

Rabbi Carmy, Consulting Editor of *Tradition*, teaches Jewish Studies and Philosophy at Yeshiva University.

WITHOUT INTELLIGENCE, WHENCE PRAYER?

If he forgot it was *Shabbat* and continued as on weekdays . . . he should complete the blessing *honen ha-da'at* [who endows with intelligence]. This is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi, who said: "I wonder how they could eliminate *honen ha-da'at* on *Shabbat*. If there is no intelligence, whence prayer?"

(*Jerusalem Talmud*)¹

Truly it is not only in man's material ambitions, in which he resembles the beast, that he requires the Torah's measures to circumscribe and order them, but also for his lofty spiritual ambitions, including the foundations and ramifications of prayer, he requires the limits and appraisal of the Torah. . . . Therefore it is improper for a man hastily to abandon occupation in Torah for the sake of prayer.

(*Rav Abraham Isaac Kook*)²

I don't believe in artificial nostrums. Much is affected by the religious atmosphere, suffused with superficial instrumentalism; much is due to the tendency towards ceremonialization—which is, at times, vulgarization, of religion; and much is brought about by the lack of a serious capacity for introspection and examination of the world and oneself.

(*Rav Joseph Dov Soloveitchik*)³

Few human enterprises, leaving aside for the moment those we share with our fellow animals, are as universal as prayer. Common human experiences impel us to worship a Being beyond our comprehension, to praise what we admire, to express our needs in hope of

This essay was originally presented to the Orthodox Forum, convened by the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, Yeshiva University, in March 2000.

their satisfaction, to be grateful for benefactions received, to cry out in pain and remorse before the One who can ease and reconcile our distress. Yet rarely are our fellow human beings as opaque to us as in the activity of prayer. Reciting our way through the same words and paragraphs as our neighbors, whether alone or in unison, silent or shouting, their thoughts and motives remain firmly closed to us.

Hardly less obscure to us are our own thoughts and motives. For observant Jews, routine is surely one of the motives, and obligation is surely present in our thoughts. Both fully observant Jews and more transient worshippers cherish the hope that prayer will do them some good as well, that it will leave us happier, more elevated in spirit, more at peace with ourselves. Frequently we enter into the words themselves, as we are instructed to: we perform the gestures of praise, petition, and thanksgiving mapped out in the *Amida*; we accept the yoke of God and His commandments when reading *Shema*; we confess specific sins and ask for His forgiveness. And when we enter into the words we are reciting, as part of our entering into the holy words of the prayer, we set aside many of our imaginings of the good we hope for, concentrating instead on the requests and expressions spelled out in the prayers themselves.

Prayer is thus an endeavor that baffles the categories of the transparently public and the intimately private. Just as surely, prayer, both in its narrow definition as the *Amida*, and in the broader usage that coincides with the *Siddur*, challenges the distinction between religion as a mode of seeking to satisfy our own desires, however elevated, and religion as the service of the heart, offered up to God in response to His demand, liberated from any aspiration to reward. On the one hand, Jewish prayer is a *mitsva* among others, circumscribed by external gesture, performed at regular times and in a set order. On the other hand, prayer is meaningless unless it wells from the depths of the heart, while standing in the presence of the living God.

Metaphysical dialectic engenders sociological paradox. Even those modern Jews who often complacently settle for the lowest common denominator of halakhic observance, may yet, with urgent pangs of emptiness and regret, rue a desultory *Amida* as an irretrievable opportunity for spiritual growth, unaccountably squandered. At the same time, we witness individuals and entire congregations, ostensibly committed to maximal halakhic achievement, who are, most of the time, oddly and even militantly lax in their conduct with respect to prayer, awakening periodically to the same burden of guilt and shame that affects their more liberal brethren. Unlike other "duties of the heart," prayer is too

ubiquitous and public a feature of our lives to permit perpetual evasion and self-deception. Failure is too frequent to protect our ease of mind. For precisely when our *need* for prayer is greatest the staleness of a myriad indolent recitations rises to the tongue like heartburn; neglect sputters in our spiritual arteries like rusty water in a disused pump.

Can thinking about prayer improve the quality of our prayer? Why not? One reason that thought about prayer might interfere with prayer is that the two are distinct activities. Praying is praising, petitioning, thanking and so forth. Thinking about prayer is philosophizing. The contradiction is as patent as Yogi Berra's famous contention that you can't hit and think at the same time. Commenting on R. Hamnuna's dictum that "the time of Torah is separate from the time for prayer" (*Shabbat* 10a), Rav Kook asserts that Torah provides man with novel intellectual insights. By contrast, "prayer deals not with the discovery of new knowledge and the enrichment of the human intellect with their truth, but with the utilization of already attained knowledge, and to deepen through the power of feeling the imprint of moral knowledge on the powers of the soul."⁴ In a narrower connection, the Mishna's condemnation of the individual who calls upon God to have mercy on us as on the bird's nest of *Devarim* 22:6, R. Kook insists on the inappropriateness of introducing theological fine points into the text of prayer: "One is confusing, by calculations of profound wisdom and speculating on reasons for the *mitsvot*, the majestic feeling that should be natural and simple and whole-hearted in prayer."⁵

A more sweeping objection to the intellectualization of prayer, in our time, is expressed by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. What *kavvana* (intention) do you have when you pray, he asks a prominent *rosh yeshiva*: what do you actually think about? And when the scholar replies that he contemplates "the connection between the sentences, the words, the various sections. . . ." says Steinsaltz, "I snapped that this is something to do on *Shabbat* afternoon after the cholent."⁶ It is treating the prayer as a text to be analyzed rather than an utterance to be appropriated and expressed. The illusion that this scholarship is *kavvana* becomes an obstacle to genuine prayer.

It is easy for those familiar with these pitfalls, and for others who take for granted a romantic critique of cerebration, to condemn intellectual work as a death of the heart, in the spirit of Wordsworth's "we murder to dissect." And yet, as the *Yerushalmi* states, "if there is no intelligence, whence prayer?" Feelings do not exist separate from the beliefs with which they are bound inextricably. Words take on their significance

within the framework of larger verbal structures and rituals. We would not dream of launching into a speech of crucial import without a prior grasp of its structural unfolding and social context. To do so would achieve, not an eloquent spontaneity, but a gibbering muddle. No more can one undertake to pray without knowing the order and significance of the *seder ha-tefillot*, without appreciating the intention that our words endeavor to encompass. All this requires familiarity and depth, not ignorance and thoughtlessness. You can't philosophize or halakhicize and simultaneously pray—but you can make yourself ready, and clear the intellectual and experiential space in which *tefilla* can happen.

R. Kook and R. Soloveitchik, the master thinkers of Torah Judaism in our age, both devoted a considerable portion of their theological and halakhic work to prayer. What distinguishes them from their medieval predecessors is their commitment to intellectual reflection as a means of overcoming modern man's alienation from authentic prayer. Their explicit goal is not only to understand prayer as a halakhic and religious phenomenon, or to contribute to the elucidation of philosophical conundrums relating to prayer. They are at least as concerned to evoke the nature of *tefilla* in a manner that will initiate and enhance its proper, heartfelt performance. If, recognizing as we do the gap between thinking about prayer and actually praying, we hope to harness the former in the service of the latter, we are fortunate to resort to their pages and enter into their preoccupations.

Our task in this paper is to look at a variety of ways in which the study of prayer is useful, or essential, to a satisfactory, and satisfying, practice of prayer. We will frequently appeal to the work of R. Kook and R. Soloveitchik and, when necessary, attempt to confront, and to surmount, unresolved barriers to the translation of their ideas from paper to experience. It is not my purpose to report a typical cross section of these thinkers' rich, inexhaustible creativity in this area, or to undertake the detailed line-by-line analysis that their texts often reward. The selection of examples and problems reflects my own concerns—the difficulty in summoning up spontaneity, the advantages and pitfalls of intellectual reflection, the tension between the intimate and the public faces of prayers, the coexistence of the stormy, vigorous life of prayer, and the desire for inner peace through prayer. Nonetheless I hope that my obsessions, filtered through the experience of the great twentieth century interpreters of prayer, will strike a chord in my readers' hearts.

I. DARING TO START—SPONTANEITY AND COMPULSION

Immediately one acknowledges the vacuity of soulless prayer, the Satan, as it were, rubs his hands in glee and breaks into a filibustering jig. For how can we address God from within our present torpor? Must one not first attain the proper state of mind, and only then pray? First, then, pray for *kavvana*. But in order to pray for *kavvana*, one must already possess the requisite second-order *kavvana*. Yet this too is elusive unless one has already started along the road that leads to God. The result of this infinite regress is either a paralysis of despair or a comedy of Sartrean *mauvais foi* in which the individual tries very hard to coincide with his, or her, role, down to the physical exertions and facial contortions, but succeeds only in pretending to become what one wants to be. Self-consciousness, it would seem, sucks us deeper and deeper into the spiritual quicksand. Mindless behavioral conformity suddenly looks like a tolerable, albeit unattractive, solution.

Viewed superficially, the psychological obstruction becomes greater in the light of R. Soloveitchik's teaching that *tefilla* requires a *mattir*, meaning that we are permitted to pray only because God has commanded us to pray, and that our speech is acceptable to Him only because the words of prayer are provided to us by Scripture. The difficulty of beginning is compounded by the belief that, in ourselves, we are unworthy to approach God, and that the infinite qualitative distance between man and God is bridged, not in fellowship, but only through the experience of being commanded.

At a deeper level, however, the Rav's doctrine, which seems to impede *tefilla*, ends up facilitating it. Despite our unworthiness, we know that infinite God, for reasons that may well be incomprehensible to us, has chosen to require our prayer, and to hear our personal, self-interested petitions as the fulfillment of His command. We also know that our predecessors, men and women whom we cannot hope to emulate, have cleared the way before us. Prayer, therefore, is not merely an imposition on God's attention, as it were, or an absurd raid on His inarticulate and immeasurable exaltation. It is a duty that we cannot shirk. Imperative thunder casts out inhibition.

By the same token, the knowledge that prayer is a privilege, a psychological necessity that yet is not a right, precludes treating prayer as a casual activity. At the root of our inability to pray seriously we often find an inability to take ourselves seriously, to honor our genuine needs, our joys, our troubles and devotions, as worthy of our own solemn con-

cern. The Rav's insistence that we recognize the tremor of unworthiness, the compulsory invitation that underlies our engagement in prayer, is thus of a piece with his stress on the vigorous, honest assertion of one's needs before Him. Knowing that one requires, and is endowed with, a divine summons to prayer, becomes the starting point for the prayerful enterprise.

The difficulty of initiating prayer is implicitly met by one of R. Kook's key concepts: "the perpetual prayer of the soul."⁷ According to R. Kook, the soul ever expresses itself in prayer, even when the prayer is subterranean, so to speak, and surreptitious. Worship of God through Torah and wisdom is a disclosure of this concealed prayer. Actual prayer is its realization, which R. Kook compares to the opening of a flower towards the dew or towards the sun. The prolonged absence of prayer with *kavvana* causes blockage in the flow of prayer, and this deficiency mends only gradually with the renewal of unobstructed channels. Yet R. Kook cherishes the idea of incessant, unconscious prayer. Proper prayer, he states, "can only arise from the thought that the soul truly prays perpetually."

Why is the belief in unconscious, pre-conscious prayer so important for R. Kook? In the context of the passage under discussion, the most plausible explanation is that prayer's constancy identifies the rhythm of worship with the unbroken cadence of the cosmos. Prayer is natural to man and to the universe of which he is a part. At the same time, the prayer that hums through our bodies without interruption ought not to be vulnerable to the metaphysical stutter that threatens to prevent the individual from getting started.

The institution of Psalm 51:17 ("God, open my lips . . .") as the obligatory preamble to the *Amida* makes the prayer for prayerfulness part of the prayer itself. R. Soloveitchik's emphasis on the integral place of this verse in the *Amida* may thus offer a halakhic parallel to the phenomenology we have just derived from R. Kook. The recitation of this verse, acknowledging that our lips open in prayer only when God graciously opens them, inaugurates the prayer itself.

Contrary to the popular notion that informal prayer is more fluent and more authentic, our previous discussion points to the conclusion that a fixed, formal liturgy serves better to counteract the danger of self-conscious paralysis. It goes without saying that genuine participation in an orderly, structured ritual presupposes, at the very least, a tacit understanding of the words, gestures and shape of the activity.

Standard Jewish worship follows a fixed text. While an Anglican like

C. S. Lewis, who tackles the problem of getting started in the first chapter of his *Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer*, appreciates the value of an established text in averting meandering, stillborn prayer, we ordinarily associate a proclivity for impromptu prayer, audible and public, with a certain kind of Protestant piety. When Jews get “spirituality,” we often perceive this, not always incorrectly, as a rejection of traditional Jewish prayer and a hankering for emotional outpourings we stigmatize as Christian, above all as a preference for a framework that does not place so much weight on experiencing the liturgy as it stands, with all its structural and linguistic depth and sophistication.

It is natural that we lament such tendencies as reflexes of ignorance and intellectual shallowness, and that we combat the separation of thought from feeling through lines of reasoning like those utilized throughout this essay. It is even easier to caricature a Christianity of unctuous tones and pious swagger; the preachy hectoring that bullies a congregation while poking an argumentative finger in the divine solar plexus, as it were; the unguarded silliness and the inevitable theological solecisms.⁸

Nevertheless, the Christian practice of formulating prayer spontaneously, and out loud, forces the individual to take responsibility for his or her petitions, whatever the embarrassing or unfortunate results. By contrast, the Jew, or any other devotee of a set liturgy, who is unready to fully appropriate the text, is liable to relinquish personal identification with the words that he, or she, utter, and to merge completely into the anonymous gray mumble of civic routine.

Profound tensions run through our spiritual lives in general, and our experience of prayer in particular: tensions between formal structure and untutored spontaneity; between the discriminating consciousness and the unleashing of raw spiritual energy; between individual and community; between intimacy and public accessibility. Before continuing our discussion, let me take the liberty of exhibiting a passage from a contemporary work of fiction. The early sections of David Duncan’s novel *The Brothers K* depict a family of Seventh Day Adventists some forty years ago. In the following scene, children are invited to improvise prayer at Sunday school. The irrepressible volunteer, as usual, is a hare-lipped girl. Keeping before us her effusion, and the narrator’s reaction, may help us to recall how much is at stake in our philosophical exploration of the subject, how startling and wondrous and terrifying:

‘*Nyelp us to nlove nyou nmore and nmore!*’ she prays as Micah laughs outright, ‘*and nmore and nmore!*’ she pleads as girls grab Kleenex, ‘*and snill*

nyet nmore! she begs as boys fizz up and overflow like jostled bottles of pop. *Nenter our narts!* she cries, her voice breaking, her body trembling so violently it makes my chair tremble too. *Nenter nthem now! Nright now! Nwee are nso nlost, nso nvery nlost, nwithout nThee!* And even as it occurs to me that this must be real prayer—even as I see that what is being laughed at is the sound of someone actually ramming a heartfelt message past all the crossed signals and mazes of our bodies, brains and embarrassments clear on in to her God—when I open my fists I see a face so exposed, so twisted with love, grief and longing, that if she was my sister I would take off my coat, and I'd wrap her up and hold her, and I would beg her never, ever to do this naked, passionate, impossible thing again.⁹

II. HOW DOES REFLECTION HELP?

The exposed face, whose prayer we have just listened in on, belongs to an unsophisticated child, though one should not underestimate how much her vocabulary and cadences owe to the grown ups. As R. Soloveitchik often reminded us, the authentic religious personality never stops identifying with the immediacy of the child's experience.¹⁰ Yet our perspective cannot help but expand towards a greater complexity. On the one hand, our mature emotional palette is, or should be, more variegated and subtle than the child's. On the other hand, perhaps for that very reason, the connection between emotional life and ritual response is less vivid. When, at times, the adult posture towards the world becomes, not childlike, but positively childish, jaded and immature at once, one wonders whether any emotional vitality subsists that can be redeemed in the name of religion. Pampered, worldly wise souls are calloused and anesthetized, in a way that keeps out the love and grief and longing, while underneath the hardness and the haze, a mute discomfort reigns, that is to the love and grief and longing of the striving spirit like chronic nausea to an athlete's honest agony.

To overcome this order of spiritual numbness means both to make the individual emotionally sensitive and to refine his, or her, intellect. Early in his *Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto invited the reader to direct his mind to moments of deeply felt religious experience. "Whoever cannot do this," he continues, "is requested to read no farther; for it is not easy to discuss questions of religious psychology with one who can recollect the emotions of his adolescence, the discomforts of indigestion, or, say, social feelings, but cannot recall any intrinsically religious feelings."¹¹ From a halakhic standpoint, such an ultimatum is ruled out by the

obligatory urgency of prayer. The elements of human experience presupposed by prayer must be accessible to the average human being. They cannot be limited to the inner world of the religious virtuoso.

The hallmark of R. Soloveitchik's work on prayer is his full commitment to the double challenge we have outlined. From below, as it were, he has demonstrated that the ladder of prayer can indeed be pitched where all ladders start, in the perennial occupations of the heart. Regarding prayer, as in other areas, R. Soloveitchik is not embarrassed by the fact that the ordinary believer comes to God with mixed motives.¹² Unlike the mystics, he champions a straightforward interpretation of petitionary prayer and its central place in *tefilla*. God has commanded us to request His help with respect to our mundane needs; there is no reason to salvage the ingredient of self-seeking in this by re-describing our entreaties as disguised moves in an occult metaphysical exercise whose true object is the *Shekhina* rather than the speaker.¹³ Against the blander apostles of spiritual uplift, he does not shy away from confronting human sinfulness, in all its ugliness, as a real setting in which the struggle for holiness takes place.

The building blocks of *tefilla*—praise, petition, gratitude—and the other components of the liturgy, correspond to universal human experiences. Consciousness of depth crises, which is important to the Rav's conception of petition, would seem to require special sensitivity, insofar as this type of crisis does not force itself upon the sufferer willy-nilly, as does a disease or famine, but requires some degree of reflective liveliness. Yet R. Soloveitchik believes that a consideration of boredom, shame, and other general human experiences, provides the needed awareness.¹⁴ No doubt he would endorse the second reason for understanding prayer as petition offered by Karl Barth (with whom the Rav also shares the emphasis on prayer as a commandment): "only in this way is there any safeguard that the real man comes before God in prayer."¹⁵

The other facet of the Rav's treatment of prayer consists of his elaboration of its halakhic structure and import. Halakha confirms and molds the subtlety and nuance of the prayerful life. Where the uninitiated turns the pages of the *Siddur*, indiscriminately wending his, or her, way from the beginning of the proceedings to the end, the halakha establishes a fixed, meaningful order. As we all know, the *Amida* is not a jumble of benedictions, but a sequence in which petition must be prefaced by praise and sealed with thanksgiving; the connection of the *Amida* with the preceding *Shema*, linking redemption and prayer, is likewise essential to the encounter prescribed by halakha.

R. Soloveitchik expanded and deepened such insights. Thus, for instance, *Pesukei de-Zimra* and *Hallel* are not merely two series of Psalms that play a part in different segments of weekday or festival worship. The former is essentially an act of scripture study, which consists in reading Psalms 145-150, inculcating a theological message about God the Creator that prepares the individual for the main part of the morning service. The latter is the fulfillment of the obligation to extol God on special occasions, which uses Psalms 113-118 as its text; the meaning of the act is praise and thanksgiving, not the fact that sections of scripture are being read. This fundamental difference is reflected in the different opening and closing benedictions for the two recitals and in other details.¹⁶ Or, to take another example, thanksgiving (*hoda'a*) appears in the *Amida* and in *Birkat ha-Mazon*. In the former, the benediction is accompanied by bowing; in the latter, bowing is inappropriate. Why? Because the expression of gratitude in the *Amida* takes place in the context of prayer, which entails submission to God, hence bowing. In *Birkat ha-Mazon* the context is one of thanksgiving after a satisfying meal. Both prayers thank God, but the nature of thanksgiving cannot be the same in two disparate frameworks.¹⁷

"Without intelligence, whence prayer?" Intelligence is the path to knowledge of oneself, thorough knowledge of the words and gestures in which one is engaged—without such knowledge, how can one fully discharge the duty of prayer, and how can one find in prayer the resources for spiritual growth? Even if the individual, or the group, luckily avoid major theological or halakhic error, one might as well speak of performing a piece of music that one hasn't studied and rehearsed. One may discharge the halakhic obligation to pray, but the flavor of prayer will be missing, and a feeling of spiritual malaise and dissatisfaction is one consequence.

The last analogy reminds us that the knowledge of which we speak must be internalized. A student once asked me, regarding the Rav's painstakingly described journey through the first three benedictions of the *Amida*, how anyone can actually concentrate on the hairpin turns of consciousness implicit in the text?¹⁸ Can one indeed shift from the unworthiness to pray expressed in the preamble to the confidence of *Avot*, to the sense of awe that dominates *Gevurot*, then to the synthesis of *Kedusha*, the various petitions, and the three blessings of thanksgiving that, according to the Rav, recapitulate, in reverse order, the themes of the opening three? No matter how slow the pace (and whistling past the opportunities for woolgathering that beset artificial prolongation) the task seems psychologically impossible. One cannot pray and stage-

manage multiple changes of mood at the same time. The only answer is that repetition and habituation must come to the aid of theological and halakhic understanding. The act of prayer must occupy the foreground of consciousness while the interpretation of prayer, in the background, provides the meaning. As R. Kook remarks more than once in discussing prayer, the sensitive and disciplined imagination, essential for living prayer, is grounded in familiarity and habit.

So far we have examined the kind of ongoing reflection on the human condition and on the liturgical text that usually makes its intellectual mark gradually, slowly seeping into the cracks of our consciousness and bodies until we are able to enact the halakhic distinctions and make the work of the liturgy our own. Sometimes intellectual insight, when it is achieved, is more sudden. So sudden, indeed, that in retrospect it seems too obvious to have required discovery. What we discover, in effect, is not a mystery about the institution of prayer, or about ourselves, but an elementary grammatical truth about the nature of prayer. In such cases we are liable to underestimate the intellectual nature of the insight. Let me illustrate with two examples:

1) Some years ago, I wrote an essay on petitionary prayer.¹⁹ My analysis was heavily influenced by R. Soloveitchik's view that prayer reflects man's attempt to learn his true needs. Yet, faithful to the Rav's outlook, I rejected a purely didactic theory of prayer, in which prayer is equated with self-analysis. A writer sympathetic with my aims and insights nevertheless imputed to my philosophizing a failure to avoid the didactic approach.²⁰ Having emphasized adequately, I thought, that the individual is not merely judging himself, but wants God to respond and to help the supplicant to attain his legitimate goals, I was initially unsure as to where I had opened myself to misunderstanding. Upon careful review I found that insufficient attention had been given to the formal act of petition. Honestly presenting one's situation to another person who is benevolent, and able to help, may come close to asking for help, and can certainly be interpreted as a broad hint that help is wanted. But, in grammatical terms, it is not quite a request. Both the text of prayer and the spirit of prayer demand of the individual that he, or she, explicitly address God in petition. If it takes the effort to write an article, and to digest a critique, to grasp this apparently simple point, then so be it.²¹

2) R. Hayyim Soloveichik's famous analysis of *kavvana* in prayer defines the act of prayer as awareness that one is "standing before the king," i.e., in the presence of God. The Hazon Ish, among other criti-

cisms, holds that such awareness is implicit in the very fact that an individual enters into the verbal behavior and gestures associated with halakhic prayer; any additional requirement is redundant.²² It would appear, then, that the consciousness of addressing God, and the conception of God accompanying our address, is so deeply embedded in the grammar of prayer as to render discussion superfluous. Whatever the case might have been when the Hazon Ish annotated his copy of R. Hayyim, many traditional Jews are both amazed and inspired when they encounter the following statement by R. Hayyim's grandson:

It is impossible to imagine prayer without, at the time, feeling the nearness and greatness of the Creator, His absolute justice, His fatherly concern with human affairs, His anger and wrath caused by unjust deeds. When we bow in prayer, we must experience His soothing hand and the infinite love and mercy for His creatures. We cling to Him as a living God, not as an idea, as abstract Being. We are in His company and are certain of His sympathy. There is, in prayer, an experience of emotions that can only be produced by direct contact with God.²³

III. AN EXAMPLE OF REFLECTION ON THE TEXT: ON HEALTH AND WEALTH

The victim of Rabbi Steinsaltz's disapproval, in our opening section, probably did not immerse himself in the intellectual quest outlined above, although, even if he did, he would still be vulnerable to criticism: the time for study is before, not during prayer. The kind of inquiry that can effectively be transferred to the post-cholent hour would more likely be a localized examination of the text, the extraction of assorted *diyyukim* and homiletical goodies from the lines of the *Siddur*. But the aimlessness of many such investigations and the sinking feeling we often experience when called upon to celebrate the results, or at least nod appreciatively, should not obscure the fact that meaning resides in the details, not only in structure and theme.

After all that R. Soloveitchik taught about the importance of petition in prayer, the supplicant must work his way through thirteen specific requests. Petition, on the Rav's understanding, pertains to our needs, about the true nature of which we are more or less deceived. The fixed order of prayer is the Torah's mode of educating us to a better comprehension of our true table of needs.²⁴ Ultimately, of course, the text itself cannot tell us what exactly our needs are with respect to

our various troubles; that is why we address our personal entreaty to God. Can the careful, word for word, examination of the text, in addition to the investigation of its general structure, yield some insight that will at least channel our thoughts in the right direction?

Let us examine two petitionary blessings: the prayer for health (*refa'enu*) and the prayer for prosperity (*barekh alenu*). Prayer for health flourishes today, not only in the privacy of the *Amida*, but in the spectacular boom in *Mi she-berakh's* and the popularity of public Psalm recitation. Most of the time we are praying for others, frequently for people in whose fate we have no selfish interest. No doubt we are all in need of material well being too, but our prayers in that direction seem less important in the overall scheme of our public spiritual existence. This, despite the fact that in days gone by, prayer for economic sustenance was a most prolific subject of petition, as witness the elective petitions inserted in our *Siddurim*. Popular culture portrays the sobbing ignoramus for whom all prayer, even the most abstruse hymn, boils down to one impassioned message: "*Ribbono shel Olam, give parnasa,*" while the most respectable and sophisticated frankly acknowledge the central place in prayer occupied by this need.²⁵ Why is it not so prominent in contemporary consciousness, even while prayer in time of illness flourishes?

One outstanding difference between threats to our health and other problems is that physical illness lends itself to objective definition: we know that something is wrong, and we count on others to understand and to empathize as best they can. Moreover, we are willing to communicate our suffering to others in the expectation, often met, that they will know how to respond. Thus we feel free to publicize our trouble, to ask for the *Mi she-berakh*. The same is true when we are threatened with poverty resulting from a drought or the collapse of demand for the goods we had labored to produce and had hoped to bring to market. Such was the typical experience of our ancestors. In the *parnasa* crises characteristic of our own situation, by contrast, when one is frustrated on the job or desolate in one's relations to others, the nature of the pain is harder to locate, and we are often reluctant to speak and find relief. In R. Soloveitchik's terms, illness manifests a surface crisis, whereas other difficulties belong to the realm of depth crisis. One might imagine that when standing before God, we need not bother with precise accounts of our condition: He knows it all. Nor need we feel inhibited before the Almighty. Nevertheless our social habits and confused self-knowledge seem to carry over into our private prayer as well. We will return to this phenomenon later on.

Let us focus more narrowly, for the moment, on the petition for prosperity. To begin with, like our other requests, it is phrased in the plural: we pray for others, not for ourselves alone. But the language of the prayer is oddly muted, at least when looked at from a modern perspective. Our prayer is limited to “this year and its crop.” We beseech the Almighty to bless it “like the good years” (*ka-shanim ha-tovot*): good years; not optimal years. When we pray for health, the text does not place similar restrictions on the scope of our petition. In principle, one might pray for endless years of boundless health: nothing in the text discourages us from forming such an intention. The words of *barekh alenu*, by contrast, encourage us to set our sights lower.

Now the concrete prayer for health that is uttered by flesh and blood people need not request the optimum. When we, or those close to us, are ill, we often bargain with God. In the act of praying, we often discover what it is that we really want, and need, with respect to our bodily integrity and function. Take the diary kept by David Klinghoffer’s adoptive mother in her battle with the cancer that eventually killed her:

‘Dear God,’ she writes, ‘please help me survive this test!’

‘Help me, dear God, give me strength and let me rid myself of the cane. I need you, dearest God, please let me feel your love. Tonight depression again has filled my thoughts.’

‘How can I calm this turmoil inside me? Only God is my salvation.’²⁶

Mrs. Klinghoffer is far from being a religious virtuoso. Yet the record presented to us is a model of passion and proportion. The formulas of traditional Judaism, of which she was, in any event, not a regular practitioner, would not have denied her an unchecked hope for total recovery. Someone else in her situation might authentically have prayed for the maximum. The question before us is: can the same be said with regard to our desire for prosperity, for material success?

R. Kook touched upon this problem in a slightly different context. Discussing the appropriate blessings bestowed by a guest upon his host, he notes that these include a wish for the host’s exceeding success (*me’od*). The guest should not include himself in this particular request. In principle, wealth can be viewed as a means of greater service to God and the community; it is, therefore, a worthy benefit. In considering one’s own needs, however, “each person should take hold for himself of the middle character and should be concerned that great riches will cause him to deviate from the straight path.” Moreover, continues R. Kook, fortuitous, outsize success generally comes about through clever-

ness at commercial affairs, usually a zero sum game. One may wish that others deserve such favor, but it is wrong to want it for oneself.²⁷

R. Kook's interpretation targets two dangers in the desire to gain exceeding wealth for oneself. The second is the likelihood that surpassing enrichment will be at the expense of others. The first is that immoderate wealth, and even more so fixing one's ambition upon it, is corrupting, quite apart from the consequences to others. One cannot help recalling Alasdair MacIntyre's remark on the different translations of Aristotle's term *pleonexia* (excess). When Hobbes paraphrases *pleonexia* as "a desire of more than their share," and others translate it as "greed," they indicate a peculiarly modern attitude, according to which excess is bad only if it interferes with the continuous and limitless expansion of others.²⁸ R. Kook displays penetrating insight into the mechanism of this category of acquisitiveness, but he also insists on the more traditional Aristotelian suspicion of the intemperate lust for possession. In any event, the text of *barekh alenu*, which we recite thrice daily, clearly reflects the ethic of moderation as to material possession. It is fully consonant with R. Kook's more rigorous interpretation, which makes acquisitiveness a vice in itself.

Our close reading of *barekh alenu*, in the light of R. Kook's comments, reveals a clash between the value system of most upper middle class congregants and the table of values presupposed by the prayerbook. That the Torah's outlook on the symbolic and practical importance of moneymaking and acquisition is alien to our society should not be astonishing. The great cultural contradiction does not need the confirmation of our literary-theological analysis. We pray because we are sinners in need of forgiveness; we pray because we are self-deceivers in need of enlightenment. The point of our discussion is better to understand the mechanism of that enlightenment.

As we have seen, the reason that *refa'enu* is closer to our hearts than *barekh alenu* is that the appropriate language for speaking about illness is readily available to us, while the language with which to approach God with our needs pertaining to material welfare proves more elusive in the social and economic situations prevalent in contemporary middle class existence. We have noted, first of all, that the threat of illness is easier to formulate objectively than the anxieties we experience about prosperity. We must now take this idea one small step forward. In order to discover the language with which to pray about depth crisis, one must have depth, that is to say, inwardness. To the extent that one's psychological life is superficial, meaning that it is nothing but

a mirror of the other human surfaces that he, or she, meets, the awareness of depth crisis will always remain mute and unredeemed. One can go through the liturgy, perhaps even manage an appreciative nod at the nice *diyyukim* that, with R. Kook's aid, we made in the text. Alas, the words of the liturgy will not penetrate the person repeating them. Without individuality, no inwardness; without inwardness, no depth.

Individuality, as expressed in privacy, is necessary for another reason. To ask, with reference to material possessions, what my genuine needs are, entails not only self-knowledge, but also self-criticism. According to R. Shimon bar Yohai, the *Amida* is recited silently in order not to mortify sinners confessing their transgressions; this is comparable to the fact that the *ola* (holocaust) and the *hattat* (sin offering) are brought to the same place.²⁹ Yet, as we have seen, the gesture of petition, insofar as it poses to God the question of our true needs, leads us to criticize our false beliefs about our needs. If the plea for enlightenment (*honen ha-da'at*) leads off the thirteen petitions of the weekday *Amida*, the requests for repentance and forgiveness follow straightaway.

We have demonstrated how knowledge of *tefilla*, its structure, its nature, and its wording, helps to create the space in which the meaningful approach to God can occur. We must next consider the experiential and theological relationship between the public aspect of the liturgy and the crucial dimension of inwardness.

IV. THE CONTEMPORARY PREDOMINANCE OF THE PUBLIC

For the human being to carry on an intimate, prayerful relationship with God, privacy is of the essence. The ceremonialism and publicity that pervade so much of conventional religion are enemies of that intimacy. The trend towards higher behavioral standards of observance, which has made attendance at public worship *de rigueur*, further marginalizes the private reality of the whispering Hannah, mother of prayer. Now I am not seeking to justify solitary fixed prayer as an option equal, or even preferable to, praying with a *minyan*. Putting aside narrow halakhic considerations, which would take us too far afield, I see no reason to question the presumption that praying with the community is, in general, more conducive to *kavvana*. The pace, to be sure, may be too fast or too slow; the conduct of one's neighbors may be distracting. Religious individuals, including the greatest, may on occasion feel an

overwhelming need to be alone with God.³⁰ Nonetheless, the mature individual of good will should be able to tune out potential intrusions and take advantage of the benefits. As R. Soloveitchik says:

I realize today that praying alone and praying with the community are like two different forms of prayer. Praying alone takes a lot less time, and I do not experience the same depth of emotion as when I pray with the community. . . . Now that I am accustomed to praying with the community, I simply cannot pray alone anymore. The prayer is not prayer without a *minyan*. I simply do not experience anything when I pray alone, and there is no flavor to such prayer.³¹

Whether one is praying with the community or alone, however, prayer has both a public and a private face. A discussion of *tefilla* that would promote spiritual liveliness, and safeguard the intimate aspect, must, therefore, clarify the divisions between the public and the private.

Note well that the present discussion is about the private and the public aspects of prayer, not about the orientation of prayer to personal needs or communal concerns. The two divisions indeed overlap, but they are logically distinct: to pray for the community in silence is certainly not an odd notion. The normative presence of communal and universal themes, in the statutory prayers, is taken for granted. It underscores the necessity that prayer not become an entirely selfish affair. But this does not bear directly on the intimacy or publicity of the prayerful gesture.

The classic definition of essentially public prayer is found in the following statement of Ramban:

The purpose of lifting one's voice in prayer and the purpose of Synagogues and the merit of public prayer is that human beings have a place to gather and thank God who created them and gave them existence. And they shall promulgate this and say before Him "We are your creatures." This is their meaning in saying: "And they shall call unto God with force—from here you learn that prayer requires voice. . . ."³²

As I have noted elsewhere,³³ Ramban unites under one rubric the prayer of thanksgiving and the panicky pleas of the Ninevites. An emphasis on human creatureliness is common to both situations. This is most appropriately a matter for proclamation, and this is best accomplished through the community's lifted voice. Naturally Ramban does not include other elements of prayer, namely the petitions and confessions, which presuppose the intimacy and soul-searching that can only occur in private.

With communal prayer the norm, even these parts of prayer ordinarily take place in the presence of the community. R. Kook, without alluding to Ramban, extends his doctrine about the centrality of proclamation in the Synagogue to embrace the petitionary element as well. He does so by making petition secondary to proclamation. The opportunity to approach God with our personal requests is, in effect, a concession to human nature. He is in full agreement with the Barthian conviction that the real human being will not appear in prayer unless his, or her, needs are placed on the agenda. But where the straightforward reading of the Talmud implies that praise and thanksgiving were established as the appropriate prologue and epilogue to the requests, for R. Kook petition is allowed for the sake of the superior proclamatory element, that is for the praise and the thanksgiving.³⁴

It would appear from this that for R. Soloveitchik the gesture of petition has a more robust function in the economy of *tefilla* than R. Kook would grant it. This is further borne out by R. Kook's adoption of the Kabbalistic view that petitionary prayer should ideally transcend one's self-seeking tendencies, but focus instead on Sefirotic illumination.³⁵ So too R. Kook insists that prayer must be free of any misconception about altering God's will.³⁶ His anxiety on this point indicates more than the desire to extirpate a philosophical blunder; the rejected idea is not only false, but harmful. In R. Kook's own words, it is "destructive of the order of human perfection." Nevertheless, one may subscribe to R. Soloveitchik's general orientation yet accept R. Kook's insight that petition, in the context of communal prayer, also serves the ideal of proclamation.

The previous discussion bridges the theological gap between the privacy of petition, which is rooted in personal need and anguish, and the publicity of communal proclamation. No doubt such insight should affect concrete experience favorably. Yet I fear it would be foolhardy to ignore the danger that a spiritual lifestyle, conducted completely in the glare of communal space, is liable to marginalize those features of religious existence that are predicated upon inwardness and self-examination, and compel such increasingly unpleasant and ungregarious endeavors as questioning the socially validated system of values and turning upon oneself in remorse and repentance. The triumph of herd morality and the withering away of individuality in Western society as a whole, and in the Orthodox community as well, make this threat especially ominous. Authentic prayer is not the only aspect of religious life imperiled by these developments.

If there is a way out of this impasse, it is not, God forbid, to make the communal dimension shallower—that is the worst thing that can happen—but to build up the intimate, individual side in whatever way possible. In considering the problem of our prayer life, the very least we can do is not to become self-congratulatory when we see the external, communally oriented elements doing well, or appearing to do so.³⁷

We should also be alert to the risks of complacency, with respect to our communal arrangements for prayer, in all that relates to the social or aesthetic atmosphere. The perennial mistake of the philosopher is to underestimate the value of familiarity and habit in facilitating healthy religious experience. This rationalistic delusion often reinforces our society's appetite for novelty as an end in itself. R. Soloveitchik's evocations of his European childhood experiences, his yearning for absent personalities and timeworn tunes, recall us to the importance of an experiential, sensual, rootedness. R. Kook, for his part, vigorously upholds the integration of imagination and reason. He explicitly relates the rabbinic commendation of the person who occupies a set place in the synagogue to the power of habit and familiarity to instill a deep emotional identification with the order of worship.³⁸

Though the more common error nowadays is making too much of innovation, there is also a danger in relying too much on the enchantment of the familiar. We should not dismiss the value, for prayerful orientation, of traditional associations and melodies. By the same token, however, we should beware of mistaking our feeling of comfort with the traditional performance of the traditional liturgy for passion, confusing the tears of nostalgia with the tears of joy and contrition and love.³⁹

V. PRAYER AND PEACE OF MIND—THE ROAD THROUGH SACRIFICE AND SILENCE

The task of defining "spirituality" is probably hopeless. Words like "spirit" and "spiritual" are elusive enough in themselves; "spirituality," an even more abstract locution, feeds on the unclarity of the more established terms.⁴⁰ One might feel safe quoting the view that the "concept of spirituality implies that there is the possibility of progress in holiness, that there is a need of working toward perfection, and that there are certain means and ways of attaining such a perfection."⁴¹ But, as Charles Liebman has recently argued, the contemporary rage for self-fulfillment via "spirituality" often seems at odds with devotion to holiness, which

entails separation and self-transcendence in the service of the transcendent, commanding God.

The starkness of the conflict, as it pertains to prayer, can be illustrated by contrasting the themes of the *Amida* with the popular tendency to identify the goal of prayer with "peace of mind." We shall not rehearse what was already said about the intense dialectic of the first three benedictions, nor the arduous work of entreaty that follows. The last part of the *Amida*, its culmination, which is technically characterized as thanksgiving, begins with *retseh*, the plea that God receive Israel's prayer under the aspect of a burnt offering (*ve-ishei Yisrael u-tefillatam*). If R. Soloveitchik's idea of petition as man's quest to understand his true table of needs identifies prayer with "self-acquisition, self-discovery, self-objectification and self-redemption," the theme of *retseh* identifies prayer with sacrifice, "unrestricted offering of the whole self . . . God claims man, and . . . His claim to man is not partial but total."⁴² The tension between these two goals R. Soloveitchik frankly calls "irreconcilable." What common ground can there be between this paradoxical dialectic and the wild enthusiasm with which many of us greet rumors of medical reports that regular attendance at services lowers the blood pressure?

And yet, who can deny that *tefilla*—and I mean strenuous *tefilla* with *kavvana*—does bestow upon the worshipper a feeling of tranquility and peace? R. Soloveitchik closes his "Thoughts on the *Amida*" with the last blessing, *sim shalom*, the prayer for peace, and exults in a state of mind in which "the fear is forgotten, the dread has disappeared, the *mysterium tremendum* has passed; and in their place arise joy and yearning for the source of Being." The problem for our society is that the peace of which the Rav speaks can only be the fruit of assiduous spiritual exercise: one gains one's life only by relinquishing it. The community Professor Liebman is thinking of is too impatient, and too bent on its own well-being to take the sacrificial leap. What we need, for such people, and for ourselves, in the moments when we falter, is a way of making the promise of spiritual wholeness and peace as vivid as the terror of the sacrifice. What we need is a connection between what we regularly experience, in the absence of full commitment to the prayerful life, and what we hope to experience when that life is vigorous and unobstructed.

Let us turn to a familiar passage that occupies an anomalous place in our liturgy. At the very end of the *Amida*, after the last blessing has been completed, but before we step back three paces, thus officially concluding the *tefilla*, we read the meditation beginning *Elokai netsor*: "God, preserve my tongue from evil, and my lips from speaking deceit, and

may my soul be silent to those who curse me, and may my soul be like earth to all. . . .” This post-*tefilla* meditation is a version of Mar bar Ravina’s (*Berakhot* 17a), not part of the body of obligatory prayer. The sentiment it expresses cannot be paraphrased simply by enumerating the specific requests it contains: to successfully refrain from speaking evil; divine protection against one’s enemies; understanding of Torah and so forth. There is a common denominator: a yearning for purity of lips and heart. The praying individual asks to be free of whatever would corrupt, or distract, his, or her, inner life. From a literary perspective, the meditation forms a fit closing to the *tefilla*. If R. Soloveitchik is right to view the last three benedictions as chiasmic recapitulations of the first three, then *Elokai netsor* corresponds to “God, open my lips. . . .” In a word, we have here a plea for equanimity, for peace of mind. The goal is achieved by placing ourselves completely in God’s hands: we remain indifferent to our ill-wishers because we trust God to confound their counsels.⁴³

Unquestionably the peace and calm expressed in these thoughts can best be attained if one has thoroughly taken in the message of the *Amida* as a whole, and in particular the concept of prayer as sacrifice. Only an individual who has confronted the demand to give up everything to God can authentically give up his, or her, frustrations and resentments to Him as well. Only the individual who has striven to find a voice and redeem his, or her, legitimate table of needs, and who has also learned to renounce everything for the sake of the divine, can satisfy the need for the silence that is beyond striving. Yet the taste for equanimity is available to us all, and the scent of genuine tranquility may be enough to lead us forward in our strenuous journey to the sometimes-terrifying Source of all peace.

The silence of *Elokai netsor*, in which we withdraw our speech from evil and meaningless pursuits and dedicate it to the holy, exemplifies the gesture of withdrawal and renunciation that defines the sacrificial concept of prayer. But silence and sacrifice come together for another reason. The sacrificial cult is, by its nature, a realm of ritual activity rather than words. It is unnecessary to enter into the question of whether the *Mikdash*, during the *Avoda*, was a place of absolute silence.⁴⁴ It is enough to consider that a modern visitor to the *Mikdash* would be as impressed by the overall silence as the pilgrims in the “Letter of Aristeas” (92) and that this would stand in conspicuous contrast to the verbal worship to which we are accustomed. An appreciation of the withdrawal from the temptation of mean language is thus connected to an appreciation of the manner in which the world of the *korban* continues to define the world of prayer.

One of the tragedies of our present communal predicament is that many people who are anxious for spiritual fulfillment are also the most addicted to incessant verbalization (in and out of shul). Sometimes I get the strange feeling that the corny jokes, trivial announcements, desultory conversations, the booming political orations and the honeyed attempts at spiritual intimacy, from pulpit and from pew, have more than a whiff of the burnt offering about them. It is as if one were to confess: "Dear God, I may not have the patience to pray properly, and I cannot sacrifice my flesh and blood upon Your Altar. I offer You instead my capacity for chatter, and for You I kill my valuable time." Imagining such sentiments may make us laugh for a moment, but wondering whether we can consistently afford to be smug about our neighbors has an immediate sobering effect.

There may be many causes (read excuses) for our difficulty in realizing the peace of *sim shalom* and *Elokai netsor*, ranging from the frenetic pace of contemporary upper middle class life to the quasi-Freudian cult of privacy-shattering discourse that so enraged Foucault. One factor, and the one closest to the dialectic we have traced in this section, is our fear of the sacrifice that the quest for holiness entails. It is not just that we aren't sufficiently committed to God, or that we like our superficial selves too much to strive for something higher. We are also obscurely afraid that the redeeming act of self-renunciation may also destroy something of what is spiritually good in us as well.

R. Kook was not oblivious to this impediment. His remarks illuminate the connection between *Mikdash* and prayer in a new way:

At the time of wholeness [*shelemut*], when the *Mikdash* existed, atonement through sacrifices affected only the evil powers; the sacrifice subdued the force of evil but did not act deleteriously upon the good powers of the body and the soul. But now, just as for the nation as a whole, because of our sins, the exile is an iron furnace to purify the dross, and together with the evil powers which it weakens, it also wreaks havoc with the good powers, so too the individual who needs to mend the evil powers through fasting, also depletes the good powers by enfeebling body and soul. This is affected by the prayer [of the person who fasts] that it should be as if [one's body] had been sacrificed on the Altar and accepted, to extirpate only the evil and to fortify the powers of good.⁴⁵

Fear and love, familiarity and terror, serenity and turmoil, intimacy and proclamation, solitude and togetherness, ritual and raw emotion,

sacrifice and self-fulfillment. The story of Jewish prayer is one of endlessly intersecting themes and struggles. Our lives wait for the meaning.⁴⁶

NOTES

1. *Jer. Berakhot* 4:4 (34b).
2. *Olat Re'iyah* I, p. 21.
3. "On the Love of Torah and Redemption of the Generation's Soul," in *Be-Sod ha-Yahid ve-ha-Yahad* (Jerusalem, 5736), p. 419.
4. *Olat Re'iyah* I, p. 20. Cf. *Ein Ayah* to *Shabbat* 10a.
5. *Ein Ayah* I, *Berakhot* 5:104, with respect to the colloquy between Rabba and Abbaye. *Tosafot Yom Tov ad. loc.* ascribes to Rashi a view anticipating R. Kook's.
6. *Ha-Tefilla ha-Yehudit: Hemshekh ve-Hiddush* (ed. G.H. Cohen, Jerusalem, 1978), p. 210.
7. *Olat Re'iyah* I, p. 11.
8. Don't think that these pitfalls have escaped the notice of Protestant thinkers. See, for example, the introduction to Stanley Hauerwas' volume of *Prayers Plainly Spoken* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1999).
9. David J. Duncan, *The Brothers K* (New York, 1992), p. 8.
10. E.g., "On the Love of Torah and the Redemption of the Generation's Soul" p. 412f.
11. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (tr. J. Harvey, Oxford, 1958), chapter 3, p. 8.
12. See *U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham* (in *Ish haHalakha: Galuy ve-Nistar*), p. 160: "The fact that the antithetical experience of love and fear, the flight to God and the flight from God, is rooted in biological nature and in the human psychosomatic state, does not diminish its value and importance."
13. Of course R. Kook is more attuned to the mystical outlook. See our discussion below, Section IV.
14. These ideas are developed most systematically in his *Worship of the Heart* (ed. S. Carmy, 2002), chapter 3.
15. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III: 4 (tr. Bromiley and Torrance, Edinburgh 1961), §53, p.98. Some Jewish thinkers (e.g., R. Aharon Kotler, *Mishnat Rabbi Aharon* [Jerusalem, 1982] volume I, p. 83f) have presented the idea that prayer is a privilege rather than a right, without drawing any systematic conclusion. The detailed similarities and differences between the Rav's discussion of prayer and Barth's would make a worthwhile topic for further inquiry, precisely because of the interconnection between the themes. On their respective theories of theological language, against the background of German philosophy, see B. Ish-Shalom, "Language as a Religious Category in the Thought of Rabbi Y.D. Soloveitchik," in *Sefer ha-Yovel la-Rav Mordekhai Breuer* (Jerusalem, 1992), pp. 799-821, and Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge, 1995), chapter 1.
16. See *Shiurim le-Zekher Avi Mori* II, chapter 2.
17. Based on MS.

18. See "Thoughts on the Amida" (Hebrew in *Ish haHalakha: Galuy ve-Nistar*; English translation in *Worship of the Heart*).
19. S. Carmy, "Destiny, Freedom and the Logic of Petition," *Festschrift for Rabbi Walter Wurzbarger, Tradition* 24:2, pp. 17-37.
20. A. Walfish, "Bet Midrash and Academic World: the Study of the Prayerbook," *Shanah b'Shanah* 39 (1998), pp. 467-504; p. 475, n. 21. My present discussion of Walfish's criticism and its remediation is indebted to my conversation with him (7/29/99).
21. The following exchange, between the veteran politician Tip O'Neill and his former schoolteacher, on the eve of his first election, brings this idea home: "Tom, I'm going to vote for you tomorrow even though you didn't ask me to." I was shocked: "Why, Mrs. O'Brien," I said, "I've lived across from you for eighteen years. I cut your grass in the summer. I shovel your walk in the winter. I didn't think I had to ask for your vote." "Tom," she replied, "let me tell you something: people like to be asked." (Tip O'Neill, *Man of the House*, New York, 1987), p. 25. The theological point, however, is not that God "likes to be asked," but that the beseecher should do the asking.
22. *Hiddushei Rabbenu Hayyim ha-Levi to Hilkhhot Tefilla* 4:1 and marginal comments of Hazon Ish. On the basis of R. Hayyim's position, see also S. Carmy, "I Have Set God Before Me Always," in *Kettonet Yosef* (Memorial Volume for R. Yosef Wanefsky, New York 2002), pp. 427-430.
23. R. Soloveitchik, "Prayer and the Human Condition," (in *Worship of the Heart*).
24. See R. Soloveitchik, "Redemption, Prayer, Talmud Torah," *Tradition* 17:2.
25. Readers of Netsiv will have no difficulty recalling passages in which divine worship is linked to the desire for worldly sustenance. See, for example, *Ha'amek Davar* to *Genesis* 2:5, *Leviticus* 20:7.
26. D. Klinghoffer, *The Lord Will Gather Me In* (Free Press, 1999), p. 78.
27. *Ein Ayah* II, 7:9 (to *Berakhot* 46).
28. A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, 1988), p. 111f. The Hobbes reference is to *Leviathan*, chapter 15.
29. *Sota* 32b; see Maharsha *s.v. mipenei*. *Berakhot* 31a and 24b offers different justifications of silent prayer, which I discuss in "Destiny, Freedom and the Logic of Petition," p. 36, n. 26. Uri Ehrlich, "*Kol Atsmotai Tomarna*" (*The Non-Verbal Language of Jewish Prayer*, Jerusalem, 1999), p. 175, suggests that the confession of sin is an instance of the kind of situation in which individual expression mandates privacy. This is confirmed by the Gemara's reference to the place of the *ola* and the *hattat*. According to my analysis, the categories of petitionary prayer and confession of sin both entail self-questioning and self-criticism; hence they share the requirement of privacy. Note, in support, that the *ola* is not viewed as a sin offering, despite the fact that, according to the same R. Shimon b. Yohai, it is brought for sinful thoughts (*Vayikra Rabba* 7:3, cited by Ramban to *Leviticus* 1:4). David Hartman mounts a trenchant attack on several aspects of R. Soloveitchik's theology of prayer ("Halakhic Critique of Soloveitchik's Approach to Prayer," in *A Living Covenant* [Free Press, 1985], pp. 150-159). Hartman argues that the Rav is wrong to base his sacrificial concept

- of prayer on Ramban's commentary to *Vayikra* 1:9. Ramban, on the *ola*, states that the worshipper must view his own life as forfeit, because of his sin; the sacrifice substitutes for the relinquishing of his life. Hartman concludes that Ramban's idea of self-negation depends on sin. Since the Rav does not refer to sin but to man's creatureliness, his appeal to Ramban is, according to Hartman, illegitimate. In the light of our analysis, however, the line between man's vulnerability, his confusion about his true table of needs and his sinfulness, is not as sharp as Hartman would maintain. *Ola* pertains to man's sinful situation, but is not itself a sin offering. Hartman, who prefers to downplay both man's helplessness and his sinfulness, is disinclined to go deeply into the interpenetration of these categories.
30. On R. Kook, see Rabbi M. Z. Neria, "The Lights of Prayer of R. Kook," in *Siach Yitzhak*, p. 155f. Cf. *Olat Re'iyah* I, p. 28 on R. Akiva's solitary prayer. For R. Soloveitchik's own testimony, see "Majesty and Humility," *Tradition* 17:2, p. 32f.
 31. Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (Hoboken, 1999), vol. I, pp. 187-8. See also R. Lichtenstein's *Shana be-Shana* essay, p. 288.
 32. Commentary to *Shemot* 13:16 (ed. Chavel, vol. I, pp. 346-7); see notes 30-32. Cf. *Torat Hashem Temima* (*Kitvei Ramban*, ed. Chavel, vol. I, pp. 152-3). P. W. van der Horst, "Silent Prayer in Antiquity," in *Hellenism-Judaism-Christianity* (Kampen, 1994), pp. 252-277, surveys the classical and non-rabbinic Jewish sources. Philo, on his account, wavers on the appropriateness of public praise, perhaps under the influence of his philosophical ideals.
 33. S. Carmy, "Destiny, Freedom and the Logic of Petition."
 34. *Olat Re'iyah* I, p. 260.
 35. *Olat Re'iyah* I, p. 16.
 36. *Olat Re'iyah* I, p. 14.
 37. The primary effect of so-called Carlebach minyanim is to animate the public, celebratory aspects of prayer. Individuals familiar with full-fledged Carlebachian prayer, where the singing and dancing pervade the entire service, and not only a limited portion of *Kabbalat Shabbat*, inform me that the crescent fervor carries over to the private times as well.
 38. *Ein Ayah* I, *Berakhot* 1:55.
 39. This point parallels C.S. Lewis's remarks on familiarity in *The Four Loves*. People tend to overlook the significance of those personal connections that are grounded entirely in familiarity and regular contact, or, alternately, to overestimate the profundity of their social interaction based on having many friends in this relatively casual sense.
 40. Stephen Smith, *The Concept of the Spiritual* (Philadelphia, 1988), a survey of this terminology in Western philosophy, does not pick up on the precise connotations of the noun and the adjective in English; Alan Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit* (Princeton, 1992) contains scattered historical notes beyond the narrow topic of the book. Nor are the definitions in OED much help. Kierkegaard's definition of spirit in *Sickness Unto Death* is probably unsurpassed for its lucidity (which may not be saying much about other accounts) but does not supply the key to contemporary usage.

41. Lucien Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin*, quoted by John Kelsay, "Prayer and Ethics: Reflections on Calvin and Barth," *Harvard Theological Review* 82:2 (1989), pp. 169-84; 180.
42. "Redemption, Prayer, Talmud Torah," p. 70f. The Rav once suggested to me that, in his later years, he had come to place greater stress on the sacrificial aspect of prayer. For another theology of prayer founded on the equation of prayer and *korban*, see Maharal, *Netiv ha-Avoda* chapter I.
43. My revered teacher R. Aharon Lichtenstein discusses the question already raised by the *Or Zarua* (II, 89:3) about the recital of *Elokai netsor* on *Shabbat*, when petitionary prayer is ordinarily limited. See "The Problem of *Shabbat* Prayer," in *Siah Yitshak*, pp. 86-105, especially 96f. My account of the meditation surely treats it as a "spiritual" request that would, from many perspectives, be very much in keeping with the spirit of *Shabbat*.
44. Israel Knohl, "Between Voice and Silence: The Relationship Between Prayer and Temple Cult," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115:1(1996), pp.17-30, revives a theory of Yehezkel Kaufmann to that effect. Knohl attaches to this suggestion historical speculations that are not germane to our subject. Ehrlich (p. 176, n. 40) suggests that the silent *Amida* may be an attempt to incorporate this element of the *Mikdash* model. Let us note, at this point, that silence, in this connection, applies in more than one way: actions performed silently, without words, are not the same thing as words recited inaudibly. Nonetheless, there is a psychological family resemblance among the different sounds of silence. For an examination of the phenomenon, in all its phenomenological variety, along classic Husserlian lines, see B. Dauenhauer, *Silence, the Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance* (Indiana, 1980).
45. *Olat Re'iyah* I, p. 293.
46. I am grateful for several remarks on the first draft by my revered teacher R. Aharon Lichtenstein. Among many others with whom I have discussed the matters touched on in this essay let me single out Rabbi Yitzchak Blau, Rabbi Asher Friedman, Rabbi Yamin Levy, Jonathan Marvin, Alex Mondrow, Rabbi Yehuda Septimus, Rabbi Alan Stadtmayer, Bernard Stahl, and Jerry Zeitchik.