

## "Yehudah - you, your brothers shall acknowledge: your hand will be at your enemies nape." (49:8)

*Chazal* teach us that the tribes will acclaim Yehudah and designate him as their king in this world, as well as in *Olam Habah*. *Shevet* Yehudah produced the Jewish kings who will conquer those kings that have challenged our people. His "*hand will be at his enemy's nape*." He hardened his "neck" and acted resolutely, with dignity, as he shamed himself publicly by confessing to his encounter with Tamar. He will, consequently, merit control over the nape of the necks of his enemies as he conquers them.

If we were to analyze Yehudah's reaction to the *ma'ase* Tamar, the episode with Tamar, we might question that he received such a remarkable reward. Should he have permitted his pregnant daughter-in-law to be burned to death? It would have been inhuman to stand still and renege responsibility at the expense of three innocent lives!

*Horav Yehudah Leib Chasman, zl*, takes a practical approach to understanding man's ability to confront his own errors. He observes that even a G-d fearing person might falter and sin and then attempt to cover up his guilt through subterfuge. In his condition, he may even go to great lengths to repair the consequences of his sin. The bottom line, however, will always be to conceal. He does it quietly, in such a way that no one will uncover and publicize the sin. He might even justify his behavior by claiming that if his indiscretion was known, it would be a grave *chillul Hashem*. This is nothing more than a "*teritz*," an excuse, for covering up his guilt. He knows that he has sinned, so why does he cover-up his guilt? He is repenting and penalizing himself. Yet, he still makes every attempt to conceal his sin. Why? *Horav* Chasman claims that this approach indicates a lack of willingness to admit that he was wrong. It is a final attempt to justify himself to preserve his own dignity when he looks at himself in the mirror. With this lack of public *hoda'ah*, confession, he falls short of performing one of the primary elements of *teshuvah*, acknowledging that he had sinned!

Yehudah could have easily found a way to justify his involvement with Tamar. A *malach*, an angel, pushed him towards her. Like the judge who sentenced Tamar, Yehudah could have found an avenue for saving her from execution without divulging his participation. In fact, he could have claimed that it was more propitious for the spiritual climate not to disclose his role in the matter. It would be a *chillul Hashem* to incite people to gossip about Yehudah, their judge and respected legislator. People would not understand that his participation had been decreed from Heaven. Perhaps, it would really be more appropriate for fewer people to be aware of the reality.

Yehudah's *middah* of *emes*, his exemplary integrity, would not permit an infraction of justice even for a moment. As soon as he recognized the articles he had given to Tamar, he knew what had to be done and he immediately admitted both his involvement and his error. He could have found a number of legal arguments for concealing his name. Such an approach, however, would be tantamount to concealing the truth. This could possibly mark the end of Yehudah's career,

tarnishing the image of Yaakov's family. Nonetheless, Yehudah could not tolerate anything but the truth. This was the height of integrity, the epitome of repentance, the true definition of a Jewish king - one who is able to reign even over himself.

*Horav Chasman* suggests that the words, "*tzadkah mi'meni*," *she is more righteous than me*," is not merely a confession; it was Yehudah's way of saying, "I have sinned, and I am ashamed." Yehudah was proclaiming his guilt, despite the fact that he had the opportunity and the rationale to justify his actions. Yehudah acted counter to human nature. Indeed, he rose above his own natural reaction in a manner befitting a ruler, which is why he became the ruler over *Am Yisrael*.