

THE TORAH IS CONCERNED WITH THE PRIDE OF THE POOR

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape #92, Selling Non-Kosher Foods. Good Shabbos & Chag Kosher V'Somayach!

The Torah Is Concerned With the Pride of the Poor

Just as the Torah is concerned lest Aharon the Kohen Gadol become haughty, so too the Torah is very meticulous regarding the pride of the Ani -- the less fortunate "poor" person. The Torah is worried that the impoverished individual should not become despondent and emotionally broken.

There is an interesting Gemara [Talmudic passage] in Bava Kama. The Gemara says that when the Jews would bring the bikkurim [first fruits] to Jerusalem to give to the Kohanim, the rich would bring their bikkurim in gold and silver baskets. The poor people, however, could not afford gold baskets. They would bring the first fruits of their meager crops in baskets of reeds.

The Gemara says that the Kohanim returned the gold and silver baskets to the wealthy people, but kept the reed baskets from the poor people. The gemara says this is an application of the old rule (loosely translated from the Aramaic) that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. It's ironic: the rich fellow gets his basket back, but the poor person loses his basket to the Kohanim!

Rav Aharon Backs explains that the reason for this paradox is as follows. The rich person has orchards full of fruit and brings large quantities of fruit to give to the Kohen. The poor person has a meager crop and probably has a very small quantity of bikkurim to offer. By keeping the fruit in the basket, at least the bikkurim look a little more substantial. The Torah says that we should have the Kohen keep the basket and let the Ani suffer further financial loss, in order to keep his pride intact. This is an example of how far the Torah is willing to go to avoid shaming a person!

One time, a person asked me the following question. He wanted to raise money for Hachnasas Kallah [bridal expenses], for someone in the recipient's own home town. His question was as follows: If he told people for whom he was soliciting, there is no doubt he could raise a lot of money, because that person was a known and well-respected individual. If he would make an anonymous appeal for Hachnasas Kallah, however, then he could not expect to make much -- because such

appeals occur several times each week. The question was, should he mention the name and raise more money or keep it anonymous and raise less money.

At that time, I asked the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Yaakov Ruderman z"tl. The Rosh Yeshiva, without thinking a minute or batting an eyelash, said, "It should be anonymous, because a person's honor is worth a great deal."

That is the lesson of the baskets. A person's self-respect is worth a lot. It is even worth losing money over. Money can always be replaced, but a person's honor and pride are much harder to replace.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Bo are provided below:

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