

## Reflection and Prayertime – Casting Away Our Sins

September 20, 2021

Said very eloquently by Rabbi [Nadia Siritsky](#)

“During the Jewish High Holy Days, between Rosh Hashanah (today) and Yom Kippur (in 10 days), we are called to reflect, reconfigure our priorities and recommit to what matters. There is a tradition (tashlich) of going to a body of water and casting away our sins... but the word sin in English means something very different than in Hebrew (different topic). In Hebrew, it means "missing the mark". It is not something to feel bad about, but rather something to learn from and inspire us to do better next time. Sadly too often, when things go wrong, we feel guilty and that can cause us to get stuck. Or we blame others and stay stuck. Guilt, shame and blame can weigh us down. And so, on Rosh Hashanah, we are supposed to throw away all that keeps us stuck in the past... which sometimes even includes religious restrictions made by human beings for purposes less than divine.

Too often we feel guilty about things that we ought to feel proud... like when we take steps forward into who we were created to be. We need to release the guilt that comes from not being who we were when we were trying to hide ourselves on order to please others...

Ultimately, I believe that the lesson of the Jewish High Holy Days is that time is short and precious... we are reminded that trying to make others happy at our own expense pleases no one... neither those we try to please, nor ourselves, nor the One Who created each of us uniquely...

And so on this High Holy Days, as I sit in front of the ocean, I pray that the waves wash away all that kept me from being me... all that keeps us all from being the best we can be... and I give thanks for a new year that gives me/us all another chance...”

I may have shared before I have led Spiritual Reflections groups at Freedom House 3 here in Louisville and I plan a scripture or poem or reading to use each time. One time I went there, having pre-selected something to share, and one of the women we serve asked if we could just open the Bible and blindly pick a spot to see what it had to say to us. The control freak part of my brain was overcome by the intrigue allure of spontaneity, so I agreed. After all, it's their group, not mine.

I don't recall which book of the Bible or chapter the woman opened and blindly pointed to but I do recall that it seemed to kind of be about “loose women.” I was instantly regretting the spontaneity and worried about how this might impact the women, some of whom may have been involved in sex work in their past. The woman who read the passage said, “well, loose women; this was definitely meant for us. Some of us know what this is all about. This is for us for sure because this is who we are.” Another woman piped up, “you are right, this was definitely meant for us. But this is who we were, this is not who we are and not who we are going to be. We are changing. We are rising above who we were.”

This ended up being my favorite Spiritual Reflections session of all – the one the women led and I was witness to the holiness, the sacred conversation of that moment. Thanks be to God that we are all changing and rising above, that we are not who we were and not who we are going to be. And God walks with us through all of it, every.single.bit, every.single.step.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfBWkn4287c>