



ELIEZER JAFFE (Photo by Esteban Alterman)

Giving from the head and the heart

Effective philanthropy requires more than a checkbook

By Lara Berman

“If I had a shekel for every philanthropist who asked for advice about charity, I could retire in style,” says Eliezer Jaffe, a leading authority in the area of giving money in Israel.

On the walls of his office, there are numerous awards and certificates for his academic and community achievements, but there is no award for good advice - which has been one of Jaffe's major contributions to the field of philanthropy.

Jaffe offers the kind of advice about money that money

just can't buy. For over 40 years, philanthropists have been asking Jaffe how they should donate their money and, just over 20 years ago, he decided to make his advice more accessible.

In the early 1980s, Jaffe, then a lecturer at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work of the Hebrew University and today a professor emeritus, came to realize that many donors were “in the dark...like tourists in Disneyland,” he says. Hundreds of organizations needed funding and donors did not know how to choose to whom to give their money. When they did make donations, the funds often went to large agencies that distributed the funds as they saw fit. This meant that philanthropists often did not know where their money was actually going.

Jaffe's aim was to help make direct matches between nonprofit organizations and donors who were looking for something very specific. This led to the publishing of “Giving Wisely,” his guide to giving money in Israel. This book listed all the registered nonprofit organizations (NPO, or *amutot* in Hebrew) in Israel and offered a step-by-step introduction for those looking to start philanthropic endeavors.

As the list of NPOs grew and more donors came on the scene, Jaffe realized there was a need to make regular updates to his material, and he wanted to make the information more accessible to the Diaspora community. So, in 2000, Jaffe started his website www.givingwisely.org, where registered NPOs can update their profiles and new NPOs can publicize their causes free of charge.

When asked for guidance about where to donate money, Jaffe explains that he is “always reluctant” to tell people where to make contributions. He understands that what is important to one person might not be as important to someone else. His one steadfast piece of advice is to always put your money where your heart is.

Jaffe insists you should treat your donation like any other financial investment; research the matter thoroughly and then give to an organization that you feel passionate about. He says that a deeper level of personal interest is required to ensure donors gain an emotional return on their investment. He also reminds philanthropists to check if potential recipients are officially registered and hold all the necessary licenses from the NPO Registrar and the Ministry of Finance.