

Charging for Charity

By E.B. Solomont

A new specialty credit card that generates charity dollars for Israel while racking up redeemable points is being launched by two businessmen who know the value of putting money where the heart is.

The Heritage Card, officially set to launch in the fall of 2005, is the brainchild of Menachem Landau and Zev Dobuler, American-born immigrants to Israel who have combined their business sense with a passion for Israel to boost charity and promote tourism in the Jewish state.

Like other affinity cards most commonly available through universities and other non-profit organizations, the Heritage Card's benefits are based on consumer spending;

unlike other cards already on the market, though, this bank-issued card will be the first of its kind to target Israeli charities as well as to promote Israeli tourism through redeemable points and discounts on travel-related products and services.

"We wanted to find a way to get the American supporters of Israel more involved on a day-to-day basis with the Israeli economy," said Landau, who founded and heads Heritage Affinity Services – producers of the card – with Dobuler.

Banking on consumer spending, the Heritage Card operates as an affinity card and rewards card in one: Each time a credit card is used, the bank charges the merchant a transaction fee. The Heritage Card will donate a percentage of this pre-existing transaction fee to

Charge for Charity (cont.) organizations that support Israel. This takes place at no extra cost to the cardholder, who also earns redeemable points with every purchase.

Landau and Dobuler said they hope a desire to help Israel, as well as rewards like discounts and redeemable points will attract cardholders.

"We want to support Israeli charities, boost tourism and help Israel's economy in a multitude of ways," said Dobuler, who added that the card's emphasis on tourism underscores the important role that visitors play in the Israeli economy.

Already, some 40 charities – including hospitals, universities and social service agencies – have signed on with HAS, and over 200 Israeli merchants are planning to offer discounts at stores, museums and restaurants in Israel to consumers who use their Heritage Cards there.

Companies like El Al and ISRAIR airlines, Avis and Budget rental cars and the Sheraton and Dan Hotel chains in Israel have contracts with HAS to offer discounts and upgrades to

reward customers. HAS is also developing a network of American establishments to offer cardholders discounts and rewards.

Cardholders can select up to five charities to support via their Heritage Cards.

"The card is intended to unify anyone that supports Israel, while individually allowing each cardholder to choose the type of charity he or she wants to support," said Karin Dimant, vice president of marketing for HAS.

Landau and Dobuler applaud other efforts to boost tourism and revenue in Israel by North American Jews – and there are many, via the Internet and direct donations – but they think their solution offers the best way to fully integrate charitable giving in day-to-day life.

"Americans tend to use their credit cards very heavily. Through every purchase, the Heritage Card allows cardholders to support the State of Israel," said Landau.

Added Dobuler: "Our goal is to give cardholders an opportunity to make a difference and live Israel everyday."

