

As she (Tamar) was taken out she sent [word] to her father-in-law... “Recognize, if you please, whose are this signet, this wrap and this staff.”

Chazal say that Tamar did not want to humiliate Yehudah by saying, “I am pregnant by you.” Rather, she sent him the three items which he had left with her, saying to herself, “If he will admit on his own - let him admit. If not, let them burn me. I will not be the one to embarrass him.” *Chazal* derive from here that it is preferable for a person to throw himself into a fiery furnace in order to prevent shaming his friend in public. This is a powerful statement – one that is not understood outside its context in the *Torah*. It is a lesson in life that we need the Torah to teach us: Better to die than to humiliate another person

Chazal give us another insight into Tamar’s character and personality. When she accepted the *mashkonos*, securities, from Yehudah, she was inspired with *Ruach HaKodesh*, Divine Inspiration. She asked for the signet, which denotes *Malchus Bais Yehudah*, monarchy which would descend from Yehudah; the wrap, to signify the *Sanhedrin*, High Court; and the staff, symbolizing *Moshiach*. When she conceived, she would pat her stomach and say, “I am pregnant with kings; I am pregnant with redeemers.” In light of this, we understand what might have gone through Tamar’s mind. She knew that she was carrying within her womb the future monarchy of *Klal Yisrael*; the very seeds of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* were within her! Yet, she was concerned about embarrassing Yehudah. *Horav Elazar M. Shach, z.l.*, adds one more point to her internal conflict. While it is true that Yehudah would have been publicly shamed, it was only a single instance. The situation would have passed, and he would still have been the progenitor of monarchy. If she would have died, he would have had nothing. Yet, Tamar decided that it was not worth it for Yehudah to suffer embarrassment – even once. It was not worth it for *Malchus Yehudah* to be the result of Yehudah’s public ridicule. It was not worth *Klal Yisrael*’s future and *Moshiach*’s coming into being, if it would have been at the expense of Yehudah’s shame.

Rav Shach suggests that in recording the episode of Tamar and Yehudah, the *Torah* is teaching us two significant lessons. First, we must attune our train of thought to that of the Torah. We say everyday in *Tefillas Shacharis*, *Va’telamdeim chukei chaim*, “And whom You taught the decrees of life” – this means that Hashem has imparted to us the way we should think and how we should approach life’s issues. When the Torah teaches us that it is “preferable to throw ourselves into a fiery furnace, rather than humiliate someone publicly,” we have to accept this lesson as a part of our Torah. It must be ingrained in our mindset and imbued in our psyche, because it is *Toras Hashem*.

Second, we learn that when one follows the Torah’s path of truth, he does not stumble or “lose” out at all. He will succeed, even when it does not appear that way. Tamar was prepared to die and lose everything. In the end, however, she merited to be the mother of kings and redeemers – all because she followed the truth of the Torah. How often do we attempt to circumvent what is right,

because we think we might profit by following an alternative approach? We manipulate and employ excuses to justify not following the correct path. Let us learn from Tamar that the truth always prevails.