



“TOSS”-LICH

Grade Level

Primary and Intermediate

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

- Students will be able to articulate that, traditionally, there is a prohibition against wearing leather shoes on Yom Kippur.
- Students will reflect on how they can make their lives better in the new year.

Background for Teachers

A common tradition during the *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah* (the 10 Days of Repentance from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur) is *Tashlich*. This custom involves throwing bread crumbs into a body of water (ideally running water like a stream or a river). The bread crumbs are meant to represent our sins, and throwing away the bread crumbs is meant to represent throwing away our sins. Usually, *Tashlich* is performed during the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah. However, it can be done up until Yom Kippur. (Some people even say it can be done until Shemini Atzeret.)

Yom Kippur is the day that we complete the 10-day period during which we atone for our sins. We focus ourselves on doing *teshuvah* and building up our spiritual selves at the expense of our physical selves. The Mishnah (Yoma 8:1) teaches us that we have five prohibitions with which to afflict ourselves on Yom Kippur. These include eating and drinking (i.e. nourishment), washing, anointing oneself with oils, sexual relations, and wearing sandals. The Gemara (Yoma 76a) tells us that these prohibitions are based on the five times that the Torah tells us to afflict ourselves on Yom Kippur. Today, the prohibition against wearing sandals is generally considered to be referring to leather shoes. However, there are people who take the stringency further and make sure to wear shoes that are not comfortable.

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Description of Activities

The Things to Do Before Class

- Arrange to have class in an open space where students can safely kick off their shoes.
- For a visual of what shoe kicking involves, you can go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GToY7v3k1iE>.

The Activity

1. Take students to the activity location. You might choose to have students meet you there if they will be coming from another activity.
2. Explain to students that they will be doing “Toss”-lich today.
3. Explain that we have a tradition of *Tashlich* on Rosh Hashanah (and continuing until Yom Kippur if we do not do it on Rosh Hashanah). We throw away bread crumbs into water as a representation of throwing away our sins.
4. Explain that the Sages teach us that we should not wear leather (or perhaps comfortable) shoes on Yom Kippur so that we can focus on doing *teshuvah* (atoning for the things we did wrong).
5. Tell students that we will be combining the two activities today as a way of focusing ourselves on throwing away the things that we want to get rid of from the past year in order to do *teshuvah*.
6. Ask students to think of two things in their lives they would like to throw away for the new year.
 - a. Examples might include using mean language, not respecting family and friends, and neglecting to be careful about respecting people’s personal space.
 - b. You can ask students to offer their own examples too.
7. Explain to students that they will kick off their shoes. They should try to kick them as far away from them as they can and not towards anyone else.
8. Students should mention one thing that they want to throw away for the new year as they kick off their shoes. You can tell students that it is OK if they say the same thing that someone else said.
9. Students take turns kicking off their shoes while saying their ideas.

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10. After students kick off one shoe, they should leave their kicked shoes where the shoes land and sit down.
11. Students can kick off a second shoe (and mention a second thing they want to throw away) if time permits.
12. Ask students to go up 2-3 at a time to pick up a shoe that is **not** their own. (If students kicked off two shoes, they should pick up two **different** shoes that are not their own.)
13. Students find the people whose shoes they collected in order to make pairs of students.
14. Each pair of students shares with each other why they chose the things they chose to throw away.
 - a. If students kicked off one shoe, each student should share with two other students (the one who collected his/her shoe and the one whose shoe he/she collected).
 - b. If students kicked off two shoes, each student should share with four other students (the two who collected his/her shoes and the two whose shoes he/she collected).
15. If time permits, you might also ask students to share with the whole class if they feel comfortable doing so.