

"You Are Here 5780" Reflection
Tashlich and the Afikomen
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On Rosh Hashanah afternoon, we gather on the bridge in South Orange for the ritual of Tashlich: poised over the moving waters, ready to symbolically cast away our sins with a few bits of bread. In my hand is a special offering according to our family tradition: a piece of the afikomen that I've saved from Passover.

The small, unleavened square is still wrapped in the purple paper dinner napkin that cloaked it at the Seder. It is even more crumbled around the edges from having been hidden, found, then tucked away again on the pantry shelf, patiently awaiting the new year. I hold it in my fingers for a second as I recall the Seder, now six months ago. I silently ask for forgiveness for my sins as I release the matzah into the air, watching as it lands on the flowing water.

I can't remember when we began this family tradition of saving a piece of the afikomen for Tashlich. It seemed a playful way to achieve *mitzvah goreret mitzvah* -- one mitzvah leading to another. But what began as a creative adaptation to increase holiness through threading Jewish ritual has continued to grow in significance for me.

Standing half a year apart, Rosh Hashanah and Pesach not only anchor opposite poles of our calendar, they seem to be in conversation about Jewish time itself. Both herald a new year: Nisan, the first month, ties Pesach to the spring awakening of the natural world, while Tishrei awakens our inner world, summoned to attention by the shofar.

Our tradition teaches that neither season can be fully entered without first looking to the past. Doing teshuvah requires us to excavate the year, revisiting those places where forgiveness is needed before we can experience the freedom of a clean slate. If we fail to do so, we stay enslaved to our sins, guilt, and shame. The Haggadah similarly moves us simultaneously backward and forward, exhorting us to "remember the day you left Egypt all the days of your life." The Exodus is not some distant event; we feel grateful for redemption from slavery each day. We pivot at these equinoctial moments, balancing past and present, pausing to look at where we've been in order to understand where we're going. Only then can we fully embrace our freedom.

As Tashlich is ending, we sing: "*Hashiveinu Adonai elecha v'nashuva hadesh yameinu k'kedem*-- Renew us as in days of old." As the song fades and my matzah drifts away on the current, I add: "Now we are slaves, next year may we be free."