

Abram's Pastoral Militia
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Every horrific eruption of senseless shootings brings fresh attacks on private gun ownership by gun control advocates. These crusaders ignore John Lott's compelling study which documents benefits to society of private gun ownership.¹ Have they forgotten the Korean shop owners, in want of police protection, during the 1992 Rodney King riots? These fulfilled the spirit and the letter of the Second Amendment by rearing up an *ad hoc* militia to protect their family businesses from looters.

The Second Amendment reflects our founders' concern about the American states' need for a local militia. "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Earlier the Genesis record reveals, Abram/Abraham also found it necessary to maintain a militia to safeguard his property and the families of his warrior/workers. Abram further secured the loyalty of his fighting force by his righteous administration of the Lord's Tithe (a tenth of his income) to minister to the non-business needs of his servants.

At first glance, we easily miss the revealed social fact that Abram/Abraham commanded a sizeable militia. The first reference to Abram's warrior/servants comes as Abram moves into Canaan from Haran. "Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the *souls* that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan" (Genesis 12:5)

We have next, the first statistical report of the size of Abram's "pastoral militia." Its total strength is revealed when Abram marshaled his forces to rescue Lot. "And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan" (Genesis. 14:14). When these 318 warriors' wives are factored in, our estimate of Abram's servants roughly doubles in number. Then, with inclusion of some four children per family and aged parents, our estimate of the total number of souls "gotten in Haran," by just Abram, conservatively ranges from 1,500 to 2,000 souls.

Before Lot's ill-advised removal of his herdmen from Abram's herdmen toward Sodom (Genesis.13:5-13), the total number of souls in the combined community under Abram may well have exceeded 3,000. It is not surprising, therefore, that leaders of the neighboring nations regarded Abraham as "a mighty prince among us" (Genesis 23:6). So, we must dismiss an often unspoken presumption that Abraham's household generally numbered less than 100 souls.

After the rescue of Lot, we learn another Biblical social fact about Abram. The "patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils" to "Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him" (Hebrews 7:4,1). Jacob later explicitly pledged to continue Abraham's custom of giving a tenth of his income to God (Genesis 28:22).*

Abraham responsibly used this Lord's Tithe to meet nonbusiness humanitarian needs, later codified by Moses. As a result, his family business was blessed with a remarkably diligent and loyal workforce. We look in vain for a hint of rebellion against Abraham. He who faithfully served as ruler, prophet and priest was equally faithfully served by his loyal circumcised servant/saints, ever constant in work and ready for war.

Abraham's "pastoral militia," though seldom deployed, served as an effective deterrent against outrageous incursion from envious neighbors. After Sarah's abduction by Abimelech, these fiercely loyal fighters were doubtless quickly mobilized, poised to mount a surprise attack to rescue Sarah. "But God [mercifully] came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife"(Genesis 20:3). His special-pleading allegations of total innocence were firmly brushed aside with God's demand for Sarah's immediate return. "Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine" (Genesis 20:7).

David's overview of successive ministries of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is still instructive for God's people. "He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; ... Do my prophets no harm" (Psalm 105:14-15). Abraham's anonymous workers perforce had weapons near as did Jerusalem's wall builders led by Nehemiah, royal cup bearer of Persia (Nehemiah 4:11-18). Like defenders of Pearl Harbor, we must be ever ready to "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition."

1. See John Lott's editorial at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444405804577560901492837174.html>

* The URL below links to a short study the relevance of the Tithe for God's people in our troubled land.

http://www.somepilgrimsinprogress.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/1_Patriarchs_and_the_Tithe.49121307.pdf