

Although the Torah's narrative continues for the next few Parshiyot to describe the last few days of Moshe's life, his final directive, the Mitzvah of Bikkurim is recorded in this week's Parsha. At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Moshe tells the Jewish people "And it shall be, when you come in to the land which G-D has given you for an inheritance, and you possess it, and dwell there, you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you shall bring in from your land that G-D has given you. You shall put it in a basket and shall go to the place which G-D shall choose to cause His name to dwell there." This beautiful Mitzvah requires all landowners to make an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to bring their first fruits before G-D and the holy priests in the temple. While, this is a most moving and even an inspiring commandment, yet, one would expect that Moshe's final commandment be something special and fundamental. The greatest teacher and leader we ever had would certainly want this last words to his people to be something of everlasting and monumental value.

The Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi Yisrael Alter suggests that in order to understand why this Mitzvah of Bikkurim should be the last one heard from Moshe, we need to better understand both the Mitzvah of Bikkurim and exactly who Moshe was. The Talmud says that in addition to all his great achievements, perhaps Moshe's greatest trait was that he was humblest man that ever lived. When Moshe is appointed by G-D to be the representative to Pharaoh, instead of rejoicing in his new position, his reply is "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Not only does he not revel in his new appointment, it is only reluctantly that he agrees to his accept the role at all. Similarly, the Talmud relates that when Moshe was asked to be transmitter of Torah to the Jewish people he demurred, he suggested that perhaps the great Tannaic sage Rabbi Akiva would be better suited that role. For the greatest teacher, leader, and mentor we ever had, to simultaneously be so incredibly humble and modest is astounding. It is this strait which is really his lasting legacy to the Jewish people.

Bikkurim is not simply the process of bringing the first fruits as a thank you to G-D, it is really a tangible experiential lesson in humility. It is only natural that after planting, pruning, and harvesting ones' trees, that one would pat himself on the back and take pride in his labor that brought forth such successful fruits (pun intended!). However, the Torah wants us to realize that it is not solely through his own efforts that his produce was bountiful; it was not he alone who produced these new fruits. There were several factors beyond his control that could have easily devastated his crop like bad weather, winds, or destructive insects, yet those damaging possibilities never materialized. Maybe it is not he alone that is almighty, rather there is a G-D above that is the Almighty. The Mitzvah of Bikkurim is help us recognize that G-D plays a key role in our lives and ultimately we are not the sole arbiter of all positive outcomes.

As an everlasting tribute to Moshe's humility, his final commandment was fittingly the Mitzvah of Bikkurim. Through this yearly opportunity to recognize our limitations and shortcoming we too can experience a sense of humility and therefore carry on Moshe's great legacy.

**Shabbat Shalom
Rabbi Meir Tannenbaum**