

## And Elokim said, “Let us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness.” (1:26)

*Chazal (Midrash)* teach, “When Moshe *Rabbeinu* wrote the Torah (as dictated to him by Hashem), he came to this *pasuk*, “Let Us make...” which is written in the plural, thus implying the notion that there might *chas v’shalom*, Heaven forbid, be more than one Creator. *Ribbono Shel Olam!* Why did You give the heretics a pretext to suggest a plural of divinities?” Hashem replied, “Write... whoever wishes to err will do so regardless. Rather, let them learn from their Creator, Who (although He) created all, still consulted with the Ministering Angels.” Thus, Hashem taught us that, regardless of one’s greatness, he should always consult with others.

The *Chasam Sofer*, *zl*, ruled that the Orthodox community should adopt the principle of “Austritt/Secession,” separating the Orthodox Jewish community from its nonobservant counterpart (Similar to what *Horav S.R. Hirsch*, *zl*, did in Frankfurt, Germany). In response, some came with a *taaneh*, accusation: This separation will undermine our efforts to influence the non-observant community positively. They felt that as long as they maintained even a somewhat diplomatic relationship with non-observant Jews, it was possible to circumvent the possibility of their complete alienation from the Torah way of life.

The *talmidei Chasam Sofer* (his students) replied with the above words of *Chazal*. It is not our responsibility to tolerate anything less than complete *shleimus*, perfection, in our relationship with Hashem, in order to prevent the heretics from descending further down the ladder to the abyss. *Emes*, truth, must remain unvarnished, regardless of the price. We do not compromise our religious beliefs in order to prevent them from plummeting to spiritual extinction.

This has been the *shitah*, principle, by which our Torah leadership has been guided in their recognition of, and relationship with the secular streams. Sharing a dais, a conference, with them implicitly acknowledges and validates their antithetical Torah beliefs. We wish them well, but we cannot allow them to achieve legitimacy by our association with them – even if this means having a religious division.

We should not forget *Horav Elchonon Wasserman*’s position *vis-à-vis* the heretics who deny *Torah min ha’Shomayim*, Torah from Heaven, with Hashem as the Divine Author of the Torah. Their denial neither has anything to do with principle, nor is it an error in *hashkafah*, Jewish philosophy. It is purely *taaveh*, victims of lust, desire, who seek to follow their hearts and live like the gentiles. What restrains them from adopting the secular lifestyle? The Torah! They simply do away with it, so that they can do whatever they want.

The Jew who seeks the truth will understand the lesson of *Naaseh Adam*, “Let us make man.” The one who seeks to live a life of unrestrained debauchery will find any and every excuse to criticize the Torah. We will not change them. Let us not allow them to change us.