

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

In an alternative explanation of these three terms, *Rashi* writes: “I will make you into a great nation.” This is a reference to what we say (in the *Shemoneh Esrai*), *Elokei Avraham*; ‘and I will bless you,’ this is a reference to that which we say, *Elokai Yitzchak*; ‘and I will make your name great.’ This is a reference to that which we say, *Elokai Yaakov*. Since all three *Avos*, Patriarchs, are mentioned in the first *b’racha* of *Shemoneh Esrai*, one might think that the *chasimas ha’brachah*, conclusion of the blessing, should include all of them. *Ve’heyey b’rachah*, ‘and you shall be a blessing’ teaches us that *becha chosmin*, with you will be the closing of the *b’rachah*. This indicates that Avraham *Avinu* will be the primary focus of this blessing.”

*Va’agadlah shemecha*, “And I will make your name great,” refers to Yaakov *Avinu*, who represented the *amud*, pillar, of Torah. Thus, we say, *Ki Shem Hashem ekra, havu godel lei Elokeinu*, “When I call out the Name of Hashem, ascribe greatness to our G-d” (*Devarim* 3:3).

*Gadlus*, greatness, is synonymous with Torah, hence, “And I will make your name great” is reference to Yaakov.

Concerning the last part of *Rashi’s* exposition: “One might think that the *chasimas ha’brachah* would include all three *Avos* – *ve’heyey b’rachah* teaches that *be’cha*, with you, will be the *chasimah*, conclusion. *Horav Simchah Wasserman, zl*, explains that refers to the conclusion of the *galus*, exile, which has sadly been our home and experience, will come about through the *middah*, attribute, personified by Avraham, the *middah* of *chesed*, lovingkindness. This *chesed* takes on the form of continuing Avraham’s outreach efforts to bring the world under the *Kanfei ha’Shechinah*, Wings of the Divine Presence.

Indeed, the *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (1:2) teaches, “The world stands (is supported through) the study of Torah, efforts of *avodah*, prayer, and acts of *gemilus chasadim*. Each one of these attributes is represented by one of the *Avos*. Avraham is the pillar of *chesed*, Yitzchak *Avinu* is the symbol of *avodah*, and Yaakov *Avinu* is the personification of Torah. Given that we conclude with Avraham, should the sequence not have been *chesed* --- Avraham – first?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that the *Mishnah* is teaching us that only Avraham represented the Torah’s outlook concerning acts of lovingkindness and their value. True *chesed* can be executed and experienced only if it is aligned with Torah dictate and *hashkafah*, perspective. *Chesed* without Torah is not true *chesed*.

At first glance, this idea is not consistent with *Chazal* (*Sotah* 14A): “The Torah begins with an act of *chesed* (Hashem fashioned the first “garments” for Adam and Chavah) and ends with an act of *chesed* (Hashem personally attended to *Moshe Rabbeinu’s* burial).” Every Jew should, by

nature, be imbued with a proclivity to act kindly towards others. Afterwards, as he develops in his knowledge of Torah and grows spiritually in his closeness to Hashem via the vehicle of *avodah*, he will then realize the level of *chesed shel Avraham*, which is the essence of *chesed*, the essence of truth. One can only achieve true *chesed* after he has climbed the ladder of Torah and *avodah*.

The Torah begins and concludes with acts of *chesed* which Hashem performs. I think the lesson we are to derive from here is that our *chesed* performance should mimic the manner in which Hashem acts kindly: no agenda, pure altruism. When we perform acts of *chesed* with a personal agenda, we undermine the very essence of *chesed*. Instead of fostering genuine compassion and connection, such acts become transactional and self-serving, which are the antithesis of *chesed*.