



## Saturday, September 12, 7:30 PM via Zoom

The Zoom link will be e-mailed on Friday morning, Sept 11.  
It is the same link that we use for Friday night Shabbat services.

**Slichot** takes place on the Saturday before Rosh Hashanah. It is a way to help us prepare for the important spiritual work we do during the *Yamim Noraim* – the Ten Days of Awe. Join us for an evening of discussion, comraderie, and prayer.

**7:30 PM** — Discussion about the connection of “faith” to our experience of the pandemic.

What has helped you get through the past six months?

What can we learn from Judaism about how to keep going during difficult times.

**8:00 PM** — Slichot Service, Changing of the Torah Mantles to White, and Havdalah|

## What is Slichot?

For many Jews, the High Holiday season begins with Rosh HaShanah and the start of the new month of Tishrei. Jewish tradition, however, teaches that the preceding month of Elul is a time of soul-searching and reflection to prepare oneself for the magnitude of the Days of Awe. It is during this time that we observe Slichot.

In the broadest definition, slichot are penitential prayers said before and during the High Holidays and other fast days throughout the year. But the term first appears as a reference to the biblical verses that were added to the Yom Kippur liturgy.

Eventually, the holiday prayers were combined with general prayers of repentance. The prayer book of *Rav Amram Gaon*, from the ninth century, for example, includes a collection of these poetic writings and meditations. While these prayers were initially only recited during the days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, the custom developed to use them in the days beforehand as well.

In Hebrew, *slichot* translates to “forgiveness,” and indeed there is an emphasis in these prayers on the merciful attributes with which God is said to govern the world.

In many ways, the prayers which make up the Slichot service mirror what we find on the Day of Atonement which follows soon after. The language of these qualities should sound familiar to anyone who has recited the liturgy throughout Yom Kippur when we speak about God’s ability to forgive “transgression, iniquity, and sin.”

We begin and end the season of repentance with the same words, calling out to the compassionate God who we hope will accept our prayers. The holiday itself occurs early in the month of Elul in Sephardic tradition, but on the Saturday evening just before Rosh HaShanah in Ashkenazi communities. Either way, prayers are read and meditations considered as individuals are encouraged to reflect on the past year and the changes they wish to make in the upcoming one.

Reform congregations have developed beautiful and meaningful programs for the observance of Slichot on the Saturday evening prior to Rosh HaShanah. This often includes a study program about the themes of repentance and forgiveness. Many congregations show a popular movie exploring these themes.

In addition to the Slichot service, a meaningful ritual of changing the Torah covers to those specifically designed for the High Holidays often precedes the service. The special covers are usually white, representing purity and the wish that through repentance, our sins will be made white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).