This Rosh Hashanah Ritual Can Help Us All Find a Fresh Start

Tashlich is about beginning the Jewish New Year free from guilt and regret, and who couldn't benefit from that?

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I'm neither acutely devout nor broadly spiritual, but as someone proud of their Jewish heritage, I always look forward to Rosh Hashanah, which commences at sundown tonight, ushering in the Hebrew Year 5781. I and Jews across America and the world will spend this weekend celebrating best they can amid continued quarantines. But there is one Rosh Hashanah tradition that can endure no matter how difficult (or impossible) it is for folks to congregate. And I think it has broad appeal to people of all backgrounds.

Tashlich, meaning "to cast," is a simple ritual that typically takes place during the first full day of the holiday, which in this case would be tomorrow. In essence, an individual or group approach a body of water (be it river, stream, lake, creek et al) and literally cast off an object – e.g. a leaf, rock, acorn, what have you – meant to symbolize anything or any actions they regret from the past year or might have done differently. (Some adherents hew to stricter interpretations involving shaking out corners of clothing or religious vestments after prayer recitation.)

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It is an act of atonement, but also an acknowledgment that

reflection and renewal are more important than living with remorse and self-doubt. By any measure, be it Hebrew or Gregorian, this has been a trying several months. And regardless of your theistic leanings (or lack thereof), we can all benefit from cutting ourselves some slack right about now — as entrepreneurs and human beings. So Happy Rosh Hashanah to those whom it applies, and to everyone else: Consider taking a moment this weekend and allowing yourself some version of Tashlich as it concerns any aspect of your life, and cast off into a hopeful stretch ahead.

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