



Nitzavim-Vayelech

Learning Happiness and Optimism From Selichot

This coming motzei Shabbat, in Ashkenazi circles, we will be commencing our annual season of Selichot.

Of course, Sephardim have already commenced the Selichot from the beginning of Elul, and we will all carry on with our Selichot until Yom HaKippurim. We follow the advice of the Rema and the Shulchan Aruch that we always start Selichot at least four days before Rosh Hashanah, and it must always start on motzei Shabbat.

We do this in order to standardise the commencement time, so that everybody will know when to start. But if that's the case, why does it have to be motzei Shabbat? Why not any other day of the week? The Terumat HaDeshen gives a beautiful answer.

He says that when we enter into the period of Selichot, it would be totally understandable if we were filled with anxiety and dread - after all, these will be the "יְמֵי הַדִּין" "God's days of judgement".

Nobody's perfect, so how are we going to be judged for the next year? However, the Terumat HaDeshen tells us that we always start Selichot on a motzei Shabbat so that we take the happiness of our Shabbos experience with us, so that we approach the High Holy Days full of happiness and optimism.

That's our Jewish approach to everything in this world. As the Jewish people enter into a new year, sadly, we have good reason to be filled with anxiety, looking at what has been happening in Israel and throughout the Jewish world.

But our tradition demands quite the opposite. We need to recognise how Hashem has accompanied us and has blessed us continuously. And as a result, let us approach this coming year filled with happiness and with optimism.

In this very spirit, may Hashem bless us during the new year to have a year that will be filled with joy, good health and success, and most importantly of all, a year of peace.

Shabbat Shalom.