From Our Selves to God: How a Siddur With Photographs May Help Us Pray

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From Our Selves to God: How a Siddur With Photographs May Help Us Pray

by Michael Haruni

(Michael Haruni devised and translated the full Shabbat siddur, Nehalel beShabbat *and* Nehalel beChol *(Nevarech Press, www.nehalel.com), in which photographs juxtaposed with prayers direct the user's thoughts to their meanings. He has done doctoral research in Philosophy on the subject of pain, and his stage plays have explored the relation between faith and identity. Born in London, he lives in Jerusalem with his wife and children. This article appears in issue 26 of Conversations, the journal of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.)*

It was a guiding idea in the creation of *Siddur Nehalel* that its distinctive format could assist the user in entering the mental state, or *kavanah*, halakhically required for praying. The principal innovation in the siddur is its juxtaposing, with the texts, photographs that purport to depict their respective meanings—so that, as one recites a given passage, the image directs one's thoughts to its meaning. But whether or not anything of this sort could succeed in enhancing the *kavanah* of the user depends on what we assume the *kavanah* of praying should be. I want therefore to say something here about how we are to understand this *kavanah*,[i] as well as about how the conception of *Siddur Nehalel* ties in with that understanding.

I'll want especially to dwell on what I suspect has become a quite widespread misconception about how to achieve *kavanah*—a misconception that could be confusing many of us in our approach to prayer—and to say something about how some contemporary siddurim, *Siddur Nehalel* among them, variously relate to this misconception. In a nutshell, my concern is that many of us have fallen into the habit, as we pray, of acting out a kind of *make-believe persona*. This need not happen, though—we are capable instead of drawing the attitudes we express in prayer from our real selves, and of presenting to God the persons we really are.

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Surely, it sometimes happens that we are overwhelmed by the sense of connecting with God through the medium of prayer in a powerful, self-consuming way. I stand before God, deeply agitated by my personal or national concerns; or I'm overcome with awe or love of God as I behold His creation of this wondrous world and of people close and far; or I'm filled with trepidation as I ponder God's engineering of the ongoing history that thrillingly and terrifyingly holds us in its grip. I then sense, as I address God, a genuine outpouring from my mental and spiritual state. I sense, too, that this registers in some measure upon the attention of God—and even that an intimacy of sorts has been created between myself and God.

But we all also know what it's like to recite from a siddur in an absentminded manner, to feel we are, at best, minimally fulfilling an obligation. We wonder then what possible value there can be in this practice, yet continue adhering dutifully to our daily prayer routine.

The two volumes of *Siddur Nehalel* that have now appeared are the product of a conviction that its format has a potential to bring our praying closer to that former kind. The meaning-relatedness of the photographs is crucial here. The images purport to be not merely decorative, but to depict in each case the meaning of some key phrase in the given passage. So, for instance, the aerial photograph of the Temple Mount is not there just because it's a pretty picture, but in order to prod the user into attending to the meaning of what he or she is saying, *...veHishtahavu leHar kodsho...* ("...and bow in worship at His sacred mountain...").

The feedback I get indicates that the format largely works. Not with everyone; some who've tried using *Siddur Nehalel* say the photographs distract them, instead of directing their thoughts to the meanings of the texts. The format is not any kind of panacea instantly curing our every *kavanah* issue. Nor do I suggest that this format absolves the user from mental exertion. It won't help to hold *Nehalel* passively in our hands; what the photographs give us, I hope, is an instrument we might *actively* use to assist us in praying with *kavanah*. Like any instrument we pick up, we must learn how to use it. So for one thing, *Siddur Nehalel* won't work if one treats it as a picture book, like a coffee table art catalogue showcasing the images. The photographs are not intended as the focus, but merely as the background to the texts; ideally they would work as unconscious prompts, directing our attention to certain meanings—much as the image sequence of a movie mostly acts as a visual backdrop, steering our attention through the narrative and cognitive content of the movie.

Many people are now davening regularly from *Siddur Nehalel*. Something, it seems, is happening with their praying—and there are abundant testimonies that it's something good. But a subjective evaluation that one's praying is improved is not really evidence (to us as outside observers) that this really is a move in the right direction. Assuming some difference is made, does this bring the user closer in some way to what praying, philosophically and halakhically, should be? Or could it be misdirected, founded on some confused notion of what *kavanah* properly involves?

So let's look now at what *kavanah* should consist of. What kind of state of mind is this? There are, as far as I can tell, two principal themes running through the traditional literature on this question. The explication of *kavanah* offered by the Talmud is expressed by the maxim, *K'she'atem mitpalelim de'u lifney Mi atem om'dim* ("When you pray, be aware of before Whom you stand").[ii] This idea recurs in the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* where he writes, "What does *kavanah* consist of? One must empty one's heart of all [regular] thoughts and see oneself as if standing before the Presence of God."[iii] Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik restates the matter as follows: "Prayer is basically an awareness of man finding himself in the presence of and addressing himself to his Maker, and to pray has one connotation only: to stand before God."[iv]The theme here is the requirement that we have an awareness, when we pray, of the presence of God.

Interestingly, this alone does not tell us that we must have an awareness of the meaning-content of our words. As long as I'm aware of the presence of God before me, I'm fulfilling the talmudic requirement of *kavanah*. The words might themselves refer to, say, God's creation of the sources of light, yet as far as this

requirement goes, I can be fully oblivious to this meaning; just as long as I'm aware, as I pray, of the presence of God, I am no more required to think of His creation of the sources of light, than about the colorful sweater someone over there is wearing or about what I'll eat for dinner.

However, an additional stipulation emerges in *Shulhan Arukh,* where it states, *haMitpalel tzarikh sheYekhaveyn beLibo perush haMilot sheMotzee biSfatav.*[v] While praying, *Shulhan Arukh* tells us, one must direct one's heart to the meanings of the words that one's mouth produces. This additional requirement saves us from the seemingly absurd possibility from which the talmudic admonition alone does not protect us. An awareness of the meanings of the words is crucially important after all.

It seems to me that as we aim when we pray, to meet these two challenges, photographs juxtaposed with our prayer texts can help us in two corresponding ways. I mentioned above how they might help us meet the second challenge. Photographs have the power to halt us as we recite the text, and to draw our attention to the meaning of some highlighted expression that is more or less central to the meaning of the passage—such as God's control of the elements (with an image of a storm cloud), or the reciprocal love relation with God we're party to as we learn Torah (images of Jews learning Torah), or to the eternity of the universe God created (star clouds receding into billions of light years), and so forth. In this way the photographs can make these thoughts vivid in our minds, thus bringing our prayer to life.

Admittedly, not every thought carried by any given passage is covered in the siddur by a photograph. I aimed generally to place images representing, in each case, some fairly central thought, around which the rest of the passage is built. The hope was that by bringing a central idea to life, this same effect could then also, so to speak, percolate out to the more peripheral ideas of the passage, through the thematic relations between these different ideas. But I cannot say in honesty that I always succeeded in this; sometimes the image relates only to a more peripheral thought. Many passages, by their nature, fail to lend themselves to being so pivotally represented by an image of something concrete—or if they did, then it went beyond my imaginative powers to see how. Nor is every passage juxtaposed in *Siddur Nehalel* with a photograph. Most obviously, direct descriptions of God—such as *Ata kadosh*, "You are sacred"—are in principle not matchable with any photograph.

But I believe that even this partial representation can have a more pervasive effect on our prayer. Intermittently halted in this way by meaning-

related images, we potentially become alert to the fact that *this is not merely a text*. Familiarly, it's a characteristic of the over-habituated, thoughtless praying we all-too-often fall into, that the text becomes one-dimensional. We come to see it as no more than a text, as just a sequence of characters, or possibly also, when our mumbling at least corresponds faithfully to the text, as a sequence of phonemes. The world of meaning, to which the text should be our portal, largely vanishes. But our occasional awakening to that meaning-dimension, forced on us by the images, can also make us more *continuously* alert to it. The world beyond the text, of which the pictures every so often remind us, cannot so easily sink away again into oblivion.

I also suggest that the juxtaposing of meaning-related photographs to prayer texts helps us meet that first, talmudic challenge of *kavanah*. We visualize, as we pray, the wondrous world God created, from the magnificent intricacy of any tiny creature, through a mountain glistening as if luminous within, to countless galaxies tending to a dynamic eternity; or the historical movement engineered by God from catastrophe to redemption; and thus we become more able to glimpse, if only by exerting ourselves, *the presence of God behind all this*. We are visualizing the very reality in which the workings of God are manifest—the veil covering God's almost palpable presence. I don't suggest there is any automatic evocation here of God's being right here, but the stimuli are prodding at us. We need only look a little harder, and God is within our reach.

* * *

It has concerned me that there could be a fundamental error in the idea of using photographs to prompt awareness of meaning. The error I have in mind is connected with what I believe has become a widespread misconception about the nature of *kavanah*. Indeed, this misconception seems to me to have nurtured a very common, but somewhat misguided, approach to praying. It has also affected many contemporary siddurim, showing, for one thing, in the style of the rubrics, or instructions—so if *Siddur Nehalel* is in error, it's not alone, although this is no comfort. The problem, very briefly, is that during prayer, however powerfully you may feel as if you've worked yourself up to, say, desiring that God establish peace on earth—if you don’t already have an *ongoing* desire that God establish peace on earth, then it's even *conceptually impossible* for you to deliberately conjure this desire. Let me now explain this more fully.

Imagine a boy telling a girl he loves her. She hears him say, “I love you with all my heart,” and he sounds thoroughly truthful. Indeed something was going on in his heart and mind at the time that caused him to sound just perfect: He had, at those moments, some intense thoughts and feelings, convincingly like those of really loving her. But then it turns out that he was, for the limited duration of the encounter, contriving this mental state. He has a knack, this young man, of working up his state of consciousness to what feels convincingly like the real thing—much like a Stanislavskian method actor. He simply had deliberately put himself into that mental state during their meeting, and when the meeting ended, so did this conscious interlude of passion end.

Does he really love her? Possibly yes; but not on the evidence of this incident alone. For to love her is for his person to be *enduringly encompassed by a certain state*, by a whole range of wishes and longings that have probably been with him for a while (the possible, though questionable, exception being if this is the onset of love at first site), and that, more certainly, stick with him the next day and the next week, possibly for years to come, and perhaps even for the rest of his life; such as a wish for this relatedness to her to continue mutually forever; perhaps a wish to build their lives together, to create a family with her, and so on.

Yet it's consistent with the situation described above that the young man could go through most of the week feeling quite indifferently or even negatively toward her. So that even if he manages, say, once a week on Shabbat morning when he meets her by the *shul*, or even every morning for 10 minutes, and even another couple of times each evening for three minutes at a time, to deliberately conjure those same inner sensations that seem to him, at the time of being overwhelmed by them, to mean “I love you,” this is not enough. It is at best an acting out.

And imagine how she would feel if she found out this show was merely his on-the-spot, method-acting performance—probably defrauded, and quite justifiably outraged!

This is not to say that true love would entail his thinking of her *consciously* around the clock. But this is the thing: to love someone is not to be in a temporary state of consciousness; although some such state of consciousness will often tend to come about, and will be readily prompted by all kinds of triggers. (In the term favored in contemporary philosophy, love, like other emotions, desires, and beliefs, is a *dispositional* state.) It might mostly remain below the threshold of his awareness; although surely, love, especially when newly discovered (or, *Rahmana litzlan*, when unrequited), *can* also be an un-abating, consuming

condition of our consciousness. But what is important—what is essential to its being love—is that the overall state is enduringly with him, always triggerably manifest, throughout his waking life.

Just as to love God truly is not a matter of periodically conjuring some or other glorious and sacred-seeming episodes of consciousness. It is, rather, to be enclosed by this all-encompassing condition that relates me to God at all times—though not necessarily constantly in consciousness. It must be the state of my person I take with me to work, bring home to my family, sit with as I eat and retire with at night, at every moment ready to evoke commensurate thoughts and feelings into consciousness following any of a variety of triggers.

Nor, similarly, is having a *belief* about God—for instance, the belief that He is the Establisher of peace on Earth—just a matter of conjuring some episode of consciousness. It is not, for instance, some momentary thought about peace between nations. Think of what's involved in my believing that Roosevelt was a great president. Would it be enough for me to force myself, at a certain moment in time, say, Tuesday at noon, into thinking positive thoughts about Roosevelt's presidency? Surely not. If I have no such belief about Roosevelt at 11:00 am Tuesday, nor at 1:00 pm, then—unless I've meanwhile received new information, or thought through a reevaluation—I surely could not be said to hold any such belief at noon. My having this belief is an enduring state of my person, which comes and goes with new information and cogitation, but otherwise stays largely as it is. Equally, my believing something about God is not a conjured episodic event of consciousness, but an enduring state of my person.

So, too, my truly *wanting* God to cure an acquaintance's disease is a feature of my psyche over a lasting period. To suppose this is really my wish, when all I experience is a feeling I turn on at just those moments when I choose to articulate what sounds like some such wish, would be founded on misconception. Let me even work myself into a two-minute, frenzied, trance-like passion, a thought that is a world unto itself: Amazing it may be, but my wish for God's speedy cure it is not.

Yet we tend to approach prayer with just this kind of misconception. It's my impression that the more or less standard and normative way of attempting to achieve *kavanah*, at least among Orthodox Jews and probably beyond, goes something like this: One comes upon the given passage, and induces within oneself a certain state of consciousness, which endures through the period of one's reciting this passage; and which seems to oneself (subjectively, or internally), for the period of its duration, like one's identification with the attitude

expressed by the passage. Coming, for instance, upon the blessing, *Hashiveynu Avinu…* (asking God to draw us back into a fuller spiritual relation with Him), and wanting earnestly to pray hard with *kavanah*, we focus on the meanings of these words, and in this way evoke as strong a feeling as we can, lasting for the duration of our reciting this blessing, and seeming to us, from the inside, as if we are asking God to draw us back in so. We bring to the task whatever techniques work for us in achieving these inner feelings, such as initially pausing for thought, and perhaps rocking back and forth.[vi] Indeed it seems so natural to resort to this; for isn't this how we make the expressed attitude come to life? And yet, if this episodic state of consciousness is not part of a *genuine, enduring wish* for God to draw us back into that spiritual relation, then it is no such wish at all.

Symptomatic of this malaise are the prompts we find in the rubrics of many contemporary siddurim. We find, for instance, in one popular siddur, before *Keriyat Shema*: “Concentrate intensely upon accepting God’s absolute sovereignty.” And before the first paragraph: “Concentrate on accepting the commandment to love God.” Before the second: “Concentrate on accepting all the commandments and the concept of reward and punishment.” Then before the last *pasuk*: “Concentrate on fulfilling the commandment of remembering the Exodus from Egypt.”[vii] (None of what I suggest here is to deny that these and other meanings are embedded in the text of *Shema Yisrael*. I am merely questioning whether the recommendation to *momentarily concentrate* on these meanings does them justice.) The assumption here is that what is required of us as we recite *Shema Yisrael* is just some such set of conscious episodes. It is to ignore the need *all day and every day* to believe in God’s absolute sovereignty, to love God, to accept the commandments and even to believe in reward and punishment—the need for these to be enduring conditions of our whole selves (which is not, I stress again, to be continuously and actively *conscious* of these truths and emotions). I could enter some heightened state in which I seem to myself to be thinking that divine reward is always justly meted out; but if this was preceded, and is then succeeded, by my manifesting a belief to the contrary, or by doubts generally dominating my thinking on the matter, or by my having no opinion on this issue, then clearly I do not really hold this belief, however much it may feel to me as if I do when I'm praying.

The situation, I suggest, can be characterized as follows. We are forgetting that the beliefs, wishes and emotions we aim to express through our prayers, to be really ours, need to be ongoing states of our whole selves. They cannot be fabricated, short-lived episodes of consciousness, discontinuous with the psyche as a whole; as such they simply would not be attitudes we genuinely hold and express. Presenting ourselves to God as if we hold those attitudes, just on the

basis of some such episodes, would be, frankly, fraudulent. For to be real, they must be consistent with the workaday beliefs, desires, and emotions that make up our mental lives; they must, in other words, be *integrated with and emerge out of the psychic whole that constitutes the self*. Yet failing to locate within ourselves those attitudes we articulate in prayer, we instead make do with just such detached, short-lived effigies of these attitudes.

Have we been more able in the past to discover, ongoing within ourselves, the attitudes we ostensibly express when we pray? I cannot say. But I do suspect that certain features of contemporary life tilt us into this problematic approach.

One is that our lives are clogged with a multiplicity of purposes, all making claims on our time and attention. Entering the fray, we resort to compartmentalizing—to rigidly sectioning our time into discrete channels, each with its distinct program of goals and means, corresponding wishes, and relevant information. We experience our lives more as a time-sharing bundle of roles—professional, parental, adult-filial, and so on—less as a unity. Each role has its own state of mind, partitioned against flowing into and interfering with the states of mind of the neighboring tracks; and the role of praying person, with its concomitant state of mind, is among these. We may therefore conjure some pertinent thoughts and sensations episodically into consciousness within the appropriate time slots, to speak not from our whole psyche but from within some discrete mental segments. Such, I surmise, is the manner in which we approach prayer.

Another feature of contemporary life affecting us similarly is the role of science and technology. It has become difficult in this atmosphere to believe in the efficacy of praying. For in an age in which empirical testability and measurable effectiveness are the dominant requirements justifying everything we believe and do, we have precious little returns to show for our prayers. What sign do we have encouraging us to believe that by uttering *Sim shalom, tovah u'vrakhah...* we increase the chances that God will establish peace on earth? Or that by pleading, *Refa'enu Hashem Elokenu*, we induce Him to heal our sick?

And this, when we are still reeling in bewilderment at how the Holocaust could have happened, or in particular at how, for an incomprehensibly long time—so it at least strongly appears to us—prayer did no good at all.

There are gigantic questions raised here—the problem of evil, and the question of how willing God is to intervene at any given time—which cannot be treated here and on which, in any case, I am far from qualified to offer any new wisdom. The relevant point here is just that, in an age in which the ideology of

science has come almost totally to premise our every thought, and in which we cannot but feel despondence over the impotence of our prayer, it has become particularly difficult to comprehend divine responsiveness to prayer in terms of any simplistic cause-effect relationship. We now need to look further in order to find reasons to pray. For the belief that, if I pray for peace, or for health, or for basic livelihood, then God grants me that good, is not a belief that we can, in our age, easily integrate into the general matrix of our everyday beliefs about life and the world. This becomes, at best, *our quasi, holy hour belief, dislocated from the rest, and vestigially acted out during the performance of prayer.*

It may be charged, against the critique I'm suggesting here, that I'm flatly ignoring the admonition in the *Shulhan Arukh* cited above. We're clearly told there to direct our hearts to the meanings of our utterances. Does this not plainly mean that we must assume the attitudes expressed by the liturgy? I think not. For to read a text and attend to its meanings is not the same as to adopt the attitudes it expresses. If I read that human history is devoid of purposeful direction, then I can attend to the meaning of the text, think it through and evaluate it, without at any point holding that it's true.

This is not to say that the veracity of the contents of the liturgy may legitimately be matters of indifference to us, or that we may remain aloof in the face of the yearnings it expresses. It is a central, inherent problem with our praying from a fixed liturgical text, that we come to articulate certain attitudes that we do not actually have. Indeed the method actor-like conjurings I've referred to here have become almost definitive of Orthodox prayer practice, *probably in response to precisely this difficulty.* But it won't solve the problem to pretend these conjurings turn us into people who really share the beliefs and yearnings we articulate; they simply don't help.

So what do we do? I cannot pretend to offer a solution. But it is pertinent here that numerous thinkers have accounted for our praying from a fixed text as serving primarily *to shape our personalities*. In particular, the petitional agenda listed by the middle 13 blessings of the *Shemoneh Esreh* might express some yearnings we don't actually have; and certainly the purpose of our reciting them is not their fulfilment by God, which it would be frivolous of us to expect. According to this view, however, we personally evolve, throughout our lives, toward the fuller adopting of these yearnings. Through prayer, our attitudes and emotions, and thus our very selves, become increasingly identified with the larger, truer agenda expressed by the liturgy.[viii] In this respect, the question of the truth of what we recite is paramount; not as what we must *a priori* believe, but as what we may dialectically evolve toward.

Now, it is an empirical question how, as a matter of psychological fact, our attitudes are most likely to converge upon those expressed by the liturgy. Do we best indulge in the method actor approach, conjuring interludes of feeling internally as if we have those attitudes? Or would we succeed better if we attend clear-headedly to the meanings, evaluate them critically, bring relevant information to bear, and so forth? It seems to me that if the first approach does bring us closer to some enduring state of mind, this will not be one in which that inventory of attitudes has become really our own. Can we genuinely integrate those attitudes, in this way, into our existing mesh of thoughts and feelings? I can't help supposing that they would continue for us as make-believe, discontinuous, and alien add-ons. It seems to me that if anything gets us to the true goal—a real integration of thought—this will be some open, rational, lucid thinking about the issues involved. This is, I believe, a project in which we should be engaged anyway. But it is beyond the scope of this essay to come to any conclusion about this.

I must now ask, though: Is the format of *Siddur Nehalel* not founded on the same confusion that, I've charged, inheres in the rubric style of some other contemporary siddurim? *Nehalel* does not explicitly, verbally demand that we concentrate on this or that truth (unless I slipped somewhere, unawares). But aren't the photographs expressing that same demand, no less than those rubrics, though through the language of imagery? Isn't the photograph of , for example, the Temple Mount simply there to tell us, "Concentrate on how God is returning to Zion"?

I think not, for there is a fundamental difference here, between *attending to some subject matter* and *adopting some belief or desire*. Demanding of someone to come up with what they think about Roosevelt (Roosevelt as subject matter), is not the same as demanding that they believe that Roosevelt was a great president (to adopt a certain propositional attitude). The problem with those rubrics is that they instruct us to adopt certain attitudes. It is true that the examples I referred to are not *explicitly phrased* as demands that we come to believe that p, or that we make ourselves want that q, and so forth. But a demand for some such propositional attitude is implicit in each of them. I can't see how I might understand, for instance, “Concentrate intensely upon accepting God’s absolute sovereignty,” without taking this as requiring, firstly, that I accept (that is, come to believe) that God has absolute sovereignty, and only then that I concentrate on my acceptance of this proposition.

In contrast, a photograph represents at the most a *topic*, such as the Temple Mount, or storm clouds, or illegal immigration of survivors from Europe to

Mandate Palestine. Certainly no belief or desire is forced on us by the image. It cannot force us to believe that we are eternally attached to Jerusalem, or that God is preeminently powerful, or that God operates in history in a certain way. An image is, at most, a prompt, triggering our thoughts about some topic we find in it. The photograph, it can be said, poses a question, soliciting our thoughts on the meaning of these historical events. One is asked to freely submit the thoughts *authentically* emerging on this topic out of the multitude of attitudes and emotions meshing together in one's psyche. One may then bring to bear a cluster of relevant thoughts *genuinely emerging from the totality of one's existing beliefs* ; and one may resultantly come to have the thought that (for example) God acts to redeem us from catastrophe; or possibly some quite different thought will emerge. What's important is that the thought elicited is something consistent with, and emerging spontaneously from, one's real self. It is not some fabricated, pretend-belief episode, procured to meet a demand for this specific attitude.[ix]

In this respect, the photographs act much like the topic of a conversation. One's discussing with someone the merits of Roosevelt's presidency acts as a prompt, posing the question, what do you think of Roosevelt's presidency? One's answer to the question can thus genuinely emerge from the full body of intermeshed thoughts constituting one's psyche—truly representing the person one really is.

In truth, the photographs in *Siddur Nehalel* are not the only topic-triggers we find in siddurim. Most contemporary siddurim have, especially in the *Amidah*, subject headers (for instance in *Koren*, "Patriarchs, Divine Might, Holiness, Knowledge..."), which one can use in this way. For that matter, occasional phrases in the body of the text itself might be used, in occasional reflective pauses, to the same effect. But one advantage of using photographs is the *greater force* of imagery. Photographs don't tell you what to think—nor do we want them to—but they tend to make you more vividly aware of their subject matter than verbal triggers.

Another advantage, I believe, is that the photographs *situate prayer in our own reality*. It is for me literally startling to read, in Psalm 137 (*Al naharot Bavel*, preceding Grace After Meals on regular weekdays), "We hung our harps on sunken willows, for our captors there demanded song, our tormentors teased us in joy, saying, *Sing to us from the music of Tziyon*. But how could we sing the song of Hashem on that soil of estrangement?!" The accompanying photograph of the inmates' coerced orchestra at Auschwitz makes us aware, I hope, of how devastatingly contemporary these lines are, of how they could have been written during living memory. The same goes for those many images from the Holocaust,

and then the establishment and thriving of the State of Israel, juxtaposed with the repeated descriptions, in the liturgy, of the recurring historical pattern they realize of catastrophe and redemption.

A liturgical text can be experienced very differently when read alongside the photographic documentation of a contemporary situation it describes. For we have a tendency to think of our liturgy—bequeathed to us from an earlier epoch—as *other-worldly*, as describing that earlier epoch, and recited now merely as a *commemoration* of that epoch, not about our world, not about our lives. The photograph counters this tendency, enables us instead *to read the text as being about the here and now, about contemporary life, and about ourselves.* We are thus encouraged to bring to bear the real attitudes and feelings we have toward the world we know. When, for instance, we see a breathtaking mountainous valley as we recite, *Lekha Hashem haGedulah...* ("This immensity and this power and this splendor and this permanence and this majesty are Yours, Hashem..."), this text, which we mindlessly drum out every time we take the *Sefer Torah* from of the ark*,* is suddenly seen to say something spectacular about God's creation *of the world we inhabit*.

If *Siddur Nehalel* can wake a few of us up to the fact that our liturgy speaks to God from our own lives, then *dayenu*.

[i] From here on, I'll use the word "*kavanah*" to mean the *kavanah* required in praying, as opposed to the *kavanah*, or the kind of motivating intention, that may be required for the performing of other mitzvoth.

[ii] *Berakhot*, 28b. Cf. also Berachot, 31a: *...sheYekhaveyn et libo laShamayim*, one should direct one's heart to Heaven.

[iii]*Mishneh Torah*, Tefilah 4:16. The same idea is also found in the *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim*, 98:1, *...veYahshov ke'ilu Shekhinah keNegdo*. (But cf. also note 4.)

[iv] *Lonely Man of Faith*, Image, 2006, pp. 53–54.

[v] *Op. cit.*

[vi] I have nothing against *shokeling* in itself. Famously, Rabbi Akiva was, when he prayed on his own, very big on *keriyot veHishtahavuyot* (bendings and bowings), which shook him from one corner of the room to the other in the course of *Shemoneh Esreh*. Cf. *M. Berakhot*, 31a. The present question is just what state of mind one should be attempting to achieve by means of this or other techniques.

[vii] *ArtScroll*. Similar and sometimes fuller thought-directions appear in many other siddurim as well. See especially *Siddur Tefilat Kol Peh*.

[viii] I understand this to be what is suggested by Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik when he writes: "Prayer enlightens man about his needs. It tells man the story of his hidden hopes and expectations. It teaches him how to behold the vision and how to strive in order to realize this vision, when to be satisfied with what one possesses, when to reach out for more. In a word, man finds his need-awareness, himself, in prayer. Of course, the very instant he finds himself, he becomes a redeemed being." p. 66. In "Redemption, Prayer and Talmud Torah," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought*, 17, vol. 2, 1978, pp. 55–72.

[ix] Relevantly here, it is one of the central insights of Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language that an image carries a meaning only when operating in a context which bestows that meaning on it. Cf. e.g., *Philosophical Investigations*, I, §22.