

**Dear Getnet**

You asked **why I chose not to include pictures**. I will also answer a question you did not ask – no one did. I will do so because it will be asked sooner than later: **why my chapter landing pages do not have conventional headings**.

Both are good, reasonable, and fair questions—and I welcome them because they go directly to the purpose and architecture of *Walking Between Worlds*.

My response is three-fold.

**First, the book is not a conventional memoir, either in proportion or in intent.**

Only about a quarter of the 470 pages is devoted to personal narrative. Even there, the memoir is less about recounting episodes for their own sake than about situating a life within larger historical, political, and moral currents. The majority of the book looks outward rather than inward. It includes letters addressed explicitly to the next generation of the Ethiopian diaspora—young people who have inherited both unprecedented global opportunity and unresolved historical burdens. It reflects on Ethiopian politics across multiple regimes and ideological moments, not as a partisan account but as a long-view meditation on power, governance, memory, and consequence.

The book also examines demographic change and development over the last half-century: rural-to-urban migration, population growth, education, public health, and the uneven translation of economic growth into human well-being. These changes are treated not as abstract trends but as lived realities that shape identity, opportunity, and conflict. Closely tied to this is an exploration of today’s ethnic-based tensions—how they emerged, how they have been instrumentalized, and how they continue to fracture civic trust. I devote particular attention to the role of the Ethiopian diaspora: its moral responsibilities, its political influence, its internal divisions, and its unique position as both witness and participant. Throughout, I try to ask not only *what happened*, but *what is owed*—to history, to one another, and to future generations.

In addition, the book includes plain-language presentations of six of my twenty-three peer-reviewed scientific papers, gathered under the title “*The Harvest I Bring*.” These subsections are an attempt to translate specialized research into accessible insight, to show how a life in science intersects with questions of development, equity, and human flourishing. Taken together, these sections make clear that the book is not primarily about my image or personality, but about ideas, responsibilities, and continuity across generations. In that context, photographs—especially those placed throughout the text—would naturally pull the reader’s attention back toward the individual, whereas much of the book’s work is collective, analytical, and forward-looking.

That said, I did include three photographs at the end of the book, and their placement is intentional. One shows me with my wife and two daughters, another with my two sons, and

the third is a solitary photograph taken fifty years after my fourteen-year-old solo walk. These images function as closing markers rather than narrative guides. They acknowledge the human life behind the words without interrupting the intellectual and moral arc of the book.

### **Second, the absence of photographs throughout the text is a deliberate invitation to the reader's imagination.**

Rather than fixing my appearance at a few select moments, I wanted readers to imagine what I might have looked like at *every stage* of the journey—from fourteen to sixty-four. To picture the gradual changes across decades: youth, uncertainty, endurance, migration, study, loss, responsibility, and accumulation of perspectives. A photograph freezes a single instant; this book is concerned with movement, becoming, and continuity over time. By withholding images, I hoped to prompt readers to construct their own internal portraits of that evolution, allowing the narrative itself—its voice, questions, and reflections—to shape how the person is seen.

In that sense, the absence of photographs is not a denial of visibility, but an act of trust in the reader. It asks readers to engage more actively, to inhabit the space between words and meaning, and to recognize that a life—especially one lived between worlds—cannot be fully captured in images alone.

So, the choice not to include photographs throughout the book was neither accidental nor dismissive of their power. It was a conscious decision aligned with the book's structure and purpose: to privilege imagination over illustration, process over snapshots, and shared responsibility over individual display.

### **Third: why my chapter landing pages do not have conventional headings**

A related and equally intentional design choice is the absence of traditional chapter titles on chapter landing (beginning) pages.

Each chapter begins with a short, compressed passage—part narrative, part reflection, part ethical proposition. These passages are not summaries of what follows, nor are they decorative epigraphs borrowed from other sources. They are original, purpose-built openings meant to orient the reader emotionally and intellectually without prescribing interpretation.

For example:

#### **CHAPTER FOUR**

*“Take me to school,” a three-year-old insisted—and never let go of the doorframe again. Years later the gown fit; the voice was hers; the oath bent toward listening. The science she chose didn’t just measure—it kept watch and cared.*

*Momentum recognized; kindness repeated until it became muscle.*

And:

## **CHAPTER NINE**

*Diaspora, we can wire money or wire the conversation.  
Send tools, not torches; send listening before language.  
Politics can shrink a nation to its fault lines. Governance  
widens it back to familiar ground and daily bread.*

The absence of a conventional chapter heading is deliberate. A title tells the reader what to think about a chapter before they enter it. These openings are meant to do something different: to slow the reader down, to set a tone, to introduce a tension or question without resolving it, and to invite reflection rather than announce a topic.

They function as thresholds rather than labels.

In a book that resists easy categorization—memoir, letters, political reflection, scientific translation—traditional chapter titles would have imposed a rigidity that the content itself works against. The opening passages allow chapters to remain porous, multidimensional, and open to interpretation, while still providing coherence and direction.

### **A Coherent Design Philosophy**

Taken together, the absence of photographs and the absence of conventional chapter headings reflect a single design philosophy.

*Walking Between Worlds* prioritizes imagination over illustration, movement over fixation, questions over declarations, and shared responsibility over individual display. It asks readers not merely to follow a story, but to inhabit it—to think alongside it, to argue with it, and to carry parts of it forward.

These choices may feel unconventional, and that is intentional. The book itself is about living between categories, disciplines, nations, and generations. Its form mirrors its content.

If these decisions prompt questions, pauses, or even discomfort, they are doing part of the work the book set out to do.