

PARASHAS BEREISHIS

Let Us Make Man

Why would the Creator need any help to complete the work of creation? Surely, the One who formed the world out of nothingness, who created all the hosts of the heavens and the teeming life of the earth, was perfectly capable of creating anything He chose to create. And yet, on the seventh day of creation, He said, "*Naaseh adam*. Let us make man." Whose help was He seeking? And why?

The Sages explain that Hashem was consulting with the angels, inviting their participation in the process of creating mankind. Although He obviously did not need their participation, Hashem was teaching us to be sensitive to protocol and proper behavior. Before undertaking a major project, consult with others.

The questions, however, continue to baffle. The angels were created on the third day, yet Hashem did not consult with them until the sixth day when He created mankind. Why didn't he invite their input when He was creating the mountains and the valleys, the trees and the flowers, the animals and the fishes?

The commentators explain that the creation of mankind was indeed the most appropriate setting for teaching the lessons of proper etiquette. How do we measure the worth of a person? On the one hand, every person is infinitely valuable, worthy of having the entire universe created for his sake, as the Sages tell us. On the other hand, there are people who are undoubtedly a disgrace to their purpose and design.

How then do we evaluate a person? We see if he is attuned to others or if he is totally egocentric. Only a person who recognizes that there is much to be learned from the knowledge and experience of his peers, who is sensitive to the feelings and sensibilities of others, truly has the potential for growth and fulfillment as a sublime human being.

Therefore, it was in the context of the creation of man that Hashem teaches us this important lesson. A tree is a tree and a flower is a flower no matter what, but a human being who has no use for other people's advice is not much of a human being. He is not a *mensch*.

A young lady came to seek the advice of a great sage.

"I am so confused," she said. "I have many suitors who have asked my hand in marriage. They all have such fine qualities, and I simply cannot make up my mind. What shall I do?"

"Tell me about their qualities," said the sage.

“Well, they are all handsome and well-established. I enjoy their company, they are so entertaining. Why, I can sit and listen to any of them for hours and hours.”

The sage shook his head. “These are not the qualities you should be seeking. It is all good and well if a man is handsome and wealthy, but does he have a good character? Is he a fine person? As for their being so entertaining, it is far more important that your husband be a good listener than a good talker. Look for a fine man who knows how to listen. He will bring you happiness.”

In our own lives, we must learn to differentiate between self-confidence, which is an admirable quality, and egotism, which is not. It is all good and well to believe in one's own talents and abilities. The truly wise person, however, knows that all people have limitations, and there is always someone of value to be learned from other people. And even in situations where other people do not have anything worthwhile to contribute, the wise person will be sensitive to their feelings and make them feel involved and helpful. If we can find it in ourselves to overcome our egotistic tendencies and behave in the sublime manner of which human beings are capable, we will reap not only spiritual rewards but material and emotional rewards as well.