

SELICHOS 1983  
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On the Shabbos before Rosh Hashonna we do not declare the new moon. We do not announce that the new months of Tishri is coming. The Chazan does not say the ~~Chiratzon~~ <sup>Yeh Chiratzon</sup> and we do not indicate that Rosh Chodesh, the new month, will be in the coming week. Many reasons are given for this. One is that we should not awaken judgement against us. Satan should not know when the new moon comes so he should not be prepared to bring accusations against the Jewish people. However, on the Saturday night before Rosh Hashonna in most years at midnight we say Selichos. Here we do not usher in Tishri with the saying of the Chiratzon but we do say Selichos at midnight. We say it at midnight reminding ourselves how King David arose at midnight to say prayers. The word for midnight in Hebrew is Chatzos. The word Chatzo in Hebrew has many other meanings. One of the other meanings is to cross the border, Chatzo Et Chagvul. Before Rosh Hashonna we must cross a border. We must get into a frame of mind which prepares us for Rosh Hashonna. Without this preparation we cannot examine ourselves thoroughly and determine how we can improve and what we can still do in order to make ourselves and the world a better place. We are not concentrating now as we do in the Chiratzon on the blessings we want to happen upon us. We are concentrating on ourselves, on our faults and our failures. If we do not do this then Rosh Hashonna will have no meaning for us. We will not be able to announce it because we will not really be able to feel it fully and deeply. Rosh Hashonna requires that we look deep within ourselves. If we do not we will not feel the effect of the day. Just announcing it does not help. In fact, we will not even feel it unless we have first gone through Selichos. We must get the proper mind set in order that we can properly face the new year with the determination and resolution necessary in order to improve ourselves. In one of the main prayers for the first night of Selichos we say "at the close of Shabbos we come before You first. Hear us from on high One who is continually praised. Listen to our plea and our prayer." Selichos always begins on a Saturday night. We ask, why should this be so? We say that there has to be at least four days before Rosh Hashonna in which we say Selichos. Because when it speaks about the offerings in the Temple for all the other holidays it says "V'Heek Raftem Oleh, and you shall offer a sacrifice", but for Rosh Hashonna it say "V'Aseesem Oleh, and you should make yourself the sacrifice." We are supposed to examine ourselves and look at ourselves for at least four days before Rosh Hashonna. Why, though, do we always start on a Saturday night? Let's just start four days before the holidays. If Rosh

Hashonna comes on a Saturday, let's start Selichos Monday night. Why do we go back to Saturday night? The answer, I believe, is found in this prayer. It is translated in English as "Listen to our plea and to our prayer" when actually the word in Hebrew for plea is Rena. Rena in Hebrew means joy. "Listen to our joy and to our prayer." What are we all working for? What is the goal that we are striving for? We are striving for the joy of Shabbos. We are striving to make all times and all peoples live like we live on Shabbos when we sit in peace and harmony with family and friends, where we sing, where we have plentiful food, where we enjoy each other's company, where we learn Torah. That's what we are aiming for. We are aiming to make this world like a Shabbos. Does everybody in the community now have enough to eat? No, there are still poor Jews in our community. Is everyone in our community able to make the Kiddush? Does everyone have a Jewish education? No, not everybody who would want to have a Jewish education can have it. Not everyone can afford it, and there are not enough scholarships to go around. On this day of Selichos we have to look not only at our personal faults but also at the faults in our community. We must correct them. There is still hunger and poverty. Youngsters are still not getting the education they should get. Before Rosh Hashonna we must not look in our hearts and feel sorry only for those sins that we did against individuals. We should also feel sorry for those sins of commission and omission that we did against the community, how we could have supported institutions better, how we could have provided more money for Jewish education, how we could have made sure that nobody goes hungry in Houston. On the prayer that we say on Selichos "as a father has pity on his children so You should have pity on us" we only mention the name of Jacob because Jacob was the only one who was able to maintain all his children as Jews. Abraham had Ishmael and ~~his~~ <sup>Saka</sup> other children who did not remain Jewish. Yitzchok had Esau who did

not remain a Jew. Only all of Jacob's children remained Jewish because he was always there. Even when they did not do right he did not reject them wholly. He rebuked them, but he still saw to it that their needs were taken care of. On this night of Selichos as we approach Rosh Hashonna we have to prepare ourselves. We must look at all our faults, faults against individuals and faults against the community. May we be given the strength and courage to correct them, and may we, because we have corrected our faults, we our Jewish community flourish and may the Mashiach come Beem Herah Beem Ohaynu. Amen.