

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. 110 (last paragraph)

זֹרַע צְדָקוֹת	zo'ray'a tz'dakot	God plants/sows righteous deeds
מְצַמְיָה יְשׁוּעוֹת	matz'mee-ach y'shoo'ot	God causes salvation/redemption to sprout
בּוֹרֵא רְפוּאוֹת	boray r'foo'ot	God creates healing/cures

The first section of the morning prayers after the introductory songs is called *Yotzer*, which means Creator. Our prayers suggest that the start of each day is like the original day when the first people were created, and that we are like Adam and Eve. We live each day in a beautiful and new place, and face the same kinds of possibilities and decisions.

In these phrases, the *Siddur* invites us to be playful, to use our imaginations. To think of the things we need as though they were plants we could find in the Garden of Eden, in Paradise. For Adam and Eve, all they knew was plants so they would naturally use the language of botany to describe their own higher prayers and desires.

These phrases also let us rewrite the Adam and Eve story a bit. In the Torah, it ends on a note of disappointment and punishment. But the *Siddur* hints that Adam and Eve have learned something. They have learned about taking responsibility, and also about hoping. They leave hopeful about their future lives, and about the possibility of finding *newness, justice, salvation, healing*. Not only through the hard work that God punished them with, but also growing naturally through God's generosity. As you say these words, think about how you have or want these things in your life, and imagine yourself hopeful that they will grow, or satisfied as if they were already here.