

The First Social Contract (The Ancient Tribe of Levi a Tribe of the Nation of Israel, from the Third Son of the Patriarch Jacob, Son of Isaac, Son of Avraham Birth, Activities and Rebirth)

Mordechai Ben-Menachem* and Kolel Bnei Rahel

Carob Tree Technologies Ltd, Jerusalem, Israel

*Corresponding author: Mordechai Ben-Menachem, Carob Tree Technologies Ltd, 91530, Quality mbm, Jerusalem, Israel, Tel: 055-2259763; E-mail: quality@acm.org

Rec date: Oct 02, 2016; Acc date: Oct 25, 2016; Pub date: Oct 30, 2016

Copyright: © 2016. Ben-Menachem M, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the creative commons attribution license, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited

Abstract

This article is a brief study of a sociological structure that is not well known, though 'everyone' knows of it. The tribal structure of the Israelite nation upon inception is a well-known Biblical story, but its ramifications have not been studied systematically, nor published in the professional literature. Yet, these structures lasted for nearly two millennia; so, they are clearly one of the most successful social structures in human history! The issue is not 'just' historical, as many of its ramifications are felt today, in all our daily lives and the ramifications can be applicable to many real-life situations in the world of today. This article provides a very brief discussion of social aspects of this structure.

Keywords: Sociology; Social engineering; Tribe of Levites; Israel commonwealth

Caveat

Clearly, I am a religious person and the influence that has on my personal views cannot be denied. However, a belief in the Divine is not requisite for this article. Facts speak strongly for themselves [1].

Milieu

Anyone with even the slightest familiarity with the Bible is aware that the nation of Israel was created from inception as a group of individual tribes. The tribes derived heredity from each of the sons of Jacob-also named Israel-twelve in number. Within each individual tribe, there were clans, formed from the sons of each of them, the grandsons of Jacob. Jacob's sons were born from the four wives of Jacob; each wife giving a certain 'individualism' to each of the sons. The four Matriarchs, together with each of the son's wives, in turn created certain differences between the tribes that enhanced their individualism; even to points of 'externalities' that today would be considered "racial"-e.g., Dan is somewhat Negroid in appearance [2-4]. (Ethiopian Jews are historically considered descendants of the tribe of Dan). By the time of the Exodus from Egypt, each tribe had also developed significant tribal characterizations, traditions and culture, as well as a physical size numbering tens of thousands of persons, per tribe (remember that Biblical counts only number 'Mustering Strengths', not numerical census figures).

With the events at Mount Sinai, each tribe received "job descriptions" as to their order of battle, marching sequence, camping places, future roles within the nation and much more. (not all of this is described specifically in the Biblical text; additional parts are parts of the oral torah. Of course, for Judaism, they both have equal weight.)

With entrance to the land of Israel, each of the tribes was given their individual sections of land; somewhat like modern "provinces". Tribes were each (basically) contiguous, except for Dan and Menashe. Note

that the tribe of Joseph was divided into two tribes, for each of his sons, while the tribe of Levy ceased to be 'counted' as a separate tribe-thus retaining the number twelve.

However, with all these, the responsibilities, the jobs and even the camping sequence of the tribe of Levi was the most complex; while at the same time, Levi was the numerically smallest tribe, by a very large margin; and against these added responsibilities, they received the smallest portion of apparent material recompense-no crop land.

The tribe of Levi was not allocated a contiguous parcel of crop land, as were the others. Rather, Levi was distributed among all the tribes into urban areas; the Biblical definition is "42 cities, plus the six cities of refuge." Surprisingly, in actual square kilometers of land per individual tribal member, Levy's allocation was the largest of them all [5].

While the 'primary job' of Levi was religious and ritualistic, they had many additional defined roles. The purpose of this distribution throughout the entire country was primarily educational-the Levites were responsible for education throughout the people/nation of Israel. It was also economic-though the occupation of the nation of Israel was, like all nations at the time, agricultural-a sophisticated economic structure cannot be forged unless agricultural outputs can be transformed into industrial products for efficient trade-e.g., grapes to wine, fruits to liqueurs, herbs to medicines and unguents and etcetera. In addition, all the ancillary industries needed to be available, such as glass and ceramic bottle makers. This all adds up to form an industrial base. For an efficient industrial-base to be constructed, it was necessary for both logistical efficiency and resource efficiency [6-8].

Basic local consumption trade can exist with no significant infrastructure. However, for more sophisticated and international trade, both social and industrial infrastructure must exist, and these demand extensive management and long-term national planning.

The basis for Biblical social discussion is land ownership, both agricultural land and urban land-land ownership, without landed aristocracy. Agricultural land ownership is defined by tribal regions,

and its tenure is long-term defined. Urban land proprietorship is defined initially as owned by the tribe of Levy, but is not long-term confined to them-aspects of urban land control are long-term defined, but not ownership. 'Normal' thinking at those times, and about those times, was confined to agricultural land-with this thinking extending in European culture to the present. Land and land ownership is the basic social, personal and national, clan and tribe building block [9-11].

This concept, creation of an industrial aristocracy, had never been tried before by humanity, and did not occur again, until seventeenth century Britain. Nearly every society has been based, at least initially, upon a landed aristocracy. These failed after a small number of generations. Yet, the industrial aristocracy-based society defined by the Bible lasted about one and a half millennia. This is extraordinary.

A primary source of agricultural inefficiency in agricultural societies is the laws of primogeniture. (Law of Primogeniture is the 'right' of the firstborn male child to inherit the family estate, in preference to siblings.) One aspect of this has partial coverage in Biblical law. The first-born male inherits double his siblings.

However, in such case, the estate rapidly becomes diluted to the point of agricultural inefficiency. (As a matter of fact, if implemented strictly and literally, within three generations farm size ceases to be economically viable.) Something smart needed to be done with the 'extra' males to retain viable farming sizes or the agrarian culture cannot long survive. The Bible accomplished this by creating the Levite cities, broadly distributed throughout the entire Land. These extra males went to live in the Levite cities, whose land could be sold, though not readily or simply, and thus creating a trustworthy manpower-base that could then process and market the estates' produce. This built a broad and diverse economic-base for the people of Israel. This was the basis for the vast wealth of Solomon; which cannot be explained by 'normative' natural resources.

Levy Lives Yet

Members of the tribe of Levy filled many and various roles in both the first and the second commonwealths of Israel. These roles included education, economic, managerial, national communications, military (in the first, particularly), taxes and entertainment. These roles are out of scope of this article. In ancient times, Levy, wherever possible, acted as the King's provincial representative. This was highly useful, as they could frequently fulfil 'aristocracy' functions without the legal baggage [12].

It is ultimately very significant to understand that the tribe of Levy still exists today and is readily identifiable-both as Cohens and as Levites. Remember that the Cohens are a part of the tribe of Levy. They are presently the only 'internal' clan still recognizable. However, its roles obviously differ from what they were 3,000 years ago. Today they are only ritualistic, and even there, quite limited in scope.

What does the future hold for them and for those they still serve? Some sources paint for them a quite rosy picture, which would be out-of-scope of this article [13].

The sociological aspect of Levy in ancient times was to provide the geo-physical infrastructure to 'absorb' the 'extra' sons and daughters that the agricultural land could not effectively accommodate. It cannot be emphasized sufficiently how critical a sociological role this was for those times. Without this component, all the rest collapses, as history

has shown. Will some such kind of role exist at any time in the future? This can only be speculation at this point.

Malachi, 2:4-7 discusses a specific "Brit" (agreement) between the tribe of Levy and Heaven, "Brit Levy". Levy is the only tribe for which a specific Brit is described between it and heaven. Respect for Levites and respect for Cohens (part of Levy) is a part of the religion. This respect is based upon a specific act of Heaven, but its foundation is the ritualistic, historical and educational roles assigned to Levy. *"Truth is in his speech and dishonesty is not on his lips, in completeness and in straightness he walks with me and he saves others from deceit."* (Only the tribe of Levy kept the Brit from the first tablets-did not approach the Calf.)

Build-Up

With the death of Solomon and the northern kingdom's formation the Levites living in that area of the country, decamped and made their ways south, remaining with the main kingdom and Jerusalem. This is an amazing phenomenon, perhaps unprecedented in all human history then or since.

Approximately a million persons, living in some 30 geographically diverse places, who have lived in their ancestral homes for half a millennium (to be exact, 476 years, from 1272 BCE until 796 BCE) abandon their homes, with no economic reward or incentive, pick up and move. There are no electro-magnetic communications-no telephones, fax or computers-how did they even 'get the word'? How were they informed? How are the tremendous logistics coordinated? Who is waiting for them at their place of arrival? How are they housed, accommodated, fed & clothed? What gainful employment is available?

A partial answer to the basic communication conundrum may perhaps be found in the Book of Ester. We see their extensive use of "runners" (probably on horses). While this may be a reasonable communications medium for Bills and Notices, it certainly is not sufficient for complex instructions and activities' coordination with large and geographically disperse populations. Chains of commands are needed. There is a more logical answer.

We know that that the temple staff maintained vast networks of hilltop fire beacons for communications. These would not have been simple "on-off" beacons, like a movie. These communicated complex messages, such as the new month and other ritual instructions. It is likely that they were not limited to single flames, like a large bonfire, but were made by complex manoeuvrings with torches, some of which were tossed up and moved in complex styles [14].

This concept is documented. It is likely (though not documented, as far as I know) that an alphabetical code was formed for significant and complex messages. And all of this was the direct responsibility of the tribe of Levi, within the temple establishment. Levites also had control of sources of sound-based communication-this began with the silver trumpets, but grew to include many diverse forms of what today would be considered forms of music; except we do not know how these were used and what geographical extent they may have had, particularly in combination with the beacons.

Loss of the Levites to the northern kingdom meant loss of the entire educational infrastructure and a very large portion of the economic infrastructure. This vastly weakened the northern kingdom in every way, eventually leading to inevitable collapse and an outside conqueror; who did not take long to appear in the person of Sennacherib the Assyrian, and the subsequent ten tribes' dispersal

(some of these are now finding their long road home; twenty-eight centuries afterwards.)

The unification of the tribe of Levi under the southern kingdom resulted in the economic strengthening of it. Unfortunately, we see from results, that the educational role was somewhat less successful. Indeed, the Kingdom of Judea was everyone's source of envy for centuries afterward for its economic prowess; until the final destruction of the economic infrastructure by the first Jihad, fourteen centuries later [7]. Vast documentation exists showing the success and economic prowess displayed by the kingdom of Judea. This is counter-intuitive because it was 'just another agricultural country'-seemingly no different from those surrounding it-but it differed immensely (Archaeological finds have shown vast water-works, of amazing complexity. Indeed, the equivalent water-works in Persia, dating from the same time, are still in use today).

The word "Hashman"¹ from which Hashmonaim is derived-is still used today as translation of "Cardinal" (e.g., catholic church) and refers to some type of aristocrat. This is the Hebrew name of the family now known as Maccabees². These were Levites of the clan of Cohen (descendants of Aaron). Remember that in Torah, the King has NO ritual role³-this is totally unique in all ancient cultures, anywhere (e.g., to this day, the "Monarchy" of England has a ritual role in the Church of England).

What Might the Future Hold?

The author of this article and its companion article ("first competitive business model") is himself a Levite, by patrimonial hereditary (in Judaism, patrimony gives tribal affiliation while matrimony gives the far more important religious/people affiliation; thus, striking a balance). It is this patrimony and life-long fascination with "my tribe" that led to detailed and deep research into the history, values and accomplishments of the tribe of Levi, and to the differences between it and other-perhaps, more 'normal' tribes within the nation of Israel-and, from this difference, leading to the difference between the nation of Israel and other nations, at the same time. The 'must be' a reason or set of discernible reasons why this nation is the only one to have survived from the cradle of civilization from three-to-five thousand years ago [4].

While this brief article does not attempt to 'prove' these differences or to 'prove' to what they can be attributed, the claim is made, and a preliminary case shown, to attribute this difference to the existence and acumen of the tribe of Levi, and at least as much, to the existence of an internal structure within the tribe. A companion article documents the economic and business model used for the entire nation of Israel, which is based upon the tribe of Levi.

The tribe of Levi is the only tribe of the sons of Jacob that is still readily identifiable; whose sons and daughters are still readily identifiable. Extensive research has been conducted by this author to discover the circumstances of the disappearance of the 'managerial class' of the tribe of Levi-the tribal Institutions; so far, to no results.

In the meantime, and because of this research, a process has begun, by this author, together with similarly inclined friends and associates, all hereditary members of the tribe, to recreate the Levi tribal institutions. This process is at its very inception.

Some concepts concerning this have become clear. Israel is an indigenous nation and the tribe of Levi is an indigenous tribe within this nation. The question is then can the vast experience of Levi be 'leveraged' also for other indigenous tribes? That is why this research is important and quite relevant today. Note that nothing in the following should be construed to, in any way, imply, impede and diminish sovereignty of any of these other Indigenous, Aboriginal tribes or Nations [5].

All indigenous tribes and nations have an inherent right to self-determination. This may, or may not, also include, self-governance. This is if such a people is, indeed an indigenous people and not a political construct to be used for 'externality' purposes.

The tribe of Levi can assist others-once tribal structure has been reconstituted, at some point in the (hopefully near) future. This assistance may take many forms, but examples may include effectively pursuing and realisation of economic and community development objectives.

Examples of this type of cooperation may be Intergovernmental or inter-tribal activities to obtain comprehensive, professional training and development programs and/or assistance to tribal policymakers with outstanding policy analysis. Leaders from tribes may play a role in these development and growth activities.

The tribe of Levi recognizes and salutes efforts of Indigenous tribes to increase their capacities, sustain community and economic development, building Infrastructure, housing, food sources, medical, education and industry. This statement includes building culturally appropriate and effective institutions that address existential challenges. There is a need today, more so than ever in the past, to make timely, strategically informed decisions about concerns and to implement those decisions-this means a comprehensive effort to rebuild secure societies that work.

All Indigenous tribes today confront the classic problems of human societies: to build effective, governments; developing economies that fit their circumstances and cultures; solving social problems to achieve their objectives in interaction with governments; managing environment and natural resources and balancing change with cultural continuity. These are enormous challenges, best met with a comprehensive social contract.

This approach comprehends that tribes wrestle with preserving their distinctiveness and exceptionalism, while not sacrificing modernity. These challenges are foundational, and they require a comprehensive response [11].

The reconstituted tribe of Levi, tribal institutions, hope to create ways for Indigenous tribes to work together, maintaining peace and security and in conformity with principles of justice. This hinges upon maintaining mutual respect for human rights and for fundamental

¹ Basic translation might be "count" or "earl" – except there are no such aristocratic titles in normative circumstances among the People of Israel, except for the case of Matitiyahu. Most commentators attribute this to him being the grandson of Shimon Hazadik, who was close with Alexander, and likely Alexander gave his family this title. Its use has not been maintained.

² which word, in turn, means "a striker" – as in hitting something

³ There is a very minor exception when Yahu tries to "fool" his people by temporarily adopting to himself a simulation of such a role vis-à-vis Baal; and even that failed miserably.

freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

Other tribes, to benefit from this future social contract program, need to affirm the desire for such principles with all peoples and tribes-selectivity is not acceptable. Tribes rightfully wish to safeguard their heritage, civilization and language; again, for them to do so, they must affirm the rights of other to do so, as well.

Such, we perceive, is the present day meaning of the tribe of Levy social contract, as described by the Biblical sources [8].

Conclusion

The conclusion to this tale is inevitable-or, at least, one of its conclusions. The tribe of Levi had a well-defined role in the divine plan how the kingdom of the tribes of Israel was to be governed and managed. This role consisted of educational, economic, logistical, communications and managerial functions. In short, the tribe of Levi was defined (predefined) to fulfil the roles needed to create and maintain a modern state structure, millennia before such was conceived anywhere else and it not only existed, the structure functioned successfully for nearly two millennia before it was destroyed with malice aforethought.

To augment and facilitate this, there existed a large and powerful 'class' within the tribe of Levi which managed and directed the tribe. The intention here is not "powerful" politically, but powerful in abilities and accomplishments. Powerful in doing. What is more-more shocking in today's terms-is that this power was never, under any circumstance, ever used for self-aggrandizement, but only and ever used for the greater good of the people, the children of Israel.

Even when a family from the tribe of Levi, of class Cohen, the Hashmonaim, took the reins of kingship, they were severely criticized.

"That is NOT the correct role for them!" (It is the role of the sons of David).

References

1. Benner RA (2013) Division of the Levites into singers and guardsmen 25: 53-64.
2. Bronznik NM (2011) Choosing the Levites Instead of the first born Hamaayan. *Nissan* 5771 3(51): 73-75.
3. Galil G (1984) Priesthood and kingship in the genealogical tree of the house of aaron; *Beit Mikra* 1: 168-172.
4. Gevirtz S (1982) Simeon and Levi in the blessing of Jacob (Gen. 40:5-7) *Hebrew union college-Jewish institute of religion; Annual* 52; Los Angeles 93-128.
5. Halevy P, Nahum Yehoshua AB (1974) The source for the holiness of the tribe of Levi; *Shana Beshana* 228-232.
6. Haran M (1961) Studies in the account of the levitical cities: 1. Preliminary considerations. *J Biblical Literat* 80: 45-54
7. Hochman RM (2007) Levi's limp; *Yeshiva.org.il. Nissan* 5767: 1-3.
8. Krotner S (1994) On the Jobs and Stations of Levi Son of Jacob as per the Bible and Apocrypha. *Beit Mikra* 190-191.
9. Lior RD (undated) Cohen and sacrifices; *Yeshiva.org.il* 1.
10. Moster DZ (2014) The Levite of judges. *J Biblical Literat* 133(4): 17-18.
11. Perelman (1913) *The Levites Cities and their Fields*; London, England.
12. Shapira RA (2010) The Tribe of Levi's Land Parcel, in the Present and Future. *5770 Yeshiva* 1-5.
13. Umhau WC (1945) Some Remarks on the Tribes and Clans of Israel. *Jew Q Rev* 26: 287-295.
14. Werman C (1997) Levi and Levites in the Second Temple Period, *Dead Sea Discov* 4(2): 211-225.