



A PROJECT OF CHICAGO COMMUNITY KOLLEL

PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Ki Savo  Rabbi Dovid Rokach

Well Connected

When the first fruits are brought to the *bais hamikdash* as *bikurim*, a special declaration is recited thanking *Hashem* for redeeming us from Egypt and for giving us *Eretz Yisrael*. In this declaration, we state that *Klal Yisrael* was taken out of Egypt because *Hashem* heard our prayers:

And we cried out to Hashem the G-d of our fathers and Hashem heard our voice and . . . Hashem took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm, with signs and wonders. (Dvarim 26:7-8).

In *parshas Vaeschanan*, however, another reason is given. The *Torah* explains that we were redeemed in the merit of our forefathers:

And because He loved your forefathers and chose their descendants, He took you out of Egypt with His great strength. (Dvarim 4:37).

Were we redeemed from Egypt because of our prayers or in the merit of our forefathers?

The discrepancy between the two passages quoted above is reconciled by a third passage in *parshas Shemos* describing *Hashem's* decision to conclude our exile:

And the Bnai Yisrael groaned from the labor and they cried out . . . And Hashem heard their cries and Hashem remembered His treaty with Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. (Shemos 2:23-24).

This language indicates that our redemption from Egypt was based upon a combination of our own prayers together with the merit of our forefathers. But it is still necessary to understand the connection between these two concepts.

The *Ramban* states that our ability to utilize the merit of our forefathers is dependent upon the degree to which we adhere to their legacy. (*Bamidbar* 14:17). This point is demonstrated by *Moshe's* prayer on behalf of *Klal Yisrael* following the sin of the *meraglim*. In contrast to *Moshe's* earlier requests for forgiveness, the merit of our forefathers is not mentioned in this prayer. The *Ramban* explains that the sin of the *meraglim* involved a rejection by *Klal Yisrael* of *Hashem's* promise to our forefathers to establish their homeland in *Eretz Yisrael*. By distancing ourselves from this important

part of our forefathers' legacy we limited our ability to rely upon their merit. *Moshe* understood this and therefore refrained from invoking *zechus avos*.

To achieve redemption from Egypt in the merit of our forefathers, it was similarly important for us to connect with their legacy. One of the areas where our forefathers excelled was their ability to reach out to *Hashem* through prayer. Indeed, *Rashi* states that when *Klal Yisrael* reacts to adversity with prayer, we are undertaking the craft of our forefathers. (*Shemos* 14:10). By channeling the suffering of the Egyptian exile into an outcry for *Hashem's* help we acted as our forefathers would and thus became entitled to be redeemed in their merit.

The significance of our own conduct in facilitating access to the merit of our forefathers is further emphasized by the statement in *shemona esrai* that redemption will be brought in remembrance of our forefathers and also for *Hashem's* sake:

And He remembers the deeds of the forefathers and brings redemption to their descendants for the sake of His name with love

Our forefathers elevated the name of *Hashem* among mankind through their devotion to *avodas Hashem*. We are destined to obtain redemption in their merit only if we likewise conduct ourselves in a way that honors Him.

These concepts are particularly significant during the upcoming holidays of *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* when *Hashem* weighs our *tefillos* and our merits to enter judgment for the upcoming year. May we be *zoche* this year to appear before the Heavenly Court as successors to our forefathers' legacy of *avodas Hashem* and full recipients of their everlasting merit.

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HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Eis Ratzon

Rabbi Ari Friedman

During these Yemei Ratzon, Chazal have instituted the minhag of saying selichos, which are to be recited at an “Eis Ratzon”(auspicious time). There are different opinions and various minhagim have developed as to when exactly this auspicious time is.

The Shulchan Aruch writes (O.C. 581-1) that it is customary to rise “b’ashmores” (before dawn) to recite selichos. The Magen Avraham explains that the period right before dawn is an “eis ratzon” and it is therefore the best time to recite selichos. Other seforim cite the minhag to recite selichos at chatzos, as this time is considered to be an eis ratzon as well. (Tehillah LeDovid 131-2, Igros Moshe O.C. 2-105) Either of these times depending on the minhag, is considered to be the optimum time for reciting selichos.

In many communities the question is raised as to whether selichos may be recited at any other time. For example, there are those who find it too difficult to stay up at night until chatzos, or to get up before dawn. In one case presented to HaGaon Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l, the members of the shul were afraid to walk to shul late at night. May they recite selichos at a more convenient time?

To begin, the Magen Avraham (565-5) quoting the Arizal writes that one should not recite any selichos before chatzos. The Chachmei HaKabbalah have revealed that before chatzos it is a time of “Din” (harsh justice), and it can be extremely harmful to recite selichos at that time. Only after chatzos when the eis ratzon begins is it proper to say selichos. The Mekubalim treated this issue very seriously and went so far as to say that one who finds himself in a shul, which happens to be saying selichos before chatzos should rather sit quietly than respond and participate in the selichos. (Sharei Teshuvah, 581)

Despite the above opinions, there were and still are communities which say selichos before chatzos. As a way of being melamed zechus to justify this practice, there are those who say that even two hours before chatzos is

considered to be an eis ratzon and one may say selichos at that time. (Mishmeres Shalom as quoted by the Achronim, see Igros Moshe as well) Others explain that the eis ratzon which begins at chatzos is actually dependent on the time of chatzos in Eretz Yisroel. Hence the communities which lie to the west of Eretz Yisroel such as in Europe and the U.S., are actually reciting selichos at an eis ratzon even if it is somewhat earlier than chatzos in their time zone (Machshavos Beitzah kuntras Parparos lechochmah,8). These approaches however are questionable and certainly do not sit well with the majority of poskim (See Shut Mahari Asad, 8, Yechave Daas 1-46). The more accepted rationale for those kehillas who recite selichos before chatzos seems to be based on R’ Moshe Feinstein who ruled that in a situation where the tzibur would otherwise not say selichos they may say selichos before chatzos. Rav Moshe adds that they should however seek to rectify the situation.

Another prevalent minhag is to say selichos sometime after sunrise just before the regularly scheduled Shacharis. It seems that this practice began by those particularly in the yeshiva world who felt that saying selichos at any other time would disturb their strict seder hayom. For those to whom this is not a concern, there should certainly be an effort to recite selichos at the proper time. Rav yitzchok Zilberstein suggests that one should make an effort to arise somewhat earlier than usual to recite selichos, thereby fulfilling the words of the Shulchan Aruch who writes that we arise early in the morning to recite Selichos. This extra effort during Ellul is an important step in our coming closer to Hashem and our preparation for the Yamim Noraim (Alenu l’shabeiach p.261, see also Tshuvos V’hanhogos 4-134).

It should be noted that the minhag in most communities is to begin the week of Selichos by reciting it at night (on Motzei Shabbos). This is due to references made in the Selichos itself “ b’motzei Menucha” which refers to motzei Shabbos, and B’zakasam beod leil – crying out at night, which are said in the first Selichos.

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