

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

וְכָלֵם מִקְבְּלִים עֲלֵיהֶם	<i>v'chulam m'kablim alayhem</i>	and all of them take on themselves
עַל מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם	<i>ol malchut shamayim</i>	the yoke of the kingdom of heaven
זֶה מִזֶּה	<i>zeh mizeh</i>	one from another
וְנוֹתְנִים רְשׁוּת זֶה לְזֶה	<i>v'notnim r'shut zeh lazeh</i>	and give permission one to the other

This section comes from a version of the *Kedushah* that is said while we are still seated. It describes the way the angels in God's presence help each other to praise God, to say their sacred words. This is a paraphrase and interpretation of the vision of the prophet Isaiah.

The prayer community of the angels -- this is of course a metaphor -- is an ideal for our own prayer community. Each of us should be able, through our presence, to give and receive permission to use our time of prayer to communicate with God, to meditate, to concentrate, to reflect, to hear.

We can focus with these phrases on that *kavannah*, that intention, in one of two ways. We can remind ourselves to add to an atmosphere of sanctity for others, to remember the importance of the prayers that everyone is saying, to judge all who are present on a scale of merit. Or we can take in the strength that comes from others, and never be embarrassed by our own fervency in prayer.