

## 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. 104, end of top paragraph:**

הַמְעוֹרֵר יְשָׁנִים *Ha-m'orayr y'shay-neem* [God] Who wakes the sleeping  
וְהַמְקִיץ נִרְדָּמִים *V'ha-may-keetz nir'dameem* Who rouses the slumbering  
וְהַמְשִׁיחַ אֵלֶּמִים *V'ha-may-see-ach eel'meem* Who helps the mute to speak  
וְהַמְתִּיר אֲסוּרִים *V'ha-ma-teer asooreem* Who unties the tied-up/imprisoned  
וְהַסּוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים *V'ha-somaych nofleem* Who holds up the falling/fallen  
וְהַזּוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים *V'hazokayf k'foofeem* Who straightens the bent

At this time of year especially, we can be using our prayers to help us focus on the process of *teshuvah* (repentance, better yet "turning ourselves back to the way"). The object in one of the phrases might describe a person at this moment -- sleeping, mute, tied up, imprisoned, bent. Or maybe the lines describe a process from being "asleep" to being awake but not knowing what to say next...

Focus on one or more of these lines to seek a point of inner strength, or for reassurance, that if you are "asleep" you can wake up and think about your life, that if you are "mute" you can find the word you need to think to yourself or to say to open a conversation with someone important in your life.