

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. 105

וְכָל קָרֵב וְכָל לַיּוֹת יִזְמְרוּ לְשִׁמְךָ *V'chol kerev uch'layot y'zamru lishmecha*
and all my organs (!) sing to Your name

The paragraph on the top of p. 105 goes through all the parts of the body. Its formal-sounding words define the role that every part plays in praising God. This prayer brings the opening part of the service to an end. One bookend is the list of the morning blessings we began with. This is the other bookend, coming back to the body.

And though the translation in our *Siddur* does use formal words, the idea is to pause and *feel* each part of the body as it is mentioned. Obviously, the lips and the mouth have their function: to speak and sing holy words. But I love the line I quoted here. It literally means "my internal organs and my kidneys." Aren't they just part of the support system, the mechanical part that keeps the mind and the soul going?

Perhaps -- and if so, take a moment to feel them or at least to notice them, because without them we could not perform our higher functions or fulfill our high purposes. But the prayer goes on to quote a psalm, which says that it is our physical insides that know God, and that understand God's justice and compassion. They are what moves and acts, even when we think we are not doing anything. They keep the rhythm; they are always mobilizing for strength and healing, even when we think nothing is happening.