

Notes: September 23, 2023

Introduction: Shabbat Shuvah – Understanding Selichot

Shabbat Shuvah literally means "**Sabbath of Return**," but it is also a play on the phrase "**Shabbat T'shuvah**" ("**Sabbath of Repentance**"). It is the Shabbat that occurs between Rosh Hashanah and immediately prior Yom Kippur, that is if during the 10 days there are two Shabbats then it is the one closest to Yom Kippur. It is to be a time for reflection leading up to the atonement of Yom Kippur.

As we are approaching Yom Kippur, we are in the midst of the 10 Days of Awe also known as the 10 Days of Repentance. A time where our pursuit of repentance is heightened.

It is a time that we know when judgment actually is. It is on the calendar, the same day every year - 10th of Tishrei.

Unlike the *olam haba*, the world to come, when the Books will be opened and everyone will be judged according to what is in the books.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of the throne. Books were opened; and another book was opened, the Book of Life; and the dead were judged from what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

I mentioned the "books" on Rosh Hashanah in which God inscribes all of our names. On Yom Kippur, the judgment entered in these books is sealed. This day is, essentially, your last appeal, your last chance to change the judgment, to demonstrate your repentance and make amends.

I conveyed my belief that we all begin in the Book of Life according to Moshe's interaction with Adonai in which he Moshe conveys wanting to be removed from it

Exo 32:32 Now, if you will just forgive their sin! But if you won't, then, I beg you, blot me out of your book which you have written!"

Exo 32:33 Adonai answered Moshe, "Those who have sinned against me are the ones I will blot out of my book.

And yet are removed upon our transgression...

And to be inscribed in the Book of Life again upon acceptance of Yeshua as the one whom Adonai sent to be a kapparah for us.

Yet, just because we have accepted Yeshua, doesn't mean we stop seeking Adonai, His mercy and forgiveness from our sins.

On the contrary, we should be doing this always, but equally as important, we should still be doing it at this time. I will tell you more about the why on Yom Kippur, but today, I want to focus on the pursuit part...

I want to focus on this time that we are to pursue repentance, forgiveness.

This begins with our own introspection.

An in depth self-analysis of what we have done in the past year.

A Jewish understanding of this includes going and making amends with anyone you may have offended in the past year. Yet this concept is also consistent within the New Covenant...

Mat 5:23 So if you are offering your gift at the Temple altar and you remember there that your brother has something against you,

Mat 5:24 leave your gift where it is by the altar, and go, make peace with your brother. Then come back and offer your gift.

Selichot are Jewish repentance poems and prayers, especially those said in the time leading up to the High Holidays, and on Fast Days.

God's 13 Attributes of Mercy are a central theme throughout these prayers.

Categories of Selichot

When Selichot are recited, these are the elements you will find...

- **Selichah** (סליחה) — Hebrew for "forgiveness." This is the default Selichah and comprises the vast majority of the Selichot service.
- **Pizmon** (פזמון) — Hebrew for "chorus." These central Selichot vary according to the day and contain a chorus which is repeated after each stanza. (Psalm 136)
- **Akeidah** (עקידה) — Hebrew for "binding", a word which specifically refers to the Binding of Isaac. This Selichah contains the theme of the *Akeidah* as a merit for God answering our prayers. It begins to appear on Rosh Hashanah eve and is placed immediately before the Pizmon.
- **Techinah** (תחינה) — Hebrew for "petition." This Selichah begins to appear on the eve of Rosh Hashanah in the Tachanun section, at the very end of the Selichot service.
- **Chatanu** (חטאנו) — Hebrew for "we have sinned." Starting on the evening before Rosh Hashanah and continuing through Yom Kippur, this Selichah is said after the final recitation of the Thirteen Attributes and before Vidui - confession. It contains as its refrain, "חטאנו צורנו סלח לנו יוצרנו", "We have sinned, our Rock, forgive us, our Creator". Perhaps the most famous Chatanu Selichah is the Eleh Ezkera Martyrology recited during Musaf (an additional service on Yom Kippur, though the recitation of the aforementioned refrain is not always followed in this particular Chatanu.

Eleh Ezkera Martyrology – The 10 Martyrs were ten rabbis living during the era of the Mishnah who were martyred by the Romans in the period after the destruction of the second Temple. Although all ten could not have been killed at the same time, since two of the rabbis listed lived well before the other eight, they are listed together, in a manner of a dramatic poem (known as the *Eleh Ezkera*) recited on two important Jewish holidays, to elicit the proper mood of the day, one of reflection and the hope of redemption in the face of attacks to the beliefs of Judaism.

The Story:

The Roman emperor Hadrian during the revolt of 132 – 135 CE, decides to martyr 10 rabbis as 'punishment' for the 10 brothers listed in the Torah who sold their brother Yosef to Ancient Egypt (Genesis 37). He justifies this by saying that the penalty for this was death (according to Jewish law, one who kidnaps his fellow Jew and sells him into slavery is punished with death.

This, however, does not allow for descendants to be punished in place of their ancestors), and though this crime took place almost two thousand years earlier, there are 'none like you' 10 who are capable of rectifying this crime.

<http://leibelewaldman.blogspot.com/2012/03/eleh-ezkerah-martyrology-prayer.html>

In contemporary times, the moral of this poem has taken on a new meaning with the deaths of millions of Jews during the Holocaust. Many Jews followed Rabbi Akiva's example reciting the Shema as they were being led to the gas chambers. A liturgical link was made explicit in the *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, a 1972 project of the Rabbinical Assembly which is the primary rabbinical association for Conservative Judaism. In an elaborate reworking of the traditional text, the martyrology was interwoven with material from Hayyim Nahman Bialik, Lillel Bavli, and other sources, connecting the Roman persecutions to later persecutions such as those by the Russian Czars and the Nazis. The section climaxes with a special version of Mourner's Kaddish which names sites of persecution and Jewish flourishing

During this time, we focus on the 13 attributes of Adonai as found in Exodus 34:6-7, where we truly weigh what His mercy means to us. A mercy that is undeserving yet is freely given.

Most don't realize this, but the grace conveyed in the New Covenant through Yeshua is the same grace that is found in the Tanakh.

Think of it this way, had there been no sacrificial system, had there been no Yom Kippur, there would be no mercy or grace because we all would have died in our transgression.

But, it is through Adonai's mercy that He has provided a means for reconciliation with the final and most powerful Kapparah found through Yeshua.

The Thirteen Attributes begin with the first "Adonai," in verse 6, and end with the word "ve-nakeh" in verse 7.

Exo 34:6 Adonai passed before him and proclaimed: "YUD-HEH-VAV-HEH!!! Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh (יְהוָה) [*Adonai*] is God, merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in grace and truth;

Exo 34:7 showing grace to the thousandth generation, forgiving offenses, crimes and sins; yet not exonerating the guilty, but causing the negative effects of the parents' offenses to be experienced by their children and grandchildren, and even by the third and fourth generations."

The single attributes are contained in the verses as follows:

1. יְתָרָה *Adonai* — God is merciful prior to the sin.
2. יְתָרָה *Adonai* — God is merciful after the sin.
3. אֵל *El* — God is merciful above and beyond.
4. רַחֵם *Rachum* — God eases punishment of the guilty and has great sympathy for human frailty.
5. וְחַנּוּן *VeChanun* — God shows mercy to those who may not even deserve it, while also raising up the oppressed and consoling the downtrodden.
6. אֶרְאֶה אֶפְיִים *Erech appayim* — God allows for the sinner to reflect, change, and repent.
7. וְרַב־חֶסֶד *VeRav chesed* — God always leans in the favor of virtue over sin and is kind to

those who may not be able to muster personal merit.

8. וְאֵמֶת *VeEmet* — God is honest and keeps his word to those who stay true.

9. נִצְרָה סְדֻלָּאִימִּים *Notzer chesed laalafim* — God doesn't forget the acts of the righteous and applies those merits to less deserving generations.

10. נִשְׁאַעוֹן *Noseh avon* — If the sinner repents, God forgives (even intentional sin).

11. וַפְּשָׁע *VaFeshah* — If the sinner repents, God forgives (even malicious sin).

12. וְחַטָּאָה *VeChata'ah* — God forgives sin that arose out of ignorance, carelessness, or apathy.

13. וְנִקְיָה *VeNakeh* — If one truly repents, God is merciful and forgiving.

A consistent theme found throughout Scripture:

Return to me and I Adonai will return to you.

Hos 14:1 (14:2) Return, Isra'el, to Adonai your God, for your guilt has made you stumble.

Hos 14:2 (14:3) Take words with you, and return to Adonai; say to him, "Forgive all guilt, and accept what is good; we will pay instead of bulls [*the offerings of*] our lips.

Atonement comprises blood of an innocent to be applied to the altar, yet it is T'shuvah that truly restores us to Adonai.

Confession, admittance, acknowledgment of our transgression to Adonai. This is a consistent message found throughout Scripture...

1Jn 1:8 If we claim not to have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1Jn 1:9 If we acknowledge our sins, then, since he is trustworthy and just, he will forgive them and purify us from all wrongdoing.

1Jn 1:10 If we claim we have not been sinning, we are making him out to be a liar, and his Word is not in us.

Pro 28:13 He who conceals his sins will not succeed; he who confesses and abandons them will gain mercy.

Consider Nehemiah's words...

Neh 1:6 Let your ear now be attentive and your eyes be open, so that you will listen to the prayer of your servant, which I am praying before you these days, day and night, for the people of Isra'el your servants — even as I confess the sins of the people of Isra'el that we have committed against you. Yes, I and my father's house have sinned.

And pay careful attention to verse 7...

Neh 1:7 We have deeply offended you. We haven't observed the mitzvot, laws or rulings you ordered your servant Moshe.

"WE HAVE DEEPLY OFFENDED YOU."

Most don't realize that their justification for not doing any of Adonai's mitzvot that apply to them is in essence offending Adonai.

So, when you say you don't have to because Yeshua fulfilled the law and I therefore am not required, ask yourself...

"Did God really say I didn't have to do it?"

Yet it is through our confession and Adonai's atonement, we receive His mercy found in forgiveness.

Hos 14:3 (14:4) Ashur will not save us, we will not ride on horses, and we will no longer call what we made with our hands our gods. For it is only in you that the fatherless can find mercy."

Hos 14:4 (14:5) "I will heal their disloyalty, I will love them freely; for my anger has turned from him.

Hos 14:5 (14:6) I will be like dew to Isra'el; he will blossom like a lily and strike roots like the L'vanon.

Hos 14:6 (14:7) His branches will spread out, his beauty be like an olive tree and his fragrance like the L'vanon.

Hos 14:7 (14:8) Again they will live in his shade and raise grain; they will blossom like a vine, and its aroma will be like the wine of the L'vanon.

Hos 14:8 (14:9) Efrayim [*will say*], 'What have I to do any more with idols?' And I, I answer and affirm him; I am like a fresh, green cypress tree; your fruitfulness comes from me."

Hos 14:9 (14:10) Let the wise understand these things, and let the discerning know them. For the ways of Adonai are straight, And the righteous walk in them, but in them sinners stumble.

Let us be mindful of these 13 attributes of who Adonai is and just how significant they should be within our lives...

Mic 7:18 Who is a God like you, pardoning the sin and overlooking the crimes of the remnant of his heritage? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in grace.

Mic 7:19 He will again have compassion on us, he will subdue our iniquities. You will throw all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Mic 7:20 You will show truth to Ya`akov and grace to Avraham, as you have sworn to our ancestors since days of long ago.

Your Selichot prayers don't need to come from a prayer book, but should comprise the

elements I had mentioned earlier, while also focusing on Adonai's 13 attributes of mercy. When both are present, I believe a truly repentant heart is exposed for Adonai to see. This is where true T'shuvah can be found.

Then I am reminded of David and his transgression and the confession that we have in Psalm 51...

Psa 51:1 *[For the leader. A psalm of David, (51:2) when Natan the prophet came to him after his affair with Bat-Sheva:]* (51:3) God, in your grace, have mercy on me; in your great compassion, blot out my crimes.

Psa 51:2 (51:4) Wash me completely from my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin.

Psa 51:3 (51:5) For I know my crimes, my sin confronts me all the time.

Psa 51:4 (51:6) Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil from your perspective; so that you are right in accusing me and justified in passing sentence.

Psa 51:5 (51:7) True, I was born guilty, was a sinner from the moment my mother conceived me.

Psa 51:6 (51:8) Still, you want truth in the inner person; so make me know wisdom in my inmost heart.

Psa 51:7 (51:9) Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Psa 51:8 (51:10) Let me hear the sound of joy and gladness, so that the bones you crushed can rejoice.

Psa 51:9 (51:11) Turn away your face from my sins, and blot out all my crimes.

Psa 51:10 (51:12) Create in me a clean heart, God; renew in me a resolute spirit.

Psa 51:11 (51:13) Don't thrust me away from your presence, don't take your Ruach Kodesh away from me.

Psa 51:12 (51:14) Restore my joy in your salvation, and let a willing spirit uphold me.

Psa 51:13 (51:15) Then I will teach the wicked your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Psa 51:14 (51:16) Rescue me from the guilt of shedding blood, God, God of my salvation! Then my tongue will sing about your righteousness -

Psa 51:15 (51:17) Adonai, open my lips; then my mouth will praise you.

Psa 51:16 (51:18) For you don't want sacrifices, or I would give them; you don't take pleasure in burnt offerings.

Psa 51:17 (51:19) My sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God, you won't spurn a broken,

chastened heart.

Psa 51:18 (51:20) In your good pleasure, make Tziyon prosper; rebuild the walls of Yerushalayim.

Psa 51:19 (51:21) Then you will delight in righteous sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then they will offer bulls on your altar.

Or consider the rich man in Yeshua's parable from Luke 16:19-31

Where the rich man, experiencing the impact of Sh'ol asks Father Avraham...

Luk 16:27 "He answered, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house,

Luk 16:28 where I have five brothers, to warn them; so that they may be spared having to come to this place of torment too.'

And Avraham's response to the rich man is...

Luk 16:29 But Avraham said, 'They have Moshe and the Prophets; they should listen to them.'

Luk 16:30 However, he said, 'No, father Avraham, they need more. If someone from the dead goes to them, they'll repent!'

Luk 16:31 But he replied, 'If they won't listen to Moshe and the Prophets, they won't be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!' "

What is the message of Moshe and the Prophets?

In addition to Hosea, whom I shared earlier,

The Prophets speak of this judgment as the Day of *Adonai*:

- Isaiah 2:12, 13:6:13 (a verse of which is alluded to in Matthew 24:29)
- Ezekiel 30:3
- Joel 1:15, 2:1, 3:4 (quoted at Acts 2:20)

Joe 2:1 "Blow the shofar in Tziyon! Sound an alarm on my holy mountain!" Let all living in the land tremble, for the Day of Adonai is coming! It's upon us!—

Joe 2:2 a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick fog; a great and mighty horde is spreading like blackness over the mountains. There has never been anything like it, nor will there ever be again, not even after the years of many generations.

For in his testimony to the men in Jersualem Kefa proclaims these verses as he testifies about Yeshua...

Act 2:17 'Adonai says: "In the Last Days, I will pour out from my Spirit upon everyone. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

Act 2:18 Even on my slaves, both men and women, will I pour out from my Spirit in those days; and they will prophesy.

Act 2:19 I will perform miracles in the sky above and signs on the earth below—blood, fire

and thick smoke.

Act 2:20 The sun will become dark and the moon blood before the great and fearful Day of Adonai comes.

Act 2:21 And then, whoever calls on the name of Adonai will be saved." '

Proclaiming Yeshua...

Act 2:22 "Men of Isra'el! Listen to this! Yeshua from Natzeret was a man demonstrated to you to have been from God by the powerful works, miracles and signs that God performed through him in your presence. You yourselves know this.

Act 2:23 This man was arrested in accordance with God's predetermined plan and foreknowledge; and, through the agency of persons not bound by the Torah, you nailed him up on a stake and killed him!

Act 2:24 "But God has raised him up and freed him from the suffering of death; it was impossible that death could keep its hold on him.

- Amos 5:18-20
- Obadiah 1:15
- Zephaniah 1:17-18
- Zechariah 14:1 - 9
- Malachi 3:22 (4:5) (alluded to at Matthew 17:10 - 11).

Mal 3:22 "Remember the Torah of Moshe my servant, which I enjoined on him at Horev, laws and rulings for all Isra'el.

Mal 3:23 Look, I will send to you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of Adonai.

Mal 3:24 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers; otherwise I will come and strike the land with complete destruction." [*Look, I will send to you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of Adonai.*]

With the primary message, found in many places including...

- Deuteronomy 30
- Jeremiah 3 & 4
- Isaiah 55
- Haggai 2
- Zechariah 1
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To the Jew, Israel, - Return to me and I will return to you.

To the nations – turn to me and I will turn to you.