

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. 136 -- Hallel, Psalm 118

פְּתַחֲרוּ לִי שְׁעַר־צְדָקָה	<i>pitchu li sha'aray tzedek</i>	Open for me the gates of justice/righteousness
אֲבֹאֲבָם אֹדְהָ יְהוָה	<i>avo vam, odeh Yah</i>	I will enter them, I will acknowledge/thank Yah
זֶה הַשַּׁעַר לַיהוָה	<i>zeh ha'sha'ar l'Adonai</i>	This is the gate of Adonai
צְדִיקִים יָבֹאוּ בוֹ:	<i>tzadikim ya'vo'u vo</i>	Tzadikim/the righteous enter it

These lines are for visualization. Conjure up an image of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a great assembly entering the courtyard outside the *Beit Hamikdash*, on the Temple Mount. Or use the ark in front of you as an image of a gate, with doors that open and lead you toward Torah. Or meditate in your own mind on a gate that you can walk through as you commit yourself to living and working for justice in our world. Focus on the commitment to being a *tzaddik*, say to yourself, "I can be a *tzaddik*" and picture yourself walking through, in a procession of others entering the gate in the same consciousness and commitment.