

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.*

--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 to you to add to your "repertoire". If you find one, 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, you needn't rush to move on with the congregation.

Siddur Sim Shalom, p. 106

נְצִיחַ גְּדֻלָּהּ וְגְבוּרָה *Netzach Gedulah U'gvurah* Endurance, greatness, and power

We conclude the *P'sukei D'zimra*, the warm-up psalms and songs, with a summing up. We start to turn to ideas. We touch base in the נְשִׁמַת כּוֹל-חַי *Nishmat Kol Chai* section with each part of our body and with our breath and words, in order to move forward in our prayers.

Each word in itself could be a meditation. If we were to take this phrase alone, we might contrast two aspects of ourselves. נְצִיחַ *Netzach* means timelessness or endurance. It represents what grounds us fundamentally, today as every other day, this Shabbat just like last Shabbat. It also stands for our perseverance, toward what we seek that is important and vital, or to stay with what the week might have thrown us off from.

גְּבוּרָה *Gevurah* means power. We might take it as energy, as a new exertion to make something right, maybe for the first time. Or the energy to force a change.

As we move into the service, we can reflect on the week. Which of these two qualities did I draw on? What solid ground did I stand on, when something unsettling happened? What initiative did I take? Or we can meditate on a challenge or dilemma we are still facing. How can I strengthen myself through נְצִיחַ *Netzach*, my core commitments? Where will I need

גְּבוּרָה *Gevurah*, the strength to try a new approach?