

Sacred Giving: A Story

In New York there is a Soup Kitchen, a place where people can come for dinner one evening a week, which is run by volunteers from the rabbinical school that houses the program.

People who come for dinner are referred to as “guests.” They are seated at small round tables, where they can talk and hear one another. Guests are served their food by the students. There is no lining up and no institutional-style seating.

There are flowers at the center of each table. The flowers are plastic, but they’re pretty and pleasantly arranged.

*Often there will be a student with musical ability playing during dinner. One student might have a collection of buttons and is repairing guests’ coats while they are eating. There are warm clothes to take, as well as toiletries – soap, shampoo, toothbrushes – if any of the “**guests**” need them.*

The students who organize the Soup Kitchen hold fundraisers to help pay the bills and welcome the help of people who are willing to come.

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The students who run this Soup Kitchen know that even though they supply important nutritional needs to their guests, it’s not just about the food!

- What would you say is a major concern of the organizers, beyond the issue of hunger? What evidence do you see of that?
- Sometimes we are so pre-occupied with WHAT we do that we forget the importance of HOW we do it! What can you say about the rabbinical students who run the Soup Kitchen?

Teacher Note: Optional - Plan a class visit to a local Soup Kitchen. Plan, in conjunction with a local sponsoring philanthropic organization, what the class might bring or do at the time of the visit to provide something ‘extra’ in addition to the nutrition that the meal provides. If your class goes to help at a local Soup Kitchen, be ready to eat after the guests have finished and to study some Jewish texts along with your food.

