

## OzTORAH

### Two views of BARUCH

The first word of every blessing is BARUCH. The translations say, “Blessed are You, O Lord”. Perhaps the translators are aware that this rendering conceals a major theological problem; perhaps they are not. But to imply that human beings can bless God is difficult in the extreme.

Yaakov can bless his children. Moshe can bless his people. But that earthly creatures should bless their Creator implies that in some sense we have something to bestow upon Him, and that is simply unthinkable.

The problem lies in the grammatical form of the word baruch. Words with the A-U form are passive participles. A Biblical example is GANUV, something which is stolen (B'reishit 30:33).

But there are times when A-U has an active, not a passive meaning. Common examples are RACHUM, merciful, and CHANNUN, gracious. In each case these words suggest positive activity: when we say God is RACHUM the meaning is that He is the source of mercy; when we say He is CHANNUN, we acknowledge that He is the source of grace.

BARUCH, therefore, does not need to be taken in a passive sense (“You are blessed”) but with an active connotation, “You are the source of blessing.” Hence when we say BARUCH ATA we are not bestowing anything upon God but affirming that all our blessings come from Him.

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