

תְּפִילַת יִצְחָק *Tefillat Yitzchak -- Rabbi Jon's commentary on words of prayer*

The worshipper must direct his heart to each and every word. He is like a man who walks in a garden collecting roses and rare flowers, plucking them one by one, in order to weave a garland.... Every word seizes hold of him... entreats him not to abandon it, not to break their bond, saying: *Consider my light, my grace, my splendor. Am I not the word 'Baruch'? Harken to me when you pronounce me. Consider me when you utter me.*"

--Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, quoted in Rabbi A. J. Heschel, "Quest for God", p. 34

As you are learning the prayers, one goal is to find a word or a phrase here and there that is meaningful and that you can add to your "repertoire". If you find a phrase meaningful, stop and try to say it to yourself in Hebrew, whether you are reading the Hebrew or the transliteration. Say it slowly, or more than once, or in a quiet chant that your ears can just hear. Let whatever meaning or feeling sink in, and don't rush to move on with the congregation.

Siddur Sim Shalom, p. 116, middle of long paragraph and p. 157, middle of third section

מְתֵי תִמְלֹךְ בְּצִיּוֹן *Ma-tai timloch b'tzee-yon* **When** will you rule in Zion?
אַיֶּה מְקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ *Ah-yeh m'kom k'vodo* **Where** is the place of Your presence?

These are two related phrases from similar prayers, two different version of the *Kedushah* prayer (more on that another time). Rabbi Nachman frequently taught about the word אַיֶּה *ah-yeh*, which means "Where?" It is one of the simplest possible prayers we hurl in God's direction. Where are You? Where is my answer from You? Rabbi Nachman reminds us, however, that אַיֶּה *ah-yeh* is also the prayer that God continually sends toward us. Where are *you*? Where is My answer from *you*?

מְתֵי *Ma-tai* is an even simpler prayer. When? When, God, will You be here? When will You answer me?

The moment of מְתֵי *Ma-tai* is a moment when we can say to ourselves what we long for, what we hope and wish for. We can hurl that מְתֵי *Ma-tai* toward God, or we can just send it out into the air. It is not the moment of answer, but of noticing that we yearn. The rest of the paragraph connects yearning to hoping -- that's a teaching for another time.

Especially this week, close to Rosh Hashanah, use the moment of the word מְתֵי *Ma-tai* to feel a yearning, a longing, perhaps even to summon what specific thing you are hoping for in the new year.