



Mishpatim

To See or Be Seen...?

Do you come to shul to see or to be seen?

In Parshat Mishpatim, the Torah presents us with details relating to the Shalosh Regalim, the three pilgrim festivals, and the key term there is: "Yera'eh"—he shall be seen. That is: to be seen in Yerushalayim for these momentous occasions.

However, the Mishnah in Masechet Chagigah points out that "Yera'eh" has the same spelling as "Yireh." One means *he shall be seen*, while the other means *he shall see*.

From here, our sages learn that in order to fulfil this mitzvah, a person must be able to see—must be capable of visualising what is in front of them. And so, very sadly, the Mishnah rules that a blind person is exempt from this mitzvah.

The Rambam asks: What about a person who is blind in one eye? His answer is that such a person is also exempt, because one must have full clarity of vision to appreciate the city of Yerushalayim in its full splendour, the Beit Hamikdash—the Temple—in its absolute greatest glory.

As far as the Temple was concerned, it was important not only *to be seen* but also *to see*.

This concept applies to many aspects of life. Why do we attend events? Sometimes, people go to an event simply *to be seen*. They may not be particularly interested in attending, but if it's a simcha—a happy occasion for friends or family—they want to show their loyalty and support, to be part of the numbers.

The same applies to communal gatherings. But ideally, one should attend an event not just *to be*

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seen but *to see*—to fully engage, to absorb, to experience the moment.

This is exceptionally relevant when it comes to attending shul services. Many wonderful people attend out of a sense of duty and loyalty, because it's the right thing to do, because they want to be seen. But it is far more meaningful to come because one truly wants to be there, because missing out would feel like a loss.

A shul should have a magnetic pull. Its services should be uplifting, appealing, life-shaping, and even life-changing.

This is also a message for those responsible for creating and running synagogue services. We should not only be catering to those who attend in order *to be seen*, but primarily to those who come *to see*—to visualise, to experience, to connect, and to enjoy.

We must ensure that our synagogue services are spiritually engaging and inspiring, occasions about which people will say: "I want to be there, because if I'm not, I'll be missing out."

So, when it comes to shul services, let us strive, please God, to create an environment where people don't just come *to be seen*, but also *to see*.

Shabbat Shalom.