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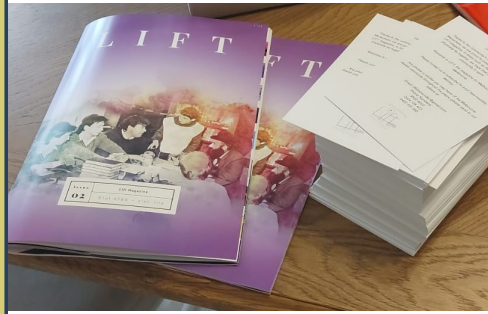
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A nush will be available for every by early next week. Details to follow.



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## A Selichos Reflection in Lockdown

This Motzai Shabbos, Ashkenazim throughout the world will gather in their Shules to begin saying Selichos. Due to the current lockdown restrictions in Melbourne, we will probably not be saying Selichos in a Minyan in Melbourne.

The most important and powerful part of Selichos are the *Yud Gimmel Middos Harachamim*, the 13 Attributes of Mercy. Whilst we can say the rest of Selichos on our own, the *Yud Gimmel Middos Harachamim* may only be said with a Minyan.

One of the oldest sources for Selichos is a Tanna Dbei Eliyahu that teaches: *Dovid Hamelech was worried how the Jewish people will be atoned for their sins once the Beis Hamikdash will be destroyed and they will no longer have the Korbanos?*

*Hashem told Dovid that when troubles befall the Jewish people on account of their sins, they should gather together as one באגודה אחת (literally as one bundle). They should confess their sins and say before Me the Seder Selicha and I will answer them.*

*This secret was revealed to Moshe Rabbeinu on Har Sinai, when he davened that Hashem forgive the Jewish people for the Sin of the Golden Calf. Hashem emerged from His darkness like a Shaliach Tzibbur wrapped in his Tallis, standing before the Ark... and revealed to Moshe the Seder Selicha.*

*So too, when the Jewish people gather before Me in unity and say this Seder, I will answer them.*

The Gemara gives a similar account. *Hashem wrapped Himself in a Tallis like a Shaliach Tzibbur and showed Moshe the order of prayer. He said "Whenever the Jewish people sin, let them do before Me in accordance with this order and I will forgive them."*

The Gemara continues: *Hashem made a covenant with the 13 Attributes of Mercy that when we appeal to them, they will never return empty-handed.*

The commentators are puzzled by this assurance. We have stood before Hashem many times, wrapped in a Tallis, saying Selichos and calling out the 13 Attributes of Mercy. Yet our prayers are not always answered.

Some suggest that it is not enough to say the *Yud Gimmel Middos Harachamim*. Rabbeinu Bechaye writes that whoever "properly understands and

knows the explanation and essence of the 13 Attributes and invokes them with Kavana, their prayers will not return empty-handed."

Kaf Hachaim goes a step further, writing that it is forbidden to say them without Kavana.

Tzror Hamor offers a novel answer which is incredibly powerful and relevant in our current circumstances.

If we look at the Gemara, Hashem did not say that when the Jewish people need salvation they "shall say before Me" or "pray before Me" with 13 Attributes of Mercy. Hashem said let them "do before me" (עשו לפני) this order.

In the *Yud Gimmel Middos Harachamim* we describe Hashem as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in kindness". We ask Hashem to forgo on His honour to show us this kindness even when we have sinned.

The secret that Hashem revealed to Moshe was that if we want Hashem to display these Middos towards us, we have to 'do them' by practising these Middos in our interactions and relationships with others.

If we are kind, compassionate, patient and empathetic; if we can forgo on our honour and forgive, then we have the assurance that the 13 Attributes will not return empty-handed.

This is why the Tanna Dbei Eliyahu emphasises that to invoke the Seder Selicha, we must stand before Hashem באגודה אחת, in absolute unity and solidarity.

You can have many people standing in one room, davening in the same Minyan, but they are not united. In contrast, we can all be davening in our own homes, but deeply united, like that 'strong bundle' that cannot be broken.

Members of our community may be suffering hardship; financially, emotionally or mentally. They may be feeling lonely and isolated or struggling in other ways. As we enter the day of Selichos, there are many ways that we can reach out and emulate Hashem's Middos of kindness and compassion.

If Moshiach does not come, we might not be able to 'say' the *Yud Gimmel Middos* in our Selichos. But we can do much better... we can "do them"!

# The weekly Halacha analysis

## Saying Vidui on Rosh Hashona and during Tekiyos

### Rabbi Yonason Johnson

On Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur, many communities add Piyutim (liturgical poems) to their prayers. Some Kehillos also add Piyutim on special Shabbosim such as the four Parshiyos and to the davening of the Shalosh Regolim.

Customs vary greatly for community to community regarding on which day Piyutim are recited. There are also differences in how many and which Piyutim are said and where they are inserted into the davening.

The Piyutim do not form part of the essential text of the Tefillos composed by the Anshei Kneses Hagedola. They were added at later times as a Minhag.

The Piyutim are inserted into the Chazzan's repetition of the Amidah for Shachris and Musaf and in some communities are also added to the Birchos Krias Shema.

These Piyutim are often referred to as Yotzros. Technically this name refers to the Piyutim inserted into the Birchos Krias Shema which begins Yotzer Or. The Piyutim added into the Amidah are referred to as Krovetz (an acronym for קרובת צדיקים באהלי וישועה בינה וישועה באהלי צדיקים) or as Krovos.

The Pri Megadim writes that the Piyutim are called Krovos, related to the word קרוב meaning close, because they draw the hearts of the Jewish people closer to Hashem.

The question is whether or not they constitute a hefsek, a problematic interruption in the davening. The Poskim distinguish between where the Piyutim are inserted.

#### Piyutim in Birchos Krias Shema

In the Birchos Krias Shema, the Mechaber<sup>1</sup> rules that they do constitute a hefsek and this custom should be stopped. This is the view of the Rambam<sup>2</sup>.

The Ram"o<sup>3</sup> however brings the opinion of the Rashba<sup>4</sup> and Rabbeinu Yonah<sup>5</sup> that the Piyutim in Birchos Krias Shema are not problematic and are a widespread practise. They argue that it is permissible to add to the middle of these blessings as long as the beginning and end of the blessings remains intact. The Ram"o however does conclude that one who does not say these Piyutim does not lose out.

#### Piyutim in Chazoras Hashatz

In Chazoras Hashatz there is stronger grounds for reciting Piyutim since in the Amidah one may technically add to each Bracha if it is related to the Bracha<sup>6</sup>.

However, there is discussion whether one may insert Piyutim into the first three blessings of the

Amidah. These are blessings of praise for Hashem and one is not supposed to make personal requests or supplications.

Nonetheless the Poskim permit Piyutim to be inserted into the first three blessings since they are not personal requests but are for the needs of the community<sup>7</sup>. The Rosh<sup>8</sup>, as quoted in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch brings support for this permissibility from the fact that Rabbi Elazar Hakalir, perhaps the greatest of Paytanim composed Piyutim to be inserted into the first three blessings of the Amidah.

#### Rabbi Elozor Hakalir

Rabbi Elazar Hakalir was a Tana who lived in Eretz Yisroel in Kiryas Sefer. The Rosh identifies Rabbi Elazar Hakalir as the son of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. He is called Hakalir according to the Aruch, because when he started to learn he was given a cake with pesukim on it as a segulah which enabled his eyes to be opened. Kalir means a small cake in ancient Greek. Others, including the Rashba<sup>9</sup>, suggest that he was the Tana Rabbi Elazar ben Arach.

The Alter Rebbe, based on Shaar Hakavanos of the Ariza"l, writes that there are those who will only recite the Piyutim composed by the early Payatnim such as the Kaliri, as they were composed in the way of truth. It is said that they were composed with Ruach Hakodesh and contain secrets of Torah.

#### In Practice

The Alter Rebbe did not include Piyutim in Birchos Krias Shema and was also very select and limited about the Piyutim included in the Chazoras Hashatz for the Yomim Noraim. This is also Shitas Hagr"a.

Most communities do not recite Piyutim in the Birchos Krias Shema.

It is recorded that the Baal Shem Tov would not add Piyutim even in Chazoras Hashatz except the Tefillah of Tal, Geshem and the Four Parshiyos<sup>10</sup>. The Chasam Sofer was displeased by the practise in his community to add Piyutim in Birchos Krias Shema but did not nullify the custom. Concerning the Piyutim in the Amidah he writes that they were important and that Gedolei Yisroel would ensure to finish any Piyutim skipped by the Tzibbur after davening<sup>11</sup>.

Shibolei Haleket writes that it is a Mitzvah to recite the Piyutim<sup>12</sup>.

While the Chazzan recites the Piyutim one should follow along reciting it together with the Chazzan. One should certainly not speak during that time and should not even learn, even if just

looking into a Sefer without actually reading<sup>13</sup>.

Pri Chadash warns that the reciting of the Piyutim should not cause one to miss zman Krias Shema and zman Tefillah. If the Chazzan left out one of the Piyutim and had already concluded the Bracha, the Piyut may not be added at that or a later point. It is advisable to recite the omitted Piyut after davening.

An individual davening on their own cannot add any Piyutim in the Brachos of their Amidah<sup>14</sup>.

The Piyutim may be said even if one does not understand them. The Rebbe advised Baalei Tefillah to look over the Machzor and learn their meaning.

The Alter Rebbe rules that when Rosh Hashona falls on Shabbos one should not extend davening past Chatzos. On a weekday, one may extend the davening with Piyutim, but not merely with Chazonus and nigunim<sup>15</sup>.

#### Changing Minhagim in Tefillah

On this topic, the Poskim address the ability to change customs of davening. The Alter Rebbe<sup>16</sup> adds that one should not change their family minhagim of Tefillah. This ruling is based on the Ariza"l who explains that there are twelve gates in heaven through which the Tefillos of each tribe ascend according to their minhag.

The Mahari"l<sup>17</sup> records that when he lost a daughter (r"l) he attributed it to having changing the minhag hamokom (custom of the community) regarding the reciting of the Piyutim.

The Bach also records how someone who tried to cancel the custom of reciting Piyutim did not live out the year. The son of Rav Chaim Vital attests that despite his father's opinion against the reciting of the Piyutim, when he served as the Shliach Tzibbur in a community whose custom it was to say them, he did recite them<sup>18</sup>.

**Those davening on their own this Yomtov may not add any Piyutim in their own Amidah. Although not obligatory, it is advisable to recite the Piyutim after the Amidah. Except the personal Tefillos of the Chazzan.**

1. OC 68:1
2. Teshuvah Pe'er Hador 64 and 129
3. OC 68:1
4. Teshuvos 1:469
5. Brachos Perek Ein Omdin
6. Shulchan Aruch Harav OC 68:2. See Tur OC 112 and Rosh Brachos 5:21.
7. ibid. See Ram"o OC 112:2
8. Brachos 5:21. See also Maadanei Yom Tov.
9. Teshuva 1:469
10. Piskei Teshuvos
11. ibid
12. Mishna Berura 68:4
13. Ram"o 68:1
14. Mishna Berura 68:6
15. Shulchan Aruch Harav OC 584:6
16. 68:2 based on the Magei Avraham. Also quoted in the Mishna Berura 68:4. Concerning changing from Nusach Ashkenaz to Nusach Ha'Ariza"l which represents the 13th gate which receives all Tefillos, see Igros Kodesh 14:91 and 391.
17. Seder Yom Hakippurim
18. Mishna Berura 68:4. See also Shaarei Teshuvah 68:1