

And G-d said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” (1:26)

Why is the word *naaseh*, let us make, in the plural form, used to describe the creation of man? It should have said, “I will make.” The *Imrei Emes* explains that man is not created complete with an array of *middos tovos*, positive character traits. The refinement of these character traits entails considerable hard work. Indeed, man is a microcosm of the animal world. The nature of all of the animals that preceded his creation is a part of him. He must refine and cleanse himself of any base character traits as he ascends the ladder of spirituality. He must recreate himself and become G-d-like. To accomplish this takes more than hard work; it requires Divine assistance.

Man was created with incredible potential for greatness and perfection. Maximizing this potential is an extension of the work of creation, and, thus, it brings to fruition the Divine statement, “Let Us make man.” The final product, a mature, spiritually, ethically and morally correct man, is the ultimate goal of Hashem’s creation. It is Hashem’s desire that man complete this maturation process by his own efforts. Due to the extreme difficulty of this process, Hashem lends a hand, as if He is addressing the newly- fashioned creation we call man, saying, “Let Us do it together. I will give you the potential and the capabilities, and I will assist you in the process. The actual work, however, must be the result of your own doing.” Man is truly a partner in the work of creation. The flip side, however, is quite unnerving. If man does not work to achieve his potential, he essentially has a hand in destroying Hashem’s creation. It is all up to us.