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Charities

Giving Wisely by Eliezer Jaffe. Jerusalem, Keren Publishers. 656 pp. \$18.00. Distributor: The Jerusalem Post, 120 E. 56 St. (Suite 840), N.Y., N.Y. 10022, U.S.A.

Jack Riemer

I WISH that I could share this book with everyone who wants to know what Israel is really like, for it is an extraordinary document. It lists Israeli charitable organizations and their officers, and provides descriptions of their budgets and statements of their purposes.

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. Then there are societies that give free loans, or loan out wedding dresses to poor brides, and there are other societies that provide food for the poor before the holidays, or secret charity. There are more than six hundred and fifty-six pages of such societies. They 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 focus on one cause so that they can get the satisfaction of knowing just where and how their money is helping.

ONE OF my favourite childhood memories is of the mail that used to come to our house during the month before Pesach and the month before Rosh Hashana. 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 from orphanages, old age homes, *yeshivot*, and other charities. We children used to tease our father as he made out cheques for them. We would ask him how he knew 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 careful and turn down someone worthy.

My father would have found this book unnecessary. But for those of us who want more reassurance, it will be a handy reference work. It will enable us to check out in a moment the authenticity of anyone who comes to us for help.

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 whenever you feel depressed about the state of Jewish life, open this book and browse through it for a few minutes. See how many people there are in Israel who are doing *mitsvot*, quietly, personally, and voluntarily. See another side of Israel from the one we usually see in newspapers here. For, 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, and who help not only by writing cheques but through their own personal involvement. □