

TAP INTO THE EXALTED PLACE OF PRAYER – SHUL (SYNAGOGUE)

This is our miniature Holy temple, which is all that remains to us until the Final Redemption brings the rebuilding of the Holy temple in Jerusalem. One Jewish text says: “A person’s prayer is heard...if he recites it in a shul.” A prayer offered in a shul will be heard. The very walls of the shul are sanctified through Torah study and prayer that saturate the rooms within. Just as the Torah teaches that the walls of a house can become afflicted with tzaraas (a leprous-like disease) and tainted with the impurity of the inhabitants, so too can the walls of a shul become imbued with holiness. One can therefore understand why prayers said in a shul have a special efficacy.

Because the shul’s holiness derives from the words of Torah and prayers spoken within it, each person who walks through its doors has the power to elevate that holiness by virtue of the sacredness he brings through his Torah learning and prayers.

When we enter the shul, we should take a moment to absorb the intense, awesome holiness surrounding him. We should then say, “and I, in the abundance of Your kindness, will come into your house, I bow down to Your holy Temple in fear of You.”

One Jewish sage teaches that we should stop and consider what a privilege it is to have the opportunity to pray in a shul. How fortunate we are to be able to enter within the holy walls of the shul and draw closer to God. A true appreciation can be grasped by thinking of all the sick, the weak, the homebound elderly who would gladly give everything to sit in front of the Holy Ark where the Torah is kept and join their prayers to all those ascending together from this place.

Each person can make the shul in which they pray “especially suited to prayer” by entering it with reverence and praying with a sincere awareness that we are standing in the Almighty’s presence. In a continuing upward spiral, he enhances the sanctity of the shul with his sincere prayers, and the sanctity of the shul enhances the power of his prayers to find favor with God.

POINTS TO PONDER

Due to prayers and Torah study that take place within a shul, within its walls, are imbued with holiness.

A person who prays in a shul where prayers are more readily accepted.

A person’s demeanor on entering a shul should indicate a sense of awe at being in the Almighty’s presence.

Sincere prayers imbue the shul with greater sanctity and that sanctity, in turn, gives greater power to the prayers.

Psalm 54:4 O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth. (TNK)