

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

MA TOVU

A Time Of Favor

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

O Hashem, I love the House where you dwell, and the place where Your glory resides. I shall prostrate myself and bow, I shall kneel before Hashem my Maker. As for me, may my prayer to You Hashem, be a **time of favor**; O G-d, in Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation.

ה' אהבתי מעון ביתך,
ומקום משכן כבודך, ואני
אשתחוה ואכרעה, אברכה
לפני ה' עושי. ואני, תפילתי
לך ה', **עת רצון**,
אלקים ברב חסדך, ענני
באמת ישעך

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



The word “*aneini*--answer me” is a plea to Hashem that one’s tefillos be answered. However, we are truly seeking not just an answer, but “*yishecha* -- Hashem’s salvation”. And, beyond that, we are seeking “*biemes yishecha* -- the truth of Hashem’s salvation.” The *Anaf Yosef* explains that these words remind us that we are addressing the one Source who can deliver to us the ultimate answer to our prayers - a true and enduring salvation.

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Power of a Minyan

A minyan praying together creates a “time of favor” which facilitates G-d’s acceptance of our prayers.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Optimizing Your Prayers

The Gemara explains that there are times that are especially propitious for our prayers, giving them an increased power to penetrate heaven. To enable us to tap into these times of grace, G-d channels them into specific times and places in this world. One of these times and places is at *shul*, when a minyan prays together. A *shul* is sanctified through the Torah study and prayer embedded in its walls. This atmosphere of sanctity enhances the ability of one’s prayers to be accepted in heaven. Shulchan Aruch states: “A person should endeavor to pray in a shul together with the congregation.” The Gemara explains that praying with a *minyan* can even compensate for a lack of *kavannah* by any one member of the *minyan* at any given time. So well-accepted is this concept of praying with a *minyan*, that one who performs the mitzvah of praying with a *minyan* — and thereby brings about the revelation of Hashem’s power (because the prayer will be accepted) — is credited with performing a great *kiddush Hashem*. Says the

Shulchan Aruch HaRav: “Even though *tefillah b’tzibbur* is a Rabbinical mitzvah, it is greater than a Biblical mitzvah since one sanctifies G-d’s Name in public.

King David alludes to the existence of *eis ratzon* in the verse, “*But as for me, my prayer is to You, Hashem, at a favorable time.*” “A favorable time,” according to the Gemara (Berachos 8a) refers to “the time the congregation prays.” Further support for this link comes from the fact that the numerical equivalent of the words “*tefillah b’tzibbur*” — 815 — matches that of “*eis ratzon*.”

When we seek out opportune times and places and use them to their maximum benefit, we throw open the floodgates of blessing from Above. Suddenly, that which was beyond our reach is close at hand. But the most life-altering result of calling upon Hashem in an *eis ratzon* is the deep spiritual connection one is able to feel at that propitious time. Hashem is close by, ready to listen, ready to accept all worthy prayers.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Music To Hashem

Moshe plays a bass guitar. Reuven plays drums. Shimon plays a tuba. When any of them play alone, the sound is sorely lacking. Although each is expert in his instrument, his lone sound is bereft of melody and depth. An audience hearing a solo performance of any one of them would soon lose



interest and walk away. But when they play with their ten-piece band, the sound is truly magnificent – strong, harmonious and rousing. The audience sits rapt, feeling the beat of the music and riding along on its flow.

This is the image of a *minyan*

praying together. Each Jew with his own merits, his own deficits, his moments of *kavannah* and moments of distraction blends into a sum far greater than its parts. The *minyan* is beautiful music to Hashem, and so He does not turn away. He listens carefully, savoring each participant’s contribution. Anyone who comes to shul and “joins the band” finds the perfect time to make himself heard in Heaven.

Try This!

► Inside your shul, standing right by the door, there’s a billionaire. He announces to the men assembling for the morning minyan, “The next person who walks through this door is going to be given anything he asks for.” You are that next person. Imagine the overwhelming joy you would feel when you walk through the door and hear the news. Imagine your friends converging upon you to shake your hand and wish you mazel tov. Think of that moment when you say the words “*eis ratzon*,” and feel the power of the special gift Hashem does indeed give you whenever you enter the shul to pray.

Did You Know

► **How Far To Go For A Minyan**

Shulchan Aruch states: “A person should endeavor to pray in a shul together with the congregation,” apparently indicating that a *minyan* is preferable but not required. However, many, including the Chofetz Chaim and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, rule that it is an obligation. Shulchan Aruch rules that a person who travels to a city and plans to stay there overnight should travel up to four *milin* (72 minutes) to pray with a *minyan*. If he must back-track or be detoured sideways from his journey in order to find a *minyan*, he is required to go only one *mil* (18 minutes) out of his way. These rules only apply if he knows there is a certainty of a *minyan* and the road to the *minyan* is not dangerous.