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# MAGEIN AVRAHAM

THE BRACHA OF MAGEIN AVRAHAM  
IN SHEMONEH ESREI



EXPLANATION OF THE  
BRACHA ON THE LEVELS OF  
PESHAT, REMEZ, DERUSH  
AND CHASSIDUS

COMPILED BY  
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ב"ה

*The Bracha of Magein Avraham  
in Shemoneh Esrei*

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## Introduction: The Bracha of Protection

The bracha of Magein Avraham is the first bracha of the 18 (currently 19) brachos of the Shemoneh Esrei. By way of introduction, I would like to share a point that the Alter Rebbe (תורה אור פ' לך לך ד"ה אנכי מגן לך) makes about the powerful effect of this bracha. The Alter Rebbe explains the way this bracha protects the Jewish people from our enemies, particularly those from the Arab countries:

Avraham represents and embodies Hashem's attribute of Kindness. He taught the world about Hashem and about how people should show kindness to each other. Hashem's Kindness is unlimited. He can give life and power to all creations. This means that even unholy entities receive life from Hashem, since Hashem's Kindness encompasses everything. When we connect to Hashem's Kindness, represented by Avraham, we need to make sure that we are not also energizing and empowering unholy creations, which is a possible side effect of our connection to Hashem. Unholy creations, especially those that associate themselves with and descend from Avraham (the Arab nations) attempt to divert the holy energy and power that we draw down.

For this reason, when we call upon Hashem's Kindness, we ask that He provide a "shield," a protective covering, on this attribute of Kindness. This "shield" will filter out the life and power from Hashem's Kindness and guarantee that it not be seized by the forces of unholiness and the wicked people that want to cause our destruction. The "shield" will make sure that all the Kindness from Hashem will only go to people who will share their power and life with others in a way of kindness. This refers specifically to the Jewish people, (or, l'havdil, to goyim that keep the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach).

This is especially important now when the Jewish People need extra protection from those who associate themselves with Avraham but act in the completely opposite way from the path that he taught with his teachings of kindness to all humanity. Therefore, this bracha (Magein Avraham) has a double significance in our current situation: It is a bracha about Hashem protecting Avraham and his descendants, the Jewish people, from all harm in all generations. And it is a bracha asking Hashem to not allow evil people who claim to connect to Avraham to have any kindness from Hashem so that they have no power and are unable to do more evil, G-d forbid.

May the merit of our kavanah in this bracha protect the Jewish people and give us complete victory over our enemies, leading to the fulfillment of what we say in this bracha “ ומביא גואל” ומביא גואל -לבני בניהם -that Hashem brings a redeemer, Moshiach, to the Jewish people, the descendants of the Avos,” speedily in our days.

## General Notes on Shemoneh Esrei:

Before going into the Bracha of Magein Avraham, a few general points on Shemoneh Esrei:

- 1- For one who finds it difficult to have kavanah throughout the entire Shemoneh Esrei, if he can only have kavanah to think the meaning of the words for one bracha, it should be Magein Avraham.
- 2- For one who can do more than that, s/he should also think about the meaning of the התימה-end of the other brachos. For example, in the second bracha (which starts אתה גבור), one should focus on the meaning of the last five words “מחיה המתים-ברוך אתה ה- blessed are You Master, who revives the dead. In the third bracha, beginning אתה חונן, think the meaning of the last five words, “ברוך אתה ה חונן- blessed are You Master, who graciously gives knowledge.” For each bracha, think the meaning of at least the last line that starts with ברוך אתה.
- 3- In the bracha of שמע קולנו, before כי אתה שומע, you should ask Hashem in your own words for things that you need physically and spiritually. It is not a הפסק-interruption to say your own words, even in English, at this point, asking for your needs. You can also insert private requests in אלקי בצור before saying the second יהיו לרצון, which precedes עושה שלום.
- 4- In מודים, besides thinking of the meaning of the words, stop and reflect on some of the things that Hashem does for you personally and that you are grateful for.
- 5- If possible, try to make a rotation of thinking about the meaning of the remaining brachos of Shemoneh Esrei that follow Magein Avraham. For example, on Sunday morning in Shachris, in addition to thinking about the meaning of Magein Avraham, also think the meaning of אתה גבור. The next day, Monday morning, think about the

meaning of מגן אברהם and the bracha of אתה קדוש. The next day, Tuesday, the bracha of מגן אברהם and the bracha of אתה חונן. If you do this, then in around a month you will go through the entire weekday Shemoneh Esrei with the pirush hamilos. But don't start this until you get used to thinking about the meaning of the bracha of מגן אברהם every time you daven Shemoneh Esrei.

### Overview of the Bracha Magein Avraham:

Here, we will discuss the kavanah of the first bracha of Shemoneh Esrei. This bracha is extremely important and central to the mitzvah of davening Shemoneh Esrei. To fulfill one's obligation in Shemoneh Esrei, one needs to have kavanah for this bracha. Otherwise, it is considered as if he did not daven at all and (technically) he would need to repeat the entire Shemoneh Esrei.

To understand the first bracha of Shemoneh Esrei, we will look at the meaning of the words and the pesukim that this bracha is based on. Then we will explain, phrase by phrase, the meaning of the bracha as it is explained by the classic commentaries on the siddur.

## The Bracha of Magein Avraham

My Master (Hashem), please open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise.	אדני, שפתי תפתח, ופי יגיד תהלתך.
Blessed are you Eternal Master of all (Hashem),	ברוך אתה ה',
our G-d, and G-d of our fathers, G-d of Avraham, G-d of Yitzchak, and G-d of Yaakov.	א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו, אלקי אברהם, אלקי יצחק, ואלקי יעקב
The G-d who is great, mighty, and awesome,	הא-ל הגדול, הגיבור, והנורא,
the G-d who is Exalted.	א-ל עליון
Who gives an abundance of kindness,	גומל חסדים טובים,
who creates everything,	קונה הכל,
and remembers the righteousness of the forefathers,	וזכר חסדי אבות,
and brings a redeemer to their children's children,	ומביא גואל לבני בניהם,
for the sake of His Name, with love	למען שמו, באהבה
King, (You are) a helper, savior, and shield.	מלך עוזר ומושיע ומגן.
Blessed are You Eternal Master of all (Hashem), the Shield of Avraham	ברוך אתה ה' מגן אברהם

As seen in the color-coded chart, the bracha can be divided into seven parts; a preparation, and six sections of the actual bracha:



Preparation for Shemoneh Esrei

- 1- Describing our connection to Hashem.
- 2- Describing Hashem's Greatness as mentioned in the Torah.
- 3- Describing Hashem's great deeds and kindness in general.
- 4- Describing Hashem's special kindness to the entire Jewish people.
- 5- Describing Hashem's special kindness to oneself individually, daily.
- 6- Completing the bracha.

These sections can be further subdivided into more specific phrases, each phrase based on a pasuk.

We will explain the Bracha in this order:

First, we will describe the basic idea of the entire bracha.

Second, we will go through the seven parts of the bracha with a simple explanation, and connected to the pesukim they are based on.

Third, we will go into "Further Insights" into the wording of the bracha.

Fouth, we will look into the comments from the Midrash on the bracha.

**The general idea of Birchah Magein Avraham:**

The bracha is called “Magein Avraham – the Shield of Avraham” because it refers to how Hashem protected Avraham, our forefather, throughout his life and gave him the power to accomplish his mission of revealing Hashem in the world. Not only did Hashem do that for Avraham, but He also did that for Yitzchak and Yaakov. Hashem’s special protection for Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov was in the sense that they were Hashem’s representatives in this world, they revealed Hashem in this world to all of humanity. As their descendants, we also have the same role of revealing Hashem in the world, and therefore have that special connection to Hashem and receive special protection and blessing from Hashem to enable us to fulfill that mission.

All the praises of Hashem in this bracha are connected to attributes of Hashem that were revealed in this world specifically through Avraham and his children.

It is with this merit that we stand before Hashem to ask for His help, knowing that we are the direct continuation of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and we are responsible to fulfill the purpose of creation. In this merit, we ask Hashem to bring Moshiach so that we will be able to complete our mission of revealing Hashem in this world through the service of the Beis Hamikdash. In this merit we ask Hashem to help us every day to overcome our own personal struggles and spiritual enemies.

**More on the idea of Magein Avraham:**

The halacha is that every bracha needs to have שם and מלכות. שם is Hashem's name (הוי' א-לקינו) and מלך העולם is King of the whole world.

However, where in Shemoneh Esrei where do we have מלכות, as the brachos do not mention מלך העולם?

Tosfos in Gemara Rosh Hashana says that we say אלקי אברהם is מלכות, because Avraham Avinu proclaimed Hashem's Kingship over the entire world (see Rashi parshas Chayei Sara on pasuk ה' א-לקי השמים וא-לקי הארץ).

Now, the question that follows logically is 'What does that have to do with me personally?'

In (סהל"ש ע' 453) תשנ"ב the (Sefardi) chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael, R' Mordechai Eliyahu, had a yechidus and discussed many things with the Rebbe. He mentioned this explanation of Tosfos, that א-לקי אברהם is מלכות because Avraham made Hashem King of the world, and the Rebbe responded:

Not only Avraham Avinu, but every single Yid has the power to make Hashem King over the entire world. This is seen on Rosh Hashana, when Hashem asks every Yid- "תמליכוני עליכם- make Me King over you," and we say "מלך על העולם כולו בכבודך- be King over the whole world in your Glory."

To clarify this, the Midrash (עיי' לכוז סי' קי"ב) discusses how every bracha of Shemoneh Esrei is connected to a certain story in Tanach. The first bracha of Shemoneh Esrei is connected to the story of Hashem protecting Avraham from death when he was thrown into a furnace.

In the first maamar that the Rebbe said, Basi Legani, the maamar explains (אות ג' וז) that the mesirus nefesh of Avraham

Avinu was that he didn't want anything for himself, not even mesirus nefesh. He just knew that he was given a mission from Hashem ויקרא שם בשם ה א-ל עולם, אל תקרי ויקרא אלא ויקריא Hashem. Meaning, that his mission was to teach everyone in the world that Hashem is not separate and removed from this world. Rather, Hashem is the only power and true existence of everything in the world. Hashem is everywhere and there is nothing separate from Him. His mission was to teach this idea to everyone on such a level that they would fully understand and be able to give the same idea to more people, so that this message would spread everywhere.

The Rebbe concludes that this is the mission of every single one of us, to reveal Hashem in this world.

Just like Hashem protected Avraham Avinu and gave him the power to fulfill his mission, so does He protect every one of us and give us the power to fulfill our mission. So when we say ברוך אתה ה מגן אברהם, we mean both Avraham Avinu and ourselves, that we (I) inherited a neshama from Avraham and are his ממלאי מקום and continuation to fulfill the mission of revealing Hashem in this world.

Most of the commentary in the next section is based on the Abudarham:

## Explaining the Seven Sections of the Bracha:

My Master (Hashem), please open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise.	אדני, שפתי תפתח, ופי יגיד תהלתך.
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Before beginning the Shemoneh Esrei, our Sages established the practice of saying a pasuk from Tehillim (chapter 51), asking Hashem to help us daven to Him properly. The pasuk itself is proof that we should ask for help before we daven: First, we ask Hashem to open our lips, and only then can our mouths declare praises of Him. The Abudraham says that this is like the pasuk (Mishlei 16:1): “מִעַנֶה לְשׁוֹן” -A man needs to prepare in heart what to say, but only Hashem can give him the power of speech.”

### Important Kavanos:

- 1- In Pri Eitz Chayim<sup>1</sup>, it quotes the Arizal saying that after the pasuk of אדני שפתי תפתח ופי יגיד תהלתך and before starting ברוך אתה השם you should stop and have in mind that you intend to fulfill the mitzvah of tefilla. This is because the main fulfillment of the mitzvah of tefilla is through Shemoneh Esrei. Even for the private requests that we have, we are supposed to ask Hashem for them in שמע קולנו. Therefore, before starting Shemoneh Esrei, we have in mind that we are fulfilling this mitzvah of tefilla, which is one of the 613 mitzvos of the Torah.
- 2- The Rokeiach writes that one of the main challenges that Hashem gives us in life is to have kavanah when we are davening Shemoneh Esrei. Therefore, a person needs to realize that he is standing face to face with Hashem Himself and talking to Him directly and focus on that before starting Shemoneh Esrei. (See also Kutres HaTefilla chap. 11, where the Rebbe Rashab says that

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<sup>1</sup> Shaar Hatzitzis 6:6.

before Shemoneh Esrei we need to stop and think for a moment that we are now standing face to face with Atzmus Eis Sof).

<p>Blessed are you Eternal Master of all (Hashem), our G-d, and G-d of our fathers, G-d of Avraham, G-d of Yitzchak, and G-d of Yaakov.</p>	<p>ברוך אתה ה', א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו, אלקי אברהם, אלקי יצחק, ואלקי יעקב,</p>
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1- When we begin the main text of the bracha, the first point that we make is to establish our connection to Hashem as our G-d. This means that He connects Himself, especially to us, and chooses to reveal Himself in the world through our service of Him. We receive the power to accomplish this from our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, who established this special connection with Hashem and passed it down to us through our fathers and grandfathers, all the way back to the Avos. (A convert is called “the son/daughter of Avraham” since his or her Neshama receives this special connection to Hashem from Avraham Avinu’s Neshama directly).

Also, in Parshas Shemos (3:15) when Hashem first appeared to Moshe at the burning bush (sneh), Hashem told him to tell the Yidden: “ וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אֶל-הַיָּמִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם זֶה שְׁמִי וְזֶה זִכְרִי לְדֹר וָדֹר לְעֹלָם וָעֹלָם וְזֶה זִכְרִי לְדֹר וָדֹר לְעֹלָם וָעֹלָם -**Hashem, the G-d of your fathers, G-d of Avraham, G-d of Yitzchak, and G-d of Yaakov,** has sent me [Moshe] to you; [Hashem said that] this is my Name forever, and this is how I should be called for all generations.” We see from here that this is how Hashem wants us to refer to Him when we daven to Him, referring to how He is the G-d of the Avos, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

The G-d who is great, mighty, and awesome,	הא-ל הגדול, הגבור, והנורא,
the G-d who is Exalted.	א-ל עליון

2- The second section of the bracha is where we describe Hashem's greatness. Since Hashem is infinite, it is not possible to adequately praise Him no matter what we say. Praising Him with trivial compliments could be insulting (see Berachos 33b). Therefore, the Chochomim established that we praise Hashem using the formula found in the Torah (Parshas Eikev (Devarim 10:17), and in Sefer Ezra-Nechemia (Nechemia 9:32)).

In Parshas Eikev, Moshe talks to the Jewish people before he passes away, trying to impart to them a feeling of awe and love for Hashem.

He says (10:14-17), “אל-היה השמים ושמי השמים הארץ וכל אשר בה: רק באבותיך חשק ה' לאהבה אותם ויבחר בזרעם אחריהם בכם מפל העמים פיוס הנה: ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם וערפכם לא תקשו עוד: כי ה' אלהי-יכם הוא אל-הי האל-הים ואדני האדנים הא-ל הגדל הגבר והנורא... את ה' Hashem owns the heavens and earth and everything in them, but He only chose your forefathers [Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov] and to love them, and He chose you, their children, from among all the nations to be His special nation forever. Therefore, open your hearts to Hashem! For Hashem your G-d is the G-d of all heavenly powers, and the Master over all masters, **the G-d who is Great, Mighty, and Awesome**...this Hashem you should fear and serve Him and connect yourself to Him.”

Moshe tells the Jewish people to realize that they have a special connection to Hashem because of the Avos.

Therefore, they should serve Hashem and connect to Him in davening. When davening, we should praise Hashem for being great, mighty, and awesome.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rashi on the Gemara Berachos 33b explains that Ezra used this phrase “הא-ל הגדול הגבור והנורא” in the Tefilla recorded in Sefer Ezra-Nechemia. When Ezra later composed the Shemoneh Esrei with the Anshei Keneses HaGedola, he incorporated the same phrase. In other words, Ezra (and the Anshei Keneses Hagedola) decided that this formula (which was used by Ezra previously in a public Tefilla, based on what Moshe said in the Chumash) is what every Jew should use in their daily Davening.

This is the story of that Tefilla: When Ezra and Nechemia came to Eretz Yisroel to complete the second Beis Hamikdash, they found many Jews had intermarried, and stopped keeping Shabbos etc. They aroused the nation to do Teshuva. That year, after a whole month of Tishrei speaking to the people about Teshuva, on Isru Chag after Sukkos, he gathered everyone to the Beis Hamikdash. He had the Leviim say a long song of praises and requests from Hashem. This song speaks about Hashem creating the world, taking us out of Mitzrayim, giving us the Torah, and bringing us to Eretz Yisroel. (Most of the first part of this song we say in Pesukei Dezimra before Az Yashir.) Then it goes on to describe how the Jewish people sinned in Eretz Yisroel and refused to do Teshuva until Hashem destroyed the Beis Hamikdash and sent us in galus. But even in galus Hashem did not abandon us, and He is still taking care of us despite everything we did wrong.

At that point in the song, it says (9:32): “וַעֲתָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל - **And now our G-d, the G-d who is Great, Mighty, and Awesome, who keeps His promise [with the Avos] and [remembers] their righteousness and kindnesses [as a merit for us],** do not let the suffering that has found us seem trivial before You...”

In other words, we see from Ezra that when Hashem remembers His promise with the Avos to take care of us, this shows that He is Great, Mighty, and Awesome. This idea is also explained in the Gemara (Yoma 69b) that Hashem's true power, greatness, and awesome abilities are expressed in the fact that He takes care of the Jewish people against impossible odds. Every generation the nations of the world want to kill us, and Hashem always saves us. This proves Hashem's existence and providence to all the nations of the world more than anything else.



What does it mean that He is "great, mighty, and awesome"? One<sup>3</sup> way of explaining this is that Hashem is called "great" for the great kindnesses that He does; He is called "mighty" for punishing people in general who rebel against Him; and He is called "awesome" for allowing His presence to be felt in this world through miracles, Tzadikim, and in the Beis Hamikdash. (For more on the meaning of "great, mighty, and awesome," see the "Further Insights" section).

In Parshas Lech Lecha (Bereshis 14:19), Malki Tzedek, (who is Sheim, the son of Noach), praises Hashem as "וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ וַיִּבְרַךְ אַבְרָם לֵא-לֹהֵי עֲלִיּוֹן קִנְיָה שְׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ-and he [Malki Tzedek] blessed him [Avram] and said: **blessed is Avram by the Exalted G-d**, Creator of heaven and earth." Because Hashem made great supernatural miracles for Avram when he defeated the four kings, Hashem became known in the world as "exalted," meaning higher than nature and in control of nature.

Since these two praises are recorded in the Torah, we can use them to praise Hashem's greatness without insulting Him, since we are quoting the praises that Hashem Himself instructed us to write in the Torah.

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<sup>3</sup> See Midrash Tehillim, chapter 19: He is called "great" because of the great things He did for us when He took us out of Mitzrayim, He is called "mighty" when He drowned the Mitzrim at the Yam Suf, and He is called "awesome" because of His revelation in the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash.

Who gives an abundance of kindness,	גומל חסדים טובים,
who creates everything,	קונה הכל,

3-The third section of the bracha is where we describe the great things that Hashem does for everyone:

- a- He bestows an abundance of kindness upon His creations,
- b- Moreover, He creates them out of nothing. If He would not do that, they would not even exist in the first place.

Why do we mention Hashem's kindness first, before the fact that He creates everything?

The actual order is the opposite: Hashem first creates something before He is kind to it?

One answer is that we praise Hashem for what we see Him do, and we see His kindnesses directly, whereas, His creative power is not something that we readily see.

These two praises of what Hashem does are also mentioned in the Torah:

In Yeshaya (63:7) the verse says, “חֲסִדֵי ה' אֶזְכִּיר תְהִלַּת ה' כְּעֵל” -I will recall the praises of Hashem for all that Hashem has given us, **and for the great goodness that He has given to the House of Yisroel, according to His mercy and abundant kindnesses.**”

In the story of Malkitzedek and Avram (quoted above), Malkitzedek said, “בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָם לֵאמֹר לֵאלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ” -Blessed is Avram by the Exalted G-d, the **Creator of heaven and earth.**” In Yeshaya (45:7) it says, “יֹוצֵר אוֹר וּבֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבֹרֵא רָע, אֲנִי ה'” -[Hashem says that] He forms light and creates darkness, He makes peace and creates evil; **I, Hashem, have made everything.**”

The Abudarham explains that from this part of the bracha and on, starting from וּכְרֵי גּוֹמֵל חַסְדִּים טוֹבִים, the bracha is written in the present tense. This means that these are things that Hashem did in the past, does for us now, and will do for us in the future. He has shown abundant kindness and has created everything, and He is still doing that, and we rely on Him to continue doing that. He did remember the promise He made to the Avos and took their grandchildren out of Mitzrayim. He *is* bringing us closer to Geula every day, and we will see how He completes the promise with the complete Geula very soon. He did help us, save us, and protect us; He is doing that now; and we trust in Him to continue doing those things.

and remembers the righteousness of the forefathers,	וְזָכַר חַסְדֵי אֲבוֹת,
and brings a redeemer to their children's children,	וּמְבִיא גּוֹאֵל לְבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם,
for the sake of His Name, with love	לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ, בְּאַהֲבָה

4-The fourth section of the bracha describes the special kindnesses that Hashem does for the Jewish people. Hashem promised the Avos that He would never abandon us and would always take care of us. He remembers that promise and protects us in the worst situations of Galus, and the Jewish people have survived thousands of years of the worst possible persecution.

Not only do we recognize that Hashem protects us in Galus and is with us in Galus, but we also believe that Hashem will bring Moshiach, and for three reasons:

- A- In the merit of the Avos.
- B- For the sake of the glory of Hashem's Name that will be elevated when Moshiach comes.
- C- Because of His love for the Jewish people.

These praises of Hashem's special connection to the Jewish people are also mentioned in the Torah:

In Parshas Bechukosai (Vayikra 26:42), discussing how Hashem will remember us when we are in Galus and take us out, He says, “ וְנִכְרַתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק וְאֶת בְּרִיתִי אֶת אֶתְרָרְךָ אֶזְכֹּר וְאֶתְרָרְךָ אֶזְכֹּר וְאֶתְרָרְךָ אֶזְכֹּר -I will remember my covenant with Yaakov, and also my covenant with Yitzchak, and also my covenant with Avraham I will remember, and I will remember the land [to rebuild it with the Jewish people again].” We see that Hashem remembers the Avos and the good things they did, which is why Hashem made a covenant, a promise, with them, to always protect them and their descendants.

In Yeshaya (59:20-21) the verse says, “ וּבָא לְצִיּוֹן גּוֹאֵל וּלְשִׁבְיָהּ פֹּשֵׁעַ בְּיַעֲקֹב בָּאֵם ה': וְנָגַי זֹאת בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם אָמַר ה' רֹחִי אֲשֶׁר עָלְיָהּ וְדִבְרֵי אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַתִּי בְּפִיהָ לֹא יִמְוָשׁוּ מִפִּיהָ וּמִפִּי זָרַע זָרַע וּמִפִּי זָרַע זָרַע אָמַר ה' מִעַתָּה נֶעַד עוֹלָם -Hashem says: **a redeemer will come to Tzion and to those who do teshuva among Yaakov.** And this is my covenant with them, says Hashem, My spirit which is upon you and My words [of Torah] that I have placed in your mouth will never leave from your mouth, or from the mouths of **your children, and from your children's children forever**, says Hashem.” Hashem says that His special connection to us through the Torah, and Hashem's promise to bring a redeemer to us, is something that will continue throughout all generations.

In Yeshaya (63:16) the verse says, “ כִּי אַתָּה אָבִינוּ כִּי אַבְרָהָם -For You [Hashem] are our Father, for even if Avraham didn't know how to save us, and Yisroel didn't recognize our merits to help us, You Hashem, You are our Father, **Your Name has always been 'our Redeemer.'**” We see from this that Hashem's Name is “the Redemer of the Jewish People,” and He redeems us for the sake of His Name, besides for His promise to the Avos.

In Yirmiyah (31:1-3) the verse tells us, “ פה אָמַר ה'... עַם שְׂרֵירֵי חֶרֶב הִלּוּד לְחַרְגֵי עוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל... וְאַהֲבַת עוֹלָם אֶהְבֵּתִיךָ עַל כֵּן מִשְׁכַּתִּיךָ חֻסְדָּ: עוֹד אֶבְנֶה וְנִבְנֶית בְּתוֹלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל... כִּי יֵשׁ יוֹם קָרָאוּ... קוֹמוּ וְנַעֲלֶה צִיּוֹן אֵל ה' אֶל-הַיְיָ-So says Hashem: Yisroel, the people who have survived the sword will find favor and have peace... Hashem says [to the Jewish people]: **I have loved you with eternal love**, therefore I have brought kindness to you, the daughter of Yisroel will once again be built up... for there will come a day when they will say to each other: Tzion! Get up and let us to Hashem our G-d [in the Beis Hamikdash].” We see from this pasuk that Hashem will bring us a redeemer, Moshiach, because of His love for the Jewish people, besides for the sake of His Name and because of His promise to the Avos.

King, our helper, savior, and shield.	מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגֵּן.
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5-The fifth section of the bracha is where we describe Hashem's relationship with us personally, in four different ways:

a- As our King, since He gives us direction and purpose in life and our lives are dedicated to Him.

b- As our Helper, since He helps us to accomplish our mission by giving us the strength to learn Torah, do mitzvos, and overcome the yetzer hara.

c- As our Savior. This means that He saves us from bad situations that we have already become stuck in. For example, He helps us do teshuva if we do an aveira and He saves us from physical problems that we already have.

d- As our Shield, He protects us from being harmed in the first place, both physically and spiritually.

These praises of what Hashem does for us are also mentioned in the Torah:

In Yeshaya (33:22) the verse says, “**כי ה' שפוטנו ה' מחקקנו ה' מלכנו**” -For Hashem is our Judge, Hashem is our law giver, **Hashem is our King**, He will save us.” We see that Hashem is called “our King.”

In Tehillim (37:39-40) it says, “**ותשועת צדיקים מה מעוזם בעת צרה: ה' ויפלטם ויפלטם מפלטים מרשעים ויושיעם**” -The salvation of the righteous is from Hashem, He is their source of strength in a time of distress, **and Hashem helps them** and redeems them, **He redeems them from the wicked and saves them**, for they have put their trust in Him.” We see that Hashem helps and saves us.

In Parshas Vezos Habracha (Devarim 33:29) Moshe tells the Yidden, “**אשריך ישראל מי כמוד עם נושע בה' מגן עזרך ואשר חרב גאותך**” -Fortunate are you Yisroel, who is like you?! You are the nation this is saved by **Hashem, who is the shield of your help**, and majestic sword of your protection; your enemies will do anything to make peace with, even trying to trick you, but you will step on their high places.” We see that Hashem is our shield and protection.

Blessed are You Eternal Master of all (Hashem), the Shield of Avraham	ברוך אתה ה' מגן אברהם
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6-We end the bracha saying that Hashem is the Shield and protection of Avraham our father, and for every Jew for all time, including me and you.

This praise of Hashem as the shield of Avraham is also mentioned in the Torah:

In Parshas Lech Lecha (Bereishis 15:1) it says, “אָחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה דְבַר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם בְּמַחְזָה לֵאמֹר אֵל תִּירָא אַבְרָם אֲנִי מְגֹרֶךָ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה דְבַר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם בְּמַחְזָה לֵאמֹר אֵל תִּירָא אַבְרָם אֲנִי מְגֹרֶךָ [that Hashem gave Avram victory over the four kings in battle] Hashem appeared to Avram in a vision and said: **Do not fear Avram, I am your shield**, your reward is very great.” We see that Hashem said about Himself that He is the “shield of Avraham,” and by extension, all of Avraham’s children, as quoted above from Parshas Vezos Habracha. In Avraham’s merit, Hashem is the shield of each Jew.

### Further Insights:

Now that we explained the bracha on a basic level, we can investigate it further.

#### **Hashem as my Master and Hashem as everyone's Master**

What is the difference between Hashem's Name's "א-ד-נ" (in the pasuk we say before Shemoneh Esrei) and His Name "א-ד-נ" (in the beginning of the bracha of Magein Avraham)? This question is especially relevant since we pronounce it the same way.

The Abudraham answers in the name of Rabbi Shmuel ben Chafni:

The Name "א-ד-נ" refers to Hashem as He relates to me personally, "my Master."

The Name "א-ד-נ" refers to Hashem as He is, was, and will be forever, the Master of all the creations.

In other words, first, we ask Hashem on a personal level, as my personal Master, to open my lips to daven properly. Then we speak to Hashem as He is the Eternal Master of all creations. (In English we would translate "א-ד-נ" as "my Master," and we would translate "א-ד-נ" as "the Master," or just plain "Master" depending on the context, or "the Eternal Master of all."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim chapter 5. There are different opinions as to when we say Hashem's Name of "א-ד-נ" should we have in mind the meaning of how it is pronounced as א-ד-נ meaning Master, or as it is written, which means the Eternal One (who was, is, and will be forever). The Alter Rebbe writes that it is preferable to have in mind both meanings, i.e., the Eternal Master of all. If it is too difficult to have both in mind, it suffices to have in mind the meaning as it is pronounced, "Master."

The Abudraham here teaches us, that even if we only have in mind the meaning of "Master" when we read the Name "א-ד-נ" it is in a different



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context then when we think of Hashem as our Master when we read the Name אדני-י. When we read the Name אדני-י we are thinking of Hashem as my own personal Master, as opposed to when we read the Name "י-ה-ו-ה" we are thinking of Hashem as He is the Master of all creations.

(This makes sense: the word אדני-י means "my master," and when used about Hashem, we are referring to Him as "my Master." But when we are reading the Name הויה which refers to how Hashem is Eternal, it cannot mean only "my Master" since I am not eternal, it would not make sense to praise Hashem as being "my Eternal Master," since He was not my Master Eternally, only from the time I was created. If we are talking about how Hashem is Eternal, we need to say that His being called Master is how He is eternally Master, i.e., the Eternal Master of everything that could ever exist, like how we describe Hashem in אדון עולם as "the King who reigned before anything was created.")

I personally spoke with Rabbi Nissen Mangel שיחיה, author of the English translation of the Siddur published by Kehot. He translates the Name אדני-י as "my Lord" (lord means the same thing as master), and he translates the Name "י-ה-ו-ה" as "the Lord," since "my Lord" means my personal Master, and "the Lord" means the Master of everyone and everything. He told me that this translation is based on the Abudarham mentioned above. He also said that his translation of the Siddur was personally checked over by the Rebbe who approved it for print.

To note, that in Sefer Piskei Teshuvos on Orach Chayim Ch. 5 (p. 62), he brings an opinion (that of הליכות שלמה) that the requirement to have in mind both intentions of הויה, as it is written, which means "that He was forever, is, and will be eternal," and of how it is read which means "the Master of all," is mainly by the first verse of Shema, and in the first bracha of Shemoneh Esrei, the bracha of Magein Avraham. Based on this, at least in the bracha of Magein Avraham, it would be proper to have in mind when saying Hashem's Name הויה that He is "the Eternal Master of all." For the remainder of Shemoneh Esrei, it can suffice to have in mind "the Master," or just "Master," as it is translated in the English Siddur (as "the Lord" or just "Lord," depending on the context).

(Perhaps we can say that this idea of talking to Hashem as “my Master” personally before talking to Hashem as “the Master” of everyone is similar to the following idea: We call Hashem “מלכנו-our Father our King.” We first talk to Hashem as our Father, on a more personal level, and then as our King, on a more all-encompassing level, as the King of everyone. This pattern is also like the general pattern of brachos: First, we say (in the second person) “Blessed are You, Master, our G-d,” and then we say in the third person “King of the universe, that He has commanded us/that He has created...,” first showing His direct connection to us as “our G-d,” and only then as He is the transcendent “King of the universe”).

### Leaving our World to enter Hashem’s World

Let’s go back to a question we asked earlier:

Why, if every bracha needs שם ומלכות, (needs to mention that Hashem is the King of the universe) is there no mention of מלך העולם in the bracha of Magein Avraham? We answered according to Tosfos, that mentioning "G-d of Avraham" is the idea of Hashem's Kingship since he made the whole world aware that Hashem is the Creator and Ruler of the world, and therefore, established Hashem as the King.

Other Rishonim, Mahari Bar Yakar, and the Rokeiach (among others)<sup>5</sup> say we only need to mention how Hashem is King of the world in brachos on physically performed mitzvos<sup>6</sup>, and lehavdil, on food, and other things we benefit from physically.

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<sup>5</sup> See also Midrash Tehillim, chapter 16 of Tehillim.

<sup>6</sup> Mitzvos that are performed in thought, such as the mitzvah to awaken a love and fear of Hashem through contemplation, do not require a bracha before them. Only physical tangible mitzvos of action or speech require a bracha before them. However, Davening is essentially a spiritual mitzvah, since its main aspect is the kavanah and the thoughts in the mind. (In fact, if one is physically unable to say the words of

Even the brachos of Pesukei Dezimra and Birchos Kerias Shema start with ברוך אתה אלקינו מלך העולם since they discuss Hashem's Mercy that He shows to His creations, and we experience tangibly.

However, in davening Shemoneh Esrei, a person has no direct physical enjoyment, only a spiritual connection to Hashem.

(Even though part of Davening is also asking for our physical needs, but during Davening itself there is no tangible physical benefit, and, in fact, we do not even know exactly how Hashem will answer our requests.<sup>7</sup>)

In other words, all the other brachos we make besides for Shemoneh Esrei are about bringing Hashem's Light into our world and experiencing Hashem's Kingship in the world we live in. Whether it is through using physical objects to connect to Hashem in a mitzvah, or in enjoying Hashem's food and connecting to Hashem's power He invested in the food.

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Davening with his mouth, he should recite it in his mind (see Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, 94:7.) Therefore, no bracha is recited on Davening. For the same reason, in Davening Shemoneh Esrei itself we do not need to have שם ומלכות, according to these opinions. (Even though Davening must be physically recited with one's mouth (if he is able to), this is only to fully express and awaken the kavanah in the mind, and to bring the Davening to affect the person even in his physical life. But the main aspect of the Davening is the Kavanah.)

<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that we only ask Hashem for things because it is a mitzvah, we also ask because we believe that Hashem listens to our requests and will actually help us because we ask Him to. But sometimes Hashem answers our requests in ways that we cannot understand, by giving us things that are better for us in the long run or delaying seeing the answer to our request until the right time. So, when we ask Hashem for things, we know that He is listening to us and wants to give us what is best for us, but we do not always understand how Hashem's kindness works. Therefore, we do not always see the immediate material benefit of our davening.

However, in Shemoneh Esrei, we are rising from our world and entering Hashem's World, the World of Atzilus. In Shemoneh Esrei we are not perceiving His Kingship in our world, we are seeing Him in His World. This is why in Shemoneh Esrei we stand still and quiet in awe and reverence of Hashem, since we have entered His private chambers, like entering into Yechidus with a great Tzadik.

This is like what the Pri Eitz Chayim writes in the name of the Arizal<sup>8</sup>: The bracha of Magein Avraham in Shemoneh Esrei is different from all the other brachos we say. All the other brachos we say, such as those on food and mitzvos, are about bringing down Hashem's Light into our physical world (from Bina of Atzilus to Malchus of Atzilus to Asiya). However, the bracha of Magein Avraham is about elevating us so that we may enter the world of Atzilus (this happens by Malchus of Atzilus coming down to us as we stand in the World of Beriah and giving us the power to "jump" into the World of Atzilus).

This means, that when we daven Shemoneh Esrei we need to imagine that we are leaving our world, and entering Hashem's world, as it were. That is why it is very important to have the proper thoughts in Shemoneh Esrei, since we are in Yechidus with Atzmus U'Mehus, with Hashem Himself!

### **Individual Connection to Hashem:**

In the Siddur Otzar Hatefillos, the commentaries known as Eitz Yosef and Iyun Tefilla ask the following questions:

- 1- In the beginning of Shemoneh Esrei, we mention "אלקי-G-d of" five distinct times; "אלקי, ואלקי אבותינו, אלקי, אלקי, ואלקי יעקב", seemingly, the bracha could just say "אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו, אלקי אברהם, יצחק, ויעקב", why does the bracha need to say "אלקי-G-d of" by each of the Avos?

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<sup>8</sup> See Shaar HaBrachos chapter 3.



connection to the Avos that they passed down to us, which is what empowers us to have a direct connection to Hashem. (See Or HaChaim on this pasuk: The Anshei Keneses HaGedola established the beginning text of the first bracha of Shemoneh Esrei in the same pattern as this pasuk).

This is also why it says “אל-לוקי” separately by each of the Avos. This is to teach us that Yitzchak did not only believe in Hashem because his father commanded him to, but because he developed his awareness of Hashem just as much as Avraham did when he had to figure it out by himself. Yitzchak's connection to Hashem was something personal to him, not just something he inherited from his father. The same thing with Yaakov: His connection to Hashem was personal and created through his hard work and effort to develop his awareness of Hashem, not just something he inherited from his father and grandfather.

So, on the one hand, the power we need to connect with Hashem is something we inherit from the Avos and are taught by our parents and teachers (or Rebbeim, etc.). On the other hand, this connection needs to be developed into a unique personal relationship with Hashem, so that Hashem is “[y]our G-d,” in addition to being the “G-d of [y]our fathers.”

### Hashem's Attributes:<sup>9</sup>

It says that Hashem is “הגבור, והנורא, והגדול, והאל-ל-the G-d who is Great, Mighty, and Awesome.” What exactly does this mean?

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<sup>9</sup> The sources for this are from: Sforno and other mefarshim on Devarim 10:17, Midrash Tehillim on chapter 19, Abudraham, Siddur Otzar Hatefillos, and Tefilla Lemoshe, a likut of Rishonim on the Siddur.

- 1- What does it mean Hashem is “great” if we cannot know how big He is? How can we praise Him for something we cannot know?
- 2- What is the difference between saying He is mighty and saying He is awesome? Don’t we have awe from considering His Might?

The answer to these questions is as follows:

- 1- Hashem’s Greatness cannot be measured directly. Rather, when we speak about Hashem’s greatness, we mean one of three things:
  - a- We are describing what we understand about His Greatness from His creations. By seeing the amazing creations of Hashem, and how vast the universe is, we can establish some idea of Hashem’s Greatness, even though it is not His true Greatness. That is what the Gemara [Megilla 31b<sup>10</sup> (on this pasuk)] says: In the place where you find His greatness, you are finding His humility. This means, Hashem humbles Himself to express some of His Greatness on a level we can understand, even though it in no way reflects His true greatness at all. This can be compared to someone who makes a painting: Even if the painting is truly beautiful, it does not tell you about the one who made it beyond the details of that specific painting. Abudraham says: Hashem’s “greatness” is most strongly felt in the spiritual worlds of the malachim and neshamos. These great and awesome levels are greater than anything in the physical universe, and tell

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<sup>10</sup> See *Shu"t Nodע ביהודה תנייא אר"ה ס"י כ'* regarding the girsa of the Gemara that says "במקום שאתה מוצא גבורתו" compared to the popularly quoted version of "במקום שאתה מוצא גדולתו".

you about Hashem's greatness as the Creator of those incredible worlds.

- b- We are describing Hashem's Greatness in terms of how His existence is on a greater level and category of existence than any of His creations. We can only have an indirect knowledge of the manner of Hashem's existence. Any limitation that exists in creation does not apply to Hashem, since He is the Creator of all limitations. When one considers this idea, one will realize that Hashem is beyond time, space, and all levels. In this way, one can realize that Hashem's existence is a completely different type of existence, on a much greater "level" of existence, as it were, and in a category beyond all limitations.
  - c- Another explanation of Hashem's "greatness": This refers to the great kindnesses Hashem performs for His creations. When someone is generous, they are called having "a big heart," and Hashem's generosity is massive. In that sense, He is "Great" in the sense of very generous. This attribute of Hashem was strongly revealed in the world through Avraham and his kindness.
- 2- The idea of Hashem being "mighty":
- a- Hashem's "might" refers to the power He uses to run the world. The Abudarham says: In the world of the stars and planets we see Hashem's "might" the most strongly, since He uses an infinite power to make all the stars and planets move constantly. His might is the power that makes the wind blow and the rainfall, etc. When we hear thunder, we make a bracha "Whose might and power fill the world."
  - b- Hashem's "might" is the power of self-restraint Hashem uses to hold himself back from punishing us too severely



- c- Hashem's "might" is the power He uses to save the oppressed from those trying to harm them, and He uses it to punish the wicked. His might is connected to His attribute of justice. Yitzchak revealed this attribute of Hashem in the world by showing what it means to fear Hashem, since Hashem is the true and exacting Judge and we need to carefully examine our deeds before Him.
- 3- The idea of Hashem being "Awesome:"
- a- The miracles Hashem performs which are completely beyond human comprehension instill in us a sense of awe. An example of this is the miracles that happened by the Splitting of the Sea.
  - b- The Abudarham says: The concept of how Hashem is exalted above everything, and yet comes down to deal with each person in the minute details of his life and give him reward or punishment for every single deed is something which boggles the mind, and instills in us a sense of awe.
  - c- Hashem is not only involved with what we do, but more so, He chose to dwell in this world, with us, in our physical life, which is something truly amazing and tells us that Hashem can merge finite and infinite since He transcends both. Yaakov revealed this attribute of Hashem when he met Hashem in the place of the Beis Hamikdash, and by bringing Hashem's holiness into his physical life, as we see that all his children were tzadikim.

### **"Good" Kindnesses**

What does it mean "גומל חסדים טובים-He gives kindnesses that are טובים-good." Isn't kindness automatically good?

- 1- The word 'טובים' can also be interpreted to mean "many" or "a lot of," like the Aramaic word "גומל טובא-many/a lot of." We can thus explain "גומל חסדים טובים-He gives a lot of kindnesses," an abundance of kindness.
- 2- Hashem gives good which we can see. Sometimes Hashem does things for our ultimate good, but they appear bad to us. This is why we say that Hashem also and mainly gives kindnesses that we can identify as kindness, even from our limited perspective. According to this, "גומל חסדים טובים-He gives kindnesses which we see are good."
- 3- Hashem gives things that are good for everyone, and forever. Sometimes a person wants to do something good for someone else, but in the long run, it will end up being bad for him, or for someone else. Only Hashem knows how to do good that is truly good for this person, and for everyone, for now, and forever. According to this, we would translate the phrase "גומל חסדים טובים-He gives kindnesses which are completely good in all aspects."

### In Possession and Control of Everything

We say in this bracha that Hashem "קונה הכל-Creates everything," which is based on the wording of the pasuk "קונה שמים וארץ-Creator of heaven and earth." The word used in the pasuk, and in this bracha, is "קונה" which usually means "one who acquires" or "one who owns" something. Rashi on the pasuk explains: It means that Hashem is the Creator of heaven and earth. Since He created them, He automatically acquired them and owns them. The question is, why does the pasuk use the word "קונה," which usually means "acquirer of," to describe Hashem as the Creator of heaven and earth? Why not use the usual words describing Hashem as Creator, such as "בורא-Creator," or "יוצר-the



“אור ויוצר-He creates light and forms darkness, עשה שלום ובורא אֵת הַכֹּל.” However, the pasuk this is based on, (Yeshaya 45:7) says: “אֵת הַכֹּל וְיוֹצֵר אֹר וְיוֹצֵר חֹשֶׁךְ וְיוֹצֵר שְׁלוֹמִים וְיוֹצֵר עֲוֹנוֹת.” [Hashem says] He forms light and creates darkness, He makes peace and creates ‘evil;’ I Hashem have made everything.” The Gemara (Brachos 11a) asks, ‘Why did the Chochamim change the wording from ‘evil’ to ‘everything?’ Because we want to use a more refined language in davening, so we hint to the word ‘evil’ by saying ‘everything,’ since ‘everything’ includes also evil. In other words, when we praise Hashem for creating light and dark, peace and ‘everything,’ this is a euphemism for saying peace and evil/bad, since the opposite of peace is ‘evil/bad,’ just like the opposite of light is dark. So we are praising Hashem for creating light and dark, good and bad, holiness and unholiness. We believe everything is created by Hashem, and even the things that look bad to us are created by Hashem for a good reason, even if we cannot understand.

Based on this, we can explain a possible interpretation: If we only quote the wording of the pasuk “וְיוֹצֵר שְׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ-who creates heaven and earth,” you might think it refers to all the good things Hashem created in heaven and earth and is in obvious control of. But someone might think, chas veshalom, that the bad choices people make are not “created by Hashem,” since it is people who chose to act this way. Hashem gave them free choice to choose to do the right thing or the wrong thing, and they chose to go against Hashem’s will. How can we say Hashem “created” those bad deeds of people? The answer is: Even though Hashem gives them free will to choose their actions, the result of their choice is up to Hashem to decide if He will allow it to happen. A person might decide to hurt someone else, but only if Hashem decrees that the victim should be hurt will it actually happen. Otherwise, Hashem will protect the victim and not allow anything

bad to happen to him. So, even though the motives of evil actions are based on people's bad decisions, if these actions actually happen, it is because Hashem allows it to happen, and gives them the power to actually do it. In this sense, Hashem "creates" evil and things that look bad to us, since nothing can ever happen without Hashem decreeing it to happen.

In this sense, it is even greater praise of Hashem to say "קונה הכל-He creates 'everything'" even seemingly bad things, than to just say "קונה שמים וארץ-He creates heaven and earth." We are expressing our belief that Hashem is "קונה-creates, owns, and is in full control" of everything and everyone, even the forces of evil and seemingly bad things that are included in "הכל-everything." Hashem has the power to take care of us even in "bad places," like in Galus, even though "bad people" like Achashveirosh, as we saw in the Purim story, wish harm upon us. Hashem is fully in control of what happens, even in the worst places and worst situations. This is why Jews throughout history gave up their lives for Hashem while saying "Shema Yisrael...Hashem Echad," since we believe that when an evil person wants to kill us, G-d forbid, for being Jewish, it is Hashem allowing us to fulfill the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem and to come closer to Him than otherwise possible. This is possible because Hashem is the one who created this evil person and is in full control of whatever that evil person does.

The same thing is true of our Yetzer Hara: Hashem is the one who created the Yetzer Hara and all the distractions for unholiness. He creates them so that we should come closer to Hashem by overcoming the Yetzer Hara and unholy distractions. We believe that we can find Hashem everywhere, and in everything, even in our own personal struggles, since Hashem is the one who created us with those struggles. This is a great praise of Hashem: That not only what we see as good is from Him, but

even the things that look and feel bad and unholy, etc. are also created by Him for a Divine purpose.

**Kindnesses of the Forefathers**

What does it mean that Hashem is “זוכר חסדי אבות”-He remembers the ‘חסדים’ of the forefathers?

- 1- One explanation is that it means ‘חסידות-piety/righteousness.’ Hashem remembers the righteous deeds that the forefathers did in their service to Hashem.
- 2- Another explanation is that it means “חסדים-kindnesses.’ Hashem remembers the kindness that the forefathers performed by teaching the whole world about Hashem, besides the other acts of kindness that they performed.

## Explanations from the Midrash:

The explanation until now was focused on the basic meaning of the bracha.

The Rishonim (Rokeiach, Rashi in Machzor Vitry, Reb Shlomo MiGermaiza) also explains this bracha based on the Midrash. According to that explanation, every single phrase of this bracha is somehow referring to something in the lives of the Avos, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and how Hashem became revealed in the world through their avodah, or through Hashem performing miracles for them.

Let's go through this bracha again in this light (based mainly on the Rokeiach):

**אלקי אברהם, אלקי יצחק, ואלקי יעקב**

The Rokeiach explains that the reason we mention the Avos at the beginning of the tefilla is not only because we are relying on their merit to be able to daven, but also because the Avos themselves “established” the idea of davening, and the ability to connect to Hashem in davening throughout all hours of the day:

- 1- Avraham established the practice of davening every morning, which is a time when Hashem's Kindness is revealed in the world. Through this, and through showing kindness and teaching others to be kind, he brought the attribute of Hashem's Kindness into the world.

We also see this in the following (Bava Basra 16b): Avraham would wear a special jewel as a necklace. Whoever would look at this jewel would be healed of his sicknesses. This is because Avraham embodied the attribute of Hashem's kindness, including Hashem's power of healing. The idea of healing is also connected to

the power of sunlight, as it says (Malachi 3:20) “וְנִרְקָה לְקָם יִרְאֵי שְׁמִי שְׁמֵשׁ צְדָקָה וּמִרְפָּא בְּכִנְפֵיהָ -the mitzvah of Tzedaka will shine for you, who fear My Name, like the rays of the sun that bring healing.” We see from this pasuk that the morning when the sun's rays shine strongest, is connected to the attribute of kindness, the mitzvah of Tzedaka, and the act of healing. These are all embodied by Avraham, who established the idea of davening in the morning and made it possible for anyone to connect to Hashem by davening at that time.

- 2- Yitzchak came along and said: “My father’s establishment of davening is only effective in revealing Hashem in the time when the sun’s rays are shining brightly, from the morning until noon. I will establish Davening in the afternoon, at the time of day when I was bound up at the Akeida to be offered as a korban to Hashem. Since a korban may be offered to Hashem any time of the day before sunset, I will establish the idea of Davening also in the afternoon, while the sun is still shining. Yitzchak made it possible for anyone to connect to Hashem by davening in the afternoon.
- 3- Yaakov said: “Avraham’s accomplishment in connecting to Hashem in Davening was only effective in the morning until noon when the sun reaches its full strength. Yitzchak’s accomplishment in connecting to Hashem with davening was only effective until sunset. I will establish the ability to connect to Hashem by davening also at night when only the stars and moon are shining. Because Yaakov and his sons were busy learning Torah at night and taking care of sheep, they established the ability to connect to Hashem through davening the entire night.

Since the Avos established the practice of davening three times a day and empowering every Jew to connect to Hashem



through davening at any time of the day, the first bracha of Shemoneh Esrei is about the Avos.

**ה-א-ל, הגדול, הגבור, והנורא**

The greatness, might, and awesomeness of Hashem is revealed through the Avos:

The Rokeiach goes through this sentence word by word:

**ה-א-ל:** Hashem is the Almighty G-d. The word "א-ל" means strength, and is therefore used also to describe strong people who have a lot of power over others. When applied to Hashem, it means that Hashem is the Almighty ruler of everyone.

**הגדול:** This refers to how Hashem is the G-d of Avraham, who is the father of a "גוי גדול-great nation" (Bereshis 18:18), and who is called "האדם הגדול בענקים-the great man among giants" (Yehoshua 14:15, see Rashi). In other words, Hashem's "greatness" is revealed through Avraham and his descendants, so when we praise Hashem as "הגדול-the great" we also mean "the G-d of the great person – Avraham – and his great descendants – the Jewish people, who reveal His greatness in the world." As explained above, since Avraham and his descendants teach the world about Hashem's Oneness and about how to show kindness, they reveal the greatness of Hashem, His power of kindness, and the greatness of His true existence, to the entire world.

**הגבור:** This refers to how Hashem is the G-d of Yitzchak, who is called "גיבורי כח עושי דברו-mighty in strength who fulfill Hashem's commands" (Tehillim 103:20, see Radak). Yitzchak fulfilled Hashem's commands without questioning, including being prepared to give up his own life at the Akeida and throughout his entire life, even when it was very difficult. We see this also in that Yitzchak knew about the sale of Yosef but didn't tell Yaakov about

it because Yaakov's ten sons made a beis din and decreed that no one is allowed to reveal the secret. Yitzchak cried for Yaakov because he felt his pain, but he still held himself back from telling Yaakov. So, when we praise Hashem as "הגבור-the Mighty," we also mean "the G-d of Yitzchak who was mighty and strong in controlling himself to do Your will, and whose descendants are mighty in controlling their yetzer hara even when it is very difficult for them." That Jewish people control themselves to fulfill Hashem's will even when it is very difficult reveals Hashem in the world. [ The same pasuk ("עושי דברו-mighty in strength who fulfill Hashem's commands") that we quoted about Yitzchak, is also attributed in the Midrash (Vayikra 1:1) to the entire Jewish people, who said "נעשה ונשמע-first we commit to doing what Hashem wants, even before we understand why." ] The Midrash uses the farmers in Eretz Yisroel who keep Shemita as an example of this devotion to Hashem. This is because of the great sacrifice required for the farmers to control themselves and not harvest the land even though their livelihood depends on it. This is a kidush Hashem that is likened to actual self-sacrifice).

**והנורא:** This refers to how Hashem is the G-d of Yaakov, who proclaimed "מה נורא המקום הזה-how awesome is this place," when he realized that he had slept in the place that would be home to the Beis Hamikdash. (Bereishis 28:17) We also see that the Beis Hamikdash is connected to the idea of "נורא-awesome" in the pasuk "נורא אלקים ממקדשיך-Hashem, You are known as awesome from Your presence in the Beis Hamikdash." (Tehillim 68:36) In other words, Yaakov and his descendants brought Hashem's presence into this world, until it was felt in the Beis Hamikdash. So, when we say "והנורא-and the Awesome," we also mean "the G-d of Yaakov and his descendants, who cause Hashem's awesome presence to be felt in this world," since the Shechina rests on the head of every Jew, and this is revealed every time a Jew learns Torah or does a mitzvah (see Tanya chapter. 37 and 53).

According to this explanation, when we say “הא-ל, הגדול, והנורא והגבור, והנורא” we are praising Hashem as:

“The G-d whose greatness and kindness is revealed through Avraham and his descendants, whose majesty and reverence is felt in the world through the mighty devotion of Yitzchak and his descendants, and whose awesome presence is felt in the world through Your Shechina resting on Yaakov and his descendants.”<sup>11</sup>

#### א-ל עליון

“Hashem who is above the limits of nature.”

This praise of Hashem, “א-ל עליון-the Exalted G-d,” is a praise of Hashem said by Malkitzedek, who is Sheim, the son of Noach, to Avraham, when he defeated the four kings, as mentioned previously. Because of the supernatural miracles that Hashem performed for Avraham in that battle, Hashem became recognized as the One who is Above the limits of nature. Avraham revealed this truth to the world.

#### גומל חסדים טובים

Because Hashem was “גומל חסדים טובים-gave abundant kindness” to Avraham in a supernatural manner when he defeated the four kings, that is how it is expressed that Hashem is Exalted and elevated beyond the limitations of nature.

The Rokeiach adds: When Hashem gives abundant kindness to the Yidden in Galus and protects them in a completely supernatural manner, this shows the entire world that Hashem is Exalted and that He is above the limitations of nature.

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<sup>11</sup> For another explanation of והנורא, הגדול, הגבור, והנורא see footnote number 2, from the Gemara Yoma 69b.

Machzor Vitry adds that besides Hashem's kindness to Avraham by helping him defeat the four kings, there were other times that Hashem showed His kindness to Avraham: When Avraham had a bris milah, Hashem came to visit Him on the third day to make him feel better. Avraham wanted to stand, and Hashem told him to sit. Hashem said, "This same kindness I will do for your descendants when they are sitting learning Torah, I will stand over them while they are sitting." Furthermore, when Avraham wanted to do the bris milah, he was afraid to do it by himself, so Hashem took him by the hand and helped him do the bris, as it says "וּכְרוּת עִמּוֹ הַבְּרִית" -and Hashem did the bris milah together with Avraham."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [Interesting to note that the Midrash does not mention the story of Hashem saving Avraham from the fiery furnace as an example of kindness from Hashem. Perhaps this is because kindness means giving someone something they do not "need" but just to show love to them. Like Hashem visiting Avraham on the third day: Avraham would have recovered even without Hashem making a special visit since He sent him the malach refael to heal him. But as a gesture of kindness, Hashem came to visit him. Also, Hashem said that Avraham should sit and He will stand, another gesture of kindness. The same thing with the bris milah: Hashem gave Avraham a command, and Avraham would have to do the bris even if he was afraid, but Hashem showed him kindness and helped him do the bris. This is different than when Avraham was in the furnace, he needed to be saved to survive, this was an emergency rescue mission from Hashem, not just a gesture of kindness. Even in the case of the four kings, Hashem made supernatural miracles more than were needed to win the war. Hashem could have just helped him get a regular army and fought a regular battle, with Avraham as the winner (or had Avraham negotiate to return Lot in return for a ransom, or some other way of saving Lot). Instead, Hashem made it so that a handful of people would throw sand in the air that turned into spears and arrows, and that the enemies' arrows turned into dust. In that sense, there was an element of "kindness" from Hashem in how Avraham won the battle in a completely supernatural manner.]

## קונה הכל

After Malkitzedek praised Hashem as “א-ל עליון-the Exalted G-d” for performing miracles for Avraham, he praised Hashem as “קונה שמים וארץ-Creator of heaven and earth,” since these miracles that were performed in the physical world show that Hashem is in complete control of everything on earth, in addition to being in control of the heavens. How is it that Hashem has total mastery of heaven and earth? Because He created heaven and earth and is constantly creating them anew. This is the reason that He can do miracles on earth. The phrase “קונה הכל-Creator of everything” means the same thing as “קונה שמים וארץ-Creator of Heaven and earth.” This is the basic meaning of how this praise of Hashem is connected to Avraham.

However, the Midrash [Bereishis Rabbah on this pasuk, Parsha 43:6 (see also 49:4, and Midrash Mishlei (Buber) chapter 19)] explains:

Avraham set up a tent in the desert and gave food to whoever came to him. When they finished eating, Avraham would ask them to thank Hashem for the food. If they refused, he would ask them to pay full price. Having no choice, they would thank Hashem, saying “Blessed is the Exalted G-d who has given us food to eat.” Because of this, Avraham taught many people that the same Hashem who is Exalted above the laws of nature is the one who gives food and the other needs of people in this physical world. Hashem said that in the merit of this, Avraham became like a “partner,” as it were, in the ownership of heavens and earth, since it is through Avraham that Hashem became recognized as the owner of heavens and earth.

According to this Midrash, the pasuk means “ברוך אברהם ל-א-ל עליון קונה שמים וארץ-Blessed is Avram by the Exalted G-d, the

same Avram who is a partner with Hashem in ownership of heavens and earth.” When we say “קונה הכל-owner of everything” in the bracha, we also mean to praise Hashem as “the Owner and Creator of everything, Who partners with Avraham and his descendants in making this known to the entire world.” For example, someone who owns a business that makes a product that everyone might want to buy needs to partner with someone to publicize it, otherwise no one will know about his product in the first place. His publicity agent is his “partner” in the company, even if he does not own any share in the company, since without him the company would fall apart. Similarly, lehavdil, Hashem’s ownership of everything is only made known through Avraham and his descendants. In that sense, they are “partners” with Hashem, as it were, in ownership of the world.<sup>13</sup>

What does it mean that the Jewish people are “owners” of heaven and earth?

The Midrash Tanchuma (Parshas Acharei Mos, chapter 9) says:

When Yehoshua wanted the Yidden to complete the battle in Givon before sunset, he told the sun to stop moving. The sun replied: Who are you to tell me to stop moving? I am a greater servant of Hashem than you, since I was created by Hashem on the fourth day of creation, and you were only created on the sixth of creation! Yehoshua answered: A young child of a master has the right to tell

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<sup>13</sup> As an interesting anecdote: The Rebbe once told Rabbi Moshe Feller that our job is not to be Hashem’s policemen enforcing the rules, but as Hashem’s salesmen, promoting the awareness of Hashem in the world. See also Kli Yakar on this pasuk: Originally Hashem was only known as “the Exalted G-d” above the world but not involved, but Avram changed that so that people would know that the same G-d who is “Exalted” is also the Creator of heaven and earth, and deals with everything on earth.

the old servant of his father what to do, and Hashem gave ownership of heaven and earth to my father Avraham, as it says “ברוך אברהם לא-ל עליון קונה שמים וארץ”-Blessed is Avram by the Exalted G-d, who gave him ownership of heaven and earth.” The sun accepted this response and stopped moving so that the Yidden could finish the battle before sunset.

In other words, when it comes to fulfilling a mitzvah, as Yehoshua did when he wanted to fulfill the mitzvah of conquering Eretz Yisroel<sup>14</sup>, no one has the right to tell a Jew that he knows better about what Hashem wants! When it comes to Torah and Mitzvos, a Jew is in charge of the entire world, as the Rebbe would frequently say “א איד איז דער בעל הבית אויפן וועלט”-a Jew is in charge of the world” in terms of having the right to tell people to serve Hashem, and recruiting their assistance in fulfilling Torah and Mitzvos. No one has the right to tell a Jew “I don’t need to listen to you about serving Hashem.” The Jewish people are the “owners” of the world in the sense that everyone and everything in the world is required to fulfill their instructions in the service of Hashem,<sup>15</sup> and to do whatever they can to help Jews serve Hashem.

The Rebbe explains in a Sicha<sup>16</sup> another aspect of what is meant by the statement that we are "partners" with Hashem in the

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<sup>14</sup> According to one opinion, he also wanted the sun to stop moving so they could finish the battle before Shabbos.

<sup>15</sup> See also in "The Lubavitcher Rabbi's Memoirs" the story of Rabbi Yoel Baal Shem. He convened a Beis Din and ordered unholy creatures from the nether world to comply with the laws of the Torah, and they were forced to obey the Din Torah since all creatures are required to follow the Torah's laws, as defined by the Jewish Rabbanim.

<sup>16</sup> See Likutei Sichos vol. 6, page 23 footnote 73. There the Rebbe explains two levels of our “partnership” with Hashem in the creation of

creation of heaven and earth: Since we are fulfilling the purpose of the creation of the world, we are giving it “permanent existence,” in the absolute sense. Every object that we elevate into the realm of holiness, we are bringing out of the realm of kelipa, a “nonexistence,” and bringing it into kedusha, “true existence.” In that sense, we are partners in the creation of the world since we participate also in the “creative” aspect of giving everything in this world true meaning and purpose, which is the essence of existence. In that sense, we are not only partners in ownership of the world in terms of responsibility to get people to serve Hashem, but also in terms of completing the creative process through elevating everything in the world into holiness.

Another explanation from the Midrash, brought in Targum Yonsasan ben Uziel: The pasuk should be read like this: “ויברכהו ויאמר ברוך אברהם לא-ל עליון קונה שמים וארץ-and Malkitzedek blessed Avram and said: Blessed is Avram by the Exalted G-d since it is in the merit of Tzadikim like Avram that Hashem created heaven and earth.” In other words, we are praising Hashem as the Creator of heaven and earth, but this is also connected to Avram and his descendants, since it is only in their merit that Hashem desired to create the world in the first place (see Biur Yonasan, and see Rashi on the first pasuk of the Chumash). Based on this, when we say “קונה הכל-Creator of everything” we also mean “Creator of everything in the merit of the Avos and their descendants, who reveal the Creator in His creations.”

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the world: First, by bringing awareness of Hashem to His creations, we “create” a world that recognizes its Creator, as it were. Second: Through taking things of this world from unholiness and bringing them into the realm of nonexistence of kelipa and bringing them into true existence of holiness. In this sense, it is as if we “brought them into existence” in partnership with Hashem.



## וזכר חסדי אבות

The simple meaning of this phrase is that Hashem remembers the righteousness and the acts of kindness of the Avos, as explained previously (in the “Further Insights” section).

The Midrash Tanchuma (brought in Siddur Chasidei Ashkenaz), explains what these specific “חסדי-kind acts” of the Avos are referring to:

When Hashem asked Avraham to bring his son as a korban, Avraham took Yitzchak tied him up and put him on the Mizbeiach. When he took the knife, Hashem told him not to cut him, but to put him down. Avraham said that he would not put down the knife unless Hashem promised that when Yitzchak’s descendants do aveiros, and they do teshuva and mention the Akeidas Yitzchak, Hashem will forgive them and protect them. Hashem promised right away, and Avraham put down Yitzchak. Then Avraham felt bad that he “forced” Hashem to swear to him, as it were, since it is not appropriate for a servant to make his master swear, and to have to use that oath in the future to get what he wants. Avraham then told Hashem that he would put aside the oath, and instead of using it, he would only ask Hashem to forgive us out of His Kindness, not using the oath. But now that Avraham said that he will only rely on Hashem’s Kindness and not on the oath, he asked Hashem to provide a guarantor that his children will always be able to ask Hashem for Kindness and Hashem will always answer them. Hashem said that because Avraham did this “kindness” to Hashem, that he did not “force Him” by using the oath Hashem made, Hashem will give him a guarantee that the Yidden will always be able to ask for His Kindness. The guarantee is “אמת-Truth,” which is Hashem’s “seal.” This is the meaning of the words “תתן אמת ליעקב-You [Hashem] give “Truth” to Yaakov,” which is Hashem’s seal, that gives them the power to ask for His Kindness. Because of this “kindness” that Avraham did, that he

didn't force Hashem to answer to His oath, Avraham is referred to as "kind," as the pasuk says "תתן אמת ליעקב, חסד לאברהם, אשר נשבעת" "You give 'Truth' to Yaakov, [because of the] kindness of Avraham, that [he put aside the oath] that You swore to our fathers in previous days, [and instead said he will only ask You to give us out of Your Kindness]."

Because of this "kindness," we say that Hashem remembers "חסדי אבות-the kindnesses" of the fathers, meaning that they showed "kindness" even to Hashem, as it were.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that this explanation of חסדי אבות as meaning they showed "kindness" to Hashem, as it were, is like the explanation of the Zohar "איזהו חסיד המתחסד עם קונו"-who is a 'kind' person, one who shows kindness to his Creator," as mentioned in Tanya chapter 10. In the Zohar (Tikunei Zohar, Introduction, 1b) it uses this term to describe the level of Avraham Avinu, since he shows kindness to His Creator by making a "nest," a home for Hashem in this world. This fits well with the explanation here that חסדי אבות is referring to Avraham's "kindness" to Hashem at the Akeidas Yitzchak, by not only fulfilling Hashem's command with mesirus nefesh but by telling Hashem that he and his children will only ask Hashem to give us in kindness and not "force" Him by invoking Hashem's oath in judgment. Based on this, we can see how it applies to each one of us: In chapter 41, the Alter Rebbe says that every Jew has some of this great love for Hashem like a child loves his parents to the point of mesirus nefesh. A Jew truly wants Hashem to have His desire fulfilled of Dirah Batachtonim, just like Avraham Avinu who cared about Hashem and His desire in the absolute sense. Just like Avraham was "kind" to his Creator in the sense that he loved Hashem so selflessly that he only wanted Hashem's plan should be fulfilled, and didn't care about himself, not even his spiritual level; so too every Jew should have in mind that every mitzvah they do is to make Hashem happy by having a Dirah Batachtonim, since, deep down, every Jew cares about Hashem the same way as Avraham Avinu who was "kind" to his Creator, every Jew is "kind" to their Creator in the sense that they have a purely selfless and altruistic love for Hashem without expecting to get anything back in return at all, only to make Hashem happy. This is another idea of what

In other words, the “חסדי אבות” refers to two things: The righteous acts of the Avos, especially the Akeidas Yitzchak, that Hashem remembers as a merit for their descendants for all to forgive them and save them from Galus. It also refers to the “kind” acts of the Avos in their boundless selfless love for Hashem, which is why even after the Akeida and Hashem's promise to protect Avraham's descendants, Avraham told Hashem that he only wants Hashem to forgive us out of His kindness, and not out of any obligation to fulfill His promise.

The Rokeiach adds that in this bracha we find all the letters of the בית אלהי בית, except for the letter פה. This is because the letter “פה” means “mouth,” and Avraham could have opened his mouth before the Akeida and said to Hashem, “How can you tell me to kill Yitzchak when You already promised me that my descendants will come from Yitzchak?!” But because Avraham did not open his mouth and say that to Hashem, and instead he followed Hashem's command to perform the Akeida, we merited to open our mouths today in davening and to ask Hashem to help us and save us. To show that Avraham did not open his mouth before the Akeida, the letter “פה” is missing from this bracha.

**ומביא גואל לבני בניהם**

The simple meaning of this is that Hashem remembers the kindness and righteousness of the Avos that they did in the past.

The Machzor Vitry brings the Gemara (Bava Metziah 85b) in connection to this phrase of the bracha and explains that this is not only something that happened in the past, it is something that is happening now. The Gemara tells us the following story:

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Hashem remembers (in זוכר חסדי אבות), this selfless love for Hashem that comes from the Avos to every Jew.

Eliyahu HaNavi would learn frequently with Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. One day, which was a Rosh Chodesh, he came late to learn with him. Rabbi Yehuda asked him why he was late. Eliyahu HaNavi said “Every morning I go to the Avos in the Mearas HaMachpaila. First, I wake up Avraham, wash his hands negel vasser, wait for him to daven, and then help him go back to sleep. Then I do the same for Yitzchak, and then the same for Yaakov.” Rabbi Yehuda asked, “Why don’t you just wake them all up at the same time and let them all daven together, instead of waking them up separately?” Eliyahu answered, “If they would all daven at the same time, their davening would be so powerful that it would bring Moshiach instantly, before the designated time for his arrival.”

The Maharsha asks: Why is it that specifically on Rosh Chodesh it took longer than usual for the Avos to finish davening, the reason stated for Eliyahu’s lateness? Because Rosh Chodesh, when the moon is renewed, is a special time of renewal for the Jewish people through the coming of Moshiach, as we say in Kiddush Levanah. Therefore, the Avos were davening for the Geula on Rosh Chodesh and it took longer than usual.

We see from this story that the Avos daven every day for the complete Geula through Moshiach. In this sense, that Hashem brings a redeemer, Moshiach, to the descendants of the Avos, is not just because He remembers the good things they did in the past, but because He “remembers” to listen to their davening every single day for the Geula. This is like what we say in Yaaleh Veyavo: We ask Hashem to “remember” us. Not in the sense of remembering something from the past, but to remember to be mindful of us in our current situation. So too, we ask Hashem to “remember” to be mindful of how the Avos daven every day for the Geula for their descendants.

## למען שמו באהבה

One way of reading the words “for the sake of His Name, with love” is that Hashem saves us for the sake of His Name being elevated when Moshiach comes, but he also does it out of love for us. The Midrash says just the opposite: The main reason that Hashem brings Moshiach is out of His love for the Avos and their descendants, the Jewish people, and the secondary reason is for the sake of His Name being elevated.

In the Sefer HaPardes, written by the students of Rashi, the following explanation is brought:

When the Yidden sinned at the golden calf, Hashem said He was ready to destroy the Yidden, G-d forbid. Moshe had to argue with Hashem to save them (see Parshas Ki Sisa, Shemos 32:11-13). First, Moshe tried to argue that Hashem should save them because it would be a Chilul Hashem, a desecration of His Name if He destroyed the Jewish people. The purpose of the Ten Plagues was to show the world Hashem's might and power, and that He controls nature and everything in the world. If he destroys the Jewish people, who will tell the world of Hashem's power and might, and that He is in control of nature and everything? Hashem did not respond to that argument (see there, 32:11). Then, Moshe argued that if He destroyed the Jewish people, the nations would say that the Egyptians were correct in their prediction that the Jewish people would be killed in the desert, and they would – G-d forbid – say that Hashem did not have the power to defeat the kings of Canaan, and therefore He killed the Jews in the desert. This would be an even greater desecration of Hashem's Name! Hashem also didn't respond to this argument either (see there, 32:12). Only when Moshe asked Hashem to remember His promise to the Avos and

His love for them did Hashem say that He would forgive the Jewish people and save them, out of His love for the Avos and their descendants (see there, 32:13). The same thing applies nowadays: Even though Hashem also will save us from Galus to sanctify and elevate His Name, the main reason He will send Moshiach is out of His love for the Avos, and for every Jew. This is why it says “ למען שמו, באהבה-[not just] for the sake of His Name, [but more importantly,] out of His love for us.”

### מלך עוזר ומושיע ומגן

The simple meaning of this is that these are things that Hashem, our King, does for us every day, He helps us, saves us, and protects us.

The Rokeiach explains that these also refer to specific things that Hashem did for Avraham in his lifetime, and we ask Hashem to help us like He helped Avraham:

**עוזר:** Hashem “helped” Avraham when he was thrown in the fiery furnace of Nimrod, the wicked. (Perhaps this represents the idea that Hashem helps us against our yetzer hara, which can be like a burning furnace of physical desires).

**ומושיע:** Hashem “saved” Avraham’s wife Sarah when she was captured by Pharaoh, and later by Avimelech. (Perhaps this represents how Hashem saves us even when we feel “captured” by the yetzer hara).

**ומגן:** Hashem “protected” Avraham when he was in battle with the four kings. (Hashem protects us from coming into harm in the first place, in supernatural ways. Like it says הגם מכיר בניסו Hashem does miracles to protect us from harm, but we do not even know about it).

**ברוך אתה ה' מגן אברהם**: We mentioned a Midrash brought in the Levush, stating that this bracha was said by the malachim when Hashem saved Avraham from the fiery furnace. The Rokeiach brings from Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer that the malachim said this when Hashem saved Avraham in the battle against the four kings. Seemingly, this is a bracha that was said several times by the malachim whenever Hashem saved Avraham supernaturally, which happened often. Similarly, Hashem very often saves the Jewish people by supernatural means, as we say in the Hagadah: In every generation, the nations of the world rise against us to destroy us, but Hashem always saves us from their hands.

### Example of Kavanah:

I would like to give an example of what it would look like to think the pirush hamilos of the entire bracha of Magein Avraham.

Generally, kavanah means thinking the meaning of the words either before saying each word (or two), or while saying them (or at least right after saying each word or two). It is recommended to think the meaning of each word (or two) before saying it, and after doing that many times, a person might then be able to think the meaning of the words while saying them.

In our case, lets spell out the process of thinking the meaning of each phrase before saying it:

	<i>Think:</i>	<i>Then say:</i>
1	My Master	אדני
2	Open my lips	שפתי תפתח
3	And my mouth	ופי
4	will declare	יגיד
5	Your praise	תהלתך
6	<i>Think for a moment that you intend to fulfill the mitzvah of Tefilla, and that you are talking directly to Hashem</i>	
	<i>Think:</i>	<i>Then say:</i>
7	Blessed are You	ברוך אתה
8	Hashem, Eternal Master of all	הו'
9	Our G-d	אלקינו
10	And G-d of our fathers	ואלקי אבותינו
11	G-d of Avraham	אלקי אברהם
12	G-d of Yitzchok	אלקי יצחק
13	And G-d of Yaakov	ואלקי יעקב
14	The G-d	האל
15	Who is great	הגדול
16	Who is mighty	הגבור
17	And who is awesome	והנורא
18	The G-d who is Exalted	אל עליון



	<i>Think:</i>	<i>Then say:</i>
19	Who gives	גומל
20	An abundance of kindness	חסדים טובים
21	Who creates everything	קונה הכל
22	And who remembers	וזוכר
23	The righteous deeds	חסדי
24	Of the forefathers, (Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov)	אבות
25	And who brings a redeemer (Moshiach)	ומביא גואל
26	To their children's children (meaning to us)	לבני בניהם
27	For the sake of His Name	למען שמו
28	In love (for us)	באהבה
29	King	מלך
30	(You are) a helper	עוזר
31	And a savior	ומושיע
32	And a shield	ומגן
33	Blessed are You	ברוך אתה
34	Hashem, Eternal Master of all	הוי'
35	Who is the shield of Avraham (and all his descendants)	מגן אברהם

In this example, a person will stop for a moment (around 2 seconds) about 35 times, to think before saying each word or two. On average, doing this for the entire bracha of Magein Avraham should take between one and a half to two minutes (after doing this a few times to get used to the process).

Even though it may sound difficult to stop to think 30 times, but, once you get used to it, it will not be that hard at all.

Think about it like this: The entire Shachris is a build up to the main part of Davening, Shemona Esrei.

In Shemona Esrei, the kavanah of the first bracha is what makes the entire Tefilla count as valid.

In that sense, the entire Davening is dependent on having kavanah for this one bracha.

If you knew that your entire Davening depends on kavana for this one bracha, would it be worth it to spend two minutes to actually think the meaning of the words you are saying?

Even if a person only has 5 minutes to daven Shemoneh Esrei, he should spend two minutes to say the bracha of Magein Avraham with kavana and then say the rest of Shemoneh Esrei even without perfect kavana.

This is only one example of how someone can have kavanah. A person who is truly able to concentrate can focus on the meaning of each word as he says it without having to stop before saying each word. But for someone that has a hard time focusing, stopping to think before saying each word or two is a practical way to get yourself to have kavanah even if your mind is not so clear and ready to think about what you are saying.

Even if you can concentrate on the meaning of each word while saying it, it will still take you a minute or two to say this bracha with the proper mental focus. There are very few people who can have kavanah on the pirush hamilos of this bracha even if they say it quickly.

You should be honest with yourself and figure out what it will take for you to actually think pirush hamilos when saying this bracha every day, whether you can think the meaning while saying the words slowly or you need to stop and think the meaning of each word before saying it.

Either way, it will take some effort to actually think the pirush hamilos of this bracha three times a day, every day. But that is exactly why its called עבודה-work.

It is very important to remember that Hashem appreciates your hard work to think pirush hamilos.

There is a famous story about a girl who wrote to the Rebbe that she took a hachlata to say morning brachos from a siddur instead of by heart while walking to school. The Rebbe had so much nachas, he said it was like cold water for a weary and thirsty person! In this story, all the girl said was that she would say brachos from a siddur, not that she would have any special kavanos in davening, but this was greatly appreciated by the Rebbe, and obviously by Hashem as well. If a person take a hachlata to do something in Davening that will take effort every day, this will bring the Rebbe and Hashem tremendous nachas!

You should also remember that in the zechus of your effort to have kavanah in Davening, Hashem is protecting the Jewish people everywhere, especially in Eretz Yisroel.

This is especially true of the Bracha of Protection, the Bracha of Magein Avraham.

### לעילוי נשמת

החסיד ר' אברהם אהרן בן

הרה"ח ר' שניאור זלמן יששכר געצעל הלוי

רובאשקין

לרגל היארצייט שלו, ט' ניסן, תש"פ

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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ולזכות כל השבויים וכל החיילים, שה'  
 ישמרם ויצילם בתוך כלל אחינו בני ישראל,  
 ויעשה לנו נסים וישועות בנצחון גמור, כמו  
 שעשה לאבותינו, "ומביא גואל לבני בניהם  
 למען שמו באהבה," וימהר לגאלנו בגאולה  
 האמיתית והשלימה תיכף

ומיד ממש!