Lost in Translation

Previously we explained that although it was allowed by the Sages to pray in a language that one knows, many times when the Hebrew words are translated into another language they lose their original meaning.
When two languages □□belong to the same family (such as Portuguese and Spanish, or Hebrew and Aramaic) then the semantic field of the words is very similar, and we can speak of a "literal" translation. But when it comes to translating from Hebrew into English, for example, which belongs to a completely different family of languages, it is impossible to obtain an accurate rendition.
The Hebrew word "BARUKH" provides an excellent example of the difficulties of translating.
The english translation of the word BARUKH is misleading. In English BARUKH is translated as "blessed" and this translation, far from helping us understanding what BARUKH means, confuses us.
Why? Because in English the word "blessed" defines the recipient of a blessing!
When we say of someone that he or she is blessed, we mean that he was graced with all kinds of blessings. Or when we tell someone "blessed be you", we are wishing that person to get a blessing: health, if he is sick, or bread if he is hungry.
This is what is meant by blessing someone, wishing that his wishes be fulfilled, his afflictions will end, and his needs met.
Imagine now if we would apply the concept of "blessed" to God. If we would say: "blessed are you" or "blessed be you" HaShem, assigning to God the role of the recipient of a blessing. What would be the meaning of "blessing" God? "Wishing" something to God? Is this what we should think when we say BARUKH? Wishing something to God is like declaring that God is missing something … a profane and even heretical thought, that far from being a praise, is even offensive.
Now, what does BARUKH really mean in Hebrew ? When BARUKH applies to God it does NOT mean that God is the "recipient" of the blessing but rather the "origin" of our blessings. We call "blessing" anything that we receive in abundance and freely from HaShem. Everything that exists, creation, life and

existence itself is part of the Divine Blessing. And the more privileged I'm, the more I must recognize HaShem as the origin of everything I'm blessed with: my family, my parents, my children, my intelligence, my food, my health, etc. When I say BARUKH I recognize that HaShem is the source (in Hebrew BEREKHA) of everything that is given to me. This was already explained by the Rabbis: barukh = meqor haberakha, HaShem is the source, lit. the spring, of the blessings we receive.

HaShem is for us what parents are for a son. Parents bring a child into this world, and give him or her "life" and food and sustenance until he or she is independent. The difference between our parents and our Creator is that our dependence on HaShem never ends: we continue to receive His blessings and His attention until the last day of our lives. The word BARUKH inspires us to profess an eternal gratitude towards HaShem. And it invites us to discover His generosity in the things we take for granted.

All this meaning, and much more, is encapsulated in the Hebrew word BARUKH.

It is because of all this that we must make every effort to pray in Hebrew and learn not only the translation but also the meaning and depth of the words we recite in the Tefila.