



Praying WITH Passion

GIVING MORE MEANING TO OUR TEFILLAH - ONE WEEK AT A TIME ISSUE NO. 6

Tefillah Focus Of The Week: **MA TOVU PART 3** *A Time Of Favor*

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

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.

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

A minyan praying together creates a "time of favor" which facilitates G-d's acceptance of our prayers.

Insight:

Deeper meanings of the theme

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 enables 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
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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.



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(INSIGHT cont.)

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 these 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

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 G-d’s ears, 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.

Halacha:

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.

Take It With You:

Your personal connection to the prayer

Sometimes, you feel like you’re really being heard. You’re talking to someone who really wants to help you resolve whatever is on your mind. The person is focusing on your words, his face shows concern and interest, and you know that whatever he can do to help you, he will do. But you cannot always get that reception from a person. People can be

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Did You Know: An insight for the week ahead.

Being Part Of The Minayn

Q Unfortunately, because I often come late to pray Shacharis, I frequently “run” through the end of *Pesukei D’Zimrah* through *Shema* while the *minyan* recites *Shemoneh Esrei*. I know this is far from ideal, but I did think I was at least getting the benefit of praying with the *minyan*. Recently, however, someone told me that praying with a *minyan* means specifically saying *Shemoneh Esrei* with the *minyan*. Am I really missing the whole point?

A The focal point of congregation completed reciting *Birchas Avos* in *Shemoneh Esrei* (*Halichos Shlomo* on *Tefillah*, Ch. 8, *Se’if 7, D’var Halachah 8*). Although not obligated, when a woman prays along with a *minyan*, her prayers join those of the *minyan*, and the words “the community’s prayers are always heard” apply to her as well (*Avnei Yashfei, Tefillah* 16, fn. 12 citing Harav Elyashiv).

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(TAKE IT WITH YOU cont.)

difficult to reach, busy and preoccupied with their own priorities, or simply not wise and resourceful enough to offer you real assistance.

There are no such limitations when you come to shul to pray with a minyan; you will always find G-d's warm, caring reception. You need only walk through the doors of the shul and join yourself to those who are praying there, and you have G-d's ear. There is no one on earth who is comparably available, wise, resourceful and ready to help. This is the fantastic, daily opportunity for which we thank G-d when we recite "Ma TovU."

Your Personal Tefillah Trainer:

Exercising mind, memory and imagination to carry kavannah into your davening

Imagine opening a door to your shul, coming to your seat and finding there the key to a vast treasure chest. You pick up the glimmering key and carefully place it in your pocket, knowing that when you leave, all your needs will be taken care of for the rest of your life. Imagine the ecstatic joy of that feeling, and this week, when you say, in Ma TovU, the words "eis ratzon," picture that golden key.

Try This!

To track your progress, give yourself a check for each day you have Kavannah in Ma TovU

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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