

# LEHRHAUS

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# RABBI CHAIM YAAKOV GOLDVICHT AND HIS UNINTENTIONAL REVOLUTION IN YAVNEH

SHLOMO ABRAMOVICH

On Yom Ha'atzmaut 1991, the State of Israel awarded the prestigious Israel Prize to the *hesder yeshivot*. Selected for their “special contribution to society and the state,” the *hesder yeshivot* promoted traditional Torah study accompanied by army service. The person selected to represent the *hesder* movement was Rav Chaim Goldvicht, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh.

KBY was the first *hesder* yeshiva, founded in 1954 by World Mizrahi and Bnei Akiva. Now linked to army service; at that time, however, these Religious Zionist institutions desired a yeshiva that reflected their unique ideologies—the military component was added several years later. Mizrahi tapped Rabbi Goldvicht to serve as KBY's founding rabbinic head. Back in 1991, Rabbi Goldvicht participated in several interviews in the Israeli press, expressing the *hesder* yeshiva ideology and the point of view of Religious Zionism.

Nonetheless, the choice of Rabbi Goldvicht to represent the *hesder yeshivot* movement did not pass without criticism. One writer complained that Yeshivat Hadarom and its *rosh yeshiva*, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Meltzer would have been a worthier representative. To this writer, Meir Hovav, Yeshivat Hadarom should have been credited with the idea of merging yeshiva and army service, and therefore Rabbi Meltzer was a better representative than Rabbi Goldvicht in receiving the Israel Prize.<sup>1</sup>

Given his background, Rabbi Goldvicht was a curious symbol of Religious Zionism. He was a close follower of the Hazon Ish and a proud graduate of the Lithuanian-style yeshivot which often denounced Zionism.

In a certain way, this contradiction between Rabbi Goldvicht's character—which was deeply rooted in the Haredi society—and his rabbinic station at KBY—where he played a significant role in the history of Religious Zionism—explains a lot. His ability to adjust to the political reality and to the actual needs of his students enabled him to succeed in his complex role.

## **Why Rabbi Goldvicht?**

Born in 1924, Rabbi Goldvicht grew up in Jerusalem, learned in Yeshivat Etz Chaim under the tutelage of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer—the father of Rav Zvi Yehuda Meltzer of Yeshivat Hadarom. He maintained a close relationship to Rav Yitzhak Ze'ev Soloveitchik, the Brisker Rav. After he got married, he moved to learn in Yeshivat Slobodka in Bnei Brak. In that Haredi environment, Rabbi Goldvicht was mentored by the Hazon Ish, Rabbi Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz, the peerless leader of Israel's so-called Ultra-Orthodox community.

Owing to his Haredi training, Rabbi Goldvicht was not the first choice of KBY's founders. The heads of Bnei Akiva tasked with identifying a *rosh yeshiva* searched for a scholar and

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<sup>1</sup> See Mordekhai Bar-Lev, Yediyah Kohn, and Shelomoh Rozner, eds., [\*Fifty Years of Bnei Akiva in Israel, 1929-1979\*](#) (Tel Aviv: Bnei Akiva, 1987), 311.

teacher whose views matched their Religious Zionism. However, no one agreed to take the job. Among the names mentioned were Rabbi Moshe Zvi Neria and Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli. Both men turned down KBY and Bnei Akiva, content in their rabbinic roles in Kfar Haroeh.

Rabbi Haim Drukman claimed that several candidates declined because they deemed KBY was too far away from the central Israeli cities and religious communities.<sup>2</sup> KBY's location was important to its founders. Based on Rav Avraham Yitzhak Kook's teachings, they wanted to create a yeshiva in the very spot that Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai founded his school directly after the destruction of the Second Temple.

KBY's difficulty to find an "appropriate" rosh yeshiva betokened part of the reasons for establishing such a yeshiva. The lack of rabbinic leadership within the Religious Zionist enclave encouraged leaders to get involved in the creation of the new yeshiva that would train a new generation of rabbis. Some secular leaders were also sympathetic to this cause. For example, Menachem Ussishkin, the head of Jewish National Fund, helped purchase the land for the yeshiva during the early stages of planning and described his wish that KBY would foster new leaders to compete with Haredi rabbis.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, Bnei Akiva turned to Rabbi Goldvicht, then studying and teaching in *kolel* in Bnei Brak, holding no official position. Before accepting, Rabbi Goldvicht asked the Hazon Ish for his advice. According to one account, the Hazon Ish told him: "if [the Religious Zionists] want to learn Torah—we need to help them."<sup>4</sup> The narrative represents Rabbi Goldvicht's position as an outsider coming to KBY to teach Torah to Religious Zionist young men. This attitude was expressed in several ways during Rabbi Goldvicht's early tenure at KBY and created tensions with the yeshiva's founders.

To balance the Goldvicht appointment, World Mizrahi appointed a *mashgiah* whose views more closely matched Religious Zionism. In fact, the decision to "balance" ideologies was stated explicitly in Rabbi Goldvicht's first contract.<sup>5</sup> In 1958, KBY hired Rabbi Binyamin Efrati. Rabbi Efrati had written several books on Rav Kook and his Zionist writings. In addition, the school's founders ensured that KBY students were exposed to other Religious Zionists rabbis and scholars such as Rabbi Elimelech Bar-Shaul, Rabbi Mordechai Breuer, and Dr. Nechama Leibowitz.

### **A "Lithuanian" Bnei Akiva Yeshiva**

In 1956, Rabbi Goldvicht outlined his vision for KBY. He called for a Lithuanian, Talmud-centered yeshiva surrounded by an environment of Religious Zionism. He expressed a positive attitude toward Bnei Akiva and was aware of the nature and culture of his students. But he insisted that this world remain outside the walls of KBY's study halls and its

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<sup>2</sup> Yochai Rodik, "The 'Mercaz Ha-Rav' Yeshiva: Its Developments and Educational Trends" (PhD diss., University of Haifa, 1994), 166.

<sup>3</sup> World Mizrahi Papers #396, Archive of Religious Zionism, Mossad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, Israel.

<sup>4</sup> Shaul Meizlish, *Yavneh and its Scholars: The Story of the Pioneer Hesder Yeshiva* (Kerem B'Yavneh: Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, 2010), 55.

<sup>5</sup> World Mizrahi Papers #405, Archive of Religious Zionism.

curriculum. In this sanctuary, the KBY students were meant to learn Torah the same way as their counterparts in “Slobodka, Telshe, and Bnei Brak.”<sup>6</sup>

In response, World Mizrahi wrote to Rabbi Goldvicht in harsh tones. Its leaders were furious that Rabbi Goldvicht, so they alleged, deemphasized the organization’s role in KBY’s founding. They accused the *rosh yeshiva* of ignoring the “spiritual roots” of the yeshiva and its founders. Rabbi Goldvicht dashed off a letter back, expressing his deep appreciation to Mizrahi, acknowledging its leaders’ important role in the yeshiva and as the “absolute owners” of KBY. As it turned out, this was just the first of several clashes around this argument about the nature of the new yeshiva.<sup>7</sup>

In the earliest years, Rabbi Goldvicht’s vision and cultural cues clashed with his students. At KBY, young pupils dressed in shorts and sandals, far from the more conservative and typical outfit of Lithuanian yeshiva students. KBY students also maintained their relationships with their peers outside of yeshiva, including the girls they had met and mingled with at Bnei Akiva. Rabbi Goldvicht, on the other hand, kept his traditional rabbinic dress and spoke in the Ashkenazic-styled Hebrew pronunciation used in the Haredi yeshivot, which was sometimes hard for his students to follow. However, these differences usually did not prevent Rabbi Goldvicht and his students from developing close relationships.<sup>8</sup>

But Rabbi Goldvicht’s troubles with the founders persisted. Bnei Akiva and the World Mizrahi demanded to make changes in the yeshiva. For example, they insisted that students should study a curriculum that espoused Religious Zionism. In 1955, Rabbi Drukman offered this idea in a Bnei Akiva journal. There, Rabbi Drukman wrote that “the Bnei Akiva yeshiva should create an original path<sup>9</sup> to educate “pioneering scholars,” ones who were attuned to the needs of Religious Zionism.

In 1956, the national board of Bnei Akiva asked Rabbi Goldvicht to broaden the courses of study beyond Talmud, to spend more time in learning Tanakh and Mussar texts. Bnei Akiva also agitated for space and time for contemporary issues and debates relevant to Religious Zionism. Some Bnei Akiva leaders also conceded that perhaps they were too hasty to establish KBY before a clear decision was made about the way of learning in the new yeshiva.<sup>10</sup>

The tensions continued. In 1959, Mizrahi urged Rabbi Goldvicht to expand KBY’s curriculum, and as a response he organized an educational program for KBY that included the views of Chabad and Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. Not necessarily Zionist, these texts

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<sup>6</sup> Shmuel Avidor, “Bat Kol Nishme’a B’Yavneh,” *Ha-Tzofeh* (17 Elul 5716): 3.

<sup>7</sup> World Mizrahi Papers #383, Archive of Religious Zionism.

<sup>8</sup> World Mizrahi Papers #413, Archive of Religious Zionism.

<sup>9</sup> Bar-Lev, Kohn, and Rozner, *Fifty Years of Bnei Akiva in Israel*, 113.

<sup>10</sup> The protocols of the discussions were published in *Zera’im* 2 (Heshvan 5717): 8-10.

nonetheless would expose KBY students to spirituality and modern Torah learning beyond the pages of the Talmud.<sup>11</sup>

Rabbi Goldvicht added Tanakh and Jewish thought courses but drew the line on studies he believed would compromise the integrity of his Lithuanian-style yeshiva. The differences in attitude between Rabbi Goldvicht and the yeshiva's Religious Zionist founders was simple to understand. The former wanted a place for Religious Zionists to learn Torah. The latter desired a new type of yeshiva fashioned in a Religious Zionist milieu.

What is more, Rabbi Goldvicht also expressed a Haredi view that felt most comfortable separating Torah learning from the surrounding atmosphere and the identity of the students poring over those texts. To him, therefore, there ought not be a difference between Haredi and Religious Zionist *yeshivot*: both should strive to isolate themselves in a world of Torah apart from "distractions" of culture and politics. To some extent, the Bnei Akiva and Mizrahi founders yearned for a radical approach, at least by the views and standards of that time. They wished for an amalgam. To them Torah and culture should influence one another, and therefore the first official Religious Zionist yeshiva must be different from the standard Haredi *yeshivot*.<sup>12</sup>

### **Rabbi Goldvicht, a Revolutionary?**

The image of Rav Goldvicht as a conservative element in KBY, fighting against the attempts to change the nature of the yeshiva, is unquestionably accurate. However, it is also an oversimplification of Rabbi Goldvicht's legacy and character. Alongside the traditionalism, his pragmatism and devotion to students' needs compelled him to innovate.

Two examples bear this out. Rabbi Goldvicht made space for Jewish thought classes, even if the allotment for these courses did not reach the expectations of KBY's founders. He did this in response to students' request to continue the type of learning they experienced in the Religious Zionist high schools. Rabbi Goldvicht recognized that his pupils took this area of study very seriously and encouraged them to develop their learning and analysis of Jewish thought.

The second point concerns army service. KBY was not originally intended to include and accommodate participation in the Israel Defense Forces. KBY students pleaded with the school's leadership to find a way for them to participate in Torah study and defend their country. In turn, Rabbi Goldvicht complied with this and helped to organize a system that became the hallmark of *hesder yeshivot*. He took part in the discussions with the IDF about creating new arrangements for yeshiva students and shaped the policies and framework for all *hesder yeshivot*.

In time, Rabbi Goldvicht's yeshiva created a deep change in the history of Religious Zionism. KBY and the other *hesder yeshivot* changed the level of observance of this community and the

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<sup>11</sup> World Mizrahi Papers #405, Archive of Religious Zionism.

<sup>12</sup> See Dov Schwartz, *The Theology of the Religious Zionist Movement* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1996), 9.

social status of rabbis in this religious sector of Israel.<sup>13</sup> Keeping to the vision set forth by Mizrachi, KBY created a cadre of Religious Zionists rabbis to serve in their communities and in official rabbinic positions. All of this helped cultivate a newfound confidence among the Religious Zionists that extended to the army and the political realm, none of which could have been conceived in the 1950s.<sup>14</sup>

Whether he was the ideal match for the *hesder* yeshiva movement and Religious Zionism might be debatable. In many respects, he was an outsider. However, due to his pragmatism and student-centered leadership, Rabbi Goldvicht played an important role in the Religious Zionist revolution. He was proud of his accomplishments and expressed as much when he received the 1991 Israel Prize on behalf of a religious movement he helped lead.

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<sup>13</sup> See Mordechai Bar Lev, "The Graduates of the Yeshiva High School in Eretz-Yisrael: Between Tradition and Innovation" (PhD diss., Bar Ilan University 1977), 357. Bar Lev showed that there is a big difference between high school yeshiva graduates who attended *hesder* yeshiva and those who did not in the observance of several halakhic issues, such as mixed gender swimming and dancing.

<sup>14</sup> For an extensive discussion, see Shlomo Abramovich, "'We Shall Establish Yeshivot Everywhere': The 'Hesder' and the Developments and Changes in the Religious Zionism, 1953-1985" (PhD diss., Bar Ilan University, 2017), 66-101.

# PRAYER IN AN AGE OF DISTRACTION

ZACHARY TRUBOFF

As early as the Talmud Yerushalmi, we find accounts of the struggle to be mindful while praying. Rabbi Matanyah proclaimed that he would thank his head for bowing of its own accord when he reached the *modim* section of the [shemoneh esreh](#), implying that his prayer was an unconscious act, lacking the ideal spiritual focus.

In the ensuing centuries, prayer hasn't gotten any easier, and in recent years new problems have emerged. Ask any *shul* rabbi what is one of the things they most detest, and they will probably say it is the sound of a cell phone ringing during the silent *amidah*. Cell phones, long seen as an anathema in the Haredi community, have recently come to be viewed by the Modern Orthodox community as a potential danger to spiritual life. It recently made the [news](#) when a prominent Modern Orthodox synagogue banned all cell phones from daily *minyan*, requiring those attending to place them in a secure container during services.

The problem with cell phones, however, is more pernicious than the distraction of their constant beeping and vibrating. The real danger lies in the ceaseless allure of social media beckoning from the digital screens of today's smartphones. At its heart, prayer requires a sense of *penimiyut*, or inwardness. In order to pray, one must turn to an inner world where the words of prayer are transformed from a collection of ancient texts to the authentic outpourings of the soul.

Though often done in the presence of others, prayer requires us to look inward to focus solely on God and ourselves. Unfortunately, many of us utilize our smartphones to place our inner world on display for all to see, thereby lessening its value. In the [words](#) of one cultural critic:

the self is increasingly located in its various identities rather than in the internal world of its passions and desires ... The self-fashioned internet activist is shallow, not in the same sense as the consumer of celebrity gossip, but in that she is completely consumed by the outward, the political. She is all externality—surface without depth, that is to say, without inwardness.

By its very definition, *penimiyut* is not subject to “likes” or dependent on the validation of our peers. This can easily be seen, for example, in Hannah's prayer. Though her silent beseeching of God eventually becomes the paradigm for authentic, heartfelt prayer, she is initially perceived by Eli, the high priest, as drunkenly violating the sanctity of the *Mishkan*. For our own prayer to be successful, we must find ways to escape the incessant need for social acceptance and recover the sense of inwardness that allows for *kavvanah*. Two unique books recently published by Koren, [The Rav Kook Siddur](#) and [Tikkon Tefillati](#), can help guide the way.

*The Rav Kook Siddur*, edited and translated by Rabbi Bezalel Naor, offers a detailed commentary on the text of the *siddur* drawn from Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook's voluminous writings. As would be expected from his past works, Rabbi Naor's translations

and comments are masterful, capturing the depth and sophistication of Rav Kook's mystically inflected theology of prayer.

Particularly noteworthy are the repeated descriptions of the inner experience of prayer. Rabbi Naor poetically explains it as follows: "Prayer is an incessant internal monologue. 'In truth, the soul constantly prays.' In the inner recesses of the soul, there is an uninterrupted flow. What we observe in the formal prayer uttered at the prescribed time is but the eruption of a hidden babbling brook, the surfacing of subterranean current" (xiv).

Though this phenomenon is rooted in the Jewish mystical tradition, which perceives the soul as constantly striving to unite with God, scholars have also noted that Rav Kook's writings are a remarkable example of what contemporary philosopher Charles Taylor describes as the "expressive turn" of the modern era. This concept has two critical components.

First, it is characterized by a focus on the inner self. In the modern period, individuals look less to external structures and traditions to provide meaning and instead turn to their own subjective experience. Yehudah Mirsky [explains](#) that, for Rav Kook, "the expressive turn" becomes an opportunity for a renewed focus on the soul, for "the inner self is ultimately grounded in the divine ... Kabbalah plays a key role here in that the inner motions of the subjective self come to be taken as the manifestations of divine forces coursing through both the material and spiritual universes and in particularly modern ways, such as an emphasis on individual freedom" (24).

According to Taylor, the second feature of the "expressive turn" is the act of articulation. To discover our inner voice, we must find a medium through which it can be expressed. To demonstrate this, he points to the changes that took place within art during the modern era. For millennia, art was primarily concerned with imitating the external world. Only in recent centuries did artists begin to see themselves as creating something fundamentally new from their own inspiration. These same ideas make up Rav Kook's philosophy of prayer. Whereas premodern kabbalistic prayer was primarily focused on the divine *sefirot* of the Godhead, Rav Kook's understanding of prayer turns inward to find God. Furthermore, the soul, one's authentic self, can only be discovered and made manifest through the act of articulated prayer.

Several examples of this can be found in the commentary of the *siddur*. In an adaptation of one of Rav Kook's most famous essays regarding the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden, Rabbi Naor explains that by violating God's command and eating from the Tree of Knowledge, "he [Adam] was alienated from his essence; he turned to the opinion of the Serpent, and lost himself." Naor further clarifies that this primordial sin recurs in all future generations. Nonetheless, "Our 'I' we shall seek; our self we shall seek and we shall find" (196, 199).

Though we may have become closed off to our inner selves due to our errors, the act of prayer helps us begin the journey of self-discovery, for "Prayer brings light, to life, that which is concealed in the depths of the soul" (xxvi). Prayer enables one to know and eventually become one's true self by freeing the soul from the obstruction of sin. Rabbi Naor is to be commended for creating a commentary replete with so many teachings that beautifully



capture the inner experience of prayer. Those who use the *siddur* and carefully read the commentary will not be disappointed with what they find.

If the *Rav Kook Siddur* paints a picture of what *kavvanah* can and should look like, it is *Tikkon Tefillati* (May My Prayer Be Pleasing) by Rabbi Dov Zinger that provides the tools to achieve it. Rabbi Zinger is not particularly well-known in America, but he has played a significant role in the *hasidic* revival that has taken place in Israel within the Religious Zionist community. He was a close student and friend of Rav Shagar, and founded the innovative yeshiva high school [Makor Chayim](#) along with Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. In recent years, Rabbi Zinger initiated the [Beit Midrash L'Hitchadshut](#), an organization dedicated to helping individuals focus on their *avodat Hashem* by creating small informal groups devoted to spirituality and prayer.

*Tikkon Tefillati* is given the unusual subtitle of “Recipes for Prayer,” rendering it a literal prayer cookbook. At first glance, it earns this description because the book is a collection of short yet substantive reflections in elegant yet accessible Hebrew, offering specific advice to the reader on how to achieve a deeper and more authentic prayer experience. Each reflection opens with a rabbinic or *hasidic* teaching followed by a commentary by Rabbi Zinger, and concludes with a writing exercise or meditation intended to assist in deepening one’s *kavvanah*.

In the introduction, Rabbi Zinger clarifies that the concept of a prayer cookbook was not meant to be ironic; it simply points to the fact that prayer and cooking share common elements. Just as cooking is a creative activity which requires the integration of different ingredients, so is the act of prayer. Just as two people may follow the same recipe yet inevitably produce different results, so will two people speaking the same words produce different prayers. Because prayer is dependent upon the subjective inner experience of the individual who is engaging in it, the prayer of two people can never be the same. Additionally, it is easy to forget that cooking and prayer are each a skilled practice. A failed attempt at a recipe is no excuse not to try again. Prayer, too, requires the same perseverance.

The essential purpose of *Tikkon Tefillati* is “to offer a language for engaging in prayer not as a part of Torah study ... but rather a language of service, a language of the heart. To pay attention to the soul, to give it words and to offer paths to reach it” (ix). According to Rabbi Zinger, prayer is not purely an intellectual exercise. To discover the soul, one must be willing to engage one’s emotions and imagination in order to let the heart speak authentically. Like Rav Kook, he too sees prayer as an act that reveals the inner depths of who we are. Poetically, he writes:

There exists inside a person a constant of moaning, whispering waves that ebb and flow. Cries, desires, requests, expressions of gratitude. Many times in one’s life, whether he is aware of it or not, he stands opposite them. He seeks his soul. He yearns. He longs (xiv).

In addition to Rav Kook, Rabbi Nahman of Breslov also serves as a primary influence on the work. His writings repeatedly emphasize the absolute centrality of prayer to religious life, and he even encouraged that his extensive teachings be turned into prayers. (See *Likkutei Moharan Tenina 25* where he is recorded as saying that, “It is also good to make prayers from

Torah.”). Rabbi Nahman’s student, Reb Noson, achieved this very goal with the composition of *Likkutei Tefillot*, and a similar thrust can be seen throughout Rabbi Zinger’s work. He cites a variety of rabbinic and *hasidic* texts while offering his own soulful commentary that vacillates between prose and poetry. Rabbi Nahman is also well-known for his concept of *hitbodedut*, a spiritual practice that transcends the traditional framework of prayer and encourages the individual to engage in a direct personal relationship with the Creator.

Similarly, much of *Tikkon Tefillati* is dedicated to showing the reader how to rediscover their own inner depths in order to connect authentically with God. Many of the reflections utilize various writing exercises to help achieve this. It is interesting to note that journaling in the way Rabbi Zinger suggests has often been used in the modern era as a critical tool to develop and articulate the self. Spiritual diaries are a rarity in Jewish history, but eventually come to be utilized by Kabbalists and even the *Musar* movement. Rav Kook himself spent much of his life keeping spiritual diaries to record his intellectual excursions and innermost feelings. What makes them unique is that, unlike the spiritual writings that populate blogs and other social media, these were not initially intended for the public but rather for the writer’s own spiritual growth and development. The same is true for the exercises that appear throughout *Tikkon Tefillati*. They are designed to help the reader cultivate an inner life from which the act of prayer is a natural outgrowth.

An excellent example of what makes *Tikkon Tefillati* an exceptional work is found in the reflection “*Yehi Ratzon*,” where Rabbi Zinger combines the teachings of Rabbi Nahman with elements of Rav Kook’s expressivist notions of prayer. He opens the section by citing a teaching from Rabbi Nahman that, “The essential aspect of prayer is the revelation of desire, as expressed by, ‘May my prayer to you, God, be at an opportune time’ (Psalms 69:14).” In this excerpt Rabbi Nahman is engaged in creative wordplay and interprets “May my prayer to you” as “I am prayer.” In other words, the expression of our innermost desires is itself an act of prayer. Recognizing our inner depths and needs is an act of great spiritual authenticity. Rabbi Zinger then writes the following:

“All of us move about in this world and our desires are hidden within us  
desires that wait for prayer.  
Prayer is the opportunity  
to dwell in the world of desires  
without forcing them  
without searching for ways to draw them into the world of action  
just to be in the world expressing desires  
to tell to the Holy One Blessed be He about our dreams  
about what we want today:  
I want to be joyous  
I want to truly speak  
I want for Jerusalem to be built once again” (10-11).

He concludes the section by imploring the reader to take a few moments to imagine their various desires cascading over their head like the waves of the ocean. They should then take time to write them down, fleshing out the details and implications. The final step is to grab hold of one or two desires and use them as a foundation for genuine prayer.

Forty years ago, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik [wrote that](#) “What man fails to comprehend is not the world around him, but the world within him ... the needs of which he is supposed to have clear awareness” (p. 62). He acknowledges that many would find this notion absurd in a world where human beings appear to be driven purely by the pursuit of their selfish desires. However, like Rav Kook, Rabbi Soloveitchik understood that man loses himself all too often in the needs and desires put forth by others, a process that modern technology only intensifies. In a world where nearly everyone feels the pervasive influence of social media, it is extraordinarily difficult to know one’s true identity and desires. According to Rabbi Soloveitchik, authentic prayer offers an antidote to all of this. He writes, “through prayer man finds himself ... 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 ... he becomes a redeemed being” (66).

Authentic prayer has always been hard, but in today’s day and age it has become a genuinely countercultural activity. *The Rav Kook Siddur* and *Tikkon Tefillati* remind us that it is worth the effort.

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