

EIS RATZON-PRAYING WITH A MINYAN

When the focus is on one individual, his every fault is plain to see. When that person melds into a group, however, the overall spirit of the group overrides the traits of its individual members. To a certain extent, this principle helps explain why a minyan creates an *eis ratzon* for prayer.

The prayers of the congregation are more powerful than those of an individual. The community is not seen as a mere collection of individuals. Rather, it is a new entity that is greater than the combination of the merits and strengths of its individual members.

The Jewish writings explain that praying with a minyan can even compensate for a lack of kavannah by any one member of the minyan at any given time. Different people will have kavannah during different portions of the prayer time and they will all come together in a very powerful, sincere prayer ascending to Heaven. Expounding on the verse: *But as for me, may my prayer to You, Almighty, be at a favorable time.* It explains that a “*favorable time*” refers to “the time the congregation prays.”

The prophet advises: *Seek the Lord when He can be found; call upon Him when He is near [Isa. 55:6].* It is for this reason that one should seek out those special times of closeness such as the *Days of Awe* at the High Holidays. The sages explain that the concept of distance and closeness applies only to one who is praying alone. The Almighty is always receptive to the prayers of a *minyan*.

When we pray in a group we show our *emunah* (faith) in the Holy One. With such power attached to the prayers one says with a group, it is clear why, through the ages, we have braved adverse weather to gather with our congregations to pray. When one can join his prayers to those of a *minyan*, with their added merit, why should he stand alone?

POINTS TO PONDER

A minyan is seen by the Almighty as one entity, thus mitigating the flaws in each individual member that might make his own prayers unworthy.

The prayers of a minyan are more readily accepted in Heaven.

Isaiah 45:20 "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you survivors of the nations! They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save. ²¹ Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. ²² "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. (ESV)