כה. סומא מברך "הנותן לשכוי בינה" לכל הדעות. [ילקו"י מהדו"ק עמ' נג]
חרש, יש אומרים שלא יברך "הנותן לשכוי בינה", שברכה זו נתקנה על שמיעת קול התרנגול, והרי הוא חרש שאינו שומע. ויש חולקים וסוברים שכיון שהברכה היא על מנהגו של עולם, רשאי אף החרש לברך. וכן עיקר, וגם החרש רשאי לברך ברכה זו. [מרן הראש"ל זצ"ל בילקו"י מהדו"ק עמ' נג. וכ"פ בא"ח וישב ה"ד, ובכה"ח סוף ס"ק י]

ברכת "פוקח עורים"

כו. בברכת "פוקח עורים" נותן הודאה לחסדו יתברך, דעיני האדם היו סגורות וסתומות בשינה, וכשניעור נפקחו עיניו. [בא"ח וישב ה"ה]

Blind or deaf people

25) Even blind people are obligated to recite the blessing of *hanoten lasekhvi bina*. All the *Poskim* concurred with this ruling.[14] According to some *Poskim*, a deaf person may not recite this blessing since he is incapable of hearing the rooster's crow. Others ruled that it does not matter whether the individual can hear it since the morning blessings were instituted to thank God for the general nature of the world. Therefore, even someone who is deaf can recite this blessing. This is the accepted ruling.[15]

Poke'ah Ivrim

The gift of sight

26) While people sleep at night, their eyes are normally shut. Even if their eyes are open, people cannot make conscious use of what they see. Therefore, when we wake up in the morning, we recite the blessing of "פּוֹקֵחַ עִוְרִים – Who gives sight to the blind" to thank God for our renewed ability to see.

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14. Below in halakha 27, it is explained that a blind person should not recite the blessing of "פּוֹקֵחַ עִוְרִים – Who gives sight to the blind." He may recite the blessing of הַנּוֹתֵן לַשֶּׂכְוִי בִינָה, however, since he can hear the rooster's crow.

15. This is the ruling of Maran the Rishon Letziyon in the *Yalkut Yosef* (first edition, page 53). He explained that there is nothing in the text of the blessing to suggest that a deaf person should not be able to recite it, especially since the blessing was instituted to thank God for the way He set up the world, and not for each individual's experiences. Deaf people also understand the difference between night and day, and therefore they may recite this blessing. A number of *Rishonim*, cited in the *Halakha Berura* (page 362) concurred with this ruling. The *Magen Avraham* (46:14) likewise ruled that deaf people may recite the blessing of הַנּוֹתֵן לַשֶּׂכְוִי בִינָה although he ruled that blind people may not recite the blessing of "פּוֹקֵחַ עִוְרִים – Who gives sight to the blind."

The *Peri Hadash* and Harav Moshe Zakkut ruled that even a blind person may recite the blessing of "פּוֹקֵחַ עִוְרִים – Who gives sight to the blind." Although our practice is to instruct blind people to refrain from reciting it (see below in halakha 27), based on the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*, Maran the Rishon Letziyon reasoned that there is a much broader basis to permit deaf people to recite the blessing of הַנּוֹתֵן לַשֶּׂכְוִי בִינָה.

Some explanation is needed here. Since the *Hagahot Maimoniyot* ruled that a deaf person cannot recite the blessing of הַנּוֹתֵן לַשֶּׂכְוִי בִינָה just like a blind person cannot recite the blessing of "פּוֹקֵחַ עִוְרִים – Who gives sight to the blind," we should have to apply the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel* to this blessing as well. Apparently, Maran the Rishon Letziyon took the text of the blessings into account. The blessing of "פּוֹקֵחַ עִוְרִים – Who gives sight to the blind" is a direct contradiction to the status of a blind person. The blessing of הַנּוֹתֵן לַשֶּׂכְוִי בִינָה, however, does not mention the ability to hear. The concept of the blessing is

כז. סומא שרצה לברך ברכת "פוקח עורים" בברכות השחר, אין מוחים בידו, שיש לו על מה שיסמוך. ומכל מקום אם בא לשאול מורים לו שלא יברך ברכה זו, שספק ברכות להקל. [יביע"א ח"ה סי' י אות ג]

Blind people

27) If a blind person insists on reciting the blessing of "פּוֹקֵחַ עִוְרִים – Who gives sight to the blind," we should not protest. There is a sound basis to permit him to recite the blessing. If a blind person asks a rabbi whether he should recite the blessing, however, the rabbi should instruct him to refrain from reciting it, based on the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*.[16]

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the intelligence to distinguish between day and night. Thus, a deaf person's status does not contradict the text of the blessing. Therefore, he is allowed to recite it.

16. According to the *Magen Avraham* (46:14), a blind person may not recite the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim*. The *Peri Hadash*, however, ruled that he may recite it, just as he may recite the blessing of *yotzer hame'orot* although he cannot see the daylight or use it. He still benefits from daylight since it enables other people to see and lead him to where he needs to arrive. In the same way, he can thank God for giving people the ability to see, since others who are sighted can assist him. Harav Moshe Zakkut, cited in the *Sheyare Berakha*, concurred with the *Peri Hadash*, adding that even Rambam agrees that a blind man may recite this blessing although he ruled that one must experience each benefit in order to be obligated to recite its blessing. The fact that others can see and guide him is considered a direct benefit of the gift of sight.

The *Matte Yehuda*, in defense of the *Magen Avraham*, explained that the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim* is an expression of thanks for the personal benefit of the gift of sight and it cannot be recited as an expression of thanks for other people's ability to see. We cannot compare it to the blessing of *yotzer hame'orot*, since that blessing describes the creation of the sun, not people's ability to see its light.

One might argue that blind people should be required to recite the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim* since we follow the school that teaches that we do not recite the morning blessings for our personal experiences but for the general creation of the world. If so, even someone who is blind should have to thank God for creating most people with the ability to see. This is not a valid argument, however. Regarding all the other blessings, the halakha is that one is obligated to recite them even if one has not personally experienced the benefits they describe, but that is because this person could potentially have experienced those benefits. Regarding the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim*, however, a blind person has no chance of personally experiencing the benefit of sight.

The *Matte Yehuda* suggested proof for his position from the ruling of *Hagahot Maimoniyot*, cited in the *Bet Yosef*, that if there are no roosters in the area or if a person is deaf, he may not recite the blessing of *hanoten lasekhvi*. In the same way, a blind person cannot recite the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim*.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. V, #10:3) suggested an additional proof to the *Matte Yehuda's* position from a responsum of Rabbenu Avraham, son of Rambam, who complained bitterly about a community who had appointed a regular cantor who was blind, and he daily recited this blessing on behalf of the congregation. This, incidentally, is a direct refutation to the position of Harav Moshe Zakkut, who suggested that even Rambam agreed that a blind person may recite the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim*. The *Matte Yehuda* argued in diametric opposition that even the school that ruled that it is not necessary to experience each benefit personally agrees that that a blind person cannot recite this blessing.

The *Shalme Tzibbur* (74d, cited in the *Od Yosef Hai parashat Vayeshev* halakha 3) suggested that there is some justification for those who ruled that a blind person may recite this blessing, based on the interpretation of Rabbenu David Abudarham. He noted that people are not actually blind while they are asleep; it is just that their eyes are shut and they do not see what they could potentially see. The term *poke'ah ivrim* does not mean "give sight to the blind" but rather "inspire the unobservant to notice." The concept of the blessing, therefore, is that God gives a conscious person the quality of being astute and of noticing the things around him through all his senses, and this is true of blind people as well.

The *Mishna Berura* (46:25) and the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Vayeshev* halakha 5) both ruled in practice that a blind person may recite the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim* since he benefits from others' ability to see. In the newly published *Mikabtze'el*, the author explained that this ruling is based on the Arizal's teaching that all the morning blessings are for the general creation of the world and not for each individual's experiences and benefits.

כח. מי שהתחיל לברך "ברוך אתה ה'" על דעת לסיים ברכת "פוקח עוורים", וסיים "מתיר אסורים". אינו חוזר לא על ברכת "פוקח עוורים", ולא על ברכת "מתיר אסורים".

ולכתחילה, הנזכר לאחר שם ומלכות שהיה צריך להקדים ברכה אחרת, לא יסיים בה, אלא יסיים את הברכה שהיתה בדעתו בתחילה לאומרה. [אוליצ חיב עמי מ]

Changing blessings in the middle

28) If someone recited the words *Barukh Atta Hashem* with the intention of reciting the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim*, but he then became confused and ended the blessing with the words *matir asurim*, he may no longer recite the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim*. He may not repeat the blessing of *matir asurim* either.

If someone recited the words *Barukh Atta Hashem* while intending to recite a specific blessing and then he realized that he is not yet up to this blessing, he may not switch to recite the ending of the one he is up to, or of any other blessing. Instead, he must continue and complete the blessing that he had in mind when reciting the opening words.[17]

Therefore, although a blind person does not benefit from the gift of sight, the world in general does benefit from it, and even the blind person must thank God for that.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon concluded that we cannot protest if a blind person wishes to recite this blessing, but if he asks what is best to do he should be instructed not to recite it, following the ruling of Rabbenu Avraham son of Rambam, and that of *Hagahot Maimoniyot*. Although we do not follow the ruling of Maran regarding the morning blessings in general, it is best to limit this exception wherever possible, and instead follow the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*. The *Hesed le'Avraham* Alkalai and other *Poskim* ruled that even in a case where the common custom definitely permits one to recite a blessing, if someone chooses to refrain from reciting it because there are *Poskim* who ruled that it may not be recited, he is commended for his caution and he will be blessed from Heaven. This certainly applies to this case since there are multiple reasons for a blind person to refrain from reciting this blessing.

Harav Moshe Levi (*Birkat Hashem* Vol. IV, page 322) ruled that blind people may recite this blessing, but this does not detract from the argument of Maran the Rishon Letziyon, especially since the *Shulhan Arukh* follows the opinion that one must personally experience the benefit of each blessing in order to be able to recite it.

17. According to Rambam, if someone recited the words *Barukh Atta Hashem* while intending to continue with *poke'ah ivrim*, then even if he ends the blessing with the words *matir asurim* he has fulfilled his obligation for *poke'ah ivrim* and not his obligation for *matir asurim*. The majority of *Rishonim*, however, ruled exactly the opposite – he has fulfilled his obligation for *matir asurim* and not that of *poke'ah ivrim*. The *Shulhan Arukh* (209:1) cites Rambam's opinion as the halakha and then mentions that there is a dissenting opinion. The *Mishna Berura*, however, ruled in practice to follow the dissenting opinion. In practice, we follow the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*, and we do not repeat *poke'ah ivrim* or recite *matir asurim* in such a case. The *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, page 40) explained the logic of Rambam's ruling. See more about this in the *Yalkut Yosef Berakhot English Edition* (*Siman* 209:1).

A slip of the tongue

The *Mishna Berura* (46:20) ruled that if someone intended to recite the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim* but in the end the words *malbish arumim* escaped his mouth, as long as he corrected himself within one second, he has fulfilled his obligation of reciting the blessing of *poke'ah ivrim*. This is the opinion of many *Aharonim*, but the *Sha'are Teshuva* and *Dagul Mervava* remained unconvinced that this is true.