



UNDERSTANDING the **KEY** to RELATIONSHIPS

Rabbi Alon Friedman

It is customary on Rosh Hashanah to extend greetings to one another. In addition to the traditional greeting of *Ketivah vachatimah tovah*, “May you be written up and inscribed for a good year,” I believe it is also appropriate to wish each other a hearty *mazal tov*. On the first Rosh Hashanah, a great wedding took place. Hashem introduced Adam to Chavah, and they immediately got married. If not for that wedding, we would not be here today, and thus we are all part of this great, joyous event.

Adam the *Chatan* was the most handsome man that ever lived. In describing Adam’s beauty, the Talmudic sage Rav Avuhu (Bava Metzia 84a) says that his beauty was “*mei’ein*,” a fraction of that of our patriarch Ya’akov and that the beauty of Ya’akov was a fraction of the beauty of Adam.

The Gemara (Megillah 15a) says that our matriarch Sarah was one of the four most beautiful women in the world. The Gemara (Bava Batra 58a) also states that Sarah compared to Chavah was like a monkey compared to a human. Chavah was the most beautiful woman in the world who ever lived.

Their wedding was very elaborate, and the One who adorned her like a *Kallah*

and led her down the aisle to meet the *Chatan* was none other than Hashem Himself (Midrash Rabbah, Bereshit 18:1). After the wedding, the young couple moved into the most exclusive neighborhood available, the Garden of Eden. With the whole world at their disposal, they were the wealthiest couple that ever lived.

With no mother to teach her how to cook, Chavah’s first task was to prepare food for her new husband. Like any young wife, she undoubtedly sought to prepare a delicacy for him to soothe his palate and enhance his admiration for her. She went out to shop in the Garden and met a member of the animal world, “Mr. Serpent.” They struck up a conversation and he advised her that the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge would make an excellent meal for her husband. To be extra sure, she first tasted the fruit herself and, convinced that it was delicious, she gave the fruit to her husband as well.

Suddenly, they heard the voice of Hashem, and Adam realized that he had sinned. At first, he tried to blame his wife, but it was to no avail. Hashem held him responsible and expelled the young couple from his exquisite residence, the Garden of Eden. All of humanity, the descendants of Adam and Chavah, have suffered the

consequences of their sin to this very day.

In today’s society, what do you think would have happened if such an incident took place? Considering the staggering statistics of broken marriages and high divorce rates, I believe Adam and Chavah would have immediately divorced. After such a disastrous first day of marriage, what kind of future could they have expected together? Many modern-day marriage counselors would likely advise the young couple to divorce before complicating their lives by having children.

But not only did Adam and Chavah eschew divorce, but they also remained together for hundreds of years after the incident!

Why did Adam remain married to Chavah? Immediately after their sin, the Torah says *Veha’Adam yada et Chavah ishto*, “And the man had known his wife Chavah (and she conceived and bore Kayin).” According to the simple reading of the verse, the word “*yada*” is in the past tense, which tells us that the conception and birth of Kayin occurred before the sin and expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Others, however, explain that the conception and birth of Kayin took place *after* the sin. In this view, the word



The late Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer zt"l, who passed away last year.

“yada” is in the present tense and can also mean that Adam understood his wife after the sin. Whereas before the sin, Adam knew Chavah superficially, after the sin he understood her in a deeper way. Instead of casting blame, as he did initially, Adam recognized that his wife was only human and that human beings make mistakes. With this new understanding, they remained together as husband and wife, bringing many children into the world together.

One of the reasons many marriages fall apart so quickly is the lack of “yada” – the couple’s lack of understanding for one another. This “yada,” this understanding and acceptance of each other’s imperfections, is the key to a solid and happy relationship.

The Gemara (Nedarim 41a) says, “He who has understanding has everything in him, and he who does not have it in him, what is within him? He who acquires it, what does he lack, and he who has not acquired it, what has he acquired?”

When a couple sets out to build a home, the Torah requires them to place a *mezuzah* at the entrance of their home. When it is affixed to the doorpost, it is placed on a slant. The simple reason for this is that *halachah* has a

difference of opinion on whether the *mezuzah* should be affixed vertically or horizontally. To satisfy both views, a compromise is made by placing it on a slant (Yoreh Dei’ah 289:6).

But perhaps there is a homiletical message here as well. If a husband and wife wish to protect their home and make it strong and long-lasting, they must be willing to “bend” to understand one another. Without understanding, the home will collapse. But if both husband and wife are ready to “bend” and compromise, their home will be blessed.

At a wedding, it is customary to give souvenirs to the guests. The most memorable keepsake from Adam and Chavah’s wedding and the first day of marriage is “yada,” the understanding they showed to one another in the wake of their sin. Our children and we

will be blessed with long and happy relationships if we succeed in making this souvenir our own!

Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer zt”l, an alumnus of the Telz Yeshiva in the United States and the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva College of South Africa, had an exceptional ability to understand the nature of people, possessing a genuine love for and connection to all those around him. He compromised, avoiding strife and anger at all costs. He built people up with sensitivity and warmth. This is true “yada.”

As we approach the first *yahrzeit* of our beloved teacher and Rosh Yeshiva, may we all merit to inculcate this incredible quality into our lives.

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