

It is ironic, but entirely possible, that the mechanisms developed by organized Jewry to provide philanthropic aid to Israel have, in a number of ways, both impeded a closer personal relationship with Israel and stifled Israeli initiative.

The major conduits of fund raising for Israel are the UJA and Israel Bonds. Invariably these funds are allocated to, and disposed of by, governmental agencies in Israel for ongoing services and projects. In the lively competition for these funds, municipalities and government ministries obviously hold more cards than private, volunteer citizens groups. The government and its agencies are the recipients of the bulk of funds raised for Israel, and they decide what projects and which groups will benefit and which will not. And from the diaspora point of view, it is easier to deal with one recipient than with hundreds; presumably, the government also has the advantage of knowing the best way to use the funds. While the system has worked fairly well for three decades, in recent years there have also been some negative by-products.

With or without government blessings, Israeli citizens have, over the years, established a rather large network of private, non-profit social services. The womens' organizations, from Hadassah to Mizrahi,

Eliezer D. Jaffe of the School of Social Work at the Hebrew University, was formerly head of the Jerusalem Municipal Welfare Department and a member of the Prime Minister's Committee on Disadvantaged Youth.

have developed their own constituencies abroad for fund raising and have also lobbied hard for funds from the government. Keren Yiladeinu, Chabad, Alin, Akim, and literally thousands of other organizations have fought their way into the welfare scene by this same route. And yet hundreds of others, perhaps equally important and "respectable" welfare ideas and enterprises, have failed to survive the fund raising test for lack of political savvy and clout.

The result has been a Darwinian "survival of the fittest" in Israeli welfare. But have all the best really survived? Were all the vanquished social services really the worst? In my opinion, many good services never got off the ground because they could not find funds, and still other innovative grass roots ideas died a stillbirth because they were contrary to establishment ideas, or they were too threatening and independent of government control. This is one reason, for example, that Israel still has no private (non-profit) legal aid for the disadvantaged, no private (non-profit) adoption or foster care agencies, no strong civil rights organization, and few meaningful citizen lobbies in welfare services. Adult education for advocacy and for consumer organization is in a pathetic state.

On the American philanthropic scene, fund raising for Israel has been dichotomized into "chore" (UJA) and "schnorr" (aid to the "independents"). The UJA effort has tended to deal in stereotypic welfare needs of Israel, like "the aged," "the poor," "the disadvantaged," and "the children," with very little personalization and involvement in what these terms

mean. Giving has, for many, become mechanical, and is often primarily related to status in the local community rather than to the needs that are being addressed. Fund raising has not been an in-depth, educational process, nor one that has led to real partnership between diaspora Jews and Israelis.

One way to resolve the dilemma of Israelis in-search-of-resources-for-services (the "schnorrers") and diaspora Jews in-search-of-personal-relationships-with-life-in-Israel might be to institutionalize and "legitimize" independent philanthropy as a percentage of one's total contribution to Israel. For example, if a person annually donates \$2,000 to the UJA he might, under this plan, independently give 10 percent (or \$200) to an Israeli organization of *his* choice. A "Directory of Israeli Non-Profit Social Service Organizations" could be drawn up by an independent, non-governmental panel of Israeli welfare specialists who would provide a professional description of each service and perhaps even a rating recommendation as well. Senior social work students, with proper professional supervision and clear criteria could do the job quite adequately, and the Directory could be updated annually without too much cost. This might open the door to many struggling citizens' welfare groups here in Israel so that Jews abroad could read about them and decide whether to lend them a hand.

The funds earmarked for organizations described in the "Directory" could be donated directly to the recipient organization in Israel, or, for purposes of tax-exemption, they could be

handled by a special department of the UJA specifically created for "the 10 percent gifts," or by Sidney Musers' Israel Endowment Foundation which channels private donations to Israel. The Directory could be placed in every Jewish Community Center in the world, in every Jewish Community Federation, and in synagogue libraries.

I do not expect my colleagues at the UJA to be overly enthusiastic about skimming 10 percent of all current donations, so to make the idea of personalizing aid to Israel more palatable. Perhaps "the 10 percent gift" can be added to the top, as an additional gift beyond the "regular" UJA grant.

In any case, we must find some mechanism for bringing about a more personal interest in social problems and services in Israel between Jews in the diaspora and self-help organizations in Israel. We have to find a way to dilute the monopoly in Israel of local and national government which gives them the exclusive power to define what is respectable and acceptable

in social services and grassroots efforts. And we must find a way to open up, in an honorable, professional way, the competition in Israel for private welfare dollars from Jews abroad.

If I were to propose the idea of developing an independent "Israel Director of Non-Profit Social Services" as a project for funding to the Israeli government or to the UJA, it would probably go over like a lead balloon. And that is exactly what I'm talking about.

For those in Israel and abroad who are considering making personal, independent grants for Israeli welfare work, let me suggest seven principles as a guide:

1. Don't support programs in Israel that you wouldn't support in your home town. "Orphan" homes and institutions for babies are out, everywhere. Ask your local social service experts whether the basic idea you have heard about is sound in principle. Then go after details of how the program is to be implemented in Israel.
2. Don't ever give money in Israel without insisting on accountability for your funds, and on professional evaluation of the service. Don't ever settle for pictures of smiling children and heart breaking or tear-jerking success stories.
3. Don't get into a situation where you are raising funds on an ongoing basis for organizations which do not allow you to say how those monies are spent. Welfare organizations owe you a detailed description of their allocation process, and a hearing for your comments. They are also free, of course, to disagree with your comments and to reject your money. But communication must be a two-way street.
4. Do not get involved in projects that should be the responsibility of the Israeli government, unless the projects are catalytic experiments or demonstrations to entice government agencies into action.
5. Avoid buying into programs that may be outdated and may perpetuate practices that are no longer in tune with Israel's changing needs. Choose innovative projects and have

the nerve to do things that may be unpopular at City Hall, but popular with grassroots sponsors who are enthusiastic in initiating them.

6. Do not be afraid of getting involved in social action and advocacy ventures, particularly those which hold promise of influencing legislation nationally or locally in Israel. Always ask yourself this question: "What will be the influence of this project (i.e. your investment) five or ten years from now?" Are any new policies or ongoing services likely to spin-off from your effort? Or is it strictly a hit-and-run project? Don't settle for too much hit-and-run.

7. *Do your homework:* Never give money without getting educated about the issues, differences of opinion, and the mechanics of social work in the specific area that you are considering making a grant. Donors living abroad should press their Federation people to help them check out facts, should ask their relatives in Israel to provide information, and for the names of anyone else who can be of help. Foreign donors who are planning a visit here should tour *two days less* and use the time to check out potential projects. And don't be apologetic about it; it's your money so be hardhearted as to how you invest it in welfare enterprises. Be a partner, not a tourist, when you donate money to Israel.

Whatever you choose to support, I personally would respect you less if you didn't take your philanthropy seriously. Don't always judge the success of your investment by how many friends you make or their status in Israeli society. Sometimes you can judge success by listing the people you upset by your efforts.

Finally, and not at all with tongue in cheek, I would say to foreign philanthropists who are unhappy about how "their" Israeli program is run the same thing I answered my mother Sarah when she didn't like the way her little boy Eliezer washed the dishes: "Mom, if you don't like the way I'm doing it, come on over and do it yourself." Now that's the height of philanthropy! ★

MAY, 1979

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 5