

“Hashem before Whom I have walked, will send His angel with you.” (24:40)

Avraham *Avinu*’s expression characterizes his relationship with Hashem in terms of one “before Whom I have walked.” *Rashi*, in *Parashas Noach* (6:9), distinguishes between Avraham and Noach, about whom it is written, “Noach walked with G-d.” Noach walked with Hashem, he required Hashem’s support to uphold him in his righteousness, while Avraham drew strength from within himself and walked in his righteousness by himself.

Horav Nosson Wachtfogel, z.l., explains the depth of Avraham’s “walking by himself” in the following manner. He cites the *pasuk* in *Yeshayahu* 51:1-2, where the *Navi* speaks to the righteous Jews, “Listen to me, O pursuers of righteousness, O seekers of Hashem...Look to Avraham your forefather and to Sarah who bore you, for when he was yet alone did I summon him and bless him and made him many.” The *Navi* seems to be implying that Avraham’s distinction was in the fact that he was called “*echad*,” one. Furthermore, we note the *Talmud Pesachim* 118a, which cites Hashem *Yisborach* saying that He spared Avraham from the *kivshan ha’eish*, fiery cauldron, because “I am a *Yachid*, one (individual) in My world, and he (Avraham) is also a *yachid*, in his world. It is only appropriate that a *Yachid* save a *yachid*.”

Avraham’s distinction was in his being a *yachid*, an individual. *Rav* Nosson submits that this does not mean that it was Avraham’s independence that distinguished him, because independence is not necessarily a virtue. One must be willing to listen, to be inclined to “bend” a little and defer to others who might be more knowledgeable or more experienced. Rather, the advantage of being a *yachid* lies in one’s ability to take the initiative, to take a stand and not always be a follower. Avraham *Avinu* taught us a significant lesson: one must be prepared to learn, to take his own initiative – when necessary. This does not preclude the importance of following. It is just very important to know whom to follow.