

# The Significance of a Simple Basket



Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

From the Sichos in English Collection

The Torah portion *Ki Savo* opens with the commandment of *Bikkurim*, the offering of the first fruits that were brought in a basket called a “ten” and given to a *kohen* in the *Beis HaMikdash*. As described in the *Mishnah*,<sup>1</sup> the basket was a simple one, made of peeled willow twigs. Both the basket and the first fruits were given to the *kohen*.

Emerging first, *Bikkurim* epitomizes the prime of the crop,<sup>2</sup> which were to be brought specifically from the “seven varieties for which Eretz Yisrael is lauded.”<sup>3</sup> *Bikkurim* were to be brought only to the *Beis HaMikdash*, and the *mitzvah* applied only in Eretz Yisrael.<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding this, the first fruits were brought in a small basket.

Why is it that the first and best fruits of Eretz Yisrael were limited by their container, and why was the basket of such simple quality?

In a spiritual sense, *Bikkurim* alludes to the Jewish people<sup>5</sup> in general, and particularly to their souls as found with their source above<sup>6</sup> — a level where spirituality precedes all else.<sup>7</sup>

Although the soul above is on such a high plane, it must descend and clothe itself within the “vessel” of a body which conceals and limits its bond with G-d.

While this descent is indeed great, it serves a vital purpose: Through its descent, the soul is able to attain a level of spirituality that it could not attain otherwise.<sup>8</sup> For this descent reveals the soul’s choicest aspect — how it is truly one, as it were, with G-d Himself.<sup>9</sup>

Just as this is so regarding the soul’s descent, so too with regard to the Jews’ service in this world: The ultimate purpose of our spiritual service is achieved not so much through the attainment of love and fear of G-d,<sup>10</sup> as by the performance of practical good deeds.<sup>11</sup>

By performing *mitzvos* that involve even the lowest parts of the human organism, a person causes his entire body to become a fitting receptacle for the sanctity of his soul. This in turn elevates the soul to its loftiest state.

The reason for this is similar to the explanation as to why G-d created different levels in the spiritual worlds and the physical one.

The *Alter Rebbe* explains<sup>12</sup> that the purpose of the chain-like downward succession of worlds is not for the sake of the higher worlds. Rather, the purpose is this lowest world. By having this world transformed into a dwelling place for G-d’s essence, a tremendous elevation is achieved in the higher spiritual worlds as well.<sup>13</sup>

The same is true with regard to the soul: It is specifically through its descent within the body that it is able to transform this world into a dwelling place for G-d. Within the world itself, this is achieved by elevating even its lowest aspects through the performance of practical mitzvos.

By dint of this service, the soul attains a level of spirituality and closeness to G-d that is even greater than it enjoyed prior to its descent— it achieves the level of spiritual *Bikkurim* by vesting itself in the simplest of vessels, the body.

The same is true with regard to the mitzvah of *Bikkurim*: The ultimate elevation of the first fruits is reflected in the fact that they are brought and given together with a simple basket of willow twigs.

Based on *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XXIX, pp. 150-152

Lubavitcher Rebbe

Parshah

Ki Tavo

## FOOTNOTES

1. *Bikkurim* 3:8.
2. *Devarim* 26:2 and commentaries of *Rashi*, *Seforno*, et al. See also *Menachos* 84b; *Sifri* beginning of this Torah portion; *Yerushalmi*, *Bikkurim* 1:3. *Rambam*, *Hilchos Bikkurim* 2:3.
3. *Ibid.*, 2:2.
4. *Ibid.*, 2:1.
5. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 253a. See also *Bereishis Rabbah* beginning of ch. 46; *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 121a.
6. *Or HaTorah*, *Savo* 1033ff., 1039ff.
7. See *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4.
8. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Bamidbar*, p. 2a ff.; *Re'eh* 25a, 27a ff.
9. See *Hemshech* 5666 p. 491ff., p. 502ff.
10. See *Tanya*, conclusion of ch. 40.
11. See *Igros Kodesh*, *Rebbe Rayatz*, Vol. III, p. 305; *Iggeres HaKodesh*, conclusion of Epistle 20.
12. *Tanya* ch. 36.
13. See *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5643, p. 35ff.

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