

Frequently Asked Questions

What are “Discretionary Tzedakah Dollars”?

This refers to charitable monies that you distribute at your discretion. It does not include tuition or other fees for services that you receive.

What about Tzedakah monies used to help family members?

These monies should not be included in your calculations of discretionary dollars, as the obligation to assist family members – local or otherwise – takes precedence over other charitable causes.

What if I have previously made a multi-year commitment that does not fit within these guidelines?

You must of course honor any existing outstanding commitments to organizations and individuals wherever they may be located. Nevertheless please join in the pledge for your future charitable allocations.

What about the many appeals that are made to us by individuals and organizations from elsewhere?

Please continue to respond and to give as you can. We must continue to support and to encourage giving to good causes and needy individuals wherever they may be located. The Pledge is designed not to exclude non-local causes, but to help us focus on our priorities and responsibilities. It is understood however that this reallocation may in some circumstances necessitate reductions to our previous patterns of giving to other individuals or causes.

What about national organizations or Yeshivos?

These organizations should of course be supported, but only after our local causes that rely completely on us.

What if I do not have children in schools?

You should still participate. The proper funding of day school education is clearly one of our greatest challenges. Our families and our *Mechanchim* (educators) sacrifice immeasurably for the education of our children. This

responsibility needs to be shared by the entire community. In former times when Jewish communal life was stronger, taxes were imposed on all members of the community to fund the *Chinuch* of the community's children. Today we can only encourage all of the members of our community – whether they have children in the schools or not – to consider our community's schools their first priority in their *Tzedakah* allocations.

What if I am already paying very large sums to the schools for tuition?

The burden on our families to fund their childrens' education is unbelievable, and at times unbearable. Indeed our generation's *Mesirus Nefesh* on this front is astounding. The schools and their staffs also face unbelievable and often unbearable pressures to meet the enormous costs involved in educating our children. When every member of our community – parents of current students and others - will prioritize their discretionary charitable giving to their local educational institutions, we will all be doing our part, and there is hope that parents will ultimately be granted some relief from the crushing burden of tuition.

Commitment to Community Pledge

We recognize that there are many very worthy causes and needy individuals amongst our people, locally, in *Eretz Yisrael*, and around the world. The Baltimore community is known for the generous manner with which it welcomes and supports all of these causes and needs. This is a source of great pride to all of us, and we hope and pray that we are able to continue to be supportive of one and all.

At the same time, we recognize our primary responsibility to the local causes and individuals that appropriately rely primarily on us, members of the Baltimore community. We are painfully aware of the impact that the current economic downturn has had on many individuals and families in our community. And we recognize the ongoing “tuition crisis”, wherein all of our families – parents of students, as well as *Mechanchim* (educators) - sacrifice greatly for the education of our children.

As such we pledge B’li Neder:

- To continue to welcome one and all who need our help.
- To allocate a minimum of 51% of our discretionary *Tzedakah* dollars to *אנשי צדקה* (the local needy) and other local causes.
- To allocate a majority of those monies – i.e. a minimum of 26% of our total discretionary *Tzedakah* dollars – to our local schools.