

Praising Hashem Honestly

The Gemara in יומא דף סט: states, “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Why are the Sages of those generations called the members of the Great Assembly? It is because they returned the crown of the Holy One, Blessed be He, to its former glory. How so? Moshe came and said in his prayer: “The great, the mighty, and the awesome G-d.” (Deuteronomy 10:17) Yirmiyahu the prophet came and said: Gentiles, i.e., the minions of Nebuchadnezzar, are carousing in His sanctuary; where is His awesomeness? Therefore, he did not say awesome in his prayer. Daniel came and said: Gentiles are enslaving His children; where is His might? Therefore he did not say mighty in his prayer. The members of the Great Assembly came and said: On the contrary, this is the might of His might, i.e., this is the fullest expression of it, that He conquers His inclination in that He exercises patience toward the wicked. And these acts also express His awesomeness: Were it not for the awesomeness of the Holy One, Blessed be He, how could one people, i.e., the Jewish people, who are alone and hated by the gentile nations, survive among the nations? The Gemara then asks: And the Rabbis, i.e., Yirmiyahu and Daniel, how could they do this and uproot an ordinance instituted by Moshe? Rabbi Elazar said: They did so because they knew of the Holy One Blessed be He, that He is truthful, and they consequently, did not speak falsely about Him.”

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At first glance it is difficult to understand the answer given by the Gemara. How could the Neviim think that praising Hashem as Awesome and Mighty, would be a lie? Surely, Yirmiyahu and Daniel did not argue with the descriptions Moshe attributed to Hashem! Granted, those attributes were not able to be seen by their generations, due to their sins, and therefore expressing

these praises may have been lacking in appreciation. However, where is the lack of truth? *אני ה' לא שניתי?*

It must be that Yirmiyahu and Daniel both felt, that for a person to express praise to Hashem, with a description that he can't see, has an intrinsic flaw. Although the person may know intellectually that this description is true, his lack of seeing it, creates a lack of emotional appreciation for that description. This results in what is considered a false expression.

We can learn from here a powerful insight with far reaching effects. We are privileged to recite many praises of Hashem daily. We see from here that if a person expresses praise to Hashem without personally recognizing, appreciating and feeling that description, besides for it being a lack in his own personal *עבודת ה'*, he is also considered engaging in שקר. It is therefore integral that we spend time focusing on, and deepening our appreciation of the daily praises that we express.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר
לרפואה שלמה רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה