

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

Bereshit

October 10, 2015 27 Tishrei, 5776
Rosh Hodesh will be Tuesday and Wednesday

DEDICATIONS: In Honor of Aryana and Stevie and Amalya's new brother

Minha & Arbit 6:06 PM -Candle Lighting 6:06 PM
Friends – We need assistance and a commitment for Friday evenings

Shabbat
Class with Rav Aharon 8:00 AM – Latest Shema 9:10AM
Shahrit 8:30 AM, Torah 9:45 and Musaf at 10:30

Kiddush this week is sponsored by The Lloyd In memory of Arther Schoenberg.
וְשָׂרָה הַשֵּׁם וְגַם מֵהַרְבָּא

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30 with Jennifer
Ages 2-5 - in the Playroom/
Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's program at Bach at 4:30PM –
Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 4:30

Class with Rav Aharon at 5:00PM
Minha 5:30 PM - Seudat Shelishit 6:00 PM
Birkat HaMazon 6:45 PM Arbit 6:50 PM – Shabbat Ends at 7:05

SUNDAY MORNING Shaharit at 8AM

Sisterhood Meeting this Sunday 930

DAILY MINYAN
Monday, Thursday 6:55, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:00AM

LOOKING FORWARD:

Sisterhood dinner Tuesday evening November 17
Honoring Baruch and Karen Kahn.

Please take the time to settle your outstanding pledges and obligations

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100 – Mincha– The most important tefilah of the day –Give us 11 minutes and we'll give you the World To Come!

Editors Notes

Although we began the New Year with Rosh Hashana, in many ways it's when we start Bereshit that we feel the year begins anew. Bereshit is always exciting. We go from creation to the flood to the tower of Babylon. We meet Abraham and Sarah again and travel with them to Egypt. We share in the birth of Isaac and accompany him to the akeydah where he is bound as a sacrifice. We are with Jacob when Rebecca orders him to take the blessings from his father. We go to uncle Laban and from there back to the Holy Land. We are with Joseph in Egypt and with the brothers who travel back and forth finally being a part of the reuniting of Jacob and his long lost son.

I didn't know if we would get an issue out this week. There was so much in my head and so much I gave over verbally, but I didn't write much. In a normal year just coming to work after basically taking three weeks off seems to be a never ending game of catch up. So this issue is always rough. But this year there is more to the story.

Baruch Hashem as we begin this year anew, we have a new member to begin it with. My daughter and son in law, Aryana and Steven had a baby boy. We pray that as we will enter in the Brit, so shall he be blessed to learn and acquire Torah, get married and build a family and continue in the path of good deeds of his parents. Keshem sheyikanes laberit, kn yikanes leTorah, lechuppa ulema'asim tovim.

Going into 5776, we have a new column. Sod HaParasha – The secrets of the weekly portion. My brother Victor will hopefully share with all of us some of the esoteric lessons of the week. Please let us know your thoughts.

We just finished the Zohar reading in anticipation of the Milah and it's always an uplifting experience. So while I thought I would be off to the house, I am still here putting this together. I looked back in the archives and read something I wrote almost ten years ago. It inspired me as I felt weighed by communal pressures so I felt it would be good to share with all of you again. And finally at the end of the newsletter

is a very interesting take on the relationship between Iran, Russia and the USA.

For many pulpit Rabbis the weeks following Simhat Torah are a time of a much needed vacation. From the beginning of Elul through Rosh Hashanah, the aseret yemey teshubah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Hoshanah Rabbah, Shemini Aseret and through Simhat Torah he is on constant call. Quite a few lay leaders end the holiday season with a form of burnout. And due to a pressing economy (even when times are good, it always feels pressing for our organizations) and difficult times facing budgets many of them come to November and toss in the towel. No wonder that so many organizations elect new officers during these days.

I often discussed with the Rabbi how he dealt with the burdens of an entire community. He treated every problem as his own. He was as empathic a person one could know. And he stayed with a person day in and day out until the problem was solved or the burden had eased. He rarely complained though. He looked at everything he did as doing his job. Not in the sense of a job at work, but the job mankind has of emulating G-d while on this world. To the Rabbi everything appeared as an opportunity to do the right thing, to do the misvah.

He once mentioned a story that serves as a lesson to those wishing to throw in the towel.

When the Chofetz Chaim was in Vienna, an important person came to the house where he was staying to ask a pressing question. The Chofetz Chaim was in the middle of a meal, so the owner of the house invited the visitor to join everyone at the table, assuring him that when the meal was finished he would gladly introduce him to the Chofetz Chaim so that he could ask his question.

Meanwhile the Chofetz Chaim was reciting the Psalm, "Mizmor LeDavid Hashem Ro'i," as he usually did at mealtimes. When he finished the last verse, "May goodness and chesed follow me all the days of my life," he turned to the guest, whom he did not know, and asked, "Isn't it wondrous that King David says that goodness and chesed shall chase me; for usually murderers and robbers are what chase a person, but when do goodness and chesed chase him?"

"We can learn from this that it may seem to a person who is occupying himself with acts of

kindness and charity that the 'goodness and chesed' indeed chase him. Since he is losing money or taking time from his work, his yetzer attempts to convince him to stop doing chesed. What should he do? King David tells him that in such a case he should pray to Hashem that goodness and chesed should continue to chase him for the rest of his life, since he is continuing to do acts of kindness and charity. He should know that if he does so G-d will allow him to fulfill that which is promised at the end of the verse, 'And I shall sit in the house of Hashem all the days of my life.'"

When the guest heard these words, he got up to leave, thanked his host and said goodbye. The host was astonished. Why would he want to leave before he had even asked his question? The guest then explained, "The Chofetz Chaim has answered me without my asking. You see, several years ago I established a gemach in my town. Recently, my wife has been complaining that my chesed is causing me losses in business, and it is taking up too much of my time. She wants me to hand over the gemach to someone else, but I refuse to do so, and we decided to ask the Chofetz Chaim. But now the Chofetz Chaim has answered our question, saying that even if goodness and chesed already have been done by a person, this is not an excuse to stop. He should continue to be occupied with them. And so now I am hurrying home to tell this to my wife." (CHOFETZ CHAIM AL HATORAH, p. 260)

Rabbi Feinhandler comments that doing chesed should be our constant goal, and there is never "enough" chesed done. So rather than throw in the towel we should also look at the work we do as an opportunity rather than a challenge. This was Rabbi Abittan every day of his life. I guess it was my dad too!

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

Sod HaParasha – Bereshit 5776 Victor Bibi

As the body requires clothing so does the soul require its own celestial garments. In the Tanakh we find the word "selem". The Sages term this spiritual clothing as "the cloak of the rabbis". A pasuk in the first chapter of Bereshit introduces us to the relationship between man and his selem. Man exists via the existence of the celestial garb that cloths his soul. This is the meaning of the verse in

Tehillim 39:7, that " Man exists only by virtue of his selem."

It can be inferred from the Zohar that man's actions do not directly affect his soul, but simply determine the nature of its clothing. If one's actions are proper, one merits a majestic garb; if they are improper, the garb becomes soiled and stained. Abominable actions can even cause a person's soul to become disrobed of its holy garment. Those garments become replaced with new clothing woven by negative spiritual forces with all that this implies. "They (Adam and Havah) realized they were naked" Bereshit 3:7. The lack of attire noted here refers to the lack of holy garments to cloth their souls. As a result of their sin they had become intimate with good and evil. It was their reduced spiritual state that was revealed to them. Rabbeynu Bahye implores us to pay attention to the wording in that verse: "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked." One would have expected it to say that "they saw". Instead they were granted a realization of something they had previously been unaware of.

The Creator calls out to Adam and asks rhetorically "Where are you?...who told you that you are naked?" Was this information given to you from an external source? Rather, this new knowledge to discern between good - which is the presence of majestic clothing ; and evil - its absence, came as a result of their partaking of the tree of knowledge. As the serpent promised Havah earlier in verse 4 that "You will be intimate with good and evil." Adam replies that he considered himself naked - bereft of a protective cover. The She'lah Hakadosh rightly asserts here that Adam could not have been referring to their physical nudity! The Torah had already reported prior to the Creator's call - that they sewed together fig leaves and made for themselves loin cloths to serve as clothing.

Later in verse 22 we are told that the Creator has mercy on Adam and Havah and provides for their souls - new garments. They are termed there as "Garments of skin." In Bereshit Rabba it is reported the word for skin which normally begins with letter Ayin is spelled using an Alef instead. This would indicate that they were granted Garments of Light. In fact Rabbenu Bahye asserts that this clothing made light - derived from the upper celestial spheres. These clothes would have to be cherished. From here on, Adam and Havah and their descendants would be given a mandate. They were to make sure that their spiritual clothing remain white at all times. As King Solomon tells us in Kohelet 9:8, "At all times, your clothing should be white"

What the Torah describes here in Parashat Bereshit is not merely an historical account of Adam and Havah in and out of Gan Eden. Rather, it is to serve as a blueprint for their descendants. We must strive to keep these holy majestic clothes for our souls. Even a faulty character trait can leave filthy stains on this celestial garment. In such an outfit we would surely be ashamed to stand before the creator. As the Navi Zekharya writes concerning the spiritual garments of Yehoshua Ben Yehosadaq the Kohen Gadol. "And he spoke to those who stood before him saying, Take off his filthy garments. And to him he said, Behold I have caused your sin to pass from you. And I clothe you in festive garments. Zekharya 3:4. The berakhot Malbish Arumim (clothing the naked) and Hanoten Laya'ef Koah (giving strength to the weak) as part of the morning blessing were established by the Sages to serve as an antidote of a rule that "there is no man on earth who does not sin." We have already explained that sin results in the removal of aspects of the holy garb from one's soul, being substituted instead with an impure garb in its place. It is the less severe transgressions which result in the weakening of the garb expressing itself as a spiritual stain.

R. Hayyim Vital writes (Sha'ar HaKavanot-Birkhot Hashahar) in the name of his teacher R. Yisshaq Luria (HaAri) that each evening our souls are given over to the Divine Presence (Shehina). Beginning at midnight, we are given the opportunity to have our ethereal garments renewed or cleansed by the Shehina. The berakha Malbish Arumim serves to reclothe the soul for transgressions that caused it to become disrobed. The berakha Hanoten Laya'ef Koah serves to strengthen the ethereal garment and effectively cleanse it from the stains associated with more minor transgressions.

R. HaAri details the meditations associated with these berakhot. The numerical value of the word Malbush - clothing is 378. This number relates to the 378 lights (and numerical value) of the holy spiritual garb called the Hashmal. The 378 aspects of this ethereal garb are formed by a combination of holy names which can be meditated upon to fully effectuate the rectification of one's transgressions. On the simplest level a person should consider, have kavana and meditate when reciting these blessings when waking, on the spiritual clothing we have been given and on the kindness shown to us by the Creator in cleaning and providing anew those same clothes each morning.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading Bereshit- Hashem creates the world, Adam sins

- 1- The events of the first 7 days of creation
- 2- The creation of Adam and Gan Eden
- 3- The creation of Hava. Adam and Hava eat from the tree and are punished.
- 4- Kayin and Hevel are born. Kayin kills Hevel and is punished.
- 5- The descendants of Kayin
- 6- The generations from Adam to Noach
- 7- The generations from Adam to Noach continued. Man becomes wicked and Hashem decides to wipe out man and animal.

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com
Becoming the People We are Meant to Become

The Midrash tells that the scholars of Athens once approached Rabbi Yehoshua with two white pieces of cheese. They told the Rabbi that although these two pieces of cheese looked identical, one was made from milk taken from a white goat, and the other from milk taken from a black goat. The scholars challenged Rabbi Yehoshua to identify which piece came from each kind of goat.

Rather than answer their question, Rabbi Yehoshua brought the scholars two outwardly identical eggs. He told them that one came from a black hen, and the other from a white hen. The scholars did not respond, and the conversation ended.

Undoubtedly, there is a deep message which the Midrash here seeks to convey. Indeed, some have explained the Greek scholars' question as addressing the Jewish People's special status as G-d's treasured nation. This exchange occurred at a time when the Jews were not committed to Torah observance, and acted in a manner similar to the lifestyle of the other nations. The scholars thus asked Rabbi Yehoshua why there was any difference between his nation and theirs. The two peoples were more or less the same, just like cheese produced from the milk of different kinds of goats. The nations' pasts are very different from one another, but right now, they are the same. And thus just as there is no difference between the cheeses, there is likewise no difference between the Jews and the Greeks.

Rabbi Yehoshua responded that the proper analogy is not two cheeses, but rather two eggs. The two eggs look identical, but once the shell cracks and the chicks are born, it will become clear which egg came from a black hen and which from a white hen.

Similarly, although the Jewish Nation might currently resemble the other nations, eventually, once we manage to rid ourselves of our outer "shell" and return to our roots and origins, it will become clear that we are special, the descendants of Abraham, Yishak and Yaakob. Despite our appearance in the present, one day we will show how we are, in truth, worthy of our special status of distinction.

Rashi, in his commentary to the first verse of the Torah, explains the phrase, "Bereshit Bara Elokim" to mean that G-d created the world for Torah; learning Torah is the purpose of creation, and it is what sustains the world. We need to learn Torah in order to learn who we are supposed to be and what Hashem expects of us. We cannot lay claim to the distinction of being Hashem's "chosen people" if we do not act special, different, and on a higher level of conduct. And the only way we can act on this higher plane is by learning and studying. This is especially relevant to the study of Sefer Bereshit, which we begin this Shabbat. Sefer Bereshit tells us of our nation's origins, of the greatness of our patriarchs and matriarchs, who laid the spiritual foundations and gave us the spiritual "genes" which enable us to become great. The more we delve into this study, the better able we are to crack the "shell" which makes us appear similar to other nations, so we can shine and radiate with the Kedusha invested within us by our saintly forebears.

Rabbi Wein

The Torah at its onset here in the parsha of Bereshit describes itself as being "the book of the generations of humankind." Although the literal context of this verse of the Torah is referring to the generations and descendants of the first human being Adam, it has been widely interpreted by Jewish traditional scholars, in its broadest meaning, to refer to all of the generations and the human beings that have inhabited this planet over the many millennia.

Jewish tradition, in adopting this expansive interpretation, means to imply that all of the challenges, greatness, frailties and failures of our common ancestor Adam still exist in all of our societies and personalities. We are all trying somehow to get back into the Garden of Eden and we find the path to enter constantly blocked by fearsome angels.

In fact, if we wish to summarize all of human history it can be done by understanding the inability of humans and their societies to regain entrance into the paradise from which they were driven. In his classic work, *Paradise Lost*, John Milton summarized this

theme. This loss of paradise haunts humankind till today.

It is what forces people and governments to search for scapegoats and to victimize others for the fact that we have not yet achieved entry into paradise. It is the source of war and violence, crime and terrorism and also of creativity, invention and the progress of technology. In a very simple metaphor, it describes the struggles of humanity in all ages and circumstances since the dawn of history.

In granting humanity the gifts of free will and action and of collective and personal memory, the Lord, so to speak, allowed human beings to remember that they were once in paradise and to allow them to pursue the goal of returning there once again. We all somehow remember ourselves as once being there. But the enormous frustration of not achieving this goal of returning distorts our lives.

The generations of Adam have always fallen prey to the weaknesses of temptation and immorality and are unable to regain their footing and begin their return trek to paradise. We cannot resist the temptations placed before us by the snake that is always there to entrap us. Every generation thrashes about with new ideas as to how to reach paradise or even, more dangerously, to redefine what paradise really is and what it should look like.

The Soviet Union called itself "the workers' paradise," even though it certainly was much more hell than heaven. All of the new social correctness, that has so weakened the moral stature of human beings and religion over the past few decades, is only a feeble attempt to redefine paradise. It is another way to avoid the harsh challenge of finding our way back and standing against the fearsome angels who inhabit our personalities and mindsets.

This entire preface to the story of Abraham and the beginnings of the Jewish people is meant to teach us that the Lord expects that the Chosen People will provide an example for the rest of humanity and mark the road that truly leads to the paradise of human happiness and serenity.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Art of Listening (Bereishit 5776)

What exactly was the first sin? What was the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil? Is this kind of knowledge a bad thing such that it had to be forbidden, and was only acquired through sin? Isn't knowing the difference between good and evil essential to being human? Isn't it one of the highest

forms of knowledge? Surely God would want humans to have it? Why then did He forbid the fruit that produced it?

In any case, did not Adam and Eve already have this knowledge before eating the fruit, precisely in virtue of being "in the image and likeness of God? Surely this was implied in the very fact that they were commanded by God: Be fruitful and multiply. Have dominion over nature. Do not eat from the tree. For someone to understand a command, they must know it is good to obey and bad to disobey. So they already had, at least potentially, the knowledge of good and evil. What then changed when they ate the fruit? These questions go so deep that they threaten to make the entire narrative incomprehensible.

Maimonides understood this. That is why he turned to this episode at almost the very beginning of *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Book 1, Chapter 2). His answer though, is perplexing. Before eating the fruit, he says, the first humans knew the difference between truth and falsehood. What they acquired by eating the fruit was knowledge of "things generally accepted." But what does Maimonides mean by "things generally accepted." It is generally accepted that murder is evil, and honesty good. Does Maimonides mean that morality is mere convention? Surely not. What he means is that after eating the fruit, the man and woman were embarrassed that they were naked, and that is a mere matter of social convention because not everyone is embarrassed by nudity. But how can we equate being embarrassed that you are naked with "knowledge of good and evil"? It does not seem to be that sort of thing at all. Conventions of dress have more to do with aesthetics than ethics.

It is all very unclear, or at least it was to me until I came across one of the more fascinating moments in the history of the Second World War.

After the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Americans knew they were about to enter a war against a nation, Japan, whose culture they did not understand. So they commissioned one of the great anthropologists of the twentieth century, Ruth Benedict, to explain the Japanese to them, which she did. After the war, she published her ideas in a book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. One of her central insights was the difference between shame cultures and guilt cultures. In shame cultures the highest value is honour. In guilt cultures it is righteousness. Shame is feeling bad that we have failed to live up to the expectations others have of us. Guilt is what we feel when we fail to live up to what our own conscience demands of us. Shame is other-

directed. Guilt is inner-directed.

Philosophers, among them Bernard Williams, have pointed out that shame cultures are usually visual. Shame itself has to do with how you appear (or imagine you appear) in other peoples' eyes. The instinctive reaction to shame is to wish you were invisible, or somewhere else. Guilt, by contrast, is much more internal. You cannot escape it by becoming invisible or being elsewhere. Your conscience accompanies you wherever you go, regardless of whether you are seen by others. Guilt cultures are cultures of the ear, not the eye.

With this contrast in mind we can now understand the story of the first sin. It is all about appearances, shame, vision and the eye. The serpent says to the woman: "God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." That is, in fact, what happens: "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked." It was appearance of the tree that the Torah emphasises: "The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and desirable to the eyes, and that the tree was attractive as a means to gain intelligence." The key emotion in the story is shame. Before eating the fruit the couple were "naked, but unashamed." After eating it they feel shame and seek to hide. Every element of the story – the fruit, the tree, the nakedness, the shame – has the visual element typical of a shame culture.

But in Judaism we believe that God is heard not seen. The first humans "heard God's voice moving about in the garden with the wind of the day." Replying to God, the man says, "I heard Your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." Note the deliberate, even humorous irony of what the couple did. They heard God's voice in the garden, and they "hid themselves from God among the trees of the garden." But you can't hide from a voice. Hiding means trying not to be seen. It is an immediate, intuitive response to shame. But the Torah is the supreme example of a culture of guilt, not shame, and you cannot escape guilt by hiding. Guilt has nothing to do with appearances and everything to do with conscience, the voice of God in the human heart.

The sin of the first humans in the Garden of Eden was that they followed their eyes, not their ears. Their actions were determined by what they saw, the beauty of the tree, not by what they heard, namely the word of God commanding them not to eat from it. The result was that they did indeed acquire a knowledge of good and evil, but it was the wrong kind. They acquired an ethic of shame, not guilt; of

appearances not conscience. That, I believe, is what Maimonides meant by his distinction between true-and-false and “things generally accepted.” A guilt ethic is about the inner voice that tells you, “This is right, that is wrong”, as clearly as “This is true, that is false”. But a shame ethic is about social convention. It is a matter of meeting or not meeting the expectations others have of you.

Shame cultures are essentially codes of social conformity. They belong to groups where socialisation takes the form of internalising the values of the group such that you feel shame – an acute form of embarrassment – when you break them, knowing that if people discover what you have done you will lose honour and ‘face’.

Judaism is precisely not that kind of morality, because Jews do not conform to what everyone else does. Abraham was willing, say the sages, to be on one side while all the rest of the world was on the other. Haman says about Jews, “Their customs are different from those of all other people” (Esther 3:8). Jews have often been iconoclasts, challenging the idols of the age, the received wisdom, the “spirit of the age”, the politically correct.

If Jews had followed the majority, they would have disappeared long ago. In the biblical age they were the only monotheists in a pagan world. For most of the post-biblical age they lived in societies in which they and their faith were shared by only a tiny minority of the population. Judaism is a living protest against the herd instinct. Ours is the dissenting voice in the conversation of humankind. Hence the ethic of Judaism is not a matter of appearances, of honour and shame. It is a matter of hearing and heeding the voice of God in the depths of the soul.

The drama of Adam and Eve is not about apples or sex or original sin or “the Fall” – interpretations the non-Jewish West has given to it. It is about something deeper. It is about the kind of morality we are called on to live. Are we to be governed by what everyone else does, as if morality were like politics: the will of the majority? Will our emotional horizon be bounded by honour and shame, two profoundly social feelings? Is our key value appearance: how we seem to others? Or is it something else altogether, a willingness to heed the word and will of God? Adam and Eve in Eden faced the archetypal human choice between what their eyes saw (the tree and its fruit) and what their ears heard (God’s command). Because they chose the first, they felt shame, not guilt. That is one form of “knowledge of good and evil”, but from a Jewish perspective, it is the wrong form.

Judaism is a religion of listening, not seeing. That is not to say there are no visual elements in Judaism. There are, but they are not primary. Listening is the sacred task. The most famous command in Judaism is Shema Yisrael, “Listen, Israel.” What made Abraham, Moses and the prophets different from their contemporaries was that they heard the voice that to others was inaudible. In one of the great dramatic scenes of the Bible God teaches Elijah that He is not in the whirlwind, the earthquake or the fire, but in the “still, small voice.”

It takes training, focus and the ability to create silence in the soul to learn how to listen, whether to God or to a fellow human being. Seeing shows us the beauty of the created world, but listening connects us to the soul of another, and sometimes to the soul of the Other, God as He speaks to us, calls to us, summoning us to our task in the world.

If I were asked how to find God, I would say, Learn to listen. Listen to the song of the universe in the call of birds, the rustle of trees, the crash and heave of the waves. Listen to the poetry of prayer, the music of the Psalms. Listen deeply to those you love and who love you. Listen to the words of God in the Torah and hear them speak to you. Listen to the debates of the sages through the centuries as they tried to hear the texts’ intimations and inflections.

Don’t worry about how you or others look. The world of appearances is a false world of masks, disguises and concealments. Listening is not easy. I confess I find it formidably hard. But listening alone bridges the abyss between soul and soul, self and other, I and the Divine.

Jewish spirituality is the art of listening.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“And G-d saw all that He had made and behold it was very good” (1:31)

This is written to teach Man that he should emulate his Creator and he too should always view all of Creation and he too should always perceive its goodness and should always declare that everything in Creation is “very good”. This world is full of joys, and men are required to be aware of these joys and to thank the Creator for them.

In accordance with the great principle that the Creation is intended to teach Man about the Creator, this verse is actually saying “And behold the Creator is very good.” “Good” includes “wise” and “kindly”.

And “very” means “endlessly wise” and “endlessly kindly”. Abraham utilized this principle to spend his entire life in the study of the endless wisdom and endless kindness of the Creator.

“He who gives a gift to his fellowman must let him know” (Shabbat 10B). The purpose is 1) to cause him to love the giver, 2) and to cause him to enjoy the gift (by informing him of the value and usefulness of the gift). Therefore: 1) the Creator informs us that He is the giver of the Creation to us, so that we love Him more because of His benevolence. 2) And also He informs us that this gift is very good, in order that we enjoy it more. Thus we are expected to study the endless benefits of Creation, and as a result we shall love the Giver more and more as our understanding of His gift increases.

But, as a result of this information, when men apply their minds to this subject and spend their lives in the study of this goodness of Hashem (as Abraham did), then the world becomes for them “very good”. Not only will they live happily and will sing to the Creator all their days, but they will be rewarded for this that they will sing in the World to Come forever. This is the true and ultimate meaning of “Behold, it was very good”. This very good world is merely a vestibule or a lobby before the Very Great Good which awaits those that prepare themselves in the vestibule to enter the great Banquet Hall (Olam Haba).

The Moscow-Washington-Tehran Axis Of Evil By Cliff Kincaid

The conventional wisdom is that Vladimir Putin has blindsided Barack Obama in the Middle East, catching the U.S. off-guard. It’s another Obama “failure,” we’re told. “Obama administration scrambles as Russia attempts to seize initiative in Syria,” is how a Washington Post headline described it. A popular cartoon shows Putin kicking sand in the faces of Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry on a beach.

The conventional wisdom is driven by the notion that Obama has the best of intentions but that he’s been outmaneuvered. What if his intention all along has been to remake the Middle East to the advantage of Moscow and its client state Iran? What if he knows exactly what he’s doing? Too many commentators refuse to consider that Obama is deliberately working against U.S. interests and in favor of the enemies of the U.S. and Israel.

In his U.N. address, Obama said, “As President of the United States, I am mindful of the dangers that we face; they cross my desk every morning. I lead

the strongest military that the world has ever known, and I will never hesitate to protect my country or our allies, unilaterally and by force where necessary.” This is laughable. We still have a strong military, but the inevitable conclusion from what’s recently transpired is that he doesn’t want to protect the interests of the U.S. or its allies in the Middle East. This is not a “failure,” but a deliberate policy. The trouble with conventional wisdom is the assumption that Obama sees things the way most Americans do. In order to understand Obama’s Middle East policy, it is necessary to consult alternative sources of news and information and analysis. That includes communist news sources. A fascinating analysis appears in the newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party, *The Militant*, one of the oldest and most influential publications among the left. You may remember the old photos which surfaced of Lee Harvey Oswald selling copies of *The Militant* before he killed the American president. The headline over *The Militant* story by Maggie Trowe caught my eye: “Reset’ with US allows Moscow to send arms, troops to Syria.” It was not about Hillary Clinton’s reset with Moscow years ago, but a more recent one.

Here’s how her story began: “Moscow’s rapid military buildup in Syria is a result of the ‘reset’ in relations forged with the Russian and Iranian governments by the Barack Obama administration. The deal—reshaping alliances and conditions from Syria, Iran and the rest of the Middle East to Ukraine and surrounding region—is the cornerstone of U.S. imperialism’s efforts to establish a new order in the Mideast, but from a much weaker position than when the now-disintegrating order was imposed after World Wars I and II.”

Of course, the idea that “U.S. imperialism” is served by giving the advantage to Russia and Iran is ludicrous. Nevertheless, it does appear that a “reset” of the kind described in this article has in fact taken place. The author writes about Washington’s “strategic shift to Iran and Russia” and the “downgrading” of relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia. She notes that Moscow “seeks more influence and control of the country [Syria] and its Mediterranean ports and a stronger political hand in Mideast politics.” Iran “has sent Revolutionary Guard Quds forces to help prop up Assad, and collaborates with Moscow on operations in Syria,” she notes. It is sometimes necessary to reject the conventional wisdom and instead analyze developments from the point of view of the Marxists, who understand Obama’s way of thinking. They pretend that Obama is a pawn of the “imperialists” but their analysis also makes sense from a traditional pro-American perspective. Those who accept the evidence that Obama has a Marxist perspective on the world have

to consider that his policy is designed to help Moscow and Tehran achieve hegemony in the region.

At the same time, the paper reported, "Since Secretary of State John Kerry's congenial visit with Putin in May, it has become clear that Washington would accept Moscow's influence over its 'near abroad' in Ukraine and the Baltics, in exchange for help to nail down the nuclear deal with Tehran." Hence, Obama has put his stamp of approval on Russian aggression in Europe and the Middle East. This analysis, though coming from a Marxist newspaper, fits the facts on the ground. It means that more Russian aggression can be expected in Europe.

The wildcard is Israel and it looks like the Israeli government is being increasingly isolated, not only by Obama but by Putin. The story notes that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with Putin in Moscow on September 21, saying his concern was to "prevent misunderstandings" between Israeli and Russian troops, since Israel has carried out airstrikes in Syrian territory targeting weapons being transported to the Iranian-backed Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon.

Some reports indicated that Israel had set up a joint mechanism with the Russian military to coordinate their operations in Syria.

However, the Russian leader reportedly told Obama during their U.N. meeting that he opposes Israeli attacks in Syria. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz ran a story that Russia intends to "Clip Israel's Wings Over [the] Syrian Skies." The paper added that Putin's remarks to Obama showed that despite Netanyahu's meeting with Putin in Moscow, "Russia intends to create new facts on the ground in Syria that will include restricting Israel's freedom of movement in Syrian skies."

It hardly seems to be the case that Obama has been outsmarted in the Middle East, or that Putin and Obama don't like each other. Instead, it appears that Obama is working hand-in-glove with Putin to isolate Israel and that Obama is perfectly content to let the former KGB colonel take the lead.

Israel has always been seen by most U.N. members as the real problem in the region. Obama is the first U.S. President to see Israel in that same manner and to act accordingly. This is why Putin has not caught Obama off-guard in the least. They clearly see eye-to-eye on Israel and Iran.

Don't forget that Obama actually telephoned Putin to thank him for his part in the nuclear deal with Iran. The White House issued a statement saying, "The President thanked President Putin for Russia's important role in achieving this milestone, the culmination of nearly 20 months of intense negotiations."

Building off the Iran nuclear deal, it looks like the plan is for Russia and the United States to force Israel to embrace a U.N. plan for a nuclear-free Middle East. That would mean Israel giving up control of its defensive nuclear weapons to the world body. Iran will be able to claim it has already made a deal to prohibit its own nuclear weapons development. Such a scheme was outlined back in 2005 in an article by Mohamed Elbaradei, the director-general at the time of the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). That's the same body that is now supposed to guarantee Iranian compliance with the terms of the nuclear deal signed by Russia and the U.S.

Elbaradei argued there would have to be "a dialogue on regional security as part of the peace process," to be followed by an agreement "to make the Middle East a nuclear-weapons-free zone."

The "dialogue" appears to be taking place now, mostly under the authority and auspices of the Russian government, with President Obama playing a secondary role.

The obvious danger is that Israel would be forced to comply with the plan for a "nuclear-weapons-free-zone," while Iran would cheat and develop nuclear weapons anyway.

Netanyahu told the U.N. that "Israel deeply appreciates President Obama's willingness to bolster our security, help Israel maintain its qualitative military edge and help Israel confront the enormous challenges we face."

This must be his hope. But he must know that Israel's security is slipping and that the survival of his country is in grave danger in the face of this Moscow-Washington-Tehran axis.

Before Putin further consolidates his military position in the Middle East and Iran makes more progress in nuclear weapons development, Netanyahu will have to launch a preemptive strike on the Islamic state.

"Israel will not allow Iran to break in, to sneak in or to walk in to the nuclear weapons club," the Israeli Prime Minister said.

In launching such a strike before the end of Obama's second presidential term, Israel would bring down the wrath of the world, led by Russia and the U.S., on the Jewish state.