



THE BOOK REVIEW

Giving Wisely:
The Israel Guide to Non-Profit
Volunteer Social Services
in Israel.
1982, 656 pages,

Author:
Prof. Eliezer Jaffe
School of Social Welfare
The Hebrew University of
Jerusalem

Publisher:
Koren Publishers
33 Herzog Street
Jerusalem, Israel

Distributor:
The Jerusalem Post
120 E. 56th Street
(Suite 840),
New York, New York 10022
U.S.A. Tel: (212) 355-4440

Reviewed by
Rabbi Jack Riemer

Iwish that I could share this book with every person who wants to know what Israel is really like, for it is an extraordinary document. It is a compendium of the charitable organizations in the land. It is made up of page after page of organizations, lists of their officers, descriptions of their budgets, and statements of their purposes. As I read it, I kept saying to myself: "MI K'AMCHA YISRAEL" — Who is like you, O Israel — for I don't know of another country in the world that could publish a book like this.

For instance, there is a charitable organization called "Keren Hateshuvah" which was founded by the rabbis of the Police Department and the prisons. What they do is

adopt young delinquents as they come out of prison and work to rehabilitate them. Wouldn't that be a wonderful agency for us to have here? Wouldn't it be great if we could find people here who would pay attention to criminals when they came out of prison, who would help them find jobs and who would guide them back into constructive living? Sure it would be great, but the idea sounds so threatening, so unrealistic, so impractical, that most of us would shy away from such a venture. It is a great idea, but who would do it? And yet such a group exists in Israel.

And so it goes all through this book. There are societies that give free loans, societies that loan out wedding dresses to poor brides, societies that give out food to the poor before the holidays, societies that give charity in secret, etc. etc. There are more than 656 pages of such societies in a land with a population half that of New York City.

These groups are not intended to replace the United Jewish Appeal or any of the other major fund-raising agencies. But they are available for those people who want to major in one particular mitzvah, who want to focus on one cause so that they can get the satisfaction of knowing just where and how their money helping.

One of my favorite childhood memories is of the mail that used to come to our house during the month before Pesach and the month before Rosh Hashanah. It would usually come in the form of envelopes with cellophane windows and with return addresses in Jerusalem or Brooklyn. These were requests for help for orphanages, old-age homes, yeshivot, and other charities. We children used to tease our father as he made out checks for all of them. We would ask him how did he know that they were all bona fide charities. He would answer that it was not for him to be their examiner.

If a Jew holds out his hand for help, one must help him. Better to be fooled than to be so careful and so cautious that you turn down someone who is worthy.

My father would have found this book unnecessary. He would not have used it to look up an agency that sent an emissary to his door to make sure that it was legitimate. But for those of us who want more reassurance and more guarantees before we give our donations, this book will be a handy reference work. It will enable us to check out in a moment the authenticity of anyone who comes to ask for our aid.

But I would urge you to get a copy of this book and keep it on your desk, as I do, for another reason. Whenever you hear Israel maligned or misjudged, whenever you hear it spoken of as a land of soldiers or conquerors, or whenever you feel depressed about the state of Jewish life, open this book and browse through its pages for a few minutes. See how many people there are in Israel who are doing mitzvot, quietly, personally, and voluntarily. See a different side of Israel from the one that we usually see in the newspapers here. See how, even though we live in an impersonal society in which fund raising and charity work have to be done in a sophisticated way, there are nevertheless still people who do good deeds retail and not wholesale, one at a time, face to face, heart to heart. See that there are people who are helping people, not only by writing checks but by their own personal involvement. See and be pleased. See and be proud.

This book is a compendium of names, facts and figures, and yet I keep it on my desk, not far from my Bible and my prayerbook, and I browse in it often, and consider it a sacred book. I invite you to do the same.

Rabbi Riemer of Cong. Beth El of La Jolla, Cal. is a former editor of "Conservative Judaism".

Pleaders and Protestors:
The Future of Citizens'
Organizations in Israel.
1980,

Author:
Prof. Eliezer Jaffe
School of Social Welfare
The Hebrew University of
Jerusalem

Publisher:
American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th Street
New York, New York

Reviewed by
Efreim Nulman
Yeshiva University

In the Foreword, the author stated that his purpose in writing this report on the "prospects of citizen involvement in Israel was not primarily academic," but rather "to inform both American Jews and Israelis about this important and rapidly changing section of the nation's life and thereby encourage them to help in some way with the never-ending task of building a better Israel." In this brief report, Jaffe has most certainly accomplished his goal. His ideological commitment to the enhancement of life in Israel is evident, and the pragmatic approach that he operationalized in "Zahavi" (Association for the Rights of Families Blessed with Children) displayed the strength of that commitment. Moreover, although he was not overtly concerned about education in this report, his description of the mechanisms for citizen involvement and social change are applicable for any social worker involved in the attempt to effect social change.

Jaffe explained that during the seventies citizen activity had burgeoned in Israel, both in regard to the Black Panther episode in 1971 and the mass demonstrations led by Motti Ashkenazi in 1973. Both incidents "galvanized previously inert population groups into action and taught them the power

of the people." He predicts a growing role for client groups in the eighties and details his work as the co-founder of "Zahavi" (along with Avraham Danino). Jaffe honestly examines the pitfalls and growing pains of an organization that is dedicated to establishing rights for Israel's 80,000 large families without relying on professional or political intermediaries. He describes the inherent dichotomy that exists for those working within the larger system whereby government approval is sought but government dependence is rejected. Zahavi has been effective in various legislative efforts and self-help and service projects for larger families. However, prior to that point, Jaffe had to grapple with paradoxical messages that were given to citizens. On the one hand, Israel desires higher birthrates as a form of "internal immigration". On the other hand, however, there is a tendency to condemn people with large families as irresponsible parasites. That condemnation often takes the form of ethnic slurs, since most big families are either Middle-Eastern Sephardim or orthodox Ashkenazim.

For many Americans, including this reviewer, the degree of bigotry that exists in Israel was surprising. Perhaps those insights that were shared by Jaffe would be inspirational for those merely considering "aliyah", or would help those who consider making independent grants to welfare programs in Israel to do so in a structured and intelligent manner, as suggested by Jaffe in his nine "suggested rules" on independent grants. Notwithstanding one's motivation for reading this report, it is suggested reading for any social worker or student wishing to gain a better understanding of citizens' organizations in Israel, or for any lay reader wishing to enhance his/her knowledge about the current human condition in the Jewish State.

Reprinted from *The Jewish Social Work Forum*, Vol. 18, 1982, 76-80.