

"And Hashem said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.'" (1:26)

This *pasuk* has been the source of abundant commentary. The plural form, "us," seems to imply that Hashem consulted with others. Did the Almighty need assistance in order to create man? *Chazal* teach us that when Moshe wrote the *Torah*, he came to this *pasuk* and noticed the plural word "us." He asked Hashem, "Master, why give heretics the opportunity to claim that there is more than one G-d?" Hashem responded, "Write! And whoever wants to err will err. Write, for if a great man ever says, 'Why should I consult with others?' they will tell him, 'Learn from the Creator, Who consulted with the angels.'"

The *Torah* prefers to use an expression which might be misconstrued by polytheists, rather than refrain from teaching an important moral lesson. Indeed, a number of *pesukim* in the *Torah* could be misinterpreted. Schools of Bible criticism have based their entire "religious" perspective -- or lack thereof -- upon their ability to cast aspersion upon the authenticity of the *Torah*. Hashem's response to these spiritual aberrations is, "Let those who want to err -err!" It is more important to present the *Torah* in its pristine form, so that the *Talmud* can explain its ambiguities, than to attempt to satisfy the heretics. When all is said and done, they do not desire to be satisfied. Those Jews who look for any excuse to shirk their responsibility as Jews will arrive at a false interpretation -because this is what they are seeking. The *Torah* is written for the faithful - who ask no questions.

The *Maasei Hashem* posits that Hashem is speaking here to man. While other creatures reach their potential by virtue of natural law, man is rational. Through his education and will - he plays an integral role in what he becomes. He has within his power the strength to raise himself to the zenith of spirituality or to lower himself to the nadir of depravity. It is all up to him. Hence, when Hashem says, "*Let us make man,*" He means, "Do what you have the capacity to do. I have endowed you with intelligence. I have imbued you with a holy soul. You are capable of becoming the kind of man that I intended - now do it!" To maximize one's potential is truly an extension of the work of Creation. To sit around and waste our G-d-given gifts is not only tragic, it also runs counter to Hashem's plan.