



Significant Signature

The first *brachah* in *Shemoneh Esrei* is referred to as *Avot*, the *brachah* of our forefathers. It is therefore curious that although all three of the *Avot* are mentioned at the beginning of the *brachah*, we conclude with “*Magen Avraham*”, only mentioning Avraham Avinu. The source for this lies in the blessing Hashem gave Avraham Avinu, “*vheye brachah*”, and you shall become a blessing. (*Bereisheet* 12;2). Rashi comments “*becha chotmin*”, the *brachah* (referring to the *brachah* of *Avot* in *Shemoneh Esrei*) will close with Avraham’s name. It is from the *koach* of Avraham Avinu that all others are blessed. Why is this so?

Rav Wolbe explains that a Jew’s spiritual DNA is inbred from Avraham Avinu. By singling him out at the end of this *brachah*, we emphasize that our spiritual heritage comes from him. Throughout the ages, every simple Jew’s belief in Hashem is a manifestation of this bequest and has facilitated our survival. Hence the *brachah*

ends “*magen Avraham*”, *emunah* is our protective shield.

Emunah, the *Netivot Shalom* explains, is the foundation of Judaism. In a discussion of the essential principles of Torah, the *Gemara* distills it down to the words of the prophet *Chavakuk*, “*vetzadik bemunato yichye*” (*Chavakuk* 2;4). Saying the words *magen Avraham* allows us to solidify this aspect that Avraham Avinu ingrained in us and fortify our *emunah* daily. In the merit of *emunah* we were redeemed, and in its merit, we will be redeemed in the future. This is true on a national level and on an individual level as well. To the extent that we acknowledge Hashem as the source of all blessing, we can be conduits to bring this blessing into our lives and the lives of those around us.

Rav Belsky in *Einei Yisrael* understands “*becha chotmin*” in a slightly different way. Each of the first three *brachot* in *Shemoneh Esrei* correspond to each of the three *Avot*. The first associates the middah of chesed with Avraham Avinu, the second *brachah*, *gevurot*, is associated with Yitzchak Avinu, and the third *brachah*, *kedushah*, with Yaakov Avinu. Only the first *brachah* ends with Avraham’s name, while the following two *brachot* don’t mention the *Av* to which

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it corresponds. This, says Rav Belsky, is because the *middah* of *chesed* is the hallmark of every Jew. Avraham Avinu gifted us with this shield. The *Shelah Hakadosh* teaches “*chesed kel kol hayom*” (*Tehillim* 52;3), no day should go by without doing an act of *chesed*. Taking this further, the *Saba* of *Slabodka* notes that *chesed* is not just filling another’s need, rather it is becoming a giver.

This then is the deeper understanding of “*becha chotmin*”, notes Rav Dessler. Hashem is telling Avraham, in the future of the Jewish people when there is no longer a *Beit Hamikdash* and no *Sanhedrin*, the qualities of Yitzchak Avinu’s *avodah*, and Yaakov Avinu’s Torah will be weakened. However, the quality of *chesed* will always remain the strength of the Jew. *Yeshayahu Hanavi* (1;27) declared, “*tzion bemishpat tipadeh, veshaveha betzedakah*”. The ultimate redemption will be in the merit of acts of charity and kindness. This is the *chatima*, the final stamp that will bring the *geulah*.

Every day we daven and have a constant reminder to actualize these two fundamental aspects that Avraham Avinu invested within us, *emunah* and *chesed*. In doing so, we become the harbingers of the redemption. ■



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