

# 5 Ways I'm Learning to Love Filing My Taxes

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Tax preparation season has arrived here in North America—and like so many other people, I do not enjoy preparing and filing my tax return.

I may comfort myself by saying it's just once a year, but it's still an onerous chore. My situation is complicated due to my being a self-employed writer; plus, as a dual citizen I'm required to file in both Canada and the United States, so I have to do it twice. Yuck.

So, searching for a way to see tax preparation in a positive light, I am looking beyond the tedium of gathering papers, organizing receipts, updating spreadsheets, and resolving ambiguous questions. Instead, I am wondering about the spiritual aspects of filing my tax return and how it connects to both the Baha'i teachings and life in today's world.

## 1. Closure & Calling to Account

In one sense, filing a tax return helps to bring closure to a defined time period. Regardless of the material outcome, the system calls for reckoning as well as reconciling. It invites reflection and results in order. It even seems to satisfy the intention of the following statement from Baha'u'llah, though the statement literally refers to death from our physical, earth-bound life:

**Bring thyself to account ... ere thou art summoned to a reckoning ... – Baha'u'llah, *The Hidden Words*, p. 11.**

## 2. Obedience to Government

The Baha'i writings include obedience to the laws of a justly-formed government as a fundamental principle. Therefore, I am obliged to submit forthright, honest tax information as a legal requirement. Even countries without income taxes (yes, there are a few) have a system for reporting information, generating income, and providing services throughout the population.

**... show the utmost sincerity and goodwill towards all nations; and should any soul act contrary to the laws of the government he would consider himself responsible before God ... – Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 293.**

### **3. Taxes as a Collective Enterprise**

Despite their flaws, tax systems have the potential to grow into a just, equitable means for sharing costs and for funding benefits. In theory at least, taxes can afford the means for everyone to pay their fair share. In doing so, we decrease the gap between the ultra-rich and the very poor. Of course, we presently fall lamentably short of this ideal goal, but a fair system of taxation can provide the means for equalizing access and ensuring at least a minimum standard of living for all:

**... there can be no extremes in human conditions as regards wealth and sustenance. – Abdu'l-Baha, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 36.**

### **4. Independent Thought & Opinions**

The Baha'i teachings tell me that in the future humanity will do a better job of both collecting and spending tax revenues, by using the key tool of joint consultation. Within the context of these teachings, consultation gives everyone a voice. All ideas belong to the group; participants in the process put aside individual agendas in the interest of general well-being; and the group undertakes rigorous fact-finding before making decisions. Decisions reached through consultation are implemented with no dissension, though there may be disagreement and contention along the way. Every society needs to devise fair and impartial systems for collecting taxes and for making disbursements, and as a Baha'i I believe the process itself will one day be guided by global perspectives that are free of prejudice:

**The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. – Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 87.**

### **5. A Baha'i Vision for the Future**

Where might all of this take us? The answer depends on how far into the future I dare to speculate. As a Baha'i, I do believe that someday we will have a fair, world-wide, integrated system of governance and taxation. We will eliminate extremes of wealth and poverty. All will give voluntarily, even beyond what is required. We will think of paying taxes as a privilege and not just a requirement—much like we presently view charitable donations.

As I re-read what I have written I feel lighter, happier, and more optimistic. Beyond the tedium of going through my own paperwork, I envision my desk free of clutter—and I'm content to do my part at this point in humanity's coming of age. My own effort to be obedient will perhaps contribute to helping others in an ideal, if not a material, sense. Most importantly, I hold fast to the vision of a better future for us all.