

And Hashem appeared unto him (Avraham) in Elonei Mamre . . . and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold three men stood over him and he ran to meet them . . . and he took curd and milk and the calf which he prepared and set it before them. (18:1,2,8)

The *Torah's* narrative elaborates Avraham's unparalleled performance of *hachnosas orchim*, hospitality to wayfarers. Indeed, many *halachos* regarding the proper performance of *chesed*, kindness, are derived from this *pasuk*. *Rabbi A. Pam, Shlita*, makes a noteworthy observation. When Avraham noticed the three strangers, he was personally in the midst of receiving the *Shechinah*. He was completely withdrawn from any form of physical sensation. The world of *gashmius*, materialism, was theoretical.

When the opportunity to perform kindness surfaced, however, he immediately turned to prepare food for the guests. Nothing was spared. A sumptuous meal with all of the trimmings was prepared. Suddenly, Avraham became alert to the taste of food.

He became sensitive to his guests likes and dislikes, and he made every effort to serve them a meal which was both tasty and satisfying. How does one transform so quickly?

Rabbi Pam explains that this is Avraham's distinctiveness. He understood that to perform *chesed* means to sensitize one's entire essence to be in harmony with another human being. One must connect with the other fellow to the extent that he relates to his needs as if they were his own. His own friend's sensitivities must be internalized into his being so that he personally experiences them. *Chesed* fuses two people into one. In relationship to Hashem, Avraham viewed materialism as abstract. When his obligation to his fellow man surfaced, he "felt" their needs. Sometimes we have to descend to earth in order to be sensitive to the needs of our fellow man as if they were our own. In reality, his needs are our own needs.