

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. 117

יִשְׂמַח מֹשֶׁה בְּמַתְנַת חֶלְקוֹ	<i>Yismach Moshe b'matnat chelko</i> Moshe rejoiced at his special gift
כִּי עָבַד נְאֻמָּן קָרָאתָ לוֹ	<i>ki eved ne'eman karata lo</i> for You called him "faithful servant"
כְּלִיל תִּפְאֶרֶת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ נָתַתָּ	<i>klil tiferet b'rosho natata</i> complete splendor You put on his head
בְּעֹמְדוֹ לְפָנֶיךָ עַל הַר סִינַי	<i>b'omdo l'fanecha al har Sinai</i> when he stood before You on Mt Sinai
וּשְׁנַי לוחות אבנים הוריד בְּיָדוֹ	<i>ushnay luchot avanim horid b'yado</i> and two stone tablets he brought down in his hand
וְכָתוּב בָּהֶם שְׁמִירַת שַׁבָּת	<i>v'chatuv bahem shmirat Shabbat</i> and written on them the observance of Shabbat
וְכֵן כָּתוּב בְּתוֹרָתְךָ	<i>v'chen katuv b'toratecha</i> and such is written in Your Torah...

These are the first words of the section of the Amidah that is unique to Shabbat *shacharit*. Rather than starting with abstract ideas about Shabbat, they give us an image to savor.

Each phrase adds another detail to the description. These words can be said as meditative imagery. Take in each phrase, and imagine yourself -- receiving a gift, getting a special title, feeling a crown on your head, standing in a special place, receiving the tablets to cradle, perceiving the words.

One clue to this use of the prayer may be in the opening words. *Yismach Moshe* literally means "Moshe shall rejoice", or possibly "Moshe rejoices." Though the words of the this paragraph and the next are about past happenings told in Torah, they point at the present moment of accepting Shabbat with joy. And also the future, as Shabbat is known as *me'ayn olam haba*, "a taste of the World to Come."