



It's in the Bag (Basket)

Dear Parents,

With the opening of a new school year, **we all search for the key that will help each child succeed.** Those who struggle academically can also be successful – if we can show them the value of their efforts.

This week's Parsha opens with a description of the beautiful mitzvah of bringing Bikkurim, the first fruits of the season, to the Kohein in the Beis Hamikdash, in Yerusholayim. The Torah details what and how the fruits should be brought. The description even includes the detail that the fruits are brought in a basket, a seemingly superfluous facet of the mitzvah.

The Mishnah in Maseches Bikkurim (3:8) explains that the wealthy people brought their Bikkurim in baskets of gold and silver, and **the poor people brought them in woven baskets made of peeled willow twigs.** The baskets of the rich were returned to them, while the Kohanim kept the baskets of the poor. The Sifri on the pasuk (Devarim 26:4) explains this was in order to bring merit to the poor people.

The Malbim explains that undoubtedly these baskets were made by the poor people expressly for the purpose of bringing the Bikkurim. By combining the work of their hand – the basket, together with the inferior produce (which was all the poor people could offer) their entire offering included their extra efforts and in total, their Bikkurim became equal in value to the superior quality fruits of the rich people.

The Malbim goes on to say that this answers a question one may ask – if the concern was to not embarrass the poor people, just make a decree that the rich people need to also

bring their fruits in simple baskets? The Malbim says there is no need for such a decree, for this is not at all an embarrassment to the poor people. Rather, it is a source of pride – because their baskets were the results of their efforts in the performance of a mitzvah, they were indeed exceedingly precious! Their value equaled and perhaps surpassed store-bought vessels of silver and gold.

This is a beautiful metaphor for those rich in academic strengths and those poor in those skills and abilities. If a child has strong natural abilities in learning, he can and should be expected to produce impressive results – the silver and gold baskets. However, a child who is weaker in the realm of academics or has a specific challenge in learning, can be likened to the poor person who struggles and creates a fine basket from his efforts. If the struggling student puts in effort and makes progress, that is equal if not superior in value to the fancy 'produce' of the naturally endowed fellow student.

No child should emerge from his years in school without feeling success. If we value the efforts of our children as much as the Kohein valued the efforts of the poor person, **we will be teaching all children the value of effort.** We will thereby empower our children with the strength and appreciation that true success is what comes from one's trying their best to harness the gifts that Hashem has given.

May the year ahead be one where our children are encouraged to make their best effort and to appreciate the value of every step they make to strive to be their best.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos,



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