ashkenazim observe on the first day of Rosh HaShana. A short time after the Minha prayers yet before sundown [they go] by the great sea or by a well or spring of moving water. There they read tashlikh. This is a good minhag. It is best if this is done outside the city. One stands by the water, the well, or the spring and reads there the three verses, Mi Kel Kamokha" (Micah 7:18-20).*

Today there are numerous bodies of water within city limits and close to Jewish communities. Not many people have to travel too far to be at a lakeside, pond, pool, or similar body of water. While it is best to recite tashlikh over a natural body of water, with fish in it if possible, there are no laws to require this. In an absence of any body of water, one may simply fill a bucket of water and recite tashlikh over it. (I have seen a bucket used in places in Eretz Yisrael too far removed from any natural body of water).

More than just the recital of Micah 7:18-20, the tashlikh service today has been expanded to include sections from the Zohar, numerous prayers and for those so inclined, mystical kavanot/meditations (ref. Pituhei Hotam 10-12, in Even HaShoham 583, page 121). When reciting the three verses one shakes out one's outer garment, symbolically fulfilling the verse in Micah 7:9 of casting "one's sins into the depths of the sea" (ref. Even HaShoham 3, O.H. 583:11, in the name of the Pri Etz Haim 142b).

Normally the prayers and sections of the Zohar read for tashlikh are too long to be memorized. Therefore, one usually carries a Rosh HaShana Mahzor (prayerbook) to the tashlikh site. This creates a problem when Rosh HaShana falls on Shabat and the place of tashlikh is outside the eruv, or there is not an eruv at all.

Due to the concern of a possible violation of Torah law by carrying an article (the Mahzor) in a public domain, many Rabbis have stated that when the first day of Rosh HaShana falls on a Shabat, tashlikh should be postponed to the second day. (Ref. Kaf HaHaim 583:31, in the name of the Kitzur Sh'lah and the Mishneh Berurah 583:8 in the name of the Pri Megadim).

Rabbi David Yosef, the son of HaRav Ovadiah Yosef addresses this issue in his Torat HaMoadim on the Yamim HaNoraim (3:20).

"When [day one of] Rosh HaShana falls on Shabat, if there is eruv in town, or the place of saying the order of tashlikh is outside the eruv boundaries, one should refrain from saying the order of tashlikh on Shabat. [This is] so that the public will not stumble by carrying Mahzors from a private domain into a public domain. That year tashlikh should be recited on the second day of Rosh HaShana.

If the recitation of the order of tashlikh is performed within the boundaries of the eruv tashlikh can be recited even on Shabat. Even those who makhmir (follow stricter opinions) not to rely on the eruv and do not carry anything in the public domain on Shabat (even with an eruv) are still able to recite the order of tashlikh on Shabat. They can hand the Mahzors to children below the age of observing the mitzvot to carry for them.

There are those who always postpone reciting the order of tashlikh to the second day when the first day of Rosh HaShana falls on Shabat. If there is an eruv in a place it is always more correct to recite it on day one of Rosh HaShana, even when that day is on Shabat."

This view of Rabbi David Yosef most eloquently summarizes the view of his father HaRav Ovadiah Yosef as recorded in the books Yehaveh Da'at (1:56) an Yibeah Omer (4:47). The point to emphasize here is that even without an eruv, the Rabbis suggest doing tashlikh on day one of Rosh HaShana. As Rabbi David says, *"it is always more correct to recite it on day one of Rosh HaShana, even when that day is on Shabat."*

The holy Mekubalim always recite tashlikh on the first day of Rosh HaShana, even when that day is the Shabat (ref. Kaf HaHaim 583:31). The reason for this, they explain, is that the severity of judgment on day one of Rosh HaShana is greater than on day two. Therefore, the prayers of tashlikh, which are designed to mitigate judgment, are more auspiciously said on day one than on day two. So important is this that Rabbi Eliyahu Mani of Hevron would never recite tashlikh on day two of Rosh HaShana if day one fell on Shabat. He wrote (Minhagei Beit El in Hevron, 75) that tashlikh is only applicable on day one.

Unfortunately, there are those Sephardim in many places outside of Eretz Yisrael who refrain from doing tashlikh on day one of Rosh HaShana because the eruvim in their communities were designed by our brothers the Ashkenazim and, therefore, do not conform to Sephardic standards. For the longest time, this has been a serious issue amongst Sephardim living in predominantly Ashkenazi neighborhoods.

However, in his recent work Yibeah Omer (9:33) HaRav Ovadiah Yosef writes in detail suggesting that the standards used for eruvim today can be interpreted as being acceptable for Sephardic use. In light of this ruling, many Sephardim today take advantage of the Ashkenazi eruvim without concern.

In relationship to tashlikh, this means that even the most makhmir (stringent observers) can take advantage of the eruv, even if it be just this once, to perform tashlikh, which Rav Mani says must be performed on day one of Rosh HaShana. As Rabbi David Ovadiah wrote above, if one does not wish to carry a Mahzor themselves out of concerns over the eruv, one may then have a child under the age of Bar/Bat Mitzvah carry the book for them.

In conclusion, one may rely upon a local eruv, carry a Mahzor to a body of water within the eruv, and recite the tashlikh prayers of the first day of Rosh HaShana that coincides with Shabat. This is the correct and proper observance in accordance to both Mekubalim and Rabbanim. As always, there are dissenting views, yet they offer nothing so important to postpone the supplications for Divine mercy at this most auspicious of times.

Indeed, as known to the Mekubalim, Shabat afternoon is the most auspicious time for prayer, when our prayers rise to the highest levels and reveal the highest levels of Divine mercy. How appropriate is it to then say tashlikh at this most auspicious hour. Those who do so are assured to receive Divine favor throughout the year.

May HaShem cleanse us all of our sins, and renew for us all a year of mercy, righteousness, protection, health, wealth and all good things. Amen.