**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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Selichot

What are *Selichot*? Are women obligated to recite them? Do they require a minyan?

By Laurie Novick

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# The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy

Jewish communities customarily recite *Selichot* (lit. forgivenesses) in Elul and Tishrei, as well as on most fast days. To understand *Selichot* and women's relationship to them, we first need to explore the thirteen attributes of mercy, the central component of *Selichot*, as well as some of the history of *Selichot*.

In the aftermath of the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe Rabbeinu re-ascends Har Sinai to entreat God to forgive *benei Yisrael*. After forgiveness is granted, he asks God to reassure him by revealing more facets of the Divine. God gives the second set of tablets as promised, and then grants Moshe's request by passing before him and proclaiming the Divine qualities of mercy. These are traditionally divided into thirteen attributes, usually as numbered here:[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Shemot* 34:5-7

And God descended in a cloud and stood with him [Moshe] there and called out in the name of God. And God passed before him and called out: (1) God [before the sin] (2) God [after the sin] (3) Almighty (4) Compassionate (5) and Gracious (6) Delaying anger (7) and Abundant in kindness (8) and truth. (9) Preserves kindness for thousands [of generations] (10) Forgives iniquity (11) and transgression (12) and sin (13) and Cleanses…

The Torah uses the verb "*va-ya'avor*," to describe God's passing before Moshe. The same verb is used in Rabbinic literature to denote someone leading prayer services, or passing before the ark: "*over lifnei ha-teiva*."[[2]](#footnote-2) Rabbi Yochanan, connecting these two meanings, understands God's verbal evocation of Divine qualities as a depiction of God modeling prayer. God dons a *tallit* "like a prayer leader" in order to demonstrate prayer that is sure to lead to forgiveness.

*Rosh Ha-shana* 17b

…"And God passed before him [Moshe] and called out." Rabbi Yochanan said: If it were not written Scripture, it would be impossible to say it. It teaches that God wrapped Himself as a *shali'ach tzibbur* [prayer leader] and showed Moshe an order of prayer. He [God] said to him [Moshe]: Every time that Israel sins, they should do before me in accordance with this order and I will forgive them, "God, God"….

How are we to make sense of this anthropomorphic reading of the Biblical narrative? Maharal suggests that Rabbi Yochanan's physical description is a teaching device to convey a more metaphysical message: The best way for us to come to cleave to God is by adhering to God's ways, as described by the attributes of mercy. The Divine enwrapping while uttering these attributes represents full focus in prayer. If we can emulate this focus when reciting the attributes, then the recitation can help us realize the Divine presence in our midst.

Maharal, *Sefer Be'er Ha-gola*, Fourth Be'er, 12

It is impossible for him to see the Glory for himself; only for Moshe to cleave to His attributes, and when a person cleaves to His attributes, then God cleaves to him to the extent possible, and in this (*Shemot* 33:23) "And you will see My back, but My face will not be seen."…And that which he said, "that He wrapped Himself like a *shali'ach tzibbur*," is because the wrapping of a *shali'ach tzibbur* is in order that he not veer right or left, to any side at all, and this is the wrapping. And then the calling out is fully with intent out of the depths of the heart and its truth…And here they [our sages] mean to say that a person should call out to God without turning to anything, and then God also becomes present to him, until a person cleaves to Him the Blessed. And since people are accustomed to physicality, they would not understand their words, which are essential, without physical [descriptions].

For Maharal, God's revelation to Moshe provides us with a way to reveal God and make Divine mercy manifest. In the continuation of the Talmudic passage, Rav Yehuda adds another facet to our understanding of the attributes' power by expounding the Torah's account of God committing to a covenant after reciting them.

*Rosh Ha-shana* 17b

Rav Yehuda said: A covenant was hewn for the thirteen attributes, that they do not return empty, for it is said, "Behold I hew a covenant" (*Shemot* 34:10).

To Rav Yehuda, the attributes themselves are covenantal. Their recitation thus reliably elicits a Divine response, actualizing the attributes of mercy for the whole Jewish people.

Taken at face value, a claim that uttering the thirteen attributes guarantees that prayers will be answered is difficult to understand. Perhaps this is why Rav Amram Ga'on notes that it is not enough merely to utter the words. Rather, their power to invoke the covenant depends on our genuine contrition and submission to God as a community:[[3]](#footnote-3)

Seder Rav Amram Ga'on, *Seder Ta'anit*

Would that it were that when the congregation gathers and fasts and performs *tzedaka* and seeks mercy and direct their hearts to their Father, the Blessed One has mercy upon them and "does not despise the prayer of the masses" and responds to them, as it is said "Behold God is great and does not despise" (*Iyov* 36:5) And the Blessed One has hewn a covenant with Moshe and with our forefathers that they [the attributes] do not return empty, as it is written "Behold I hew a covenant" (*Shemot* 34:10).

To truly know God is to recognize the Divine presence and to emulate the attributes of the Divine. Reciting the attributes helps us achieve this knowledge. (To learn more about the attributes and their meaning, we recommend [this series](https://www.etzion.org.il/en/series/understanding-13-middot-en) by Deracheha's Halacha Editor-in-Chief, Rav Ezra Bick. For an accessible Hebrew-language edition of Ashkenazi *Selichot* with commentary, see [here](http://www.toralishma.org/%d7%a1%d7%9c%d7%99%d7%97%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%9e%d7%91%d7%95%d7%90%d7%a8%d7%95%d7%aa/).)

# Selichot

As we saw above, the Talmud describes the attributes of mercy as an order of prayer, a "*seder tefilla*." *Selichot* is a name for that order of prayer, a liturgical platform for knowing God and finding forgiveness through communal recitation of the thirteen attributes.

More specifically, the term *Selichot* refers to the *piyyutim* (liturgical poems) integrating Biblical verses (including verses from the narrative of Moshe's prayers and God's forgiveness at the sin of the calf) with recitation of the attributes of mercy, which are followed by *viduy*, verbal confession, and various penitential prayers. We introduce the service with *Ashrei* and Half *Kaddish*, and conclude with a full *Kaddish*.

Though *Selichot* are now recited on most fast days as well as in Elul, they likely began only as part of the formal prayers on Yom Kippur. This is fitting because rabbinic tradition identifies the day of receiving the second tablets with Yom Kippur, our ultimate day of forgiveness:

*Ta'anit* 30b

*Yom Ha-kippurim* – because it includes forgiveness and pardon, the day on which the second tablets were given.

Rabbeinu Asher teaches that there was a Geonic custom to add special entreaties to prayer in the ten days of repentance leading up to Yom Kippur, or even from Rosh Chodesh Elul, which was the beginning of the forty days of entreaty on Har Sinai before receiving the second tablets.

Rosh *Ha-shana* 4:14

Rav Kohen Tzedek said to me, it is a custom in both Yeshivot [of Bavel] to recite penitential prayers (*tachanunim*) in these ten days that are between Rosh Ha-shana and Yom Kippur. And so say Rav Amram and Rav Hai, it is a custom to say penitential prayers especially in these ten days. And we heard that some places hold them from Rosh Chodesh Elul and say that on [that date] Moshe went up to the mountain a third time and came down with the second tablets on Yom Kippur. And whoever increases requesting mercy, it is a merit for him.

Rosh's son, Ba'al Ha-turim, describing the custom in his era, states that "*Selichot*" are recited in addition to the penitential prayers, and elaborates on the varying customs of when to recite them. Ashkenazi communities typically begin *Selichot* on a *Motza'ei Shabbat* prior to Rosh Ha-shana,[[4]](#footnote-4) and Sefardi communities, begin right after Rosh Chodesh Elul,[[5]](#footnote-5) and continue through Yom Kippur. (In Chabad custom, *Selichot* stop at Rosh Ha-shana.[[6]](#footnote-6))

Tur OC 581

There are those who multiply saying *Selichot* and penitential prayers from Rosh Chodesh Elul and onward…And we, our custom is like those who hold them from Rosh Chodesh Elul, but the custom of Ashkenaz when Rosh Ha-shana falls on a Thursday or Shabbat, is then to begin on the Sunday before it to stand in the [night] watch-time toward morning and say *Selichot* and penitential prayers. And most of the congregation fasts and recites the prayers of a fast day. And when Rosh Ha-shana falls on Monday or Tuesday, then they begin on Sunday the week before the week during which Rosh Ha-shana falls.

Though the tone and content of different communities' *Selichot* vary—most notably in that Sefardi *Selichot* are overall more upbeat and uniform from day to day than the Ashkenazi traditions' heartwrenching panoply of *piyyutim* (liturgical poems)—the varying practices evolved from a common tradition and have much in common. For example, the main Ashkenazi traditions (the customs of Poland, Lithuania, and Bohemia) feature many of the same *piyyutim*, though they often differ regarding the proper night or order in which to say them.

In a landmark study of the origins of *Selichot*,[[7]](#footnote-7) Professor Shulamit Elitzur explains that a series of prayers and entreaties known as *Rachamin*—which do not focus on the attributes of mercy and were recited in the wee hours of the night—became conflated at some point with *Selichot*—the *piyyutim* revolving around recitation of the attributes, which were originally connected with prayer services:

Shulamit Elitzur, Toward the Sources of the *Piyyutim* of *Selichot*, *Tarbitz* 4 (2016): 504-505.

In the Ge'onic era in Bavel two distinct services were discernible: One had its foundation in the integration of liturgical poems within the repetition [of the Amida] by the *shali'ach tzibbur* on Yom Kippur and on fast days; on Yom Kippur, in the *beracha* of *Kiddush Ha-Yom* [the sanctity of the day], and on the rest of the fast days (including Tish'a Be-Av) in the *beracha* "*Selach lanu*" [forgive us]. Between one liturgical poem and another the entire congregation said the verses of the thirteen attributes of mercy (*Shemot* 34:5-7), including opening segments (*'El Melech Yoshev al kisei Rachamim'* [God the King who sits on the throne of mercy] or a part of this opening prayer, from "God You taught us"). The liturgical poems are always placed within a framework within which are different utterances…These liturgical poems, and only they, are called "*Selichot*" in most ancient sources….The second service is completely different: at its basis it is not connected to fixed prayer at all, and its essence is in communal prayer gatherings in the *ashmoret ha-boker* [night watch-time toward morning] during the ten days of repentance, and at times also on select days in the month of Elul. This service is called in the *siddurim* of the Ge'onim *Ashmorot* or *Rachamin*, and its liturgical material, in its early sources, is different from *Selichot*: it includes long sequences of verses, petitionary prayers, some of them in Aramaic, and poetic segments in basic and simple structures…In the course of years these two services merged, and sometimes became intermixed to the point of not being able to separate them. From the end of the tenth century, and perhaps earlier, there are testimonies to gatherings of *Ashmorot* of the days of repentance into which developed *Selichot* were already integrated…

For example, *Selichot* and *Rachamin* are preserved as distinct services, one following the other, in Siddur Rav Sa'adya Ga'on, with some of the hallmark prayers of what we call *Selichot* (e.g., *Adon Ha-Selichot*) included in *Rachamin*.[[8]](#footnote-8) In his description of special prayer in Elul, Rambam does not explicitly mention *Selichot* or the attributes of mercy, and may have had *Rachamin* in mind:

Mishneh Torah *Hilchot Teshuva* 3:4

The entire house of Israel were accustomed to multiply *tzedaka* and good deeds and to occupy themselves with *mitzvot* from Rosh Ha-shana until Yom Kippur, more than all the year. And they were all accustomed to arise at night in these ten days and to pray in the synagogues with words of entreaty and submission until daybreak.

Timing

The ideal timing for *Selichot* remains that of the *Rachamin* service, between *chatzot* (halachic midnight) and dawn. In mystical tradition, this interval is considered an "*et ratzon*" (a time of favor).

Magen Avraham 565:5

One should not say any *Selichot* prior to *chatzot ha-layla* [halachic midnight].

Magen Avraham 581:1

Because God traverses 18,000 worlds (*Avoda Zara* 3b) and at the end of the night traverses this world, and it is a time of favor…

What if someone cannot recite *Selichot* in the late night or wee hours of the morning?

Rav Moshe Feinstein, writing in New York, where *chatzot* (halachic midnight) in Elul can be quite late, permitted reciting *Selichot* earlier at night in pressing situations:

Responsa *Iggerot Moshe* OC II 105

Behold we have seen that regarding the custom of *Selichot*, it is not enough that there is a time of favor of the community and the synagogue, and a time of favor during the ten days of repentance, rather one also needs the time of favor from the perspective of the time of night, which is from *chatzot* and onwards…But if it is in a manner that it is impossible from *chatzot* and onward, and this *tzibbur* will not recite *Selichot*, one should permit as a temporary ruling even from the outset [to pray earlier at night], for in these matters there is no source in the Talmudת rather they are from the words of our later halachic authorities in accordance with the works of kabbala that it follows that there is not matter of prohibition here rather that they [the thirteen attributes in an early recitation] do not take effect with the power of thirteen attributes that are promised not to return empty, but rather as regular prayer…And if it is possible, they should aim for…approximately one hour and forty minutes before *chatzot*…

Alternatively, Rav Ovadya Yosef permits reciting *Selichot* prior to *Mincha*, as he occasionally saw practiced:

Responsa *Yechaveh Da'at* I:46

It seems that it is permissible to say *Selichot* and the thirteen attributes before *Mincha*, for it is an everyday occurrence that we say *viduy* and the thirteen attributes and *Tachanun* at *Mincha*…And so I have seen God-fearing people who have the practice to say *Selichot* in Elul prior to *Mincha*. And they have on what to rely. But the *Selichot* recited in the night-watch towards morning, nothing is more valuable than them, for then is a time of favor and arousal of the attributes of mercy.

Current practice in many communities is to recite *Selichot* just prior to *Shacharit*, even if that is after dawn, in part out of concern that a late night will impair participants' functioning during the day, including performance of *mitzvot*. Nevertheless, the preferred time for *Selichot* is still the second half of the night, between *chatzot* and dawn[[9]](#footnote-9). Rav Eliezer Melamed summarizes:[[10]](#footnote-10)

*Peninei Halacha*, *Yamim Nora'im*, 2:6 (Official translation)

Nowadays, people generally go to sleep relatively late, and wake up between six and seven in the morning, which is generally about two hours after the end of the last *ashmoret*in Israel. Were they to get up during the *ashmoret*, they would be tired all day and their work or studies would likely suffer. Therefore, many people wake up a half hour or an hour earlier than their usual time and recite *Seliḥot* before *Shaḥarit*. Even though it is past dawn, *Seliḥot* may still be recited then. Nevertheless, it is better to recite *Seliḥot* after midnight when possible. In any case, a person should make sure that the recitation of *Seliḥot* does not leave him so exhausted that he cannot meet all his work or study obligations.

# Women's Recitation

*Selichot* in Elul have developed an independent liturgical structure to go along with their distinct timing. This structure is akin to the structure of a full "order of prayer," and has halachic ramifications:

Levush OC 581:1

Even though all the days of the year we only recite [*Kaddish* with] *titkabel* [*tzelot'hon*] after the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer, for that is the connotation of "*tzelot'hon*," which means *tefilla*, and the term *tefilla* refers to *Shemoneh Esrei*, the order of *Selichot* is different, for they were all enacted in accordance with the order of daily *tefilla*: For the verses that come before *Selichot* correspond to *Pesukei De-zimra*, and the *Selichot* with the thirteen attributes interspersed are in place of the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer, for the essence of the *tefilla* is the thirteen attributes, and afterwards they recite *Tachanun* as after all *tefillot*, and finish with "*va'anachnu lo neda*" ["but we don’t know"]; therefore, we recite a full *Kaddish* with *titkabel* after them, as after the completion of all the prayers of the year.

Levush views the recitation of the attributes of mercy as parallel to reciting *Shemoneh Esrei*. This comparison can explain why *Kaddish* is recited following *Selichot* as it is following prayers. This parallel also speaks to the essential nature of *Selichot*.

We've learned that women are [obligated in prayer](https://www.deracheha.org/prayer-1-obligation/), and more specifically in [*Shemoneh Esrei*](https://www.deracheha.org/prayer-2-shemoneh-esrei/), because prayer is fundamentally an act of seeking Divine mercy, and it is critical for all of us to pray for ourselves as well as for the community. As we've seen, the reasons for reciting *Selichot* overlap with the reasons for reciting prayer. However, unlike prayer, as Tur (above) notes, reciting *Selichot* is a custom and not a mitzva. Does that custom, then, apply to women?

Rema rules that a woman may attend synagogue on the *Yamim Nora'im* while in *nidda*, even in locales when women in *nidda* did not customarily attend synagogue, because all other women would attend. (See more [here](https://www.deracheha.org/contact-with-sefer-torah/).) In his comments on this ruling, Magen Avraham applies it to women attending *Selichot*:

Rema OC 88:1

Gloss: There are those who wrote that a woman in *nidda* while actively bleeding should not enter a synagogue or pray or mention God's name or touch a Torah scroll (Hagahot Maymoniyyot 4). And there are those who say that she is permitted in everything, and this is the fundamental [halacha] (Rashi, Laws of *Nidda*), but the custom in these countries is like the first view. And during her white [clean] days they were accustomed to permit. And even in a place where they were accustomed to be stringent, on the *Yamim Nora'im* and the like, when many gather to go to synagogue, they are permitted to go to synagogue like the rest of the women, for this is a great sorrow for them that everyone gathers and they should stand outside.

Magen Avraham 88:3

"On the *Yamim Nora'im*" - It seems that from the first day of *Selichot* and onwards is called *Yamim Nora'im* for all of these cases….

Magen Avraham strongly implies that women had the custom of attending *Selichot*. Indeed, a late-fifteenth-century printed edition of *Selichot* in Italy bears the signature of a contemporary woman and of another woman a few centuries later, presumably because they prayed from it.[[11]](#footnote-11) Some collections of [*techines*](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/tkhines), women's folk prayers, include recitations for the days of *Selichot*, presumably in lieu of formal *Selichot*, a further indication of women's interest.

Still, since women's custom regarding *Selichot* varies widely, with many women attending only on the first night, Rav Gavriel Ciner suggests that Magen Avraham may have referred specifically to a non-binding custom:[[12]](#footnote-12)

Nit'ei Gavriel, Laws of Rosh Ha-shana 10, note 26\*

Behold it is not clearly stated in any halachic authority to obligate women to get up for the recitation of *Selichot*…Indeed look at Magen Avraham 88:3 and Shulchan Aruch Ha-Rav 62, that a woman in *nidda* is permitted to go to synagogue from the first day of *Selichot* and onwards "for the reason that many gather to go to synagogue and it will be for them a great sorrow that all gather and they should stand outside." Therefore, the olden custom was that women would come to the recitation of *Selichot*. In any case, one can say that they [women] did not take it upon themselves under the legal category of obligation, and in a number of places the custom spread that women would come only on the first day of *Selichot*.

Where there is not a clear custom for women to attend, there is room for a woman to make her own decisions regarding reciting or attending *Selichot*.

Rav David Auerbach, *Halichot Beitah* 7:2

Women are not obligated in reciting *Selichot* on all days of the year [Note 2: since it is only a custom], but there are those who have the custom to come to synagogue for the recitation of *Selichot* during the *Yamim Nora'im*.

Although many women omit recitation of *Tachanun* when [praying](https://www.deracheha.org/prayer-9-end-and-priorities/), Rav Ezra Bick (in a personal communication to Deracheha) maintains that it is especially important to recite *Tachanun* at the end of *Selichot* if recited in a minyan. This is because Moshe Rabbeinu's immediate response to hearing the thirteen attributes of mercy was to bow down and prostrate himself on the ground:

*Shemot* 34:8

And Moshe hurried and prostrated to the ground and bowed down:

In a minyan (some would say, in the presence of a sefer Torah),[[13]](#footnote-13) we can emulate Moshe's response to the attributes of mercy at *Tachanun* at the conclusion of *Selichot*, by falling on our faces.

# Selichot and Minyan

A wide range of people find it difficult or impossible to attend *Selichot* services late at night or early in the morning. What of individuals who wish to recite *Selichot* but cannot attend minyan, or communities that cannot gather ten men for *Selichot*? This question is addressed often in halachic literature, presumably because it has arisen frequently.

The Talmudic statement about the thirteen attributes of mercy describes God as wrapped in a *tallit* as a "*shali'ach tzibbur*," prayer leader, revealing an order of prayer to be recited by "Israel." The passage conveys an assumption of communal prayer, and might suggest the need for a minyan when reciting the attributes.

To see how the Ge'onim develop this idea, let's look again at the passage from Seder Rav Amram Ga'on, this time adding in more of the context:

Seder Rav Amram Ga'on, *Seder Ta'anit*

Thus said Rabbeinu Natan, that our custom is only to recite the thirteen attributes in a *tzibbur*, and a *yachid* [individual] is not permitted to recite them in his *tefilla*, only in the *tzibbur*. And would that it were that when the *tzibbur* gathers and fasts and does *tzedaka* and seeks mercy and direct their hearts to their Father, the Blessed One has mercy upon them and "does not despise the prayer of the masses" and responds to them, as it is said, "Behold God is great and does not despise" [*Iyov* 36:5]. And the Blessed One has hewn a covenant with Moshe and with our forefathers that they [the attributes] not return empty, as it is said "Behold I hew a covenant" [*Shemot* 34:10]. Therefore, we only say them in a *tzibbur*.

Rav Natan understands the recitation of the thirteen attributes of mercy as fundamentally communal, since it is the *teshuva* and prayer of a community that take on covenantal proportions. Therefore, he rules that the attributes may not be recited in prayer without a *tzibbur*.

Sefer Ha-minhagim offers a different explanation for reciting the thirteen attributes only in a *tzibbur*, in the name of twelfth-century Ashkenaz authority Rav Eliezer of Metz. This position is based on the once common practice of reciting *Selichot* as part of the *shali'ach tzibbur*'s repetition of the Amida prayer:

Sefer Ha-minhagim, Klausner, 3

Rabbeinu Eliezer of Metz says specifically within *Shemoneh Esrei* one does not recite [the attributes] as an individual but rather with a *tzibbur*, for one [an individual] is not permitted to interrupt within the eighteen *berachot*, but when there is no interruption within the eighteen *berachot*, like this [recitation in a *tzibbur's* repetition of *Shemoneh Esrei*] and on the ten days of *teshuva*, it is permissible to recite the thirteen attributes [as an individual], and so we practice.

On this view, the essential concern is with an individual interrupting their recitation of the Amida to say the thirteen attributes. It would not apply to *Selichot* recited outside of the daily prayer service, which is how we say them during Elul and *aseret yemei teshuva*.

Typically, in halachic discussions of prayer, the term *tzibbur* refers to a group including a [minyan](https://www.deracheha.org/minyan/) of men, and *yachid* refers to praying without a minyan. Rav Eliezer of Metz's use of the term *tzibbur* clearly assumes the presence of a minyan, as required for a repetition of *Shemoneh Esrei*. Tur similarly understands Rav Natan as requiring a minyan, and then challenges this ruling.

According to Tur, one praying *be-yachid*, without a minyan, may recite any Biblical verses, including the thirteen attributes. A minyan should only be required for a *davar she-bikdusha* (an element of prayer that is halachically defined as a sanctification of God's name, which we discuss [here](https://www.deracheha.org/minyan/)):

Tur OC 565

Rav Natan wrote that the custom is for the individual fasting not to say the thirteen attributes, and I don’t know what concern there is in the matter, for it is only like one reading from the Torah, for our sages said only that every *davar she-bikdusha*, such as *Kaddish* and *Kedusha* and *Barechu* [requires a minyan].

However, Rashba (Tur's contemporary) argues the opposite. He agrees with Rav Natan that one praying *be-yachid* may not recite the attributes in prayer, and asserts that reciting them is similar to a *davar she-bikdusha*. He also does not draw a distinction between recitation within the Shemoneh Esrei and outside it.

Responsa of Rashba 1:211

That which you said, if one says the thirteen attributes [when praying] *be-yachid*? **Response**: It makes sense to me that everything we say by way of *tefilla* and seeking mercy, we don’t say *be-yachid* and are akin to a *davar she-bikdusha*. As they [our sages] said in the midrash: God wrapped Himself like a *shali'ach tzibbur* and revealed it to Moshe at Sinai. And it said whenever Israel sins, when a time of trouble arrives, they should do before me like this order and I'll forgive them. But if he comes to say this [the attributes] merely in the way of reading [from the Torah], he does say it…

Rashba adds, though, that one praying *be-yachid* may recite the thirteen attributes in the same manner in which one reads them from a Torah, like other verses. This position is a bit paradoxical, since the individual's motivation for reciting the verses is to pray, while the justification for reciting them is that they can be said in a non-prayerful manner. One possible virtue of Rashba's suggestion, though, is that it makes it intelligible for someone praying *be-yachid* to recite the *piyyutim* of *Selichot* that allude to the thirteen attributes.

Shulchan Aruch follows Rashba, using even stronger language. He maintains that recitation of the thirteen attributes on a fast day is not just **like** a *davar she-bikdusha*, but **is** a *davar she-bikdusha*, which thus requires a minyan.

Shulchan Aruch OC 465:5

The individual is not permitted to say the thirteen attributes in the manner of prayer and seeking mercy, for they are a *davar she-bikdusha*. But if he comes to say them merely in the way of reading [from the Torah], he says them. Rema: And thus an individual should not say *Selichot* or *Va-ya'avor* [the beginning of the verse].

While Shulchan Aruch's ruling leaves room for individuals, or groups without a minyan, to recite the rest of *Selichot* (aside from *Kaddish*), Rema here rules that an individual should not recite *Selichot* at **all**, and specifies that this includes recitation of "*Va-ya'avor*," the beginning of the passage of the thirteen attributes of mercy. Eliya Rabba, citing the related thirteenth-century works Shibbolei ha-leket and Tanya Rabbati,[[14]](#footnote-14) adds that this restrictive ruling applies to all recitations of *Selichot*, not just during *Shemoneh Esrei*:[[15]](#footnote-15)

Eliya Rabba 565:6

Thirteen attributes etc. And it implies even during the ten days of repentance, and not like Sefer Minhagim. And so it implies in Tanya [rabbati] p.102 and Shibbolei Ha-leket p. 126.

We can trace Rema's ruling to Or Zarua, who seems to record a more extreme version of the Ge'onic tradition:

Or Zaru'a II Laws of Tish'a Be-Av 416

It is written in the words of the Ge'onim that the *yachid* does not say *Selichot* at all and does not say "*Va-ya'avor*" since we do not say the thirteen attributes *be-yachid*, but only in the *tzibbur*. For thus said the sages, a covenant was hewn for the thirteen attributes that they not return empty.

How can we make sense of the idea that one praying *be-yachid* could not recite *Selichot*? Does that mean that in this situation one could not say *Selichot* at all?

Magen Avraham suggests that this view follows that of Rabbi Eliezer of Metz, and thus only prevents one praying *be-yachid* from reciting *Selichot* within *Shemoneh Esrei*:

Magen Avraham 565:6

It seems to me that he not say [*Selichot* specifically] in the middle of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

Alternatively, if we keep in mind that the more narrow, original meaning of *Selichot* refers specifically to *piyyutim* introducing recitation of the thirteen attributes, it makes some sense. What point is there in saying a *piyyut* that introduces a recitation that one will not make?

Taz takes this idea to its logical conclusion, suggesting that an individual reciting *Selichot* omit any portion of *Selichot* that refers to the attributes of mercy:

Taz OC 565:5

One must say that the prohibition is because one mentions in *Selichot* "and remember for us today the covenant of the thirteen attributes" and similarly, in many *Selichot*, one finds oneself mentioning the merit of the thirteen attributes, and those [sections] one should not say [*be-yachid*] even without "*Va-ya'avor*." But those *Selichot* in which the thirteen attributes are not mentioned, certainly an individual can say them and there is no concern, so it seems in my humble opinion.

His father-in-law and teacher, Bach, understands Rema's ruling as more limited. When Rema states that one praying *be-yachid* may not recite *Selichot* at all, perhaps he means specifically to rule out recitation of *Selichot* with the attributes, along with the full verse containing them. But other coherent entreaties including the entreaties of *Rachamin* may be recited by anyone:

Bach OC 565:4

It seems to me that in *Selichot* without *Va-ya'avor* there is no prohibition [for the individual], for they are only mere entreaties, and one must interpret the words of Or Zarua that he said thus, an individual may not say *Selichot* as is customary **with** *Va-ya'avor*, for this is certainly prohibited, and not because they are *Selichot* [per se] but rather because of *Va-ya'avor*, for behold he says it in the way of prayer and seeking mercy. But even *Va-ya'avor* on its own without *Selichot* is also prohibited [to one praying *be-yachid*] and one should not say that it is merely in the way of reading [from the Torah] …since the essence of his intent [in saying it] is to seek mercy.

Bach adds that Rema and Or Zarua may intend to preclude the individual from reciting the attributes of mercy as one would when reading from the Torah (as Rashba suggests), because of the paradox involved in doing so.

Aramaic Sections

Reciting the thirteen attributes is not the only issue that arises for those reciting *Selichot* without a minyan. Some of the Aramaic prayers in the concluding portion of the Selichot service also raise questions, because the Talmud teaches that one praying *be-yachid* should not pray in request to God in Aramaic:

*Sota* 33a

Behold Rav Yehuda said: A man should never ask [God] for his needs in the Aramaic language, for Rabbi Yochanan said: Whoever asks [God] for his needs in the Aramaic language, the ministering angels don't give heed to him, since the ministering angels don’t know the Aramaic language….This is for [one praying] *be-yachid*.

Discussion of angels can be challenging to understand. Lest we think that this passage means that the individual **prays** to angels, Rashi explains that individuals merely require the **assistance** of the ministering angels in making their requests of God heard, while those participating in communal prayer do not:

Rashi *Sota* 33a

An individual - needs the ministering angels to help him. A *tzibbur* does not need them, for it is written "Behold God is great and does not despise", He does not despise the prayer of the many.

In light of the Talmudic discussion, Tanya Rabbati rules that one praying *be-yachid* reciting *Selichot* should omit the sections in Aramaic:

Rav Yechiel ben Yekutiel Ha-rofe, Tanya Rabbati, Repentance and Laws of Rosh Ha-shana, *Seder Minhag* *Ma'amadot*

There are those who question, since one says these requests [following *Selichot*] in Aramaic …and they [the sages] said one who asks for his needs in Aramaic they do not heed him. This is not difficult at all, since when [praying] *be-yachid*, one should not ask his needs in Aramaic, but in a *tzibbur* it is permissible. And it makes sense where there is no minyan of ten that one should not recite these requests in Aramaic, since there are those among the angels who don’t know Aramaic and do not heed him, for behold the angels commanded over [an individual] to protect him only understand his language. But the angels given over to the *tzibbur* understand every language, therefore one says them in a *tzibbur*.

A number of halachic authorities, including Eliya Rabba and Mishna Berura, who cites him, rule accordingly.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Other authorities permit one praying *be-yachid* to recite these sections, since a native Aramaic speaker would be permitted to pray in Aramaic and since the early halachic discussion of distinguishing between individual and communal *Selichot* makes no note of them.

Kaf Ha-chayyim 581:26

I don’t know what it matters if the angels don’t understand, for doesn't one whose language is Aramaic ask for his needs from God without any intermediary. And so it seems from the lack of specification in the words of the halachic authorities that we wrote above 565:5, that an individual praying can say all *Selichot* except for the thirteen attributes…

In Practice

In practice, many halachic authorities follow the approaches of Shulchan Aruch and Bach to permit individuals or groups without a minyan to recite *Selichot*, omitting prayerful recitation of the thirteen attributes:

Mishna Berura 565:13

Rema went back and repeated in the name of Or Zaru'a that even *Selichot* themselves one also should not say *be-yachid*, but the later authorities question the essence of this law, for why should an individual not recite *Selichot*, which are mere entreaties, and they agreed that an individual can recite *Selichot* without the thirteen attributes.

Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that one can still say the thirteen attributes of mercy, as one would say them when reading from the Torah or learning, as suggested by Rashba and Shulchan Aruch:

Responsa *Iggerot Moshe* YD 3:21

Regarding the matter of the thirteen attributes when praying *be-yachid*, the fundamental halacha is that one say the entire verse until "*ribei'im*" [fourth generation] and also specifically not with the tune of entreaty but as one who learns Torah, for if he normally reads verses of the Torah with the usual cantillation, he must say them with that tune, and if when he learns Torah verses he reads them with a different tune that is easier for him, he may read with the tune of learning verses to which he is accustomed, that he not appear as one praying.

Rav Moshe allows for reciting the verse as one would read it while studying Torah, even if not with the traditional cantillation. He also insists on reciting the full verse, as one usually should while learning,[[17]](#footnote-17) rather than stopping before the end of the verse, as is more tolerated in prayer. The end of the verse, which discusses the consequences of sin being born by future generations, **is** omitted from *Selichot* when recited with a minyan.

Others, including Ben Ish Chai, allow for saying the attributes in this context leaving the end of the verse off, since the pause one makes then is only one word after the cantillatory mark known as an *etnachta*, which is the traditional place to pause mid-verse:

Responsa *Rav Pe'alim* OC 1:11

Regarding saying "*Va-ya'avor*" with cantillation for the individual, which is like reading from the Torah, that there is a cantillatory pause [*etnach*] at the word "*ve-chata'ah*", and it works out that Moshe Rabbeinu made a break in the verse there, and the individual recites only the word "*ve-nakeh*" from the following clause, and with one word there is no concern of what was mentioned [creating a new break in a verse], and this is a correct resolution.

An individual woman, a group of women, or a mixed group reciting *Selichot* with no minyan available can thus recite *Selichot* in full, with the exception of *Kaddish*, modifying the recitation of the thirteen attributes of mercy so that they are said in the mode of Torah study, and perhaps reciting the end of the verse to make that clear.[[18]](#footnote-18) One who usually bows at the words "*Va-ya'avor Hashem al panav*" would not do so without a minyan. As above, there is a difference of opinion regarding reciting the Aramaic sections without a minyan.

If said with contrition and focus on God's mercy in this context, reciting the attributes of mercy (or contemplating them meditatively) may still lead to revealing the Divine presence in its mercy, even if not as they do when said as entreaty in the presence of a minyan. Even when the attributes are fully omitted, a gathering in prayer and entreaty at this time of year has independent value as the original *Rachamin* service did.

# Who Leads

The depiction of God reciting the attributes as a *shali'ach tzibbur* suggests that the person leading *Selichot* with a minyan is considered a *shali'ach tzibbur*. Rabbeinu Meshulam says this explicitly:

Sefer Ha-minhagim (Klausner) 3

Rabbeinu Meshulam says that one praying *be-yachid* should not recite the thirteen attributes when praying *Selichot*, since we say God wrapped Himself like a *shali'ach tzibbur* and taught it to Moshe, we learn from this that only a *shali'ach tzibbur* in a *tzibbur* says them.

In practice, though many praying *be-tzibbur* say the attributes of mercy in unison, the *shali'ach tzibbur* of *Selichot* still recites *Va-ya'avor* alone and leads from *Kaddish* to *Kaddish*.

Taking the idea that the leader of *Selichot* is a *shali'ach tzibbur* a step further, Kolbo mentions a custom for the *shali'ach tzibbur* of *Selichot* to serve as *shali'ach tzibbur* for the daily prayers as well:

Kolbo 65

Also there are places which had the practice that one who prays in the night-watch [toward morning] should [lead] pray[ing] *Ma'ariv* the night before and also [lead] pray[ing] in the morning at *Shacharit*.

Kolbo takes it as a given that a *shali'ach tzibbur* for *Selichot* could serve as *shali'ach tzibbur* for other prayers. This idea also follows from the comparison that the Gemara draws between the thirteen attributes and an order of prayer, and that Levush develops into a comparison between the attributes and *Shemoneh Esrei*. (Quoted again below, along with the next point.) It is thus unsurprising that Levush recommends appointing a *shali'ach tzibbur* for *Selichot* who would be fitting for *Yamim Nora'im*.

Levush OC 581:1

…The *Selichot* with the thirteen attributes interspersed are in place of the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer, for the essence of the *tefilla* is the thirteen attributes…On these days on which we are suspended in judgment one needs great intent, therefore they should be careful to seek after a *shali'ach tzibbur* who is most fitting and greatest in Torah and good deeds that it is possible to find to pray for *Selichot* and the *Yamim Nora'im*.

Rema cites both of these comments,[[19]](#footnote-19) which indicates that he, too, considers the role of *shali'ach tzibbur* for *Selichot* as consistent with the role of *shali'ach tzibbur* for other *tefillot* with a minyan.

In our piece on [*tefilla be-tzibbur*](https://www.deracheha.org/tefilla-be-tzibbur/), we explore why a woman may not serve as *shali'ach tzibbur* for the repetition of *Shemoneh Esrei*, and for services as a whole. The comparison of *Selichot* to a classic prayer service, and specifically of the attributes of mercy to *Shemoneh Esrei*, explains why women do not serve as *shali'ach tzibbur* for *Selichot* in traditional Orthodox synagogues.

In the [same piece](https://www.deracheha.org/tefilla-be-tzibbur/), we look at whether there is room for a woman to lead a *davar she-bikdusha* when a minyan is present, or otherwise to lead a minyan in prayers where the leader is not acting as a formal agent for the community. At first glance, these might seem relevant here, since Shulchan Aruch follows the view that the attributes are a *davar she-bikdusha* and since *Selichot* are not an obligatory prayer on the level of *Shemoneh Esrei*. However, as above, the comparison between prayer and *Selichot* has been widely accepted, and this leads to having only one leader for each day's *Selichot*, a male eligible to recite all of its components (including *Kaddish* and the attributes) as well as other prayer services.

It is permissible for a woman to lead a group of other women in a *Selichot* service, modified to account for the lack of a minyan (e.g., without *Kaddish*, and with the attributes recited as one would when reading from a text, or skipped, or meditatively contemplated in silence). In many ways, such a gathering is reminiscent of the *Rachamin* service recited faithfully at this time of night in *aseret yemei teshuva* during the Ge'onic era—a service which was highly valued, but did not center around *Selichot*.

How should women relate to *Selichot*?

By reciting Selichot daily during Elul and the aseret yemei teshuva, we enter a mode of penitence and entreaty that builds up to the intensity of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. On [fast days](https://www.deracheha.org/fast-days/) as well, reciting Selichot heightens our awareness of the ta'anit and its message and inspires teshuva, and can be especially significant for those who are [exempt](https://www.deracheha.org/exemption-from-minor-fasts/) from [fasting](https://www.deracheha.org/exemption-from-major-fasts/). Selichot play an important spiritual function for all Jews, regardless of gender, so much so, that in recent years Selichot tours and Selichot concerts have become popular.

As we have seen, attending the Selichot service on the first night is customary for women in many communities. On other nights or mornings, women may still find it meaningful to join Selichot at synagogue. While the timing can be very challenging for some, others may find it easier to make it to Selichot than to most other services. (For example, in a community with Selichot services at different times, one spouse might attend at night when the children are sleeping and the other can join a minyan for Selichot in the morning before Shacharit.)

We strongly encourage all synagogues to facilitate and encourage women's attendance – minimally, by ensuring that the women's section is unlocked, lit, and empty of men, and that any Selichot books provided for men are provided for women as well.

Women may also choose to create all-women's gatherings in which to focus more on singing entreaties of Rachamin than on the thirteen attributes of mercy, modifying the service to omit Kaddish and possibly chanting the attributes as when reading from the Torah or, alternatively, reading and meditating on them silently.

Deracheha's partner institution, The Stella K. Abraham Beit Midrash for Women at Migdal Oz, has devised a third model to connect women to Selichot. Selichot are recited each night, drawing hundreds of women to the Beit Midrash. They are oriented primarily to the women's spiritual needs and song, although a [minyan](https://www.deracheha.org/minyan/) of men is also present to facilitate the recitation of the full Selichot service including the attributes of mercy, with a shali'ach tzibbur. In recent years, men who connect to this style of Selichot have begun attending as well. On many nights there are well over a hundred men present.

Reut, a woman who attends these evenings every year, explains what they mean to her:[[20]](#footnote-20)

Re'ut, Quoted in Ariel Horovits, "Tefillat Ha-ne'arot", Beit Avi Chai

I feel that Migdal Oz reconnected me to the Jewish tradition…It's true that according to Halacha women are not obligated to say *Selichot*, but this custom is the key feature of the month of Elul, and without it I would come unprepared to Yom Kippur. It is difficult to suddenly leave one's routine, and to pray many hours and to truly think about the meaning of what you say with intention. I feel that the *Selichot* are the preparation for these days. I arrive at them more directed toward what I need in order to do *teshuva*, to where I want to progress. This is worth more than anything.

Other women find meaning in reciting portions of Selichot alone, in moments grabbed during the night or day, creating a personal spiritual path to prepare for the Yamim Nora'im. Some take reciting Selichot at home as an opportunity to add prayers not in the formal liturgy. Dr. Yael Levine composed a [penitential prayer](https://www.kipa.co.il/%d7%99%d7%94%d7%93%d7%95%d7%aa/%d7%aa%d7%a4%d7%99%d7%9c%d7%94%5b…%5dd7%a9%d7%a2%d7%a0%d7%94-%d7%9c%d7%90%d7%9e%d7%94%d7%95%d7%aa/) modeled on the "mi she-ana" (one of the prayers recited in the concluding portion of the service), highlighting Biblical women whose prayers were answered. Though intended for communal Selichot, this prayer has special appeal for women reciting Selichot alone.

We have learned that reciting the attributes of mercy is meant to come alongside emulating them. Even if a woman does not say Selichot, she can still undertake other acts with religious meaning that elicit God’s mercy in the days approaching the Yamim Noraim, focusing on those most meaningful to her. These can include listening to shiurim or reading books on Selichot or other timely topics, taking care to hear the blowing of the [shofar](https://www.deracheha.org/shofar-in-elul/) when she is able to, working to increase her concentration during prayer, reciting Tehillim, giving tzedaka, or doing charitable deeds.

# Further Reading

Rav Ezra Bick, Understanding the Thirteen Middot, VBM shiur. Available here: <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/series/understanding-13-middot-en>

Elitzur, Shulamit. "Toward the Sources of the *Piyyutim* of *Selichot*." *Tarbitz* 4 (2016): 503-542. Available here: <https://openscholar.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/jstudies/files/_file_1502018221.pdf>

*Yud-gimmel Middot*, *Olamot Siur*, Available here: <https://olamot.net/shiur/%D7%99%D7%92-%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%95%D7%AA>

Geltzer, Aharon and Lifschitz, Eliyahu. *Nefesh Mordechai: Selichot Mevo'arot Nusach Polin*. (Ma'aleh Adumim: Machon Torat Imecha, 2015). See more here: http://www.toralishma.org/%d7%a1%d7%9c%d7%99%d7%97%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%9e%d7%91%d7%95%d7%90%d7%a8%d7%95%d7%aa/

1. The numbering follows the reading of Rabbeinu Tam:

   Tosafot *Rosh Ha-shana* 17b s.v. *Shalosh*

   Thirteen attributes - Rabbeinu Tam says that the two first names [of God] are two attributes… iniquity and transgression and sin and cleanse are counted as four…. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ritva makes this point:

   Ritva *Rosh Ha-shana* 17b

   For the language of "*Va-ya'avor Hashem al panav*" we expound as a *shali'ach tzibbur* passing before the ark. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This statement evokes the Mishna's assertion that a leader performing a ritual only achieves results when accompanied by a spiritual commitment of the community:

   Mishna *Rosh Ha-shana* 3:8

   "And it was that when Moshe would raise his hand, then Israel prevailed and when he would rest his hand, Amalek prevailed" [*Shemot* 17:11]. And do Moshe's hands make war or do his hands break war? Rather, any time when Israel would look on high and orient their heart to their Father in heaven, they would prevail. And if not, they would fall. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Mishna Berura explains that it was desirable to have a fixed night to start, and that the *Motza'ei Shabbat* chosen should be at least four days prior to Rosh ha-shana to get to the number ten, aligning these *Selichot* with the practice of those who fast for a total of ten days before Yom Kippur.

   Mishna Berura 581:6

   From Sunday the week before it - Since many have the custom to fast for ten days including Yom Kippur, and they will always lack four days from Rosh Ha-shana until Yom Kippur on which they are unable to fast, which are the two days of Rosh Ha-shana, and Shabbat Shuva, and Erev Yom Kippur; therefore, they need to make up four days prior to Rosh Ha-shana, and in order that there be a specified day for beginning, they enacted Sunday each time. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Magen Avraham 581:2

   From Rosh Chodesh Elul and onward - but on Rosh Chodesh 'ק don’t say *Selichot* and penitential prayers. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Chabad custom is not to recite them during *aseret yemei* *teshuva*, when **acts** of repentance should take precedence over words. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Available here: https://openscholar.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/jstudies/files/\_file\_1502018221.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Available here: https://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=20685&st=&pgnum=402 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Some calendars and websites give the times for dawn (*alot ha-shachar*) and noon (*chatzot ha-yom*), but not midnight (*chatzot ha-layla*). Halachic midnight is exactly twelve hours after halachic noon. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Available here: <https://ph.yhb.org.il/en/15-02-06/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Yuri Yalon, "Selichot over the Generations," Yisrael ha-yom, 8.7.21

    Available here: https://www.israelhayom.co.il/judaism/judaism-news/article/3867501/ [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Available here: https://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=46450&st=&pgnum=88&hilite= [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Rema OC 131:2

    Gloss: There are those who say that falling on one's face [in tachanun] is only in a place that has an Aron and a sefer Torah within it, but without this we say tachanun without covering the face, and so we practice (Beit yosef in the name of Roke'ach 324). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Shibbolei Ha-leket, Tefilla, 29

    So responded Rav Avigdor Kohen Tzedek, to Rav Tzidkiyahu son of Rav Binyamin my cousin z"l, that one should not say them [the attributes] with fewer than ten, not in *Selichot* and not in Tachanun, for they are a *davar she-bikdusha*.

    Rav Yechiel ben Yekutiel Ha-rofe, Tanya Rabbati, Repentance and Laws of Rosh Ha-shana, *Seder Minhag Ma'amadot*

    In all the days of the *ma'amadot* [*Selichot*] whether before Rosh ha-shana or after Rosh Ha-shana…we mention the thirteen attributes between each and every response and say *Selichot* and confessions as they wish and if they are not a minyan of ten, they skip the thirteen attributes and when they reach "And he called in the name of God and there it was said," they skip and say, "And forgive our transgressions and our sins and give us our portion." [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Peri Megadim raises the possibility of allowing one praying *be-yachid* to recite the thirteen attributes during *aseret yemei teshuva*, but then quotes Eliya Rabba and others who reject this possibility:

    Peri Megadim OC *Eshel Avraham* 581:3

    If we say that in the ten days of repentance a *yachid* recites *Selichot*, then it works out well that he wear a *tallit*. But see Eliya Rabba 565:6 in the name of Tanya and Shelah, it is a bit difficult…And in the Shelah in the name of Shibbolei Ha-leket in the name of the Ge'onim, that the thirteen attributes are a *davar she-bikdusha* and we don’t say them with fewer than ten, it also implies even in the ten days of repentance… [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Eliya Rabba 581:9

    He wrote in Tanya [Rabbati] that if there is no minyan, one should not recite the requests of the *Selichot* in Aramaic, like "*bi-mtutei minach*" ["please" in Aramaic], for the angels do not know Aramaic, if they are not those given over to the *tzibbur*.

    Mishna Berura 581:4

    Similarly, the requests that are in the language of the Targum, such as "*Machi u-masi…*" and "Maran Di-beShmaya…," one should not say when there is no minyan of ten. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Ta'anit* 27b

    Every verse that Moshe did not divide, we do not divide it. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Rav Zvi Ryzman has claimed that, according to the view that rejects Rashba and Shulchan Aruch's position that the attributes are a *davar she-bikdusha*, a group of women are considered a sort of plurality of people, *rabbim*, and thus could recite *Selichot* including the attributes, since a formal *tzibbur* is not required. In practice, however, halacha here follows Rashba.

    Rav Zvi Ryzman, *Ratz Ka-tezvi Yare'ach Ha-eitanim* 4 2:15

    It is explained in the words of the early authorities another reason for reciting the thirteen attributes in a *tzibbur*, that God promised that he does not despise the *tefilla* of the masses [*rabbim*], and thus the essence of the enactment was for a *tzibbur*, and therefore one needs to recite them only in a *tzibbur*. And according to this rationale, it works out that in order to say the thirteen attributes one does not need a *tzibbur* but rather masses [*rabbim*], and therefore, although ten women indeed do not have the status of *tzibbur* regarding saying a *davar she-bikdusha*, they can well be considered "*rabbim*" for this matter. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Rema OC 581:1

    They should be careful to seek after a *shali'ach tzibbur* who is most fitting and greatest in Torah and deeds that it is possible to find, that he should pray *Selichot* and *Yamim Nora'im*…and so he needs to discharge everyone through his *tefilla*…And there are places where they have the custom that the one who leads the *Selichot* prayer leads prayer all day (Kolbo). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Available here: https://www.bac.org.il/society/article/tpylt-hanaarvt [↑](#footnote-ref-20)