

And I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you and I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. (12:2)

Rashi explains the three terms/blessings of this *pasuk*; “And I will make you a great nation”: we refer to this when we say in *Shemoneh Esrai – Elokai Avraham*, G-d of Avraham; “And I will bless you” – refers to *Elokai Yitzchak*, “And I will make your name great,” alludes to *Elokai Yaakov*. *Rashi* adds, “One might think that they conclude the blessing with all of them, i.e., *Elokai Avraham, Yitzchak, v’Yaakov*.” To teach otherwise, the *pasuk* says, *V’he’yeih brachah*, “And you will be a blessing.” *B’cha chosmin v’lo ba’haem*, “With you, Avraham, they conclude the blessing and not with them.”

Horav Shimon Shkop, zl, expounds on this statement and explains why it is that the *brachah* is concluded with Avraham *Avinu*. Our Patriarch was a spiritually self-made man. He had no mentor, having discovered the truth about the Creator on his own. Indeed, he descended from a family that was steeped in idol worship, his own father owning an idol shop, where people from all over came to purchase their idols. Yitzchak *Avinu* was much more fortunate. Raised and educated by Avraham and Sarah *Imeinu*, he built upon the lessons that he received from them. His son, Yaakov *Avinu*, had the advantage of receiving an education from his father, who received his basic foundation from his father. It would, thus, make sense to conclude the blessing with the names of all three Patriarchs. The tripartite spiritual lessons and way of life would have the greatest influence on the nation that descended from them. Apparently, Avraham *Avinu's hashpaah*, influence, is one which, in the end of days, will have the greatest effect and one with which many will identify.

Avraham made a decision based on his recognition that things were not as they seemed. Idols cannot create. The world did not just happen. There is a *Baal ha’birah*, a Master/owner of the palace/world. After bursting the idol worship bubble to which the world ascribed, Avraham delved deeper until he discovered and understood that a superior Being created and guides the world. His next step was to spread the word, so that a world of pagans would reject the emptiness and absurdity of their beliefs and accept the one G-d: Hashem.

This was Avraham’s way, and this is the journey that so many of our alienated brothers and sisters will take. The many who return cannot relate to Yitzchak and Yaakov because they, like Avraham, descend from an assimilated background, in which their ancestors fell prey to the pressures of the world around them. We should never give up hope on a Jew, regardless of his distance from Torah and *mitzvos*. The *Pintele Yid* within them, the Jewish soul that resonates deep in them, can and will be inspired and catalyze a return to Hashem – as it did with our first Patriarch. Thus, we conclude the blessing: *Magen Avraham*.

Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, zl, explains this homiletically. In their individual service to Hashem, our *Avos* personified the three pillars upon which the world stands: *Al HaTorah; al avodah; v’al gemillas chassidim*; on Torah study, service/prayer and devotion to Hashem, and acts

of lovingkindness. We, by living as observant Jews, embody the tripartite foundation of the word. As a result, the names of our three Patriarchs live within us.

When Yaakov *Avinu* blessed his grandsons, Menashe and Ephraim, he said, *V'yikarei bahem shimi*, "And my name and the names of my fathers shall be called in them" (*Bereishis* 48:16). His hope was that his descendants would adhere to the three foundations upon which the world rests, allowing for Hashem's Name to be referred to as *Elokai Avraham*, Yitzchak *v'Yaakov*, the three Patriarchs who personify the three *yesodos*, principles, that keep the world "afloat."

A *chosam*, seal, is necessary whenever a possibility of falsification exists. The seal attests to the veracity of the document. Understandably, it is only precious, expensive items that one might falsify, such as gold and silver, which are precious metals. Thus, a buyer will demand proof that is signed and sealed to confirm that what he is purchasing is the real thing. A similar idea applies to people. Some individuals call attention to and laud their Torah knowledge, devotion to prayer and their many acts of lovingkindness. As a result, people tend to respect and honor them. Unfortunately, not all people are honest. The fellow who extols his Torah knowledge, prayer and acts of lovingkindness may be a sham, an imposter, who seeks to garner honor and attention from those who do not know any better. What seal is able to determine the integrity of his claim? What distinguishes between the unvarnished truth and falsehood? Humility, the *middah*, character trait, by which our Patriarch Avraham was characterized, *V'anochi afar va'eifer*, "I am but dust and ash," (*Bereishis* 18:27) indicates whether this person is real or a charlatan. Every one of our *Avos*, as well as all the righteous sages and personalities who followed, excelled in this attribute. Their *anivus*, humility, was the *chosam*, confirmation, that attested to the veracity of their characters. Without humility, one cannot achieve *shleimus*, perfection.

This *middah* is attributed most to Avraham *Avinu* because he was the only Patriarch who (so to speak) had it all. He was highly respected, wealthy, successful in all facets of human endeavor. From a spiritual perspective, he introduced the world to Hashem and reached out to thousands, bringing them to belief in monotheism. He had every reason to arrogate and lord himself over others. He did not, because he was real – he was just carrying out his G-d-given mission. The other *Avos* lived with adversity – either in the family or among the community. One who lives with challenges of adversity, pain and tribulation has no reason to be arrogant. He is too busy tending to his personal life. Therefore, his humility will not be as strong a proof of his total commitment to Hashem. As a result, we conclude with *Magen Avraham*. Avraham had everything, but he understood it was a gift from Hashem for the purpose of furthering his mission.