



From the Rabbi's Desk: Surgical Selichos

Question:

Dear Rabbi Sprung,

I work the morning shift and must arrive very early at the hospital. I have no option to stay in Shul for the entire Selichos, and even if I daven alone I can only recite some of them. Which sections of Selichos are the most important and which parts may not be said when davening alone?

Thank you,

Dr. ...

Answer:

If possible, it is best to find a Minyan for Selichos at another time, such as in the afternoon or after midnight. At any rate, you should not recite Selichos between sunset and *Chatzos*. The most important thing to say with a Minyan is the *Yud-Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim*. Regarding the other sections of Selichos, see below.

Full Answer:

The main part of Selichos is the *Yud-Gimel Midos*. Hashem made a covenant with *Bnei Yisrael* that He will have mercy on us if we proclaim them before Him in a time of distress. However, one may not say them alone (*Shulchan Aruch* 565:5) but only with a *Tzibur*.

The *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*ibid.*):

An individual may not recite the Yud-Gimel Midos as prayer or a supplication for mercy since they are a Davar sheb'Kedusha. But if he merely wants to recite them ("Derech Keria") – he may do so.

Despite this ruling, *haGaon* Rav Asher Weiss *Shlit"a* asserts that reciting the *Yud-Gimel Midos Derech Keria* is nothing more than reading words of Torah; it does not have the power of the *Yud-Gimmel Midos* that "do not return empty-handed."

The *Arizal* was opposed to individuals reciting the *Yud-Gimel Midos* even *Derech Keria*. However, the *Kaf haChaim* 131:23 rules that one may read them with the *trop* after davening. Some hold that in this case, the person must complete the

Posuk (until the word "*Ribe'im*") rather than stopping at the word "*v'Nakei*" while others do not require this, but this is not the place to elaborate.

Given the above, it is of utmost importance to say the *Yud-Gimel Midos* with the *Tzibur*.

Regarding the order of importance of the rest of the *Selichos*: Rav Asher considers the *Tefilos* that are mentioned in the Mishna and Gemara next in line. The Mishna in *Ta'anis* (15:1) records the *Tefila* of *Mi sheAnah l'Avraham Avinu* and the Gemara (*ibid.* 14a) records the *Tefila* of *Anenu Elokei Avraham Anenu*. These *Tefilos* take precedence because they are from the earliest sources.

The next priority is the recitation of the various *Pesukim* in the *Selichos*, such as *Ashrei*, *Lecha Hashem haTzedaka*, *Shema Kolenu*, etc. These are followed by the *Piyutim*. The *Pesukim* that are said as an introduction to each *Piyut* are more important than the *Piyutim* themselves.

The *Rema* adds: "*An individual may not recite Selichos or vaYa'avov (Maharil in the name of the Or Zarua).*"

However, the *Mishna Berura* comments:

The Acharonim are perplexed by this Halacha – why should an individual not say Selichos that are mere supplications? They agreed that an individual may say Selichos without the Yud-Gimel Midos.

Additionally, the *Mishna Berura* (581:4) quotes the *Elya Raba* who holds that the Aramaic sections, such as *Machei uMasei* and *Maran div'Shmaya*, should be omitted by an individual. It is also accepted by the *Poskim* not to say *Selichos* between *Shkia* and *Chatzos* under any circumstances, based on the *Mishna Berura* (565 *ibid.*). Although R' Moshe Feinstein *zt"l* was lenient in a "*Sha'as haD'chak*", most *Poskim* disagree. Certainly, if a person can say *Selichos* with a *Tzibur* between *Chatzos* (midnight) and sunrise he should do so.