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THOU, SO TO SPEAK: *DEI*-XIS

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Only in the beauty created
by others is there consolation,
in the music of others and in others' poems.
Only others save us,
even though solitude tastes like
opium. The others are not hell,
if you see them early, with their
foreheads pure, cleansed by dreams.
That is why I wonder what
word should be used, "he" or "you." Every "he"
is a betrayal of a certain "you" but
in return someone else's poem
offers the fidelity of a sober dialogue.

Adam Zagajewski, "In The Beauty Created by Others"

For me the other is neither he nor she; the other has only a name of his own, and her own name. The third-person pronoun is a wicked pronoun; it is the pronoun of the non-person, it absents, it annuls.... For me the other cannot be a referent, you are never anything but ***you****...*

Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*

We spoke one day about the names of God as they are found in Jewish tradition. There was one he did not know, namely ***Kavyakhol****, which I told him my father used sometimes [—a] word...found in rabbinic literature. Literally it*

> *means: "Making necessary allowances." Or more simply, "So to speak." So to speak. Like an Otherwise said. Or an otherwise than being. He liked the expression very much. He repeated* ***Kavyakhol, Kavyakhol,*** *like a candy melting in his mouth.*
>
> **Salomon Malka,** ***Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy***

Daniel Weiss's thoughtful essay begins appropriately enough by opening a book—the *siddur*. His essay sent me in turn to open many books of various kinds, including, needless to say, the *siddur* (rather, several *siddurim*). As I compose these opening sentences of my own, the book that sits open on my left is a grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew. Significantly for my purposes here (albeit so far as I can tell somewhat uncommon for such textbooks), the very first of its twenty-one diagnostic units treats personal pronouns. Each unit commences with an introductory text by way of illustration, and this first one cites the first *mishna* of the first *perek* of "Chapters of the Fathers":

> Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the men of the Great Assembly. They said three things [*Hem amru shlosha devarim*].

They—*anshei knesset ha'gedola*—represent but one of several Talmudic authorities (*B. Berakhot* 33a) invoked by the Sages as ordaining (formalizing, instituting) benedictions and prayers for *klal yisrael*.[1] That is to, say, the men of the Great Assembly began the process of fixing forms and patterns of worship whose eventual product became what we know as the Jewish Prayerbook, according to its several *nusachim* (rites).

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[1] Joseph Heinemann's *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977) begins *his* book with the seven Tannaitic and Amoraic dicta (from the Bavli, *Sifre,* Midrash on Psalms, *Midrash Tanchuma*, and Palestinian Talmud) that identify competing figures for the establishment of statutory prayer: *hakamim ha-rishonim, hasidim ha-rishonim*, the Patriarchs, one hundred and twenty Elders. Like the mishna in *Avot*, all these genealogies point to the reception of an ancient tradition, although in each case, the generation, public body, or personage may differ. The most detailed account for such establishment is found in *B. Berakhot* 26b: Simeon ha-Pakoli arranged the Eighteen Benedictions in their proper order in the presence of Rabban Gamliel in Yavneh."

Struck by the adventitious coupling of a grammatical lesson on pronouns in Rabbinic Hebrew and the famous Mishnaic pronouncement of *shalshelet kabbalah* (chain of tradition), I want accordingly to push off from Daniel Weiss's essay by considering the special status of God as 2nd person in Rabbinic prayer with a *shalshelet* of my own devising. My essay will thus braid together three distinct but interconnected approaches to what Weiss calls the "odd deixis of 'you'": 1) textual-historical, 2) linguistic-grammatical, and 3) phenomenological. The first of these may appear more detour than destination in its attention to concrete particulars of the 2nd person pronoun in the evolution of liturgy. But, the foray into form-criticism lays the necessary ground for the more immediately relevant, and briefer, speculations of sections two and three which treat 1st, 2nd and 3rd person-hood expressed or conveyed through congregational prayer. Even though Weiss's question seems to hinge upon the ostensive or better, relational character of the God towards whom prayer says "You" (that is, not *Dieu* but *à-Dieu*), at bottom, descriptive, speculative, and time-honored as it may be, that inquiry might also be rendered, *how do we pray?* Whatever such interrogative aims at is properly unfinalizable and a matter for eventuation over and above both description and speculation. My responses below tack dutifully in just that direction, and for the most part hug the lee shore.

Section 1. *Words carry with them the places they have been.* M.M. Bakhtin

In his 1340 commentary on the *Siddur*, R. David Abudraham remarks that no two congregations on earth recited the *tefilla* (*Shemoneh Esrei* or Eighteen Benedictions) in an identical fashion, word for word. Even at this late date, Jewish prayer, however long established, remained variable among diaspora communities in the midst of its statutory elements having been fixed by *Chazal* many centuries earlier. Indeed, it remains so, even today, across denominations. This is not merely a function of the necessary dialectical relation between *keva* and *kavanah* (cognate to *kivun*, meaning "direction"), routinized worship and spontaneous expression, upon

which Jewish prayer sits (or during the *Amida*, stands) precariously poised. For variability also describes the very discursive structure of the *Siddur* itself, a compiled and composite text if there ever was one, even more so than *Tanakh*and the Talmuds, *midrashim,* and their commentaries.

Even linguistically, while it speaks for the most part in Biblical Hebrew, it also incorporates, as Philip Birnbaum notes in his edition of the *Siddur*, "a great deal of post-biblical diction."[2] The Prayerbook is, preeminently, a *citational* text: it selects verses and passages (sometimes adjacent to each other) from *Tanakh*, the *Mishna* and *Talmud,* even the *Zohar*, across a centuries-wide swath of scriptural and exegetical composition. Such structure is the very sign, indeed name, of its textual compilation—"*siddur*" denoting order—since like the oral law antecedent to its own redaction, not only was there no "prayer-book" as such in either Biblical or post-Biblical periods, but the Rabbis eschewed any actual written *sefer* for prayer.[3]

I stress this point at this outset in order to get an initial bead on the status of vocative or apostrophic "you" with God as referent in Jewish liturgy. Of course, pragmatically and phenomenologically speaking, as Weiss proposes, the deixis of that 2nd person reference can be taken as uniform across the textual landscape of the liturgy—although even that presumption invites challenge, as I will have occasion to propose. Yet, strictly from a textual and historical vantage, it may be just as plausible to propose a range of "Yous" populating that same landscape of prayer, in its furrows and high places, its deserts, forests, and encampments.

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[2] *Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem* (New York: Hebrew Publishing House, 1971), xi.

[3] For this section, I draw chiefly upon the standard source-scholarship on the evolution and formalization of Jewish prayer, namely Ismar Elbogen's *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History* (1913 in German, 1972 in Hebrew, 1993, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society); Joseph Heinemann's *Prayer in the Talmud*, Daniel Goldschmidt's *Mehkere tefilah u-piyut* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978), Joseph Petuchowski's *Contributions to the Scientific Study of Jewish Liturgy*(New York, 1970) and *Understanding Jewish Prayer* (New York: Ktav, 1972), and Moshe Greenberg's *Biblical Prose Prayer As a Window to the Popular Tradition of Ancient Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Petuchowski (1972) notes that "not until the ninth century C.E. do we get a written order of Service for Jewish worship" (93).

Weiss is certainly correct to appeal to the pragmatic function of pronominal reference as an apparatus for understanding what it means liturgically to say "you" to God. Linguists Roman Jakobson and Emile Benveniste, drawing on Otto Jesperson's original coinage, explained deixis ("display" or "pointing") as the referential mechanism for aptly named "shifters," indexical expressions whose meaning "cannot be defined without a reference to the message," which therefore *shift* according to context (Jakobson, 1971: 131). Deictic coordinates, as J. Lyons puts it, correspond to the here-and-now of any locutional context ("the spatial-temporal zero-point" oriented "egocentrically."[4])

But *shifting* also describes the landscape of prayer itself inasmuch as it aggregates more than one single textual and historical tradition. And it likewise captures the tessellated character of the Jewish Prayer *book* whose individual sections shift according to provenance, now drawing wholly from Biblical sources (for example, the series of psalms in the *Psukei D'zimra* of the *Shacharit* service and following the *Shabbat Mincha* service, or the passages from Chronicles, Nehemiah, and Exodus preceding the *Yishtabach* prayer), now from a mixture of Biblical passages and later liturgical formulas (as in the *berakhot* on either side of the morning and evening recitation of the *Shema* and in the *Shemoneh Esrei* itself); here, prayers of attributed authorship, like the Monday and Thursday *Tachanun*, or there, whole set-pieces whose antiquity was already recognized by the Sages, like the *Nishmat* and *Kel Adon* hymns for Shabbat morning or the daily *Aleinu*, originally from the Rosh Hashanah *Mussaf*

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[4] Also pertinent here is Jakobson's six-part model of communication, which specifies a *conative* function whereby the *message* is specifically oriented towards the *addressee*, "with its purest grammatical expression in the vocative or imperative." See "Linguistics and Poetics" in *Selected Writings III* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981, 25. See also Ziony Zevit, "Roman Jakobson, Psycholinguistics, and Biblical Poetry (*JBL* 109 [1990]: 385-401. Of course, the strictly linguistic/textual treatment of 2nd person address is immense. Since, however, at some level Jewish liturgy is read in the midst of being prayed, one analogue to be considered is literature, lyric, dramatic, and narrative. A good starting point for the last of these is Dennis Schofield's *The Second Person: A Point of View? The Function of the Second-Person Pronoun in Narrative Prose Fiction*, online at http://members.westnet.com.au/emmas/2p/index2.htm.

Service. The *Kedusha D'sidra*, found in the *Uva L'tzion* prayer for weekday mornings and Shabbat *Mincha* and *Ma'ariv* is emblematic: preceded by the verse in 2nd person from Psalms 22:4, "You are the Holy One enthroned upon the praises of Israel," it is followed by antiphonal verses from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Exodus in Hebrew, accompanied by the Aramaic *Targum* to all three.

One may ask whether the "'You' of prayer" in all of the instances above—petitioned, praised, personalized, communalized—designates the same in each. Its referent surely is, but the conditions and circumstances of address and allocution vary dramatically. That is because, even within the comparatively standardized form of statutory worship, an individual service comprises an assemblage or progression of sub-genres and types, and, to that limited degree, may plausibly be called heteroglot. A given 2nd person reference to God may be supplicatory, apostrophic, intimate, and obeisant. All belong to Jakobson's conative function, but each may locate and invoke its addressee differently in much the same way that even Barthes's amatory *you* must be both consistently the same yet different. If the 3rd person pronoun annuls and absents, the 2nd person devotedly re-imagines and re-consecrates.[5]

In his essay, Weiss takes as identical the deixis of second-person in the quotation from *Shirat Ha'yam* (Song of the Sea) in *Emet v'Emunah* from the Shabbat evening service[6]—"Who is like You among the heavenly pow-

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[5] In The *Wisdom of Love*, Alain Finkielkraut provides the ethical commentary on "the beloved face" as gleaned from a reading of Proust by way of Levinas: what is loved in the amatory "you" is neither this nor that feature but rather the very quality of difference, a difference that "incessantly disorients every idea I have of it" (40).

[6] Actually, a component of the weekday *Arvit* and *Shacharit* Services as well, repeated in the corresponding *Emet v'Yatziv* from *Shacharit* and in its entirety at the end of *Pesukei D'zimra*. See Elbogen on its several interpolations into the daily liturgy. On the destruction of the Second Temple by Titus in the face of God's seeming mute witness, the verse was interpreted by the School of R. Ishmael to mean "who is like You among the silent," through a parapraxis on *elim* as *ilim* (*Gittin* 56b). Where Weiss reads the verse as "Who is like the 2nd person among the 3rd persons? Who is like the *you* among the *its?*"—God as wholly otherwise—R. Ishmael identifies God's otherness as superlative silence. The *Zohar* I:2a, on the first verse of Genesis, says that the *Ein Sof* "verged on being revealed, it produced at first a single point, which ascended to become thought. Within it, it drew all drawings, graved all engravings, carving

ers," (Ex. 15:11)—and the 2nd person deixis of *Gevurot* (or *T'hiyat Ha'metim*), the second *berakha* of the Eighteen Benedictions. Yet, the one is a Biblical quotation that fulfills the commanded twice-daily remembrance of the Exodus; the other, as composed by the Sages, conjoins phraseology from Psalms 146, Isaiah 45:8, and *Pirke De'Rabbi Eliezer*, and possibly Micah 7:18. The phrase, *mi kamocha* ("who is like You") is common to both deictic instances, in fact. But the one iteration is a whole-verse citation from Exodus in the context of the Torah-commandment of *zecher l'yetziat mitzraim*; the other gets interpolated within the immediate context of a statutory *berakha.*

Indeed, the structure of the *berakha*-formula in the Eighteen Benedictions and the special place accorded the 2nd person in it is crucial for our analysis, something I will return to. Here, however, even as I reserve judgment about the sometimes not-so-odd deixis of "You" in Rabbinic prayer, a scale of values rather than a featureless, pure address or relationality that transcends predicates, I want to reinforce one of Weiss's basic assumptions: that addressing God in Jewish prayer, a wholly unique case of pronominal deixis (albeit common to most religious liturgies), still naturally lends itself to a comparison with everyday human speech, and has always done so in the context of Judaic worship. "Speaking in the second-person is only the most elemental form of biblical man's speech to God," writes Moshe Greenberg (1983, 20). "When he prays, he uses words in patterns and these patterns follow the analogy of interhuman speech in comparable situations."[7]

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within the concealed holy lamp a thought, called ***mi,*** *Who,* origin of structure" (8). Along with David Patterson, we could say that *mi kamocha* may thus also be read as an assertion rather than a question, a naming of God's self-identical divinity. See *Hebrew Language and Jewish Thought,* 71.

[7] Compare R. Joseph Soloveitchik's observations on saying the *Shema* as compared with praying the *shemoneh esrei*: "It expresses itself more in the form of a declaration, confession, profession of faith. Whether this solemn profession takes the form of soliloquy in which man declares and challenges himself, or a colloquy—in which he addresses himself to a Thou—is irrelevant. What is important is the fact that if there is a Thou in *Shema*, the Thou is a finite being like myself. Of course, God is also experienced when one reads *Shema*, but not in a sense of fellowship or communion via the grammatical Thou" (96). By contrast, "Prayer

This is particularly the case for blessings and the *barukh* formula corresponding to them, first in Biblical narrative, and later in Rabbinic liturgy. A blessing between men, or men and women, in *Tanakh* is typically occasioned by some transaction warranting the expression or proclamation of gratitude. The Book of Ruth, for example contains a number of these, e.g., "Blessed be you before HaShem, my daughter (3:10); "Blessed be he of HaShem because he did not relinquish his constancy before the living and the dead" (2:10). In 2 Samuel, David says, "Blessed be you before HaShem because you performed this act of loyalty toward your lord" (2:5), and in 1 Samuel, Saul says "Blessed are you of HaShem; I have performed all that the Lord has said." (15:13), and "Blessed are you of HaShem; for you have compassion on me (23:21).[8]

Some of these statements convey the optative mood, *yehi...barukh*, ("may he/you be blessed"). Most, however, offer an interpersonal parallel to the public benediction whose sense was "may HaShem be praised"—invoking God, attesting to, eulogizing His increase directly or as hallowed through human agency. Greenberg makes the congruence acute:

> The survival of the phrase *baruk YHWH* can only be ascribed, in my opinion, to its functional analogy to the *baruk X* formula used with humans. David's pairing [1 Samuel 25:32f.] of *baruk YHWH* and *b^{e}ruka at* "blessed be YHWH" and "blessed be you" shows how natural it was to juxtapose the two in one breath; gratitude for a human favor might readily be acknowledgment that underlying it was the grace of God. Such functional analogy...along with occasional spoken juxtapositions, were enough to preserve the original formal parallelism of the two *baruk* formulas. (*Biblical Prose Prayer*, 35)

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forms a conversation that joins two into one community" (99). *Worship of the Heart: Essays in Jewish Prayer* (Jersey City: Ktav Publishing House, 2003).

[8] With the formalization of synagogue liturgy, however, such distinctions became sharpened and reified. Heinemann notes for example that "the formula, 'Blessed be Thou of the Lord,' commonly found in the 'benediction by which a man blesses his fellow,' [*birkat adam et havero*] is never mentioned in Rabbinic literature [because] it is too similar to the liturgical *B^{e}rakah* formula, 'Blessed are Thou, O Lord'" (284).

It is a short, though not entirely simple, step from such prose prayer in the Bible to the stylized formulae of statutory synagogue prayer. Bible scholar Jean-Paul Audet analyzed a similar *barukh* formula in his article on Biblical benedictions in connection with the Eucharist,[9] and Joseph Heinemann builds on his conclusions with reference to patterns of the liturgical *berakha* in Mishnaic and Talmudic periods. In this case, we are speaking of those many instances of spontaneous praise and wonder in Biblical narrative which are composed of two distinct but linked parts: an introductory clause, *Barukh Hashem asher__*, followed by a main-content clause in the 3rd person reflecting the particular circumstances that prompted the benediction. For example, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham who has not withheld his steadfast kindness..." (Gen. 24:27, or "Blessed be the Lord who has delivered you out of the hands of the Egyptians... (Ex.18:10)—a pattern distributed throughout *Tanakh*, in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings.[10] All such *berakhot* internally traverse the bridge between extemporaneous and formalized expression.

The Biblical expostulation presents a prototype for the liturgical benediction that forms the core of Jewish congregational prayer. It appears, in descendant form, in all those introductory *berakhot* collected in the *Siddur* whose 3rd person relative clauses in perfect tense identify God's agency: "who has given us," "who has sanctified us," "who has commanded us," etc.; the appositional *elokenu melekh ha'olam*, "Our God, King of the Universe," in such benedictions not only fulfills the halakhic requirement for a *berakha* to mention God's kingship as well as the divine name (*Shem Havaya*, the Tetragrammaton)[11], but also fills the same slot

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[9] See "Equisse Historique du Genre Littéraire de la Bénédiction Juive et l'Eucharistie Chretiènne" in *Revue Biblique* LXV (1958): 371-99.

[10] Compare 1 Samuel 25:32, 25:39, 2 Samuel 18:28, 1 Kings 1:48, 2 Kings 5:21, 2 Chronicles 2:11, 1 Kings 8:15, 2 Chronicles 6:4, 1 Kings 8:56, Psalms 66:20, Psalms 124:6, Ruth 4:14, Ezra 7:27, Daniel 3:28.

[11] For a pertinent discussion of this name of God and how to translate it, see Rosenzweig's essay, "The Eternal" and his "Letter to Martin Goldner" in *Scripture and Translation.* In both he speaks of the "three dimensions" of the personal pronoun: the speaker, the one spoken to, the one spoken of. Remarking on the vocative quality in the Hebrew substitution for *Shem*

occupied by similar epithets in Biblical precedents, "the God of our fathers" or "the God of Israel."

But the form with which we most associate the beginning of the standard liturgical benediction, "Blessed are You, O Lord"—that is, *Barukh HaShem* deictically vectored, through the interposition of *atah*, in the 2nd person—occurs only twice in the Bible (Psalms 119:12 and 1 Chronicles 29:10). Moreover, the distinctive feature of all liturgical *berakhot*—the further shift from one shifter, 2nd person, to another, 3rd person—whether in introductory statement (*barukh* formula, appellative, relative clause, e.g., "the great, mighty, awesome God who bestows beneficial kindness") or concluding eulogy, the *chatima* or "seal" (*barukh* formula, active participle or noun, e.g., "Shield of Abraham," "the Holy God," "Redeemer of Israel," "Giver of the Torah," or shorter relative clause in present tense phrased in Biblical style—distich with parallelism and cadence) is characteristic of Rabbinic prayer alone. What the Palestinian Talmud termed the "long form" (*matbe'a arok*) cements the two into one: a benediction that begins with the opening *barukh*-formula and concludes with the eulogy-formula, a paradigm that applies to the first of the Eighteen Benedictions, the morning *berakhot ha'torah* and benedictions before and after the *Haftorah*, the first of the *berakhot kriat shema* of the Evening service, and many others.[12]

Hameforash (literally, "the explicit name" or "name itself" missing in its translation as "Lord" and analogous to the root-sense of the French "*Monsieur*"), Rosenzweig says, "The quality of relatedness, of reciprocity inherent in the divine name first simply because it is a name and then in particular because of its special meaning, must rather be translated on the basis of the other side of the relationship—the side of the one who speaks and names. The 'present-to-you' of the original must be rendered by a 'present-to-me' of the translation. The vocative solution is forbidden simply as being too grotesque; what is bidden in its place is the personal pronoun, which in its three persons means precisely the three dimensions of 'present-to-me': the capacity to be spoken to, the capacity to be spoken to by, the capacity to be spoken of. The second person has priority here, since it is the source of personhood of the other two—only him whom I am prepared to speak to do I accept as an 'I,' and only him whom I have spoken to do I accept even in his absence as a person.... Only because he is my 'You' do I perceive the one- present-to-me in his 'I," and can speak of 'Him.' But enough for now. It is just now Shabbat, and everything has in any case been said, albeit briefly" (191-192).

[12] Compare the short form (*matbe'a kashar*) of the benediction over wine, *borei peri hagafen*. Compare as well the benediction in the *Birkhot Ha'shachar* after the initial one-line recitation

Neither grammatical/syntactic nor intentionalist/theological approaches fully explains this distinctive blending of pronominal deixis in the liturgical *berakha*. For the former, many *berakhot* found in the Dead Sea Scrolls use *atah* and continue in the 2nd person, as do certain benedictions in the *Mussaf* service of the Festivals. As for the latter, however appealing, the medieval explanations of Abudraham—"the Holy One Blessed be He is known both directly and indirectly"—or its modern analogue, as postulated, for example, by Max Kadushin,[13] of the dual aspect of man's relationship with the Deity conveyed through purposeful sentence-rhetoric, both argue ex post facto.

Rather, when the word "You" became inserted into the original *barukh*-formula, the Sages preferred to leave the customarily 3rd person syntax of any Biblical phraseology intact (the Bible itself not infrequently combines 2nd and 3rd persons in a single sentence). In short, the historical development of liturgical benedictions is as composite as the textual artifact—the *Siddur*—that would eventually assemble and organize them. Nevertheless, its fruit was a standardized genre consisting of stylistic norms as applied to the statutory prayer of the synagogue. And while the Rabbis were compunctious above all in regard to the form of communal worship, occasional overlap between that genre and others (private prayers, benedictions of the *bet midrash*, retentions of Temple worship) merely attest to the baseline discursive authority of Biblical patterns for all contexts of Jewish liturgy.[14]

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of the Shema that enchain a series of *atah hu*: "**It is You** before the world was created, **it is You** since the world was created, and **it is You** in the world to come," before the concluding eulogy, "Blessed are You HaShem, Who sanctifies Your Name among the multitudes."

[13] *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1972) and *Worship and Ethics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

[14] As Heinemann and many other scholars note, while there is some question about when the synagogue and its order of prayers came into existence—Babylonian exile or Second Temple period and how it initially functioned—house of prayer or place for public reading of the Law—it is likely that its roots are fairly ancient, as a popular institution that developed independently of the sacrificial cult.

Finally, I want to make a small lexical point about the core-prayer of the liturgy, the Eighteen Benedictions, about which far more can be said than space allows here. The "'You' of prayer" in every one of these benedictions is selfsame, uniformly so in the *Barukh atah HaShem* form in the culminating *chatima* to each that seals their status as Rabbinically instituted. Looked at from their lexical starting points, however, we also find a more heterogeneous structure. Three begin with the 2nd person pronoun itself: *You are mighty, You are holy, You endow man with wisdom.* Ten commence with a verb in the 2nd person imperative: *Bring us back, Forgive us, Behold our affliction, Heal us, Bless for us this year, Sound the shofar, Restore our judges, Hear our prayer, Be Favorable toward Your people, Establish peace.* Four start with prepositional phrases or object clauses: *And for the slanderers, On the righteous, And to Jerusalem, The offspring of your servant David*. One, *Avot,* begins with the *Barukh* formula. And one, *Modim,* begins with the 1st person plural: *We thank You.* The *Amidah* itself is framed by two prayers in the 1st person singular that are technically exterior to it: Psalms 51: 17, *Adonai sefatai*, and *Elokai netzor* composed by the amora Mar b. Rabina.

As a matter of not only Rabbinic stipulation but also stylistic and pragmatic sentence norms, the principle of "end-focus" explains why the end of every benediction places an invariant seal on its utterance.[15] All employ the *Barukh Atah HaShem* formula so that our perorating experience with each *berakha* will encounter the identical deictic form nineteen successive times. Even if we hold the different predicates of each *chatima* in abeyance, the "'You' of prayer" here is constant. Not so, as we have just seen, for the introductory words of the Eighteen Benedictions, since some begin pronominally and others verbally and still others neither with a pronoun nor verb expressing the 2nd person. Whatever the Sages' intentions, prayer necessarily oscillates between *kavannah* and *keva*, the free and the bound, the personal and the congregational.

In each case, the latter of these poles regulates an unalterable phraseology and discursive sequence. The former, however, depending

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[15] See Maria Luisa Zubizarreta, *Prosody, Focus, and Word Order* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).

on subjective factors that, unlegislated, can still be guessed at, certainly involves a counterpart to the end-focus principle. Initial words will carry initial weight. This is conspicuous, certainly, for the three benedictions that begin with *atah*. But it applies similarly to "**heal** us" or "**sound** the *shofar*" or "**we** thank You," each of which orients our utterance accordingly, even while the full wording of a *berakha* will often feature other prominent instances of 2nd person deictic *atah*, e.g., *For **You** are a mighty redeemer, For **You** are a faithful and merciful God, For **You** pardon and forgive*.[16]

So, now, having brought all the three linguistic persons into the foreground with this last lexical précis, I want to conclude this, lengthiest, section of my essay by considering a final dimension of the address "you" in prayer, one whose allocutionary etiquette concerns God only indirectly (which is why I spell it lower-case here). On the Talmud's stipulation that "A man should always include himself in the congregation" (*B. Berakhot* 29b-30a), Heinemann remarks as follows:

> The Position of the Sages in this matter is quite clear: with the exception of *Bar^{e}ku* as an invitational formula at the beginning of the public service, they disqualify for synagogue use any formula which addresses the congregation in the "you" style, since anyone who employs such a formula, is, as it were, excluding himself from the congregation.[17]

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[16] It bears emphasizing that Hebrew is what linguists call a "pro drop" or "zero anaphora" language in which pronouns can be omitted from statements where they are pragmatically inferable. Verb-forms and inflected endings in Hebrew, as here in the *Amidah*, will typically indicate the person, number, and/or gender. Deictics (a type of exophora as opposed to anaphora) are pro-forms: pronouns, pro-adjectives, e.g., "that", and pro-adverbs, e.g., "now" and "here." Thus, in our example here, while the benedictions beginning with imperative verbs locate a 2nd person, they do not do so pronominally.

[17] In his article, "*Seder taanit tzibbur b'makhzor Roma*" (*S. Meyer Memorial Volume* (Jerusalem, 1957), Daniel Goldschmidt assembles the restrictive number of instances in which the congregation is addressed directly through the 2nd person. Heinemann emphasizes that with the exception of the *Barkhu*, all developed in the *Beit Midrash* and thus originally belonged to a different and subsidiary genre of non-statutory prayer.

The invitation formula of *Barkhu et HaShem hamvorakh*, recited as the commencement proper to public worship in the morning and evening services and also as the introduction to the public *Kriat Ha'Torah* (reading of the Law), is justified by the Sages this way: "Since he (the Prayer Leader) says, 'who is to be blessed' [which implies: by everybody, including himself], he thus does not disassociate himself from the congregation."[18] The scrupled nature of such inclusiveness (or non-exceptionality) is a familiar component of the Passover *Haggadah* where Ex. 12:26 is illuminated in the person of the wicked son whose question "What does this service mean to **you**?" is taken to intimate "To you and not to him...by this he has excluded himself from the congregation." Similarly, *Chazal* forbade for synagogue use the prayer *Birkat adam et havero* by which one blesses one's neighbor, since one cannot include oneself in such a benediction when pronouncing it and would thus automatically separate himself from the *tzibbur* (congregation).

I stress this point in anticipation of the second and third sections of this essay to follow. Simply put, it is not merely the deictic valance of "You" that is charged with special meaning in Rabbinic prayer. For "saying 'You'" instantly folds back upon the question of the person or persons saying it. *How does one pray?* is also the question of *who prays?* If, for Moshe Greenberg and a host of Jewish thinkers and commentators both before and after Buber, "Receiving God's address, man is 'you' to God's 'I': addressing God, man is 'I' to God's 'you'" (*Biblical Prose Prayer*, 20), the 3rd person—as witness, as collectivity, as Illeity—introduces a "curvature of space," a new and indefeasible dimension into the equation, making the odd deixis of "you" truly, that is, numerically, odd. Can "You"

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[18] *Mishna Berakhot* VII, 3; *B. Berakhot* 49b; *J. Berakhot,* VII 11b-c, cited by Heinemann. In his commentary to the *Siddur,* R. Shimson Hirsch remarks that while the Reader calls upon the congregation to make a public declaration, it is better construed as, "rather, the congregation calls upon itself, through the Reader." He adds, "Because of this concept of God as *Hamvorakh, Barkhu* can be uttered only *b'tzibbur* [in the company of a *minyan*]. *Barukh ata,* the promise to bless God with the devotion of all of one's own personality, can be uttered by any individual without the presence of a congregation. But only a community which encompasses all the present and future generations in its scope can declare God is *mevorakh* (106).

be said by 1st persons to the Jewish God without necessarily referring both Him and them to the 3rd person neighbors who are each other's ever-present company? To whom does 2nd person address shift or point?[19]

Section 2. *For is the kingdom of God become words or syllables?* The Translators to the Reader: Preface to the KJV 1611

In this section and one following it, the essay's opening epigraphs exert their peculiar force. Before they do, however, a corollary to the questions about prayer I have been posing presents itself: *what do* ***"prayer"*** *and* ***"to pray"*** *mean in Hebrew?* The root, PLL, means *to clarify, estimate, render a verdict, judge.* Significantly enough and a common reference point for discussions of this subject, the verb is in the *hitpael* or intransitive-reflexive *binyan* ("construction"); indeed, its spelling is merely a *lamed* away from the name for this reflexive conjugation pattern itself: *l'hitpalel*. The *hitpael* construction expresses reflexive or reciprocal action, e.g., *l'hitlabesh* (to dress oneself) vs. *lilbosh* (to wear) or *l'hitkatev* (to correspond) as opposed to *katav* (to write). In the case of *l'hitpalel,* to pray, and *tefillah,* prayer, the reflexive meaning is not immediately apparent. When one prays, one acts upon oneself. This is more than the performance of self-judgment, however, since in term of linguistic valency, *l'hitpalel* and *tefillah* depend on a conative valence as well: "to seek a judgment for oneself."[20]

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[19] Consider Eric L. Santner's extremely trenchant observations in this regard: "When...one has lost the capacity to pray, 'God,' in essence assumes the status of a designated signifier, a stand-in for an otherwise *nameless loss*; the word signifies, *but not for us* even though we continue, in some sense, to be addressed by it, to live, as Scholem so powerfully phrased it, within the space of its validity beyond and in excess of its meaning." *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 44. Reversing the formulation's polarity, we can say that prayer at its most functional, as (response to) revelation, may also answer to a validity in excess of its significance (*in dem sie gilt aber nicht bedeutet*) such that God assumes the positive status of a "stand- in," or in the Levinasian coinage I discuss below, "Illeity"—a nameless deficit which is also surplus.

[20] And for others: the first such use of the word in *Tanakh* occurs in Gen. 20:7, where God speaks to Abimelech in a dream, describing Abraham as a prophet who seeks to intervene, to involve himself, on his behalf, *ki navi hu v'yitpalel ba'adcha*. R. Shimshon Hirsch's comments are to the point: "If our prayers were not *tefilla,* if our praying were not *hitpalel,* working on

Prayer is thus at least trivalent: one prays a prayer for God and for oneself, on behalf of God and on one's own behalf.[21]

In both Biblical and Rabbinic prayer, from a grammatical point of view, we find ourselves in something like the middle voice (though, of course, that is the verbal province of Ancient Greek, not Hebrew). As a property of language, "the middle voice" may be most familiar to readers of Derrida from the seminal essay from 1968 "La Différánce." But that discussion, like several others in a similar vein (for example, "The Supplement of the Copula: Philosophy Before Linguistics") leans heavily on the work of linguist Emile Benveniste, specifically his essay "Active and Middle Voice in the Verb." In this section, I want to refer to some of Benveniste's assertions there in order to place "the 'you' of prayer" in another clarifying context, this time as a matter of grammar.[22]

While the general frame of reference of his essay exceeds the bounds of our inquiry here, Benveniste makes two salient points about the middle voice which can instruct us about the dimensionality of both the words for, and meaning of, prayer in Hebrew. In sketching an etiology for active, passive and middle voices, Benveniste maintains that, "The Indo-

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our inner self to bring it to the heights of recognition of the Truth, and to resolutions for serving God, there would be no sense in having fixed times and prescribed forms for them. For this assumes that periodically at fixed times the masses of people are always filled with one and the same state of feelings, one and the same trend of thoughts. Yea, such prayers would be rather superfluous. Feelings and thoughts which are already lively within us have no need to be expressed, and least of all in set phrases placed in our hands.... Hence our prescribed prayers are not facts, truths, which they assume we are already fully conscious of, but are such that they wish to awaken, reanimate, and ever keep fresh" (*Commentary on the Torah*, 347-348).

[21] Another cognate for *tefilla* is *niftal*, meaning "struggle" or "wrestling." This would certainly be the sense preferred by R. Avraham Y.H. Kook, for whom prayer participated in a restless surge on the plane of existence towards originary unity, for which Jews, and *kal vakhomer* (a fortiori) Jews who pray bear a special responsibility. See *Olat Reiyah* Vol 1 (Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1962 and *Orot Hakodesh* Vol 3 (Jerusalem: Mosa HaRav Kook, 1966), and the discussion in Jack Cohen's *Major Philosophers of Jewish Prayer in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 43-59.

[22] See also the three related essays, "Relationships of Persons in the Verb," "The Nature of Pronouns," and "Subjectivity in Language," all collected in *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables: University of Miami, 1971).

European stage of the verb is characterized by the opposition of only two diatheses, active and middle" (148); that is, the passive voice was a subsequent accretion. Rather than construing the matter of voice as a subject's agency or reflexivity, the crux being the primacy accorded to transitivity, Benveniste speaks, rather, in terms of a subject's relationship to a process that is either exterior or interior to himself.

> In the active, the verbs denote a process that is accomplished outside the subject. In the middle, which is the diathesis to be defined by the opposition, the verb indicates a process centering in the subject, the subject being inside the process. [In the middle] the subject is the center as well as the agent of the process; he achieves something which is being achieved in him—being born, sleeping, lying, imagining, growing, etc. He is indeed inside the process of which he is the agent.

From here Benveniste goes on to explain how certain verbs in the middle voice might be endowed secondarily with an active form, converting the middle into a transitive.

> Thus, starting from the middle, actives are formed that are called transitives, or causatives, or factitives, and which are always characterized by the fact that subject, placed outside the process, governs it thenceforth as agent, and that the process, instead of having the subject for its seat, must take an object as its goal: elpomai 'I hope' > elpw 'I produce hope (in another),' srceomai 'I dance' > srcew 'I make (another) dance.'

The distinction here lies between exteriority and interiority with respect to agency and effectuation. That Benveniste provides the further example of "to establish laws" and "to establish laws and include oneself therein" has certain implications perhaps for a Kantian ethics founded on norms or inclinations originally linguistic in nature.[23] That he speaks in terms of "outside the subject" might also perk up the ears of pertinacious Levinasolaters. But whether a covert ethics lurks somewhere within

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[23] Vincent Pecora makes just this point in an important essay that corrects for Derrida's liberal use of Benveniste's categories in "Ethics, Politics, and the Middle Voice" (*Yale French Studies* 79, 1991): 203-230.

Benveniste's linguistics or whether Derrida is correct about linguistics ultimately ceding to philosophy, for our purposes any otherwise- than-linguistic claim I might wish to suggest here would be modest. Strictly speaking, it wouldn't be philosophical so much as rhetorical.

What if, switching back to Hebrew now, we add to Benveniste's list of middle-voice verbs, the verb "to pray?" In this case too, the subject, the one who prays, is indeed inside the process of which he is the agent. And yet, the question here, following Jill Robbins, might also be *who prays*, that is, who has agency, who has centrality?[24] Who acts when one is *mitpalel*, when one seeks a judgment upon oneself? Is it the 1st person, s/he who technically prays and says "you?" Is it, rather, the 2nd person, the one invoked, addressed, both brought near and kept at bay, who, as Weiss compellingly proposes, makes the subject stand in a relation to infinite possibility, where the address itself, the deictic shift or pointing to "the pure 'you'" brings about that very standing? Or is it neither of these, or rather both of these *plus* the 3rd person—the ones with whom I pray when I speak in the plural, whether co-present or not, the ones on whose behalf I pray, the collectivity that saying "you," in an unmarked shift—the trace—points me towards (*likrat*)?

Let me make this more concrete. During any *tefilla*, any *avoda balev* (service of the heart), the Eighteen Benedictions are said twice: once to oneself loud enough to be heard by oneself but not by one's neighbors and once again when the *shaliach b'tzibbur*, the agent or emissary of the congregation, recites the *Amidah* aloud so that the congregation can respond "Amen." In the first case, the *chatima* of each *berakha* seals it, formalizing and transacting it (*Chazal* are extremely insistent about the need to avoid blessings said *levatala* or in vain—that is, uttered although not intended or else mistaken). In the second case, saying "Amen" is, as it

[24] "Who Prays? Levinas on Irremissible Responsibility," in Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba, eds., *The Phenomenology of Prayer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 32-49.

were, the reflexive or reciprocal seal to the seal; it completes the statutory public prayer *in public*.[25]

Even more to the point, each time the *hazan* repeats the *Barukh atah HaShem* formula, the congregation is expected to respond *Barukh hu u'varukh shemo*, "Blessed is He and Blessed is His Name," both at the introductory statement of the *berakha* and at the concluding eulogy. *Blessed are You/ Blessed is He and His Name. Blessed are You/ Blessed is He and His Name.* On the reflexive and reciprocal and trivalent plane of Jewish prayer, centrality and agency flow between 2nd and 3rd persons, as indeed they do in the very structure of the liturgical *berakha*. Individual I's, of course, *mitpalelim*, are the ones who pronounce, in the collective hearing of themselves whether individually or antiphonally, "You" and "He" and "His Name," an articulation (or proclamation) that not only bears witness to God, but in some ineffable but necessary sense *bears* God, summons His presence. And such presence, again echoing Weiss's thesis, may well be both the substance and consequence of "saying 'You'" in prayer" to the degree that it opens one to the beneficence of the Saying. And that brings me, finally, to Levinas and phenomenology.

Section 3. *Does God, a proper and unique noun not entering into grammatical categories, enter without difficulties into the vocative?*

E. Levinas

One of the final books left open on my desk as I wind down this essay is entitled *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, a recently published volume whose epiphenomenon (if I may), after its manifest focus on what prayer means phenomenologically speaking, concerns the way prayer—as language, ritual, embodiment, text, experience—also prompts questions about the

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[25] The *hasid* R. Aaron Rote titles his major work, *Shomer Emunim*, "Guardian of the Faithful" based on Isaiah 26:2. In its uncompromising focus on *kavannah* in prayer, however, the title also contains a paranomasia: the congregation that answers "*amen*" to the hazzan's berakhot must be so meticulous and single-minded as to justify the sobriquet, *shomer emmunim*, "keepers of the *amens*."

boundaries of phenomenological analysis itself. In moving from form-critical through grammatical to no phenomenological categories, it has been my intent to suggest that liturgical/textual considerations such as those proposed in this essay call for such a braided, involuted approach; just as the object of those considerations, a certain usage in prayer, instructs us in the limits of those explanatory categories. Prayer, then, can represent a limit-speech or even limit-phenomenon, discursively understood, more enigma perhaps than phenomenon, to use a Levinasian distinction. As a "fine risk to be run" (*Otherwise Than Being*), it may teach us about what text or utterance (or dialogue or attention or collectivity or performance or any number of descriptive modalities and practices, including phenomenology) signify in their un-marked, everyday sense. One might object: is prayer not as elemental and familiar as the lover's discourse or conversation or teaching?

If one of Levinas's critical aims in all his writing is the consecration of discourse, making it holy somehow but also ruptured or "cracked,"[26] then prayer may possess both its holier and more profane entailments, depending on which force, which condition of personhood, situates or animates it. That is to say, prayer can be both ordinary and extraordinary, in the "midst of life" and also transcendent. It is, true to its Latin roots, *precarious*. It is *chovah*, obligatory; but it is also in some equally true sense gratuitous, both a privilege and a superfluity. In each of the previous sections, I made reference to the classic distinction between *keva* and

[26] Levinas's son, Michael, introduces a powerful insight along these lines which I cite in full from Salomon Malka's *Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006): "the last year of his life, I came across his essay on erasure, regarding Michel Leiris, and in reality, indirectly and in a very subtle manner, my father guided me toward a problem that belonged to his time, after the war: that of a work of art or a piece of writing that is not sealed, that is not formalized in an institutional manner, around which there is an enormous question mark or an enormous vertigo of incompleteness. And actually it's not Lapicque that one should go see for this, but Giacometti. I made a kind of analogy between this crack so characteristic of my father's thinking and the manner in which the figures of Giacometti—who is basically his contemporary—appear threadbare, breathless. It wouldn't be expressionistic to say that these cracks could evoke these figures we've just been talking about, but it is essentially the humanity, or the body, or the shame of the body. He calls this the face, basically. The crack—that's the face" (264-5).

kavannah, the latter term suggesting a kind of *dei*-xis (to adulterate one's Latin with Greek), in itself, for the Hebrew conveys the sense of "aim" or "direction." In his own fine essay on that topic, Jacob Petuchowski says that prayer "is actually a supreme manifestation of impertinence, of *chutzpah*" (5). One might counter that the appearance of now all-but-demotic Hebrew word in that sentence merely particularizes a universal truth that pertains to all liturgical religions—the pertinence of impertinence, as it were. Petuchowski continues:

> But such is the uniquely Jewish stance toward God that, according to one view in the Talmud, "*Chutzpah*, even against God, is of no avail." The underlying impertinence of prayer is the tacit assumption that man has but to open his mouth, and God will hear his prayer. Man does not deal in this fashion with his own human authorities...Yet man takes it for granted that he may have an audience with the Sovereign of the whole Universe, the Holy One, praised be He, at any time he chooses. That is the great daring, the *chutzpah* underlying the act of prayer.

Petuchowski reminds us that what grounds, qualifies, even legitimates the impertinence is the faith- and speech-community of *klal yisrael* that makes any individual recitation of the Eighteen Benedictions a participation in an oversound. For that same prayer has been offered countless times in the same ritualized form by generations of communities of *minyanim* of individual Jews, all of whom have invoked "You HaShem, our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob." When thus standing and saying "You," the subject stands and speaks accompanied. The meaning of prayer, as Jill Robbins glosses Levinas, "is opened by an essential collectivity," a collectivity which keeps both prayer and pray-er open to" the possibility of community" (*The Phenomenology of Prayer*, 39).

But is such collective 1st person plural and 3rd person accompaniment sufficient to guarantee prayer, by which I do not mean its efficacy but rather its "saying 'You';" or does it in some sense obscure it or act as a

placeholder for some other sort of involvement?[27] Does it make prayer more or less precarious? When Levinas speaks of "Going towards God"—the *à-Dieu* of "saying 'You'"—he construes its sense as meaningful only as "going towards the other person" by being ethically concerned by and for him. In Weiss's terms, we might say that the odd deixis of Rabbinic prayer is that invocation, apostrophe, address summon to our attention many more than the One to Whom we imagine we say "You." Thus is any temerity or *chutzpah* on one's part for praying in the first place mooted by the elevation (one's own, the neighbor's, even God's) accomplished through prayer, which (Robbins, again), "brings into view an I responsible for the universe" (37).

Doesn't praying privately do that? Is the solitary subject not also thus a vehicle for bringing that other answerable "I" into view? If, at its best, the efficacy of statutory congregational worship puts us in the physical presence of others so that they might correspond to the linguistic accord we signal in Jewish prayer when we pray using the 1st person plural, then perhaps prayer in private, at its best, succeeds when it calls that privacy into question. To pray alone deficiently, even though one says "You," fails the test of Rabbinic prayer's odd deixis. Better in such a situation, perhaps, not to pray.

Indeed, *Chazal*, in *Berakhot* 33b, and later Maimonides, in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, and even later A. J. Heschel, in "Prayers Begin Where Expressions End" in *Man's Quest for God*, and certainly Levinas in several places, all concur in a quasi-negative theology which suggests that in some sense, God's infinitude and transcendence moots the prayer's presumptuousness and perhaps better merits silence. To "say 'You'" after this fashion *would* thus mean *not* to pray. Why? Because to say "You"

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[27] This is another way to express Eric Santner's insight quoted earlier. As he puts it himself, "God is above all the name for the pressure to be alive to the world, to open to the too much of pressure generated in large measure by the uncanny presence of my neighbor. The peculiar paradox in all this is that in our everyday life we are for the most part not open to this presence, to our being in the 'midst of life'." (*On the Pyschotheology of Everyday Life*, 9). This surely would apply to prayer when it subsumes the *kavannah* (aliveness) to both God the neighbor within the dead reckoning, so to speak, of wholly obligatory *keva*.

necessarily says "I," an "I" unequipped for the *avoda*, the labor of worship. Thus, as Stephen Schwarzchild directs us, the apostrophic verse preceding the Eighteen Benedictions, *HaShem sefati tiftach, ufi yagid tehilatecha*, "O Lord open Thou my lips, so that my mouth shall tell of Thy praise," describes a certain paradox, as if to say, "I cannot pray unless You cause me to pray; therefore, I pray that you cause me to pray. But, of course, I cannot, logically, even pray this."[28]

Yet that same paradox may be resolved efficaciously when the *Amida*is begun with the awareness that humans resemble (*chutzpah*?) God. As speaking spirits (*nefesh chaya*) they bear the imprint of *tzelem elokim* (God's image), which certifies them as *medabrim*, human speakers whose humanity consists exactly in opened lips that tell of God's praise, *Barukhu et HaShem hamvorakh*, but which also says *hineni* (here am I), declares presence, counting and accountability, to all the others. They may even resemble God even to the point of infinitude. This is the provocative argument of another of the essays in the volume The *Phenomenology of Prayer* entitled "The Infinite Supplicant: On a Limit and a Prayer" by Mark Cauchi.

Cuachi's topic is the proper, or precarious, relation between the finite and infinite within the circuit of prayer that petitions or makes demand. But such requesting of God's response does not represent the counter-pole to the essays by Levinas on R. Hayim of Volozhin that severally make the case for "prayer without demand"—the saying of "You" that pre-eminently takes up God's vulnerability, so to speak, that enacts kenosis

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[28] "Speech and Silence Before God," in Petuchowski, 96. Compare Levinas's explanation of the shorter *Modim* prayer (*Modim deRabbanan*) recited by the congregation during the Reader's repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei* which seems to lack an explicit object: "It can only be said to have an object if one follows the opinion of Rav, according to whom one must continue to the end of the text where everything becomes clear. 'We give thanks, O Lord our God...for giving you thanks.' An exercise in gratitude, in short for the simple ability to say thanks. Thank you, my God, for this possibility that you have given to us to be able to thank you." Recorded in Malka, *Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy*, 85.

(*'anavah*) alongside God and on God's behalf.[29] As Cauchi explains, "if the question to the Other is truly a question, so that the Other does not remain safe and unquestioned by it, then the question must *call the Other into question*" (218). This may be a type of *chutzpah*, but it is Abraham's *chutzpah* when he entreats God on behalf of Sodom.

And it is the impertinence that somehow calls God to His own holiness, which fulfills the meaning of *berakha*: to increase.[30] Prayer makes God holy; it, so to speak, "blesses and keeps" Him, sustaining and enriching His divinity. Cauchi refers to Augustine's "Exposition of Psalms 85," specifically the verse, *shamra nafshi ki hasid ani*, "Preserve my soul for I am pious (steadfast)," which the Vulgate translates as "holy." The difficult although perhaps necessarily paradoxical idea here (the counter-paradox, if you will, to the one noted by Schwarzchild above), is that in order to pray authentically, I must be in some sense holy, but I must also pray in order to be holy. Prayer, through benediction, through living into

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[29] Along with Robbins's essay that treats these texts specifically, see Levinas, "Judaism and Kenosis" from *In the Time of Nations*; "The Name of God according to a few Talmudic Texts and "'In the Image of God', according to Rabbi Hayyim Volozhiner," from *Beyond the Verse*; "Education and Prayer" in *Difficult Freedom*; and finally "Discussion Following 'Transcendence and Intelligibility'" in *Is It Righteous to Be?* In this last piece, some of the same themes and Rabbinic allusions from the other texts are rehearsed, and Levinas supplies the Hebrew equivalent for Greek "kenosis," from *Megillah* 31a. On that same interlinguistic plane, Levinas is quoted in the interview with François Poiré from the same volume as remarking, "The word ethics is Greek. More often, especially now, I think about holiness...So be it! There is a holiness in the face but above all there is a holiness in the ethical in relation to oneself in a comportment which encounters the face as face..." (50). If there is a Hebrew word corresponding to the Greek characterological sense of "ethics," it is probably *musar* (related to *asur*, forbidden), a word that also means "fetter" or "bond."

[30] While certain commentators (Rabbeinu Bachya and Abudraham, for instance), understand the word as a request for the *petitioner's* increase, the majority interpret it in terms of God's augmentation. Thus, Radak reads, "You are maximally increased." Rashba (and also Abudraham elsewhere) read *barukh* as a request for an increase of God's presence in the world. R. Hirsch construes, "'May Your presence in this world be increased'—through my efforts." In a sort of synthesis of some of these views, Hayim of Volozhin in his *Nefesh Ha'Chaim* proposes it means, "May Your presence in the world be increased through my very realization that You are the Source of Increase." A very perspicuous reading of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, benediction by benediction, by R. Ezra Bick of Yeshivat Har Etzion, can be found online at http://www.vbm-torah.org/archive/18/.

the proclamation of *barukh atah HaShem*, enables or confers or justifies an (inter) human *kedusha.* The mechanism is mimesis or similitude, an *imitatio dei* which has already been dictated by being oneself the bearer of *tzelem elokim* after God's *demut,* His likeness. In saying "You," one *invests* the prayerful self with its capacity both to be othered and to resemble the other.

Cauchi quotes Levinas on the *Nefesh Ha'Hayim*:

> When the Talmudic scholars...recommend turning one's hearts toward the Holy of Holies when praying, they do not mean just turning in a certain direction but are indicating an act of identification or an intention to identify: one must become the sanctuary itself, the place of holiness, and responsible for all holiness.

A similar thought may be teased out of Levinas's essay "Education and Prayer," when he writes "to worship the eternal is not to evade the unique and eternal humanity over whom God bends [*se pend*]..." When the congregation bends the knee at *Barukh* and bows at *ata,* perhaps through this odd deixis this same odd mimesis at work: God bends over humanity/ the worshiper bends not only to but *like* God. Prayer may begin as directed attention, towards God, but it ends as shifted attention, towards the neighbor. In that same essay, Levinas alludes to the *aggada* in *Berkahot* 6a-7a that (impertinently?) has God put on *tefillin* and pray the *tefillah.* To R. Nahman b. Isaac's question, "What is written in the *tefillin* of the Lord of the Universe," R. Hiyya b. Abin answers, "Who is like thy people Israel, unique on this earth?"

While the *tefillin* itself may assert the same statement of non-resemblance as *Mi kamocha ba'elim Hashem*, the *wearing* of and being bound by it nevertheless records a relation of likeness between praying humanity and a praying deity. And it also sends the worshipper back to the proximity of the neighbor, to "the sanctuary itself." Hence, the exegesis Levinas supplies in "Revelation in the Jewish Tradition" of *Berakhot* 7b, where God's revelation to Moses at Sinai is refigured in terms of *avoda:*

> [T]he 'back' that Moses saw from the cleft of the rock from which he followed the passing of divine Glory was nothing other than the knot

> formed by the straps of the phylacteries on the 'back of God's neck! A prescriptive teaching even here! Which demonstrates how thoroughly the entire Revelation is bound up around daily ritual conduct. This ritualism... determines, against the blinding spontaneity of Desires, the ethical relations with the other man. To the extent that this ritualism does this, it confirms the conception of God in which He is welcomed in the face-to-face with the other and in the obligation towards the other (*Beyond the Verse,* 144).

Thus, in turn, one becomes the sanctuary *oneself.* In turning, bowing, kneeling (an alternate etymological explanation, it turns out, for the word *barukh*), in all those acts of proxemic positioning in synagogue worship, one traverses the limit between likeness and non-resemblance, between human finitude and infinity —man's, not God's. Or perhaps even both. In and through the address of "You" in prayer, one exceeds one's limits, trespasses one's threshold, calls oneself into question—*l'hitpalel.* But in praying, one cannot help petitioning, and to petition is to open both oneself and the One asked (the *e-l* in *sh'elah*, the God who provokes questions and makes them meaningful). Perhaps one doesn't "*say* 'You'" at all, if such deixis is conceived as communion.

Rather, even in prayer, perhaps especially so, separation, what Levinas will call atheism, articulates the pronominal divide that creates the necessary and proper relation between 1st and 2nd persons, between God and a separated being. It invests the limit on each side of that relation with the capacity to be crossed, and to point to the truly freighted and encumbering relation where limits are not merely transgressed but cracked: with the Third, the neighbor. In "the 'You' of prayer," one speaks *through* God as much as to God, with a collectivity and towards that same collectivity. Deixis, in this sense, is detour, a branching-off or redirect. Oddly, then, or perhaps better, *uncannily,* in allowing Himself to be pointed to, God Himself is opened, augmented and increased, *hamvorakh* (as in the *kaddish*) but also through some strangely acceptable temerity, made answerable, by the question. "Precisely because it is *a question* that prayer gives to the other and that other receives *as a question,* prayer must

be understood to *call the other into question*" (Cauchi, 228).[31] In the address of prayer, God and humanity stand both within and beyond their respective limit (as in the Amichai epigraph), bowing, vibrating, shokeling.

Kavyakhol. So to speak.

Section 4: ***Chatima. Even solitary prayer takes two;/ one to sway back and forth/and the one who doesn't move is God./ But when my father prayed, he would stand in his place,/ erect, motionless, and force God/ to sway like a reed and pray to him.***
Yehudah Amichai

Two concluding thoughts:

1) The epigraphs from Zagajewiski and Barthes above both present manifestly anti-theological scenes, scenes of prayer only in the sense that art and devotion make room for such practice in their way. If God appears there, it is solely by means of the trace, a proximity in retreat. Benveniste (whom Barthes also tacitly invokes), analyzing person and subjectivity in language, explained that the 3rd person, in marked contrast to the other two, denotes a "verbal form whose function is to express the *non-person*."

> It follows that, very generally, person is inherent only in the positions "I" and "you"... The "third person" must not, therefore, be imagined as a person suited to depersonalization. There is no apheresis of the person; it is exactly the non-person, which possesses as its sign the absence of that which specifically qualifies the "I" and the "you" (*Problems in General Linguistics,* 198-199).

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[31] Compare Franz Rosenzweig's account of the persons located in the wake of the Biblical question, "Where are you?" asked of the first human being by God: "Where then is there a You? The question about the You is the only thing we already know about it. But the question already is enough for the I to discover itself; it does not need to see the You; by asking about it, and by testifying be means of this question that it believes in the existence of the You, even when it is not within sight, it addresses itself and expresses itself as I. The I discovers itself at the moment where it affirms the existence of the You, through the question about where it is." (*The Star of Redemption*, 189).

Beneviste succinctly captures the two correlations that organize the expression of verbal person: 1) the correlation of personality, opposing the *I-you* persons to the non-person *he*; 2) The correlation of subjectivity, opposing *I* to *you* (*you* being the "non-subjective person").[32]

Let us compare a notably lucid explanation of Levinas's even odder deixis (indeed, in its import the very refutation of deixis, of a certain kind of pointing), his coinage of "illeity":

> Illeity—which might perhaps be rendered more clearly in English as "he-ness"—refers to the state or event of being a pronoun; pronounness or pronouneity. It is, in grammatical form, a noun or a proper name, but one that achieves the function of a pronoun by pointing, not to an object, but to another word—and the word to which it points, *il*, is itself a pronoun. Insofar as it points at another word, illeity is a placeholder; insofar as the word being pointed at is a pronoun, illeity points at the holding of place. In effect it is an apophasis that points only at apophasis, a placeholder that holds the place of holding place. (Oona Ajzenstat, *Driven Back to the Text*, 98).

"He-ness," if it may be put in this fashion, points precisely away from "the 'You' in prayer." It corresponds to the act of witnessing rather than of address, which inhibits the propensity to place God somewhere.

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[32] Perhaps needless to say, while Levinas may attend religiously to the nuances of pronouns (*Je* and *Moi*, for example, or *autre* and *Autrui*) and the asymmetry of "I" and "You," any opposition between 1st and 2nd persons here, as wholly linguistic, belongs to the order of totality. Compare, thus, in the present context of this essay, one of the terminal assertions from "Dialogue: Self Consciousness and Proximity of the Neighbor" in *Of God Who Comes to Mind:* "Without a possible evasion, as though it were elected for this, as though it were thus irreplaceable and unique, the I as I is the servant of the You in Dialogue. An inequality that may appear arbitrary; unless it be—in the word addressed to the other man, in the ethics of the welcome —the first religious service, the first prayer, the first liturgy, the religious out of which God could first have come to mind and the word 'God' have made its way into language and into good philosophy" (150-151). As to Benveniste's 3rd person, which, in relation to the other two, is necessarily absent and thus not a linguistic "person" at all, one might also consider one of the names for God that also denominates "3rd person" in Hebrew: *nistar,* the hidden. Indeed, the *Zohar* distinguishes between the 3rd person pronoun *hu* (for God) as concealed and therefore only indirectly referable, and *Atah* as indicating the *shekhinah,* the aspect of revelation, which can be addressed directly. See 1:154b and 1:157b on *Parashat Va-Yetzei*.

Liturgically, "[i]t makes the word God be pronounced without letting 'divinity' be said."[33] And as Ajzenstat rightly observes, saying God in the latter, defective sense is paradigmatic for all addressive/referential speech when it obscures the trace in locution. Addressing God, whether in the liturgical benediction, *Barukh ata HaShem*, or indirectly through the congregational response to its invocative call, *Barukh hu u'varukh shemo*, involves a necessary "betrayal of a certain 'You'" (so to speak) —but only because God's illeity redirects consciousness and affectivity to the collectivity of 3rd persons (embodied and existent, not verbal) who risk obscuration through the exorbitance of 2nd person address. "*... le Dieu se pend*": God bows, like us, and in so doing shows us the proper etiquette (to whom? in which direction?) of bowing on earth. This, again, attests to the truly odd deixis of "you" in Rabbinic prayer. As if to say: Every (iteration) of "You" is a betrayal of a certain "he"/ but in return the prayer which is prose offers the fidelity of a sober dialogue.

2) The second point concerns a seemingly innocent word-choice in the verse from the Book of Genesis where God announces his intent to "cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and obliterate everything subsisting that I have made, from off the face of the earth" (7:4). In his Torah commentary, R. Hirsch explains why the word for the 1st person pronoun is *anochi* as opposed to *ani*, two pro-forms evidently distinguishable in meaning though referentially identical.

> *Anochi* is always used in cases where the "I" does not place itself harshly against a person or being...whereas *ani* (from *ANH,* to send, to decree) designates the Person...who sends something to somebody but Himself remains afar...*KhNKh* is the setting, the practicing, getting habituated to one's vocation; *'ANG,* being presently surrounded by externally accommodating circumstances; *'ANK*, a collar, necklace; *ANK* tightening at the neck and *KhNK* complete strangling. All these meanings give us the underlying meaning of the root as embracing, enclosing, bearing, taking care of, etc. and *anochi* corresponds to an activity in which the

[33] Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*, 162.

> second person is borne, kept, and cared for by the "I," where the "I" is in close connection to the "thou."[34]

So far as I know, no counterpart to this doubled 1st person, grammatically or hermeneutically, exists in respect to the 2nd person in Hebrew—save, of course, the gender marker linked to noun or person which offers the choice of *at* or *atah* (in Rabbinic Hebrew, however, the feminine *at*, undoubtedly influenced by Aramaic, is frequently used for the masculine).[35] The Torah, however, surprises yet again. In Numbers 11:14-15, *Parashat Beha'alotcha*, Moses cries out to God in the face of Israel's own (albeit self- serving) tears and prayers, saying *Lo uchal anochi l'vadi laset et kol ha'am hazeh ki chaved mimeni. V'im kachah* ***at****-oseh li hargeini na harog im matzati hen b'enecha v'al ereh k'rati.* "Not I [*anochi*], alone, am able to bear all this people for it is too heavy for me. And if this is how You [*at*] deal with

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[34] In light of the cognates R. Hirsch lists, consider George Herbert's metaphysical poem "The Collar" (1633), whose speaker "will abroad" and hopes thus to escape the confines of being necklaced and collared by God: "Forsake thy cage,/ Thy rope of sands,/ Which pettie thoughts have made, and made to thee/ Good cable, to enforce and draw,/ And be thy law." Anochi, of course, is also the first "I" spoken at Sinai, the pronoun by which God identifies himself in the first commandment of *Aseret Ha'Dibrot*; an even closer phonetic cognate R. Hirsch does not mention is thus *anachi*, which means "vertical": God linked to the dimension of height and elevation.

[35] The first time *at* is used in the Torah is *Gen.* 12:11, the terminal word in the verse and thus conspicuous, when Abraham addresses Sarah, *hinei-na yadati ki isha yefat-mareh* ***at***, "See now I know you are a beautiful woman to look upon." Because of this locution, André Neher calls Abraham "the inventor of the word"

(*The Exile of the Word*, 111). There are of course a number of kabbalistic and hasdidic alphabetic glosses on the valances of *atah.* For instance, R. Shneur Zalman in his *Tanya* (quoted in Patterson), writes that "The word *atah,* You, indicates all the letters from *Alef* to *Tav*, and the letter *Hey*, the five organs of articulation, the source of all the letters." Patterson adds, "The word *atah*, then—and not the *I* of the "I think, therefore I am"—would be the seal of the human being, the trace of the transcendent Being within being, manifest in the world...It is not exactly the opposite of nothingness; rather, it is a category that is beyond the distinctions of being and nothingness" (*Hebrew Language and Jewish Thought*, 178-179). Compare the *Zohar* on the particle *et* in the Bible's first verse: "*Et*—conveying all those letters [*aleph* through *tav*]. Entirety of the all: beginning and end. Afterward *he* was added [initial letter of ***h****a'shamayim*], so all those letters would be combined with *he*, and it was called *atah*, You" (1:115b).

me, then kill me now, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your eyes, and let me not see my misfortune."

This substitution of *at* for grammatically correct *atah* represents one of only two instances in the Pentateuch. The second appears in *Deut.* 5:24, *Parashat V'etchanan*, after the second recitation of the Ten Commandments in which Moses continues his account of the people's entreaty to him as intermediary for God's commandments. In each of these passages, it is God who is addressed by the 2nd person feminine pronoun (both interpreted similarly)—a case of intriguingly odd Biblical deixis on its face. Clearly, that seeming anomaly, collocated with *anochi*, along with the event of prayer itself—Moses's prayer is minimal here, as it also is several verses later (12:13) when he entreats that Miriam be healed of her sudden onset of leprosy, *kel na refa na lah,* "O God heal her, I pray You"—all these elements catch an eye and ear already alerted to the special vocative features of Rabbinic prayer. Some commentaries understand the use of the feminine 2nd person pronoun here as connoting a "holding back of the Power of God" (R. Hirsch, for example)—i.e., that Moses was giving voice to his own weakness in line with God's having refrained from using His power to assist him. *At*, then is projective or apotropaic. A second approach (Rashi, Sforno) is mimetic, call it "grammatical naturalism": Moses is indeed so weakened that he cannot completely pronounce *atah*; weariness stops him at *at*.[36]

In her book, Ajzenstat claims that the Bible too (from a Levinasian perspective) points away from what it seems to point at, or is construed

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[36] The second half of the verse from Deuteronomy reads *v'**at** t'daber alenu kol-asher y'daber HaShem elokenu elecha* , "you should speak to us all that HaShem our God will speak to you." Yet, in the first half, the Israelites address Moses using *atah*: *krav **atah** ushama' et kol-asher yomar HaShem elokenu*, "You should approach and hear whatever HaShem our God will say." Rashi makes two points: 1) Moses is saying that his strength was weakened "like that of a woman" because he felt distress at Israel's preference that he speak to them indirectly rather than be spoken to directly by God; 2) as before in *Numbers,* Moses became too weak to complete the whole word and says *at* for *atah*. Compare *B. Berakhot* 32a: "Moses became weak and was unable to speak."

as pointing at.[37] Read ideationally (the God who comes to others' minds, who stands in for a textual or socio-cultural "state of mind"), or ontologically (the God whose own "mind" can be predicated, made present), rather than prophetically, the God who speaks in the Scriptures— whose words carry over and echo in the *Siddur*—is evaded and thereby loses his authentic place. Such place (and voice) as He possesses only hovers over or vibrates through the Holy Scriptures as its "harmonics" anyway, for God too does not quite have "a place in the Bible." If, therefore, we read the lexical ambiguity in Numbers and Deuteronomy not as a function of attributes, God's or Moses's, but rather as a certain "crack" in the word "You," which is posed as an address but in a way de-posed by the pressure of myriad third-parties—the ones one whose behalf Moses, significantly, identifies himself as *anochi*—I think we approach more closely to the sort of "placeless" reading of the text Levinas might endorse.

But the question of both Daniel Weiss's essay and my own concerns God's place, as "the 'You' of prayer," in the *Siddur*.[38] If I can conclude by speaking personally, one of the most satisfying and yet paradoxical moments for me during prayer comes at the very beginning of the Prayerbook, at the day's beginning too, directly after the commandment to recite the appropriate benediction and don the *tallit*, when one wraps it

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[37] See pp. 110-114.

[38] In the Talmud, on the other hand, in the study that is also and perhaps preeminently Jewish liturgy, Levinas reminds us that to say "God" is to say "the Holy One, blessed be He"—the naming of an attribute, Holiness, by means of an article. Levinas goes on to relate this to the structure of the liturgical *berakha*, providing his own account of the switch in pronominal deixis: "the blessing begins by invoking God in the form of Thou. But the second-person personal pronoun is followed by the Tetragrammaton. There is no blessing that does not invoke the Tetragrammaton as the Lord (Tractate *Berakhoth*12a). The expression for the blessing, in the second person up until the Name, is in the third person in the words that are placed on the other side of the Name. The Thou becomes He in the Name, as if the Name belonged simultaneously to the correctness of being addressed as Thou and to the absolute of holiness. And it is without doubt this essential ambiguity—or enigma—of transcendence that is preserved in the standard expression in the Talmud for designating God: 'The Holy One, blessed be He' ("The Name of God According to a Few Talmudic Texts," in *Beyond the Verse*, 122).

around one's head and upper body and recites four verses from Psalm 36, including this one: *b'orecha nireh or*, "by Your light we shall see light." In one of his final poems, Amichai writes, "Whoever put on a tallis when he was young with never forget:/ spreading it out, kissing the length of the neckband (embroidered/ or trimmed in gold). Then swing it in a great swoop overhead/ like a sky, a wedding canopy, a parachute./ And then winding it around his head as in hide-and-seek..."[39]—one man's "phenomenology of prayer." For my part, the head is covered, the eyes are shielded, and yet, I ask to see light by "Your light." And then, no longer shrouded or concealed, I begin to pray...in order to pray. So to speak.

[39] *Open Closed Open*, 44.

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