

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'? Hearken 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. 118 (last paragraph) and p. 119, middle line

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ

Mo-deem anachnoo lach

We thank You...

וְעַל כָּלֵם

V'al koolam

And for all of these things....

These phrases begin and end the second-to-last section of the *Amidah*, a section known as *Hoda-ah* -- gratitude or acknowledgement. The prayers as written in the *Amidah* cover a lot of ground, from history through Shabbat. The prayers we might be saying alongside the text, or instead of it, may be made up of hopes and requests. This point toward the end of the *Amidah* is a stop sign, a reminder to pause to go over what we are thankful for.

When we say the word מוֹדִים *Modeem*, we bow just our heads. Use that word and bow as a signal to slow down, and to go over what you are thankful for. At this moment, since the last time you said מוֹדִים *Modeem*. Sometime it is hard to slow down, so you can also find the second signal on the following page. וְעַל כָּלֵם *V'al koolam* "and for all of these things...." is a change to add to the list, or to complete it.

There will be other times to bow, particularly during the High Holy Day services. This is a good practice for any of those times.