

# THE LOVE YOU TAKE

by Jon Erlbaum

- This Week's **RRR** (Relevant Religious Reference): "**Speak to the Jewish people and have them TAKE for Me (G-d) an offering**" - *Exodus, 25:2*
- This Week's **SSC** (Suitable Secular Citation): "**And in the end, the love you TAKE is equal to the love you make**" - *The Beatles (in what was essentially their closing sentiment in their collective career as a Band[1])*

## BATTLE OF THE BRITS

What a dilemma! I almost went another route in deciding which "suitable secular citation" would occupy the headlining spot above. But *in the end*, it was hard to *Beat the Beatles*, so I decided to give them center stage. Nevertheless, the runner-up quote - also articulated by a prominent British chap - is worth mentioning here as well, as it eloquently echoes an essential theme in this week's Portion: the great Winston Churchill said that "We make a LIVING by what we get. We make a LIFE by what we give."

## THE LOVE WE TAKE

Both of these ideas mirror a fundamental principle regarding Tzedaka[2] gleaned from this week's Torah Portion. G-d instructs the Jews to TAKE a donation for the building of the Tabernacle. Since it is clear that He is directing the Jews to GIVE a donation, why does the Torah use the strange word choice of "TAKE"? By employing this terminology, the Torah is offering us an important insight: that when we give to someone else, we are also "taking" on behalf of ourselves.

In fact, Jewish wisdom teaches that givers ultimately gain MORE from giving than their recipients gain from receiving! True, we are ideally supposed to give based on pure and altruistic motives. But for the times that we can't seem to summon up the purest intentions, it's helpful to be aware of the rewards so that we'll continue doing the right thing (in keeping with the Torah principle "*Lo Lishmah, Bo Lishmah*": do the right thing even when you're "*not purely motivated*", and eventually the "*pure motivations will come*").

## **BOLSTERING OUR BANK ACCOUNTS - THROUGH TZEDAKA?**

Jewish sources tell us that some of the personal benefits of giving accrue in the here and now! Aside from the good feelings that come along with generous actions, we are even told that charity can help bolster our bank accounts (which leads to the ironic Jewish idea that when we are having financial difficulties, one of the remedies may very well be to give MORE Tzedaka)! In other words, to build off of Churchill's quote above, we can even help ourselves to *make a LIVING* by what we *give*! How?

Because at least 10% [3] of the money we are entrusted with[4] is supposed to be channeled through us and passed on to others as Tzedaka. So if we decide to hold on to some of that 10% - effectively clogging the pipeline - we end up blocking new funds from entering into our charge. On the other hand, each time we give Tzedaka, we are allowing new resources to enter the pipeline's supply station and thereby flow towards our jurisdiction[5].

## **YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU???**

Have you ever heard the phrase "you can't take it with you"? Is it true? Let's briefly examine this idea wearing our Jew lenses: is it possible to have money and valuables buried with us in our graves? Sure! Will they be of any use to us on our next leg of the journey[6]? Surely not! I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but we can't send a wire transfer to the next world, and it won't help to write ourselves a check to cash (in hopes of depositing it on the other side). Our financial currency simply has no value in the next world.

But fortunately, an awesome transformation takes place when we give Tzedaka: because it's a Mitzvah, Tzedaka effectively converts our dollars into spiritual currency that has everlasting value in the world to come. The same is true for other Mitzvahs and acts of giving that we perform here: they are redeemable as priceless eternal rewards (which go infinitely further than frequent flyer miles). So is it true that "you can't take it with you"? That all depends on what the "it" is. *Ironically, the only money we really CAN take with is the money we give away* (or use for Mitzvahs/acts of kindness). One woman - who obviously knew this concept well - requested in her Will to be buried not with her money, but with her *charitable receipts*[7]. Giving provides the ultimate win-win-win scenario: it allows us to genuinely help those in need, to bolster our bank accounts, and to "take it with us" in the process. ...Which leads us right back to the words of our legendary Fab Four: "and in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make".

Have a Wonderful Shabbos! Love, Jon & The Chevra

*1. As an aside, I highly recommend viewing the spectacular video of juggling sensation Chris Bliss, as he expressively juggles to the very Beatles medley that our quote is taken from. The clip is 4-plus minutes, and it starts getting unbelievable about 1 or 2 minutes into it. Make sure your volume is up:*

[www.sonnyradio.com/chrisbliss](http://www.sonnyradio.com/chrisbliss).

2. The Hebrew word "Tzedaka" is colloquially translated as "charity" but more accurately understood to mean "righteous justice" (implying that the giving of charity is not an above-and-beyond act of piety, but rather the positive fulfillment of a mandated expectation)
3. This 10% Tzedaka minimum is obviously subject to various calculations and considerations (e.g. whether to use gross or net income figures, which types of charitable causes qualify for the Mitzvah's fulfillment, etc.). Those interested in learning how to personally apply these considerations can read more and/or consult with an expert in Jewish law (please let me know if you would like me to connect you to those resources).
4. Jewish wisdom teaches that whatever money we "earn" through hard work, skills, and savvy has in actuality - from an ultimate causal standpoint - been rationed to us, in accordance with Divine determinations. It follows that whenever money comes into our charge, it has been divinely ENTRUSTED to us (for judicious safeguarding and distribution).
5. Adapted from the teachings of Rabbi David Aaron from Isralight
6. The concept of our future journey - i.e. the Next World - is an under-publicized yet essential principle of Jewish belief
7. From the teachings of Rabbi Avi Geller, from Aish.com

---

Text Copyright © 2010 by Jon Erlbaum and **Torah.org**