

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.

everything, everyone *hakol* הַכֹּל
everyone, all of them *v'chulam* וְכֻלָּם
all of *kol, v'chol* כֹּל, וְכֹל-

One of the small words that is woven throughout the prayers is *kol* in its many forms. In the Talmud, "all" does not simply mean "all." It means: *Even more. Even more than you might think. Even more than you might have thought possible. Even more than meets the eye.*

So for instance, the Talmud teaches that in the *Sh'ma*, to love God *b'chol* כָּל-לְבָבְךָ *l'vav'cha* "with all your heart" means: even with your evil inclination, the part of you that doesn't seem to love. Love God with your greed, your ego, etc. and use their energy to do good things (e.g. make more money to give more to *tzedakah*).

Another *kavvanah* (focus, intention) for this word, whenever you see it, is to expand the circle of people in your prayers by more and more. All the people in my family; all the people in this room; all the people we know; all the people in the community....and so on, to all of creation. The "even more" part of the word you can use to think about *even the people I don't know, even the people I don't like, even the people I don't usually take time to think about.*