

Thanksgiving

It's a quiet afternoon and I am sitting at the round table that serves as a desk in my office. The late fall light coming through the blinds is fading yet I've neglected to switch the overhead light on. I'm checking out a pile of mail and internal messages when I come upon a copy of a handwritten letter with the following note attached: Jim - This made my day. Thought you might like it too. - Jen

Printed in the large block style of a child learning to write is:

Dear Shelter,

I'm 8 years old and my sister is five. We just celebrated rosh hashana and yom kipper. Since last year's holiday we collected and saved our change for Tzedakuh. Tzedakuh is sharing what we have with someone in need. Last night we rolled \$81.00 for you. Please use this money for food and baby things.

Sincerely from

Adelle and EMMA

I put the note down and leaned back in my chair. When I picked it up again to read I found myself whistling the old CSNY song "Teach Your Children Well."

My thoughts first turned to my own children, who are fairly close in age to Adelle and Emma. I wondered if they would be as willing to share. I questioned how effective my wife and I have been at teaching them the important things of life.

I then thought of the women and children for whom this gift was intended. What meaning would it have for them. Living in a battered women's shelter is an isolating and stressful experience for families. Women in this shelter are in hiding, cut off from the familiar, buffeted by the howling winds of fear, anxiety, concern for their safety and the safety of their children. I wondered whether they would connect with the thought behind and the meaning implicit in the young sisters' gift.

Isn't this gift an act of both faith in the present and hope for the future, I thought as I opened the door and exited my office into the long, empty but well illuminated corridor.

On behalf of those in need, thank you Adelle and Emma.

James T. Cuddy
December, 1997