

And she said, “Recognize, if you please, whose are this signet, this wrap, and this staff.” (38:25)

Rashi explains that, in this context, the word *na* (*ha'ker na*, “recognize, if you please”) expresses nothing but request. Tamar replied, “Please recognize your Creator and do not destroy three souls (Tamar and her unborn twins). According to *Rashi*, when Tamar said, “If you please,” it was simply a plea for mercy, it was an appeal to Yehudah’s sense of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven.” *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, derives a powerful insight from *Rashi*. We are accustomed to thinking that the manner and approach for one to develop a profound recognition and perspective of Hashem is through the study of philosophical works, such as *Moreh Nevuchim* (Guide for the Perplexed) by the *Rambam*; and *Sefer Halkrim* (Book of Principles) by *Horav Yosef Albo* (student of *Horav Chasdei Crescas*). We have two philosophical treatises that delve into various aspects of Jewish faith.

From Tamar, however, we derive that it is not through the study and mastery of such eclectic works that one will gain a deeper understanding of Hashem, but rather, the ability to rise above one’s ego, to chance public embarrassment in order to save three lives. This is recognizing Hashem. *Hakoras haBorei*, acknowledging the Creator, knowing that there is a Supreme Being Who created and guides every aspect of this world – down to the most infinitesimal creation – is crucial. Such acknowledgment occurs when a person, upon being confronted with the challenge of having to overcome a *middah*, character trait – in this case *kavod*, honor, public esteem – nonetheless demonstrates a willingness to “face the music,” suffer the consequences, in order to preserve the truth; this is what it means to acknowledge Hashem. Yehudah understood the meaning of true *kavod* as opposed to the imaginary, illusory *kavod* for which people kill themselves in this temporal world. We convince ourselves that outward appearances and self-imagined deceptions (we think they are real) have meaning, when essentially the only real honor is honor of truth, which Hashem confers upon a person. We do not exchange the mythical/delusional for the authentic.