

SELF-RESPECT – THE BASIS OF IT ALL

Background

The Medrash introduces us to a very important concept: יותר ממה שבעל הבית עושה עם העני העני עושה עם בעל הבית – **that more than the host does for the poor man, the poor man does for his host.** Not only does giving *tzedaka* protect the host's money, it can save him from many bad decrees, and it is the only sure investment that a man can make. Every other investment might bring a return, but it might not. This money is invested permanently and will bring much benefit in the World to Come.

Questions

This is a very nice concept to discuss at a *tzedaka* dinner with the people who are being solicited to donate money to a cause. We who are being called upon to donate our hard-earned money should understand that in reality we are being offered a fantastic opportunity. However, it isn't appropriate for the one who is receiving the *tzedaka* to focus on this idea. In fact, it sounds almost rude, as if to say, "Don't think he did me any big favours. Actually, I did *him* the favour." While this may be correct, the receiver should have in mind how much the host is helping him or her. So why did Rus speak this way to her mother-in-law?

ספר רות פרק ב

יט וְתֹאמֶר לָהּ חַמּוּתָהּ אֵיפֹה לִקְטַת הַיּוֹם וְאַנָּה עֲשִׂית יְהִי מִכִּירְךָ בְרוּךְ וְתִגַּד לְחַמּוּתָהּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂתָה עִמּוֹ וְתֹאמֶר שֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתִי עִמּוֹ הַיּוֹם בְּעַז

And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gathered today?" And she answered, "The name of the man that I did for today. . ."

מדרש רבה רות פרשה ה פסקה ט

ט יט וְתֹאמֶר לָהּ חַמּוּתָהּ אֵיפֹה לִקְטַת הַיּוֹם תְּנִי בְשֵׁם ר' יְהוֹשֻׁעַ יוֹתֵר מִמָּה שֶׁבַעַל הַבַּיִת עוֹשֶׂה עִם הָעֲנִי הָעֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה עִם בַּעַל הַבַּיִת שֶׁכֵּן אָמְרָה רוּת לְנַעֲמִי שֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתִי עִמּוֹ הַיּוֹם וְלֹא אָמְרָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה עִמִּי אֲלֵא אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתִי עִמּוֹ הַרְבֵּה פְעוּלוֹת וְהַרְבֵּה טוֹבוֹת עֲשִׂיתִי עִמּוֹ בְּשִׁבְלִי שֶׁהֵאֱכִילֵנִי פְרוֹסָה אַחַת

We learned in the name of Rebbe Yehoshua that more than the host does for the poor man, the poor man does for his host. That is why Rus did not say, "The man who did for me," but "I did for him," implying she did many favors for him by allowing him to feed her one loaf of bread.