

"He took cream and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed these before them." (18:8)

Rashi explains that Avraham did not serve any bread, since Sarah had become a *niddah*, ritually unclean on that day. Therefore, her dough was considered to be *tamei*, unclean. The *Talmud* in *Bava Metzia* 87a states that Avraham *Avinu* was careful to eat *chullin*, unconsecrated food, only if it was ritually clean. Consequently, he would not give the bread that had become contaminated to his three guests. We may question the approach which caused Avraham to be so exacting with his guests. After all, according to *halacha* one may eat *chullin* that is *tamei*. Avraham *Avinu* had accepted upon himself the *chumrah*, restriction, of eating *chullin* only when it was *tahor*, ritually clean. Why did he insist upon imposing this personal restriction upon his guests? This is especially puzzling since he assumed these wayfarers were Arabs who were obviously not limited to the restrictions of *Torah* law!

Horav M.D. Soloveitchik, Shlita, infers from Avraham *Avinu's* behavior a profound lesson concerning the manner and the extent to which one must endeavor to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *hachnasos orchim*, hospitality to wayfarers. He relates a story concerning *Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, z.l.* During the *Yom Tov* of *Succos*, *Rav* Chaim Ozer was very ill and extremely weak. A visitor, who was unaware of the *Rav's* weakened condition, came from out of town to visit him. *Rav* Chaim Ozer immediately invited the guest to join him in the *succah* to eat. Afterwards, his students questioned him about why he went into the *succah* in his frail condition. Since one who is ill is exempt from the *mitzvah* of *succah*, the *Rav* should have remained in the house. *Rav* Chaim Ozer responded that the dispensation of illness only applies to the *mitzvah* of *succah*. It does not, however, pertain to the *mitzvah* of *hachnasos orchim*. Because the visitor would probably feel uncomfortable eating alone in the *succah*, the *Rav* felt obligated to come down and join his guest in the *succah*.

From the behavior of our *gedolim*, we learn that a visitor must sense an affinity to his host family as if he himself were a member of that family. It is incumbent upon the host to show that level of hospitality. This means that we are required to supply a guest with food *kosher* to "his" standards, even if we do not subscribe to the same *kashrus* standards. Conversely, whatever special restrictions we place upon ourselves, we should also assume for our guests. Avraham *Avinu* teaches us that whatever was not acceptable to be placed on his own table was similarly not good enough to serve to others!