

Yehudah recognized; and he said, “She is right: it is from me.” (38:26)

Tamar could have saved herself and the two fetuses that were growing in her womb – at the expense of Yehudah. She was not prepared, however, to step on someone in order to save herself. Potifar’s wife wanted very badly to be married to Yosef. She wanted to contribute to *Klal Yisrael*. Yosef was not prepared to take the wife of his master. This was not only immoral; it was also prohibited. *Chazal* teach that both women had noble intentions. They both wanted a role in building *Klal Yisrael*. Something was apparently lacking in the *l’shem Shomayim*, acting for the sake of Heaven, in Potifar’s wife’s act. Wherein is the difference between the way Tamar acted and the way in which Potifar’s wife carried out her scheme?

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, explains that *l’shem Shomayim* is insufficient unless it is bolstered by purity of heart and refined character traits. Only when one combines *yosher ha’middos*, exemplary character traits, with *l’shem Shomayim* does he have the chance of achieving success. Tamar wanted badly to be a contributor to the future of *Klal Yisrael* – but she was not going to do this at the expense of another person’s humiliation. If it meant embarrassing Yehudah – she wanted no part of it.

Potifar’s wife had designs on Yosef, and she too wanted to be the progenitress of Yosef’s tribe. She, however, wanted it at any expense – even Yosef’s disparagement! When one does not partner *l’shem Shomayim* with *yosher ha’middos*, the *l’shem Shomayim* loses its meaning.

This idea applies across the board, in contemporary life as well. We often get carried away in our religious fervor, disregarding the feelings of someone upon whom we have stepped on along the way. *l’shem Shomayim* is important; raising the banner of Heaven is what Judaism is all about. If our work impinges upon the sensitivities of a fellow Jew, we are no longer *l’shem Shomayim*. Our actions are of no value.

Horav Moshe Deutsch, zl, asked the **Chazon Ish, zl**, the following question: *Chazal* teach that one who studies *halachos*, Jewish Law, every day, will merit *Olam Habba*, a place in the World to Come. What if these two clash: if a person who is deeply committed to learning Torah embarrasses someone? Will he still receive *Olam Habba*?

The *Chazon Ish* replied that the Angels representing both sides – the learning and the embarrassing – stand before the Heavenly Tribunal. Hashem will then decide in accordance with the “defendant’s” merits. If his merits outweigh his demerits, he will pass. Otherwise, he is destined to lose what he has worked for his entire life.