

Broad-Based Philanthropy

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The JTA **reports** that **Eli and Edythe Broad** of Los Angeles recently pledged to give away 75% of their estimated \$5.7 billion total wealth, either during or after their lifetimes. Sadly, their heirs will have to get by with an inheritance of merely \$1.4 billion. (I jest, of course. *Kol hakavod* to the Broad family for this remarkable and noble act of philanthropy.)

No word on how much, if any, of this beneficence might be given to Jewish causes. It doesn't look enormously promising for explicitly Jewish causes, to judge from (only a cursory glance at) **The Broad Foundation's website**. The Foundation's mission is "to advance entrepreneurship for the public good in education, science and the arts." (These are wonderful causes, and all Jews should applaud this quintessentially Jewish spirit of *tzedakah* that demonstrates care for all people.) The Broads do support Jewish causes, albeit in smaller amounts; **according to this 2003 article from the LA Jewish Journal**, they gave a total of \$350 million in 2002, of which \$2 million (just over half of 1%) went to Jewish causes.

The Broads' giving pattern seems to be typical of the general trend in Jewish philanthropy. As the JTA article notes, **a 2003 study of Jewish "mega-gifts"** by **Gary A. Tobin, Jeffrey R. Solomon** and **Alexander C. Karp** noted that while "American Jews are generous well beyond their community numbers," contributing 22% of American mega-gifts, "Jewish organizations received a minute proportion of Jewish mega-dollars." Most such gifts go to "education, health, and arts/culture." The Broads, then, are broadly representative.

Jewish organizations do not wish (heaven forbid) to *stifle* this kind of universalistic spirit of giving; many Jewish communal leaders do, however, tend to wish that such Jewish mega-donors would spend a little more than half of a percentage point of their giving budgets in helping their fellow members of the tribe, or even to help the non-Jewish needy under publicly Jewish auspices.

But then, one mustn't make predications or assumptions. It remains to be seen what projects the Broads' generous pledge will fund. Whatever causes they turn out to be, the Broads' philanthropic spirit should be honored and emulated.