



Shelach Lecha

Should The Blind Thank Hashem for the Gift of Sight?

Every morning in our prayers, we say:

"בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, פּוֹקֵחַ עֵינַיִם"
"Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, for opening the eyes of the blind."

We are saying thank you to Hashem for opening our eyes as we awaken each day.

So should a person who is blind say this bracha? The Mishna Berurah emphatically says yes, for two reasons. The first is that the blind person is thanking Hashem for the vision that He gives to others. Sighted people are able to help those who have challenges with their sight, and therefore a blind person will be thanking God for opening their eyes.

The second reason is that "פּוֹקֵחַ" comes from the root "פָּקַח", which means to be bright, to be clever, to be perceptive. So therefore, the bracha is not talking about physical sight, but rather, the capacity to perceive accurately.

In my experience, some non-sighted people actually have a far greater depth of perception than those who are sighted. There is an application of this in Parshat Shelach Lecha. There is a key term right at

the beginning and right at the end of the parsha: "וַרְאִיתֶם".

"וַרְאִיתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ"
"And you shall see the land"

This is what Moses said to the twelve spies at the beginning of the parsha. At the end of the parsha, it says:

"וַרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ"
"you will see it" - referring to the פְּתִיל תְּזִיזִית, the blue strand of the tzitzit.

And what's the message of the word "וַרְאִיתֶם"? You see, the twelve spies went into the land, charged with the responsibility to see what was around them. But ten out of the twelve of them, despite everything that their eyes saw, got it wrong. Their perception was incorrect. And therefore, at the end of the parsha we're told: use your sight to see things well so that you can behave in a responsible way accordingly.

And that's what tzitzit comes to remind us about. So much in this world depends on correct perception. Let us all therefore ensure that what we see, we actually understand properly.

Shabbat Shalom.