

Yehudah recognized them and said, “She is more righteous than I.” (38:26)

With his confession, Yehudah demonstrated his moral integrity, his willingness to stand behind his actions, even if they were later deemed inappropriate. He was wrong; Tamar was right. She was prepared to die, thereby shattering the very goal of becoming the progenitress of the Davidic dynasty and *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*. *Rashi* quotes a *Midrash* which teaches that Yehudah had no culpability whatsoever with regard to the entire incident; “Hashem said, ‘*Mimeni*, it is from Me.’ Yehudah did not advance toward Tamar by his own volition. Hashem orchestrated the entire scenario. He greatly approved of Tamar’s *tznius*, modesty, while in her father-in-law’s home: ‘It is from someone of such moral character that I want to build the future of *Klal Yisrael*.’”

According to the natural cycle of events, Yehudah had no reason to ever dream of consorting with a woman of questionable repute. *Chazal* continue, “Rabbi Yochanan says that Yehudah (saw the woman at the crossroads and) wanted to pass by her. Hashem sent the Angel who is appointed over (the character trait of *taavah*, desire, and had the Angel confront Yehudah). He said to Yehudah, ‘Where are you going? From where do kings stand? From where do the great and mighty stand?’ And Yehudah turned toward Tamar – against his will.” *Chazal* state with utmost clarity that Yehudah acted at the behest of the Almighty.

Bearing this in mind, we are confronted with a powerful question. Tamar was an astute woman who would not undertake an endeavor that had absolutely no chance of succeeding. We have just proved that, under normal circumstances, the great Yehudah would never liaison with a woman of ill repute. Why, then, did Tamar dress herself up as such a woman and plan to ensnare Yehudah? She certainly was not aware of any Heavenly Voice directing Yehudah to advance toward her.

Horav Chaim Shmuelewitz, zl, derives an important principle from here. When a person wants something; when he desires it with all of his heart; when he feels that he absolutely must have it – he will do anything to obtain it, regardless of how unusual his actions may be. Tamar did not act sensibly. Her actions were irrational, but the nonsensical and irrational become normal procedure when someone is driven to obtain something. Tamar wanted to be the mother of Yehudah’s children. It was her ardent desire to be the mother of kings. She would establish *Malchus Bais David*, the monarchy of the House of David. Would she refrain from acting because, on the surface, she appeared to be acting without rationale? This is how a person who wants something badly enough acts.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* observes that this idea applies equally in the area of growth in *ruchniyos*, spirituality. One who really seeks to grow will do anything and everything in order to achieve his goals. In the eyes of spectators, he might appear strange, but when one wants something badly enough – nothing seems strange.

With this thought in mind, the *Rosh Yeshivah* explains a fascinating *Chazal* concerning the *pasuk* in *Mishlei* 6:6 *Lech el nemalah atzeil*, “Go to the ant, you sluggard;” *Re’eh deracheha vachacham*; “See its ways and grow wise.” Shlomo *Hamelech* admonishes the lazy fellow to take a lesson from the ant. *Chazal* explain that the ant is very industrious and does not stop gathering food – despite the fact that its total lifespan is a mere six months, and the amount of food it needs to survive an entire lifetime is but one and a half kernels of wheat. It gathers much, much more than it will ever need. *Chazal* explain its reason for doing so. The ant conjectures that, just in case Hashem decrees it to live more than its normal allotted time, it should have sufficient food to sustain itself. Likewise, man should prepare himself in this world with an abundance of *mitzvos*, for he never knows what he will need in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come.

We see from this, explains *Rav Chaim*, that when it comes to life, when one is in dire need of something, he will act far above and beyond his normal abilities. After all, his life depends upon it. Whoever does not go above and beyond is nothing more than an *atzeil*, an indolent, lazy human being. His slothful nature will bring him down, unless he is willing to change and rise above it. Laziness does not mean doing nothing. One can be assiduous and work hard, but, if he does not go that extra mile, he does not care enough about success. The individual who does not care enough about success – if one is not willing to go that extra mile, to do whatever it takes to achieve his goal – he is just plain lazy.