



HOW FARMERS' COOPERATION SHAPED THE ISRAELI AGRO SECTOR AND HOW IT CAN CREATE PROSPERITY AMONG SMALLHOLDERS

"Never underestimate the power of the small and weak ones when acting together."

THE LOWEST STARTING POINT

David was born in Germany, but in the early 1940s, instead of being in high school, he was deported to a concentration death camp in Buchenwald in Germany; the Nazis tattooed a number on his left arm, which became "his name."

He was a worthless Jewish slave who could lose his life any second if the guards wouldn't like what he was doing. He has seen his family and friends die in the hard work or be murdered by the Nazis.

On April 11, 1945, the United States Army occupied the camp and released the prisoners. David was only 18 years old that day but so skinny that he wasn't sure he would live to see the next morning.

FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

Life is a miracle, David survived the camps, and three years later, in 1948, he found himself in Israel, on a rocky hill establishing Kibbutz Tzuba.

Together with him were other young people; nearly all were Holocaust survivors, including a young woman who later became my mother.

The beginning was small and humble, as those young people had little funds to establish the Kibbutz, no infrastructure, or agricultural education (many had little education since they spent their high-school years in Ghettos and Concentration Camps).

The young Kibbutz members survived the winter snows and hot, blazing summers.

They never gave up and proceeded to establish the agriculture of their community. They were proud and content with their primary source of income – agriculture.

David, my mother, and the others lived and worked together, in cooperation, in the Kibbutz, which grew each year and became a highly prosperous community.

One by one, they passed away at a good age, surrounded by their families and friends in the prosperous community they established.

As my mother said shortly before passing away, *“We dreamed but never dreamt it would be so successful.”*

David, my mother, and the others began life in a Kibbutz as poor farmers; one should rightly ask –

Why did they choose to establish a community based on strong social bonds and cooperation (a Kibbutz) and not go on an individual journey where each sets his own farm?

Furthermore, they became prosperous farmers, while most farmers worldwide remained poor. What was the secret of their “good luck” (was it luck?)?

The answer to those questions is of utmost importance, for it may suggest how to solve global poverty among farmers.

The answer: those young people who survived the Holocaust's death camps and fought the Israel Independence War had no illusions about life; they knew the challenges of working in agriculture in a poor young country, as Israel was in those days (less than a year old).

Based on their life (intensive) experience, they figured out that facing those challenges together, not alone, increases their success chances. So they formed a group, established a Kibbutz, AND succeeded!

Yet, one may argue that *“David, your mother, and their friends had pure luck. The cooperative community approach was risky and overall had a low success rate.”*

It is therefore paramount to know that the story of David and his friends on the Kibbutz is not exceptional in Israel, but the rule; hundreds of agro-settlements based on **intensive community organization and cooperation** (Kibbutz and Moshav) were established in Israel, **with an unprecedented (99%!) success rate.**

The founders and members of those Kibbutzs originated from Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. In the Kibbutz elementary school, we were 13 children in my class, and our 26 parents arrived in Israel from three continents and no less than 13 countries.

In contrast, all (100%) of villages, based on solitary efforts with little or no cooperation among farmers, have failed and eventually turned into a Moshav (a more intensive collaboration between individuals) or ceased to exist as an agro-rural community and turned into an habitant village or small city.

Is this a coincidence? OR, could the failure of the village system in Israel resemble that in other developing economies?

To my Israeli readers, the Kibbutz and Moshav today are naturally different from 75 years ago. For this article and in the context of smallholders in developing economies, I am more interested in the Kibbutz's early stages (1910 to 1980), from which we learn how poor Israeli rural communities not only survived but became world leaders and synonymous with agricultural success.

THE PRINCIPLE FOR AGRO-SUCCESS

If farmers' cooperation is successful, i.e., Kibbutz and Moshav, and solitary activity is problematic, why don't we see all farmers' communities going the "cooperation route?"

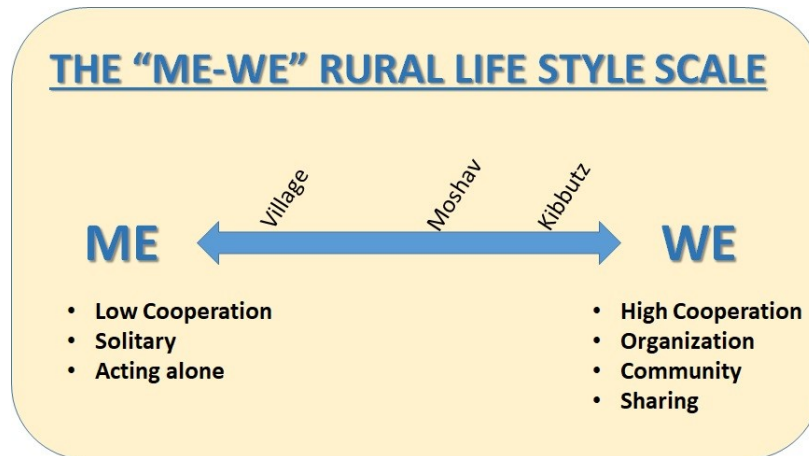
That is an important question, one we should not ignore.

A partial answer is proposed in human behavior studies. We all behave on a scale from acting alone, “ME,” to being part of a group, “WE.”

When we are part of a group, we invest a lot of energy in relationship maintenance. This is not easy, so we prefer to act alone whenever possible.

We choose to join others and cooperate when our “resources” are insufficient for solitary action, and hence we perceive acting with a group as our “last resort.”

It means that people with fewer resources, vulnerable and weak, will be more open to cooperating and becoming part of a group with common goals.



Farmers' internal organization and cooperation benefit the community, particularly in impoverished communities.

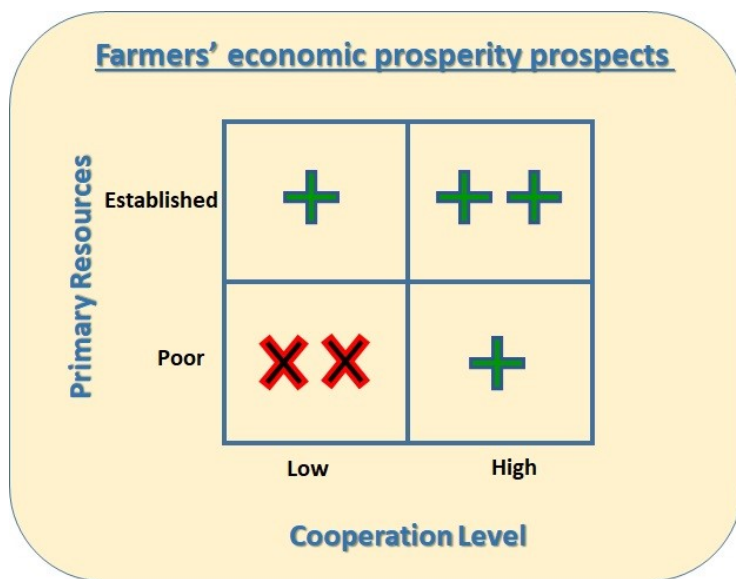
- Where do you think smallholders are currently positioned on the ME-WE lifestyle scale?
- Where should they be to improve their prosperity prospects?
- What actions should they take to reposition themselves on the ME-WE lifestyle scale?
- What would be the benefits of re-organizing their communities?

INDIVIDUAL VERSUS GROUP

Only 3% of the world's farmers are "professional." Those are established with the means and ability to act solitary and carry the entire risk upon themselves.

Meanwhile, 97% of the world's farmers are "unprofessional" smallholders. This group is characterized by a chronic scarcity of resources and a negative chance to escape poverty alone.

Currently, most smallholders act solitary, although they do not have the means and ability to support that business lifestyle attitude. This leads to persistent poverty.



To this point, we saw how two groups of poor farmers, i.e., (1) Holocaust survivors in Israel and (2) Smallholders in developing economies, that 75 years ago were in poverty and faced the same challenges have become very different through the years, where group #1 remarkably outperformed the others.

Characteristics of the groups -

→ **The First group** established communities based on high internal organization and cooperation, i.e., Kibbutz and Moshav (0.3% of the Israeli workforce are farmers). Those communities thrive, and their members belong to the Israeli middle class. They produce more than enough food to feed the people of Israel and export high-added value crops (with high-profit margins), benefiting Israel's foreign currency balance.

→ **The Second group** (smallholders are typically 30% to 80% of the national workforce) – lives in poor village communities with minimal internal organization and cooperation. Most of those communities suffer poverty, and their members belong to the lower class. Although their high numbers, the food they produce is often insufficient to feed their nations; hence, there is a growing need for costly food imports.

What do you conclude from this?

What would be your advice to smallholders?

HISTORICAL VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

Pre-colonialism, villagers in Africa were not as poor as they are today. So I asked ChatGPT to tell me about the **pre-colonial history of African villages**.

This is its answer –

“The pre-colonial African villages were generally organized around kinship ties and had a communal or clan-based social structure. The extended family played a central role in these societies, with multiple generations living together and sharing resources. The village was typically led by a chief or elder who held authority and made decisions for the community, often based on consultation with other elders or a council of village members.”

Surprisingly the Ancient African Village (AAV) structure shares similarities with the Kibbutz and Moshav current design. Although the names and terminology differ, many functions and responsibilities are similar, and so is the members’ commitment to the group’s success.

Agro community operational characteristics of the Ancient African Villages (AAV) vs. Israeli Kibbutz/Moshav.

TERM	AAV	Kibbutz/Moshav
Structure	Communal	
Ages	multi-generational	
Resources	Sharing	
Leadership	Chief and elders	Secretary and Council
Decisions	based on consultation with other members	

In short, the historical African village was not significantly different from the Israeli Kibbutz or Moshav nowadays.

The community and cooperation concept among farmers worked well for African villagers for millennia, and recently it helped Israeli farmers achieve global leadership in a short period.

For decades the “more of the same” attitude (i.e., technology, subsidies, donations, and philanthropists) has failed us;

it is time to re-think the agro-community cooperation and organization structure of farmers in developing economies.

Five hundred fifty million smallholders live in poverty; they have much to gain and little to lose if we help them to change their internal organization and increase their cooperation levels.

When the rural community structure finally happens, we must remember that it will change the community’s internal and external ecosystems and must be accompanied by compatible dedicated business and life models.

The *Dream Valley* program is a long-term strategic approach, pre-designed to help communities improve their internal organization, operation, and business results.

Dream Valley starts with mango growers as its "model crop." It will continue to other high-added value crops, rapidly generating high income for farmers and communities who join the successful initiative. Email me for more details.

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TAKEAWAY MESSAGE

- **PROFESSIONAL FARMERS** can operate without community cooperation.
- **POOR FARMERS / SMALLHOLDERS** will benefit from cooperation within the group and between communities.
- **CHANGING COMMUNITY’S** organization will create new ecosystems and require dedicated business models, such as the one offered by Dream Valley.

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*** *Mental and Economic Freedom Are Interconnected* ***

See you soon,

Nimrod



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P.S.

If you missed it, here is a link to last week's blog, [Can Ideas Change Our Reality?](#)

Link to [recent columns](#).

P.P.S.

[Dream Valley](#) is a field-proven disruptive business model based on the successful Israeli model. Contact me if you view yourself as a potential investor, business partner, or client. [Email](#), +972-542523425 (WhatsApp/Text)

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That The Existing Reality Is A Choice
and Not A Decree of Fate***