

בִּינָה

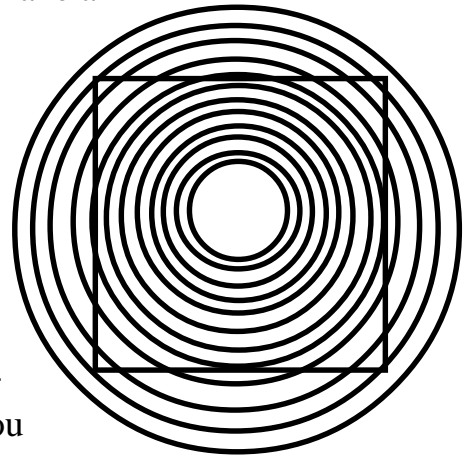
“Prayer for Understanding”

The fourth prayer in the Shemonei Esrei is the prayer for understanding. This comes from the first line of the prayer, אַתָּה חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דַּעַת וּמְלִמְד לְאִנּוּשׁ בִּינָה, “You favor man with knowledge and teach mankind understanding.” The prayer goes on to request, “Grant us from Your perception, understanding and intellect. Blessed are You, Adonai, Grantor of perception.”

Have you ever seen an optical illusion? An optical illusion is something that looks one way, but in reality is another way. Take a look at this group of circles, and the square in the middle. Do the sides of the square bend inward? Look carefully! Are your eyes telling you the truth? Or what about this picture? What do you



see? Do you see a young woman or an old woman? Which one is there? Are your eyes telling you the truth? Can you see everything the way it really is?

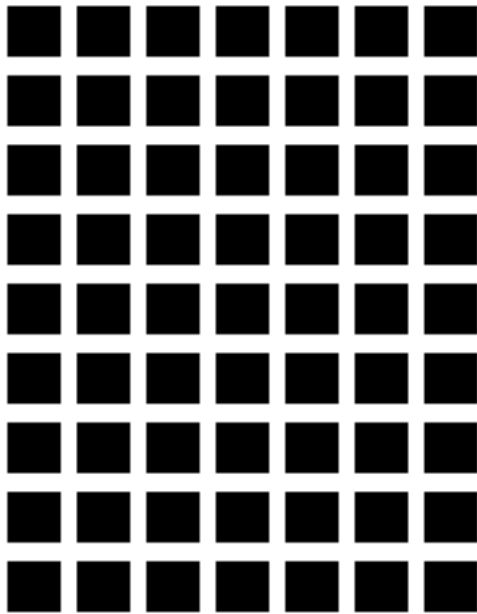


What these optical illusions teach us is that we need help to understand and to know what is true and what is not. In fact, this is what the Torah calls “wisdom.” Wisdom is being able to see things in our world, and to understand what is true and what is not, from G-d’s point-of-view. Sometimes things appear one way, when they are actually another. For instance, sometimes it looks like people who don’t love G-d and follow His commandments have a happy life and get everything they want. But if we look at life through G-d’s wisdom by understanding things through what His Bible teaches us, then we will know the truth, and the truth gives us true happiness and freedom.

The fear of
Adonai is the
beginning of
knowledge;
Fools despise
wisdom and
instruction.

Prov. 1:7

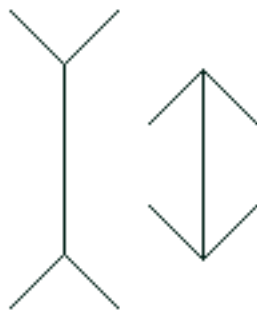
Some More Optical Illusions:



Stare at this grid. Does there seem to be “fuzz” at the intersections of the lines? Cover it with some paper so only four of the black boxes can be seen (this is done easiest at the corner). Where did the fuzz go?



Where does this triangle begin?



Are the two verticle lines the same length? Be careful! Measure them and see!