

He is your praise, and He is your G-d. (10:21)

Hashem should be the sole recipient of our praise. The *Mezritcher Maggid*, *zl*, was wont to say concerning this *pasuk*: If you want to determine the level of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, that you have achieved, you must authenticate your level of *emunah*, faith in Hashem. Analyze your *davening*, *benching* and other forms of *tehillah*, praise, to Hashem. Is it passionate, warm, with *deveikus*, desire to cling to the Almighty? The manner in which one expresses his praise of Hashem attests to his belief in Him – and vice versa.”

The *Maggid*, *zl*, m'Warsaw would often use the following vignette to describe how lacking our *davening* is. The wealthy *Paritz*, non-Jewish landowner, walked by Moishke's house and saw him swaying to and fro, *davening* to Hashem. The *Paritz* was impressed, and, after Moishke concluded his *davening*, the *Paritz* said, I want you to teach my bear how to *daven*.” “But why? Perhaps I can teach him to dance?” “No! All my friends have dancing bears. I want something different, something unique.”

The *Paritz* was not accepting “no” as an answer. In fact, he gave Moishke two weeks to produce a bear that *davens*, or else, he and his family would need a new place to live. Moishke picked up the bear, bound it in chains and transported him to his home for the *davening* tutorial. He did some heavy thinking and arrived at an ingenious plan. He found a large, heavy book and smeared its pages with honey. The bear craved the sweet delicacy and, as soon as he licked the honey off of one page, he immediately turned to the next. This went on for two weeks, which was the allotted time the *Paritz* granted him to produce a *davening* bear.

The designated day arrived, and Moishke proudly walked in with the bear in tow. “Let us begin,” the *Paritz* declared. “I want to see how well my bear ‘*davens*.’”

Moishke gave the bear a large book with strong, heavy pages, similar to the ones he had been practicing on for the last two weeks. One difference existed between the two: no honey was on these pages. The bear took the book and began making “bear noises” in anticipation of his treat. When he saw there was no honey on the first page, he flipped to the next, all the time making noises of frustration. After turning every page, the bear walked away in frustration.

The *Paritz* was visibly upset. “I instructed you to teach him to *daven*, and all you did was train him to turn pages, accompanied by noises. Is that what you call *davening*?” Moishke was no fool, and he responded, “Let us go to the large synagogue in town, and you will see that, for the most part, people are turning pages and uttering some noise.” The lesson is obvious: Our *davening* reflects our *emunah*. Are we *davening*, or just turning pages?