

# The Cities of Genesis

## Religion, Economics and the Rise of Modernity<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper argues the thesis that the modern city rises in Genesis and that urban development intertwines (a) with changes to religious concepts from spiritual religion to rational religion, and (b) with changes to economic concepts from behavioural socio-economics to non-behavioural institutional economics. The conclusion arrived at is that the modern city and religious pluralism do manifest themselves, exemplarily so in the final stories of Genesis. Then, ideas on rational religion and institutional economic governance become much more visible. Through textual, narratological analysis, the paper contributes to an institutional economic theory of ancient polity, religious text and of Old Testament-based religion.*

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In Mesopotamia, . . . the great upward surge of the cultural process . . . coincided with the appearance of [the] first great urban centers. What ecological and other factors led to the growth of cities? How does the life of the concentrated urban society affect culture? When the city-state gives way to empire is the culture pattern changed? (KRAELING 1960, v)

### I. Starting Points, Research Questions and Research Contributions

It is generally acknowledged that the study of culture starts with the study of religion. To speak with Kraeling, as quoted above, how would then the “religious culture pattern” change when we see polities like cities emerge and develop over time? Which factors drive such changes? The paper here aims at the same research questions and contributions that have inspired

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research on urban history and the ancient city at least since the 19th century. Like Fustel de Coulanges's *La Cité Antique* from 1864, I search for the religious principles that governed the ancient city. This search is textual in nature, the paper investigating stories about the cities of Genesis, and conceding that Genesis is ancient text, which emerged in Antiquity, its oldest parts going back some 3000–4000 years. However, as much as the paper is bound to trace the ancient in this sense, it contests views that ancient cities were necessarily premodern, as is commonly argued.

As a piece of literary prose, Genesis is at least as significant as a Shakespeare text; but in contrast to the Shakespeare text, Genesis and the Bible carry religious significance; they project to religious realities for so many cultural communities around the globe. In this respect, the paper accepts that Genesis is religious text; however, “the religious” may be interpreted. More conventionally, one might expect spiritual religious significance for Genesis. Nonetheless, this is debated by the paper: Religious concept, as it can be reconstructed from the text, may move away from spiritual religion and therefore religious significance may transform.

The paper then analyzes how different concepts of religion align with different concepts of economics when Genesis discusses the governance of the city, raising the theses that Genesis moves from spiritual religion to rational religion, and from a behavioral socio-economics to a non-behavioural institutional economics (as I discuss these concepts later). In this way, the paper links up organizational concept on “. . . expanding political institutions, the changing character of their religious thought, . . . and literature, and the growing oikumene which they brought about” (ADAMS 1960, 25). Through textual expedition, we may discover ancient cities that were indeed premodern, with a view to spiritual religious concept and behavioural socio-economics; cities that did not generate wealth (economic growth) and did not reflect economic ideas of organizing and ordering society. Weber exemplarily argued this and this may be more conventionally expected (KLUCKHOHN 1960; WEBER 1958; further references are listed below). Nonetheless, the paper also searches for the modern city in Genesis; with a view to ideas on rational religion and non-behavioural institutional economics; cities that create economic growth and wealth, and otherwise can be seen to be entangled with modernity.

On a methodological note, the paper develops arguments through textual, non-historiographical analysis. This approach to religious and biblical studies was set out elsewhere (ALTER 1981; BAL 2009; BRETT 2000a; 2000b; CLINES 1978; CLINES & EXUM 1993; FOKKELMAN 1975). I treat the stories of Genesis as prose fiction, following text-critical, narratological

lines of inquiry, connecting to discourse-oriented studies. As noted, the paper concedes here that the Genesis text carries religious significance.

In certain regards, textual, non-historiographic narratological analysis can be projected in historic perspective, particularly so in normative-historical perspective. One can ask what political and ethical purpose could be attributed to the Genesis text regarding societal (city) contexts in which the biblical stories emerged some 3000–4000 years ago. It is difficult to imagine that historically these stories did not have some political and ethical rationale regarding the governance of society at the time. Snyman speaks of biblical stories being written by and for the “upper echelons of society” (SNYMAN 2012, 674–675; also TOORN 2007, 1–7). A function as a quasi-legal, normative resource, as parables on political institutional governance can be deduced (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2013a, 393). And from here we can contest suggestions that “. . . no political treatise is known from textual sources of ancient Near Eastern civilization” (MAY & STEINERT 2014, 25). Algaze (2008, 12) stakes a similar claim, but overlooked the Old Testament when discussing “archaic texts” that could describe ancient urbanization. A main contribution of the current paper is to critically examine such propositions by tracing and interrelating different religious and economic concepts that contribute to the organization and governance of the city in Genesis.

Normative historical, political purposes can then be examined for *actual* historical, political governance problems that could have been implied by the biblical text. However, such empirical-historical or archaeologically informed research is a subject matter outside the purpose, focus and scope of the present paper. The current paper only aims at “text mining” when discussing the ancient city. On this textual basis alone the paper addresses its research questions and aims to make its research contributions. This implies that my analysis of the cities of Genesis is conceptual in nature, as this is generally promoted by narratological discourse-oriented analysis when it engages sociological, anthropological, psychological, economic or other theories.

Section Two sets out the framework for this project and the remainder of the paper, in Sections Three and Four, develops this framework further when tracing the cities of Genesis. The paper then investigates the textual, chronological storyline of Genesis with a view to changes to religious and economic concepts when cities emerge; and how this illuminates the rise of modernity in the course of Genesis, and what modernity amounts to here. This inquiry engages a certain degree of complexity when interrelating ideas on city, religion, and economics. Such complexity, in different ways

and degrees, needs to be accepted when tackling questions of the modern city (ROSEMAN, LAUX & THIEME 1996, xvii–xxvii; MACHULE 1997, 49).

## II. Conceptual Dimensions of Tracing the City in Genesis

Practically and conceptually, the problems of the premodern city can be said to be different from those of smaller social units, such as villages (MUMFORD 1961, 30; PARKER 2011, 14). From the opposite perspective, a fuller discussion of the modern city in relation to post-modernity is clearly desirable too. For reasons of focus and because of the constraints of writing a journal article, these debates are not a part of this paper. The current paper then critically debates approaches that tried to conclusively define the ancient city by relegating it to the premodern, especially so by classifying it with a view to spiritual religion, and by conceptually altogether separating religion from the modern city, claiming the modern city to be secularized in one way or another. Indeed, can we project ideas on modern urban development to the ancient cities of Genesis? What could the premodern versus the modern reflect when tracing the cities of Genesis? And what happens to “the religious” in the course of this process?

### *Contesting the Premodern for the Cities of Genesis: From Spiritual Religion to Rational Religion*

The premodern city has been said to reflect the small city (CHILDE 1950, 4; DAVIS 1969, 8–11; GALLION & EISNER 1975, 19); the semi-rural city (CHILDE 1950, 16; WEBER 1958, 74); the city of pre-industrial, mainly agrarian work patterns, with economic growth not being fostered by the city (BRESE 1966, 46, 50, 53; DAVIS 1969, 8) and the city being potentially close to feudal order (CHILDE 1950, 13–14; GALLION & EISNER 1975, 43; MUMFORD 1961, 59; WEBER 1958, 82–84, 100, 112, 133–134, 152, 163, 174, 176, 190; WEBER 1978, 1292, 1315–1317). In the same vein, but especially important for the purpose of the current paper, the premodern city has been viewed as spiritual religious: value homogeneous, traditionalist and potentially anti-pluralistic, even “despotic” (LIVERANI 1997, 86; also BRESE 1966, 49–50; CHILDE 1950, 12; MUMFORD 1961, 49, 59; REDFIELD & SINGER 1954, 56–57; WEBER 1978, 1292). Research on ancient cities has long approached religion in this spiritual religious tradition. This dates back at least to Coulanges (1980) and Weber (1958) (also

KLUCKHOHN 1960). In this understanding, religious moral precepts are enacted through shared spiritual perceptions of piety and virtue, with the god-fearing human being worshipping God. The approach may be lowly pluralistic but moral order is established in this way, and this facilitates institutional organization and governance of the city. It reflects a behavioral and kinship-oriented understanding of religion, spiritual community and institutional ordering.

Complementary to this view, the modern city has been said to reflect social order that conflicts with religion — presumably spiritual religion. Further ideas to characterize the modern city are large size or being metropolitan (BREESSE 1966, 50; CHILDE 1950, 4; DAVIS 1969, 8–11; GALLION & EISNER 1975, 43, 215–216); the city as manufacturing center with industrial work patterns and extensive trade relationships outside the city (BREESSE 1966, 46, 50; DAVIS 1969, 8; GALLION & EISNER 1975, 43, 72–73; PARKER 2011, 15); the economically ordered, commercial city that creates economic growth and mirrors economic policy and economic regulation, reflecting the coming of the market economy (GALLION & EISNER 1975, 88–89; LIVERANI 1997, 86, 95; WEBER 1958, 73–74; WEBER 1978, 1295–1296, 1328–1330); the city entertaining democratic government and “citizenship” (WEBER 1958, 104–112, 159–159; WEBER 1978, 1311, 1335; also LYTTKENS, 2006); and the city of technical and bureaucratic order (BREESSE 1966, 49; KLUCKHOHN 1960, 402; REDFIELD & SINGER 1954, 56–57; WEBER 1958, 102–103).

Frequently such differentiating typologies of the premodern city versus the modern city take it for granted that the ancient city of 3000–4000 years ago could only be premodern, spiritually religious and economically unproductive; and that only the western city from the late Middle Ages onwards mirrors the modern city, with spiritual religion backgrounding or now conflicting with culture; economic growth being fostered; and capitalism emerging. This understanding defines the premodern city versus the modern one by exclusively framing religion as spiritual religion and then relegating spiritual religion to the premodern city. The premodern city is then *the* religious city. Weber or Marx or similarly Kluckhohn are leading advocates, especially so with a view to the defining presence of spiritual religion for the ancient city, as they see it, and as they split religion from the modern city (KLUCKHOHN 1960; LIVERANI 1997, 95, 106; WEBER 1958). They then claimed the demise of religion (LIVERANI 1997, 86, 95) — supposedly spiritual religion, I would add, when they see the modern city rise; and the Enlightenment agrees with them on the latter point. In their understanding, the modern city developed only alongside the claimed

coming of the market economy and capitalism in 17th and 18th century Europe, connected to factors such as enormous economic surpluses being created by cities then. The current paper here aligns itself with a critical view on the Weber thesis and suggestions on religious ethics driving the development of capitalism in 17th- and 18th-century Europe. I circle the Weber thesis by tracing capitalist rational ethics of religion already in ancient times (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2012). The current paper contributes to this debate by associating rational religion with the cities of Genesis.

The current paper backgrounds definitional, trait-based and typological approaches that foreclose the modern from the ancient and that only approach religion as spiritual religion. I agree with literature that attests that there is no correct way of conclusively defining the ancient city (CHILDE 1950, 3; DEVER 1997; MAY & STEINERT 2014, 4–5; RODDY 2008, 12; SMITH 2011). Rather, the paper acknowledges that framing the idea of the ancient city is an ideological enterprise from the outset that needs to make explicit “. . . what ideologies inform the concept of the city” (GEORGE 1997, 125; also KNOX 1995, 4) and that the city as a concept reflects and “. . . generates discourses and beliefs” (KNOX 1995, 4; normatively on this issue, MARCUS & SABLOFF 2008, 12–14; MAY & STEINERT 2014, 5). The paper negotiates this discursive enterprise as a matter of chosen research approach and research questions. It generates discourse by leaving open at the outset what the city institutionally reflects, in religious and economic terms and how such openness can inform research on the premodern versus the modern.

In addition to tracing spiritual religion, the paper searches for “rational religion” when studying the cities of Genesis. Already Adam Smith set out economics as alternative ethics to behavioral moral philosophies, including his own, earlier studies in moral behavioral, virtuous philosophy (SMITH 1966; also WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2013b). In this understanding, Smith’s economics is ethics that is developed through a mutual gains program. The ethical normative societal aspiration is the “wealth of nations”. Yet, this program is ethics with a difference as compared to traditional ethics, including spiritual religion. The way Smith ethically argued for economics, in a mutual gains tradition, reflects this. Importantly, his specific call for “rational religion” (SMITH 1976, 789–793) implies this too. As fascinating as Smith’s call for rational religion is, it remained under-explored in his studies. He did not substantively, conceptually develop it and connect it with his economic program of a mutual gains ethics (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2014a; 2014b). Especially significant for the current paper is that Smith explicitly argued for the splitting of rational religion from the Bible

(SMITH 1976, 789–793; MINOWITZ 1993). In this respect, equally fascinating is the position of philosophers of the Enlightenment like Rousseau or Kant (as reviewed by KIPPENBERG & STUCKRAD 2003, 24–28; STUCKRAD 2013, 9) and their versions of rational religion as “religion civile” or “Vernunftreligion”: Not dissimilar to Smith, they aimed to split rational religion from the Bible, from traditional religion, from Antiquity, and in its substance from economics. Here my critique is that Smith’s own economics and the institutional economic ideas and the mutual gains aspirations it reflects can be reconstructed for the biblical text. In this way, the idea of rational religion is substantively and conceptually established for the biblical text and for biblical religion. An important point to remember here is that the biblical text is not any text: It reflects in my understanding religious text and conveys religious significance. Therefore, when reconstructing economics as ethics for the biblical text, we arrive at a concept of religion: as “rational religion”, as I approach this; and not merely a textually traced concept of economics (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2014a; 2014b; 2018).

Specific questions of the current paper are then in what regard can we align Smith’s economics with the narration of urban development in Genesis? Can we see a rationally religious city emerge? Here, the paper raises fundamental questions regarding the economized nature of religion, pointing at the idea of rational religion in the biblical text. The paper searches for economic institutions and cost and gains effects that are visible in the text (the next section has more detail). Assuming this project of economic reconstruction is successful, a different concept of religion is then implied for Genesis as compared to spiritual religion. This contests conventional or exclusive understandings of biblical religion as spiritual religion. Consequently, the strict separation of (biblical) religion and economics may no longer be sustainable, and such separation was implied not only by the sociology of religion (e.g. WEBER; MARX), by research on the ancient city (ADAMS; KRAELING; KLUCKHOHN) but also by economists, when they addressed questions of religion, moral precepts, and behavioral ethics in general. For instance, as already noted, Smith claimed that rational religion by necessity needed to be independent of the Bible, Smith (1976, 789–793) viewing rational religion as a scientific replacement of biblical religion (MINOWITZ 1993); Keynes (1972, 330) split religion from economics, arguing for a future “return to some of the most sure and certain principles of religion and traditional virtue”; similarly North (1981, 47; 1991, 111); Buchanan merely saw one approach to moral precept, which he split from economics (BUCHANAN 1975, 117); and Williamson (1985, 44; also 2000, 596) noticed his failure to integrate a concept of dignitarian, vir-

tuous values into institutional economics. In contrast, the current paper concedes that rational religion and the economic concept which it reflects become normative and guide religious practice through (and “outside”) the text. This understanding aligns itself in selective regards with empirically informed sociological and economic research on contemporary society (BERLINERBLAU 2005; IANNACONE 1994 and 1998; INGLEHART & BAKER 2000; McCLEARY & BARRO 2006): that religious values are not necessarily absent or no longer influential in contemporary modern society; that modern society is not necessarily secularized. However, I develop this critique with a view to tracing religion as rational religion; and in my case, already for Antiquity and for the biblical text when the ancient cities are depicted in Genesis.

### *Solving the Institutional Problem: Economic Considerations*

Religious studies like economic studies agree that city reflects an institutional “political unit held together by common rule” (JACOBSEN 1960, 63). In this sense, city, as any type of polity, including state and nation, can be interpreted as a solution to the institutional problem of (self-)destructive anarchy, the “war of all” in Hobbes’s terms or the “natural distribution state”, as Buchanan (1975) referred to this scenario. A perceived need for common rule reflects that the Hobbesian “war of all” is a possibility. In the Hobbesian state of nature, interacting parties contest property claims of others through predation and attack. Here, Mumford (1961) explicitly rejected Hobbes’s “bellicose primitive man” and apparently with this the idea of the natural state or war of all. But then he historically dates the natural state for the ancient Near East as the process when “war became fully established and institutionalized” — and cities first emerged, as he admitted (MUMFORD 1961, 24; also p. 46, 50–54). From here, relevance arises to think about city, either textual or real, as an institutional solution to the problems posed by the war of all.

In contrast to Mumford, Buchanan builds his institutional economics by explicitly engaging the Hobbesian idea of the war of all. He argues: “When conflict [the war of all] does emerge . . . anarchy in its pure form fails, and the value of order suggests either some social contract, some system of formal law, or some generally accepted set of ethical-moral precepts” (BUCHANAN 1975, 117, emphasis as in original). Buchanan’s concession is that institutional ordering of some sort — either through social contract economics or through the moral precepts approach — is needed to resolve the problems posed by the war of all (for a review of this approach,



see LUTGE, ARMBRÜSTER & MÜLLER 2016). Interestingly, Buchanan strictly separates economics from religious approach — “the moral precepts approach” as he refers to it at this point. He only entertains a singular understanding of religious moral precepts and he is skeptical regarding moral precepts as an institutional ordering mechanism, seemingly especially so for modern contexts (BUCHANAN 1975, 117; similarly skeptical SÁNCHEZ 2000). Instead, he favors economics that follows institutional economic lines to analyze and resolve problems posed by the war of all. This mirrors comparable attempts in the sociological literature or views of the Enlightenment when equating religion with spiritual religion, and consequently relegating religion to the premodern city (as spiritual religion). Later, the paper critically comments in more detail on Buchannan’s splitting of the moral precepts approach from institutional economics. However, what Buchanan, not dissimilar to Marx or Weber, seemed to have in mind when referring to the moral precepts approach was one specific approach to moral precept only, which indeed can be conceptually split from institutional economics. In the context of the current paper, I specify this as spiritual religion. Buchanan seemingly refers to this as “the moral precepts approach”. Nevertheless, rational religion can also be understood as a moral precepts approach: as an ethical approach that can be seen to normatively guide religious practice and that works through the biblical text, *and* indeed reflects institutional economic concept. Significantly, rational religion as a concept may well be compatible with Smith’s or Buchanan’s economics and ideas of organizational economic schemes that mirror incentive structures, property rights regimes, and other economic institutions for steering social interactions towards mutual gains outcomes (the “wealth of nations”).

Here, the paper analyzes the economic ordering potency of spiritual religion versus rational religion, comparing the cost and gain effects of behavioral institutions with those of economic institutions. Behavioural socio-economics analyzes institutional governance (or “common rule”) but focuses on the individual’s belief, motivation, values, attitudes, intentions, etc.; on group concepts of kinship; and so on *and* how these affect the efficiency of institutional governance (ETZIONI 1988; HILL 2001; HODGSON 1998; SIMON 1993). The thesis can be put forward that for certain contexts spiritual religion and the behavioural institutions it reflects resolve more efficiently the institutional problem of the potential “war of all” than non-behavioral institutional economics. Behavioral institutions like shared spiritual religious values, beliefs and so on can have superior cost and gains effects, as compared to non-behavioral institutional econom-

ics. In contrast, non-behavioral institutional economics, in the tradition of Buchanan, North, Ostrom or Williamson, analyzes economic institutions, like schemes of law, constitutions, organizational hierarchy, property rights regimes, tax system, contract etc. and how these exert cost and gains effects. Here, the lowering of costs and an increase in gains (i.e. mutual gains, wealth, growth) drive and ethically legitimize institutional governance, too (BUCHANAN 1975; NORTH & WEINGAST 1989; OSTROM 1990; WILLIAMSON 1975; 1985; 2000). In the context of the current paper, we can ask how this approach revamps sociological analyses of the modern city: Is an ancient city imaginable, contrary to sociological expectations like Weber's (1958) or Childe's (1950) that moves outside premodern behavioral-economic order and reflects productive cities, growth, wealth and gains in an institutional economic tradition?

For both behavioral socio-economics and non-behavioral institutional economics, cost and gains effects are assessed for the group, the city dwellers, since they have to shoulder the costs of institutional ordering and they reap the benefits of institutional ordering. An underlying assumption is that the city inhabitants aim to reduce costs and increase the gains (growth; wealth) that result from institutional governance (the *homo economicus* assumption; WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2014a; 2013c). Simply expressed, the city inhabitants want to be better off. This consideration of cost and gains effects for solving the institutional problem shifts merely religious or otherwise ethical assessments of the institutional problem into the economic realm.

As acknowledged, neither behavioral socio-economics nor non-behavioral institutional economics can always outperform the other. Rather, intervening factors need to be studied that affect the cost and gains yielded by institutional ordering of either approach. In the following, it is critically debated how factors changed and how this affected the economic viability of ordering the city through spiritual religion versus rational religion. Here, the paper does not aim to connect economic gains effects (i.e. growth) with a causal role of context factors; "size" is exemplary. Rather than interpreting size as a causal driver of economic growth and gains, it may just reflect economic growth in itself (NORTH & THOMAS 1973). Only in a classificatory sense may the idea of size be useful to distinguish the premodern city from the modern one. This adds clarifications to how the current paper plans to engage typological and trait-based approaches for differentiating the premodern and modern city, as the paper initially picked these up.

The paper then traced the theses that spiritual religion was economically superior in some of the earlier stories of Genesis with a behavioural

Biblical Economics \ / Biblical religion	Behavioral institutional socio-economics	Non-behavioral institutional economics
Spiritual biblical religion (moral precepts approach-type I)		
Rational biblical religion (moral precepts approach-type II)		

**Figure 1.** Tracing the city in Genesis

socio-economics being visible. However, in later stories, rational religion and the non-behavioral economic institutions it reflects began to outperform — on cost and gains grounds — the predominantly behavioral institutional structures of spiritual religion, which were discernable for the early city of Genesis. In this vein, the paper discusses how far Genesis entertains dual conceptions of city, religion and economics, and how we see modern pluralistic cities emerge in the course of Genesis. Figure 1 prepares the study of such moves; how changes to biblical religion interrelate with changes to biblical economics.

The framework distinguishes competing concepts of religion (spiritual religion versus rational religion); and alternative concepts of economics (behavioural socio-economics versus non-behavioural institutional economics), as outlined. With this map, the paper traces changes in religious concept and changes in economic concept, when we see cities come and go in Genesis. The overarching question is how did the religious culture pattern and religious thought change in Genesis (KRAELING; ADAMS), from spiritual religion to rational religion, as I would specify this? Did

such changes to religion interrelate with economic changes? The paper re-approaches any changes to “political institutions” (ADAMS) and “ecological factors” (KRAELING) with a view to different cost and gains that behavioral socio-economics versus non-behavioral institutional economics yield for the governance of the city. I discuss whether spiritual religion and a behavioral socio-economics are ultimately backgrounded by rational religion and non-behavioral institutional economics. Can we textually reconstruct the ancient cities of Genesis through a theory of urban development that moves in this sense from the premodern to the modern? What do the premodern versus the modern precisely stand for here? Does this investigation modify our understanding of institutional economics (e.g. Buchanan’s) and even have implications for our comprehension of the historical development of capitalism?

### **III. The Rise of the Premodern City in Genesis: Spiritual Religion, Anti-pluralism, and Behavioral Socio-economics**

Subsequently, the stories of Enoch, Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, Bethel, Beersheba, Hebron and Shechem are reviewed along the chronological storyline of Genesis. I evaluate context factors and economic considerations in order to shed light on the question as to how and why spiritual religion could at times solve institutional problems of city organization, apparently efficiently (Bethel, Hebron, Beersheba), but at other times failed altogether (Enoch, Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, Shechem).

#### *Cain and Noah: Enoch*

Issues of settlement became an instant issue after the Paradise story. Sheep herding and agriculture are raised as topics in Genesis (4: 2): Abel keeping “flocks” and Cain “working the soil”. Genesis (4: 17) then for the first time invokes the idea of the “city”, which Cain builds, and names after his son Enoch. This early reference to the city is associated with semi-nomadic, rural, pre-settlement modes of social interaction rather than city dwelling in the spatial context of physical structures such as houses: Genesis (4: 20) speaks of “those who live in tents” when it invokes the “city” (see also Gen. 4: 12). Yet, the city begins to emerge.

Genesis (6) discusses a large increase in the population. The lengthy genealogies of Genesis (5) reflect this too. “Wickedness”, “corruption” and

“violence” are explicitly raised as social problems (Gen. 6: 5, 11–12). The idea of the city is not mentioned at this point — Genesis (6) speaks of all “earth” — but the earlier reference to the city of Enoch, which Cain had built, together with Cain’s curse from God and rapidly increasing population size illustrate why Cain’s cities (Enoch) experience wickedness, corruption and violence. Personal character dispositions of the patriarchal son (Cain) and the social problems of the city of Enoch interrelate. The image of an anarchic, lawless city (society) looms. It is apparent that already in the immediate aftermath of the Paradise story, the city is challenged regarding its status as a virtuous, pious religious center. In this sense, modernity looms; moral disagreement and even value decay are a possibility. It is revealing in this regard that the counterparts of wicked Cain (and Enoch), who were Adam, Abel and Seth and who were portrayed as spiritual religious figures at this point, chose to stay away from Enoch and associate with rather different cities.

The Great Flood destroyed Cain’s cities (Enoch). Only the descendants of Seth survived, through Noah. Noah is one of the truly pious, virtuous figures of the Old Testament embodying spiritual religion. As for the Cain stories, for Noah too, a rural, semi-nomadic, pre-settlement type of societal organization is implied: Genesis (9: 20) characterized Noah as a “man of the soil” who lived in “tents” (Gen. 9: 21; see also Genesis 10: 9 on the “mighty hunter”). Nevertheless, qualifications apply: “nations”, “clans”, “territories” and “kingdom” are referred to for Noah’s sons, and Genesis (10: 10–12, 19) explicitly mentions “cities”.

In Genesis (10: 19), Sodom and Gomorrah make their appearance as Ham’s cities. With Ham having physically violated his father Noah in Genesis (9: 22, 24), it is almost to be expected that Sodom and Gomorrah later (see below) evoke some of the most powerful images for wicked cities; cities where moral disagreement was high and spiritual moral order seemingly was challenged and in doing so, as with the cities of Cain (Enoch), attracted God’s wrath again.

The story of the city of Babel, founded by Ham’s descendants, retells threats to virtuous, pious order. It invokes settlement in relation to brick making, the use of mortar and a large number of people, who live in the city (Gen. 11: 2–4): The image of building a huge tower is drawn upon. The ambition of the people was: “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens” (Genesis 11: 4). This ambition that threatened God, however, is thwarted: God imposes diversity in languages. The resulting inability to understand each other undermines human efforts towards city building.

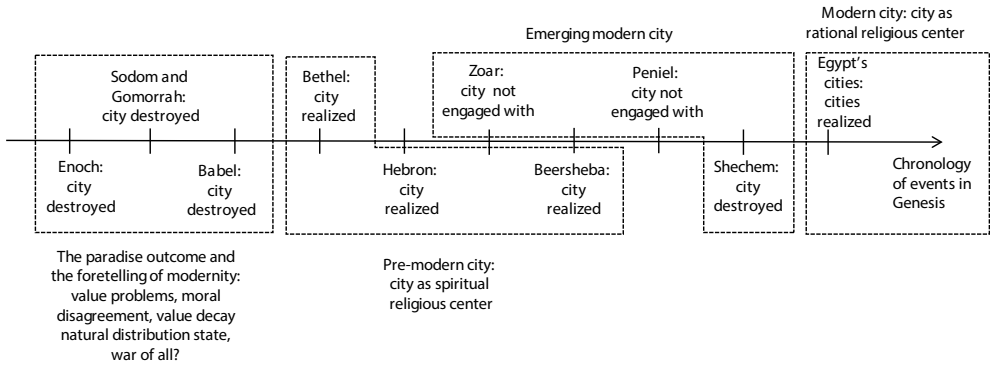


Figure 2. Textual chronology of city appearances in Genesis.

Thus, in the aftermath of the Paradise story, moral disagreement and value conflict are a huge topic for the early cities of Genesis, such as Enoch, Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah. In a sense, the problem of the modern city here reflects the starting point of Genesis, after the paradise events (See Figure 2). However, the solutions to these problems in the early stories of Genesis were destructive, and moral disagreement was not mastered as an interaction condition. If one can talk of institutional “solutions” at this point at all, the outcome mirrored the war of all.

### *Abraham: Bethel, Hebron, Sodom and Gomorrah, Zoar, Beersheba*

In the stories of Abraham, the lifestyle seemingly continues to be semi-nomadic, Abraham camping near the city of Bethel. There he enters the covenant with God (Gen. 12: 2–3, 7–8; 13: 7, 12, 18) and at Bethel, Abraham erects an altar: to honor his belief and reverence to God. The small cities of Bethel and similarly Hebron (Gen. 13: 18; 23: 2; 23: 19; see also “Mamre”, Gen. 18: 1–2, 6–7, 9–10) symbolize a spiritual religious contract, which was monotheistic too. That Abraham stays at this point outside Bethel should not be interpreted as the rejection of even the small city or the choice of a rural, nomadic lifestyle. In Old Testament understanding, political power for governing the city was spatially not located inside or at the center of cities but at the boundary of the city space. Councils of elders held office for governing the city in this boundary space of the city, at the city gates (BIWUL 2016, 37–47; GREENSPOON 2008, 51; STONE 1999, 214–216). In the stories of Bethel and Hebron, and later Beersheba too, it is this boundary space that the patriarchs contest when erecting altars for

God. Spiritual religion can be seen as conscious competition for political governance of the city.

When Lot decides to leave for the fertile land of the Jordan valley, the “wicked” and “sinning” city of Sodom looms large (Gen. 13: 13). Abraham avoids Sodom (in Gen. 13 and 14) and rejects any gifts from the King of Sodom (Gen. 14: 23). Figuratively and spatially, Abraham remains near Bethel, staying away from Sodom and from patriarchal descendants like Ham that are associated with Sodom and who had had earlier confrontations with the spiritual religious patriarch (Noah). For Sodom, as for Babel, living in houses is discussed (Gen. 19: 3–4, 10). Positively evaluated, the city of Sodom reflects value diversity and liberty (e.g. DAVIDSON 1979, 73), but more conventionally and negatively assessed (KUGEL 1997, 185–189; WESTERMANN 1986, 297–299), abuse, rape and sexual assault are suggested (Gen. 19: 5–8). Lot is thrown into this urban culture; yet, he is not captivated by it: He remains an “alien” in Sodom (Gen. 19: 9). In this respect, the idea of the city is explicitly infused with value diversity (which can be both negatively and positively evaluated) but importantly, is not projected on Lot, the “alien”. Lot’s life and the lives of those who were in his family are spared for this reason, when Sodom is eradicated by God (Gen. 19: 15). Connecting to this train of thought, Genesis (19: 29) makes clear that it was the spiritual religious dispositions of Abraham and the kind of city he chose to stay with that helped Lot to escape from Sodom: “[W]hen God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought out Lot of the catastrophe” (Gen. 19: 29). Therefore, through the figure of Abraham, we also find the city of Bethel being positioned as an opposite to Sodom.

Genesis further plays on the idea of rejecting Sodom by letting Lot and his family escape to the small city of Zoar (Gen. 19: 20, 22). Zoar is positioned in this way as an opposite to Sodom. Like Bethel it is small and problems of moral disagreement, value diversity and moral decay seem to be less of an issue. In this way, Genesis explicates city size as a source of pluralism.

In the aftermath of Sodom and Gomorrah, another city reaffirms the pious, virtuous religious contract of Bethel: At Beersheba (Gen. 21: 14, 22, 31–32), contracting (between Abraham and Abimelech) remains grounded in a pious, virtuous moral frame of social ordering, when “. . . Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the Lord, the Eternal God” (Gen. 21: 33).

### *Isaac: Hebron, Beersheba*

For Isaac, tent dwelling and cattle breeding continues, though crop planting appears (Gen. 26: 12, 25). The patriarch gradually moved away from a semi-nomadic lifestyle but the setting remains rural and associated with the city as a pious, virtuous center. As Abraham had built an altar outside Bethel to honor his covenant with God, so did Isaac erect an altar outside Beersheba, in the politically significant boundary space of the city; Mamre (Hebron) is referred to as well (Gen. 25: 9; 26: 23, 25, 28, 31, 33). Genesis (25: 9; 26: 23–25) makes explicit cross-references between Isaac's and Abraham's pious, God-revering behavior. Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba are symbolically drawn closer as places of spiritual religious worship and as cities of a monotheistic, moral order. This kind of a moral precepts approach then infuses the city concept in a spiritual religious tradition.

### *Jacob: Bethel, Peniel, Shechem, Hebron*

Although Jacob acquires the blessing from Isaac by deceiving him, no major break in continuity in the patriarchal tradition results at this point. Indeed, a spiritual religious covenant between Jacob and God is affirmed (Gen. 28: 12–13), explicitly invoking Abraham and Isaac; and spatially, this place is re-discovered as the city of Bethel: “Surely the Lord is in this place . . . This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven’ . . . He [Jacob] called that place Bethel” (Gen. 28: 16–19). As with Abraham and Isaac, Jacob physically locates outside the city of Bethel, again at its gates, creating an altar there.

An attitude of compensations, rewards, of taking-and-giving, of “tit-for-tat” is a new and regular feature throughout the Jacob stories (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2009; 2013c). It indicates that the patriarch is being economized in his interactions. This transforms not only the human counterparts of Jacob (Esau, Isaac, Laban), who were disadvantaged and subsequently compensated by Jacob, but also God (Gen. 28: 22). It changes the God-human relationship: Jacob promises a reward to God (“a tenth” of everything that God gave Jacob; Gen. 28: 22). This change in the patriarch-God relationship is highlighted in the fight between Jacob and God, when God is being pinned by Jacob. Jacob then demands terms in exchange for releasing God: the blessing from God (Gen. 32: 26). A break in the patriarchal tradition can be observed as to how the blessing is conveyed — Noah, Abraham, and Isaac being gifted by God with the blessing. In contrast, Jacob's forced approach would have been unthinkable in the



earlier stories. Peniel appears (Gen. 32: 30), potentially symbolizing a move away, at least at this point of storytelling, from virtuous, pious Bethel. In a rather economized manner, Jacob then purchases a plot of land from the Shechemites — in order to erect an altar for God (Gen. 33: 18–20). The city of Shechem receives its first mention, Jacob camping “within sight of the city” of Shechem (Gen. 33: 18), apparently again approaching the boundary space of the city.

A different vision of a contract between God and humans, and among humans appears to become feasible when, in Genesis (34), the Israelites encounter the Hivites. A “love-hate” story (WOLDE 2003) between Dinah, Jacob’s daughter, and Shechem, the son of the ruler of the city of Shechem, develops: Shechem asks Jacob for permission to marry her (Gen. 34: 4, 8, 12), offering an unconditional bride price (Gen. 34: 12). However, the price Jacob’s sons exact reinforces spiritual order but also masks deceit: The circumcision of all male Shechemites is requested (Gen. 34: 13–17). The price in itself asserts spiritual religious monotheism, enforcing conversion to the religion of Israel. And the price stated has deceit in mind (Gen. 34: 13): It is posed as a trick to physically weaken the Shechemites. Once the male Shechemites are circumcised, Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, attack the city of Shechem and kill all the male inhabitants, plundering and enslaving the rest of the city (Gen. 34: 25–29).

Ideologies of cities clash at this point and the spiritual religious city wins (Genesis 35): God asks Jacob to return from Shechem to Bethel and (re-) build an altar there. The city of Bethel and the spiritual order it has come to symbolize are thus positioned deliberately as opposites to the city of Shechem and the potentially pluralistic way of life it could have heralded — had the marriage between Dinah and Shechem succeeded. Genesis (35: 2–4) explicates the final departure from this vision:

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes. Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I build an altar to God . . .” so they gave up all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

The section is remarkable in a number of respects. Jacob, as patriarch, de facto approves the behavior of his sons Simeon and Levi; Bethel resurfaces again as one of Genesis’ most potent images of the spiritual religious city with comparatively anti-pluralistic connotations; and literally and metaphorically, religious pluralism is “buried under the oak at Shechem”. There-

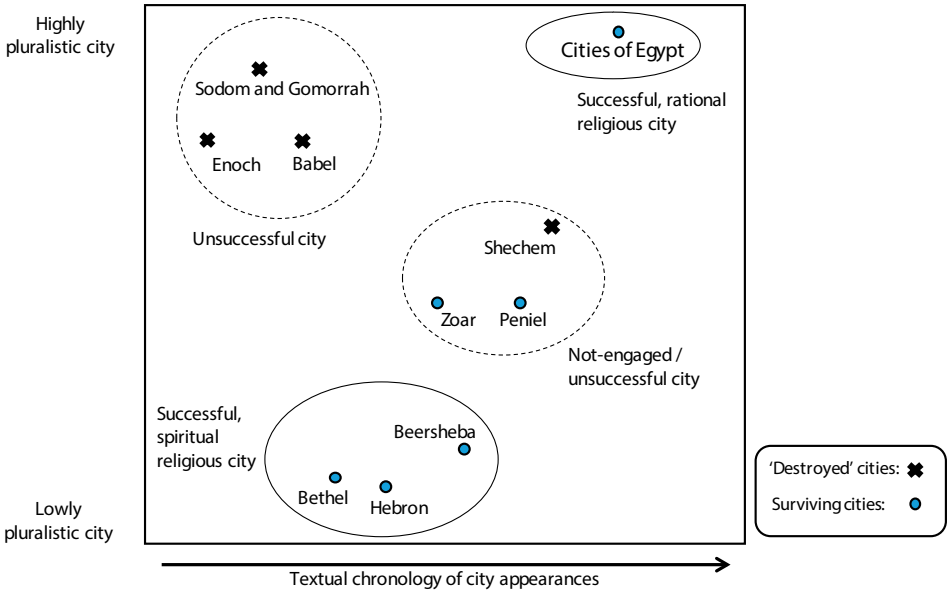


Figure 3. Emergence of the pluralistic city in Genesis.

fore, in the conclusion of the story, “Shechem turns out to be the opposite of Bethel” (WOLDE 2003, 445). We can draw on Pinder (2005, 8) or Timms (1985, 7) and extrapolate to Shechem their discussion of cities that symbolize urban dilemmas, like the coming of religious pluralism versus ethnic cleansing.

So, the stories of Jacob initially offer re-orientations regarding the loosening of the spiritual religious dispositions of the patriarch, especially so through the economizing of Jacob in his interactions with his counterparts, through Jacob challenging God and also regarding the cities of Peniel and Shechem that emerge. A new, more pluralistic approach becomes possible. However, hope is brutally crushed at Shechem (in Gen. 34): In the end, Jacob goes full circle and is back where he started, at Bethel; and at Hebron (Gen. 35: 27). The spiritual religious approach to solving the institutional problem is reconfirmed, with the emerging pluralistic city being destroyed (see Figure 3).

The ultimate message of the Jacob stories is not a comforting one regarding the manifestation of pluralism. Eventually, it would only be through his son Joseph (as discussed below) that Jacob could successfully enter the city within pluralistic settings.

*Economic Concepts of City Organization  
in the Early Genesis Stories*

The possibility of value conflict and moral disagreement had dramatically arisen with the Paradise story and Enoch, Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah had advanced it. However at this early point, this was not successfully handled. Wicked cities and how they associated with fallen patriarchal descendants like Cain, Enoch, or Ham were punished.

We then find pious, virtuous patriarchal figures in Genesis. Noah, Abraham, and Isaac were all quasi-holy, spiritual religious leaders, and largely non-economized characters. This is mirrored by the type of covenant God entered with them, and poignantly so by the city images we encounter, specifically Bethel, Hebron, and Beersheba. They reflect lowly pluralistic (quasi-tribal, small-scale, rural) and traditional urban settings. These city settings can be interpreted as one or perhaps the “first” cost effective solutions to the institutional problem of urbanizing contexts. Through sharing pious, virtuous values, or what Buchanan restrictively terms “the” moral precepts approach (BUCHANAN 1975, 117), the “war of all” can be prevented — cost-effective that is, for the specific contexts of this type of city. Coulagnes (1980, 59) very early on hinted at this, coming from a historic perspective: “Religion, and not laws, first guaranteed property”, whereby his reference to “religion” implies “spiritual religion” and the idea of law can be read with a view to economic institutions, as for example Buchanan’s constitutional economics specified this.

City organization that connects to spiritual religion can also be suggested to be transaction cost-efficient under certain conditions: Transaction costs reflecting the costs of communication and coordinating social interaction. For the small, rural-type city, the use of informal face-to-face coordination, grounded in the spiritual religious covenant, can yield low transaction costs; as this vision of political economic governance is portrayed in Genesis for the early patriarchal tradition. Figure 4 identifies such superior attack/defense cost and transaction cost differentials for the early city in Genesis, as found for Noah, Abraham and Isaac in particular. For these urban contexts, an institutional economic approach that favored economic institutions such as tall hierarchies would be less transaction cost-efficient. Williamson’s (1975; 1985; 2000) or North & Weingast’s (1989) institutional economic research can be extrapolated in this respect with regard to textual, biblical contexts.

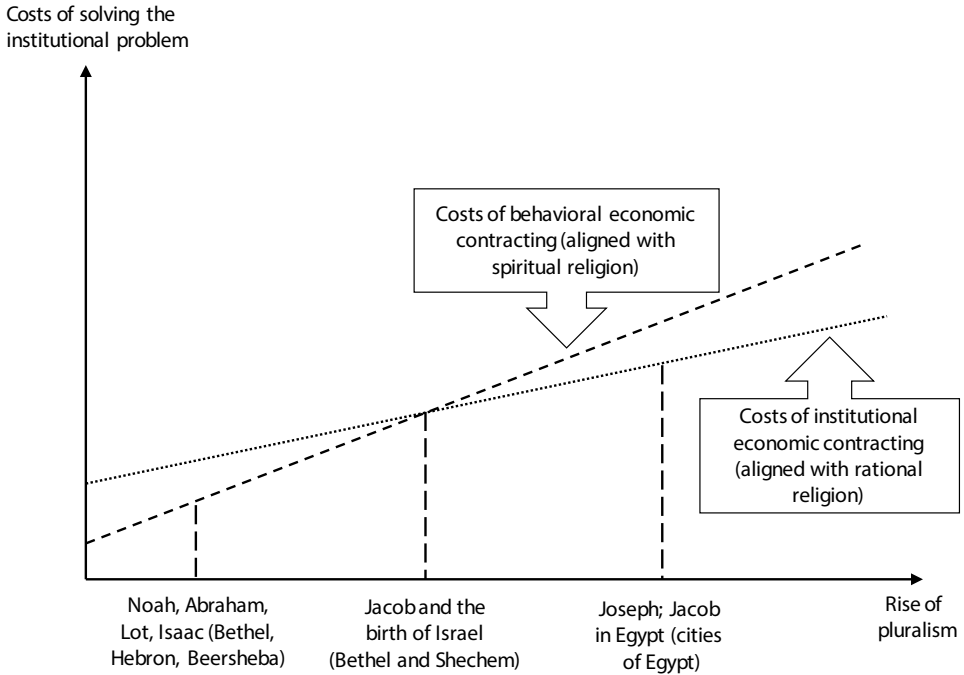


Figure 4. The rise of pluralism and cost implications for contracting in Genesis.

In Jacob, the patriarch began to be economized: Jacob was anything but the quasi-holy, spiritual religious leader as portrayed by the early patriarchs. This was demonstrated in his interactions with Esau, Isaac and Laban; and ultimately by his fight with God, in which he forcefully extracted the blessing and a new covenant. The Jacob stories made it clear that the city, as a symbolic, personified representation of the patriarch, was undergoing challenges. Similar to the earlier stories of Enoch, Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah, value problems were a big issue. However, unlike the earlier stories, Genesis now seemed to accept that the city was at least at a turning point (See Figure 4). Pluralism began to infiltrate inter-tribal encounters (between the Israelites and the Hivites) and social interactions themselves were increasingly economized, even the God-human relationship (in the interactions between Jacob and God). In the Joseph stories (as discussed below), the switch on institutional cost ground from spiritual religion and its connection to behavioral socio-economics to nonbehavioral institu-

tional economics and rational religion is complete: Figure 4 then provides a primer for an “ordinal ranking” scheme for costs of institutional ordering, as called for by North (1977, 715).

As much as the early patriarchal tradition, grounded in spiritual religion, may have been cost-efficient, critical questions remain as to whether the kind of small city portrayed could have stimulated a mutual gains program and economic growth. Indeed, we then only find here the small city. This in itself mirrors the lack of growth, and indirectly confirms the arguments of North & Thomas (1973). In particular, North’s thesis is that changes to institutional economic structures, such as property rights regimes in ruler-subject relationships, stimulate growth and increases in size. Regarding the early patriarchal tradition, I would assume that North and similarly Buchanan, Ostrom or Williamson would be pessimistic regarding an economic mutual gains and growth program since institutional economic structures had not been sorted out the way they recommended this. For the contexts that were depicted at this point in Genesis, we may indeed encounter lowly profitable or even comparatively primitive zero-sum interactions, which see a program for mutual gains and economic growth being constrained.

#### **IV. The Rise of the Modern City in Genesis: Rational Religion, Pluralism, and Non- Behavioral Institutional Economics**

The stories of Joseph signal a reorientation regarding governance and how religion now differently comes into play. Initially, the city of Hebron is mentioned as the place from which Joseph departs; at the same time, Shechem is referred to as his first destiny to meet his brothers (Gen. 37: 12–14). With the connotations in mind, which these places had acquired in earlier stories, changes in social organization could be expected. The storyline then instantly intertwines with Egypt as Joseph’s destiny, when Egyptian merchants are referred to, and to whom Joseph is sold as a slave by his brothers (Gen. 37: 25, 28, 36). Also interesting here is that, earlier on in Genesis, one of Ham’s sons or “nations” had been named “Egypt” (Gen. 10: 6), and it had been Ham’s cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, that had foretold of modern contexts.

In the following, the paper traces the city in the stories of Joseph, investigating whether Genesis favored a change in moral precepts approach, from spiritual religion to rational religion, and whether behavioral socio-

economics was increasingly replaced by non-behavioral institutional economics, and how ideas on modernity can be associated with such developments.

### *Egypt's Cities: Economic Institutions, Mutual Gains, Pluralism*

When talking about Egypt, Genesis (41: 48) refers to “cities” in their plurality. By not invoking specific names, from the outset the idea of the city seems to imply larger-scale and predominantly anonymous social relationships. When the singular term “the city” is employed by Genesis (44: 4, 13), it likely references the pharaoh’s capital city. Genesis then discusses a comparatively complex polity that organizes Egyptian cities. The paper analyzes this subsequently in institutional economic terms, with a view to bureaucratic hierarchy, promotion schemes, taxation system, property rights arrangements, the pharaoh’s military apparatus, etc., as such ideas have been discussed by institutional economics (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2009, 118–139; 2013a; 2015).

To specify these developments in more detail: First, the Egyptian society described is bureaucratically stratified. Highly differentiated occupational functions exist, such as palace guards, prison wardens, cup bearers, bakers, stewards, magicians, wise men, shepherds, priests, physicians, etc. (Gen. 39: 1, 20; 40: 2–3; 41: 8; 43: 19; 48–49; 47: 5–6, 22, 26; 50: 2). Furthermore, Genesis (39: 5) invokes agriculture and crop farming, house dwelling and the management of households (also Gen. 41: 48; 47: 20). Mumford (1961, 29–30, 102–105) might speak of the “urban mixture of occupations”, which characterizes modern cities and which signals the progressing division of labor (also HANSEN 2008, 70).

Second, Egypt had a reward and promotion system in place: It was solely because of his skills (as interpreter of the pharaoh’s dreams) that Joseph became the chief official of Egypt, who answered only to the pharaoh (Gen. 41: 39–44). This mirrors Weber’s (1978, 223, 225) suggestions on how rational bureaucracy recruits organization members in terms of technical knowledge and technical competence. Such ideas of skills-based promotion in hierarchies can contest suggestions, such as Stone’s (1999, 219) or Butzer’s (2008, 81), that ancient Near Eastern cities did not seek hierarchical organization but favoured consensus-building. In other respects, we can question Weber (1958, 100): He claimed in historic perspective that in Antiquity an “Egyptian prince was the absolute master of the city”. However, Joseph’s promotion to the top of Egypt’s hierarchy implied delegation of power. Genesis (47: 6) later re-affirms this de-personifying, skills-based

approach to promotion and delegation of power: After the Israelites' relocation to Egypt, the pharaoh invited them to look after his livestock — should they possess special shepherding skills (Gen. 47: 6). In return, the pharaoh offered the best land to the Israelites (Gen. 47: 6, 11, 27). This reflects the fact that foreigners were rewarded and promoted in Egypt's cities and that these cities were open regarding the influx of foreigners. Pluralism was then mastered as an interaction condition.

Third, Joseph set up a barter tax system for crop farming that saw 20 percent of crop harvests skimmed off and stored away by the Egyptian administration (Gen. 41: 34, 47–49). The remainder of harvests was the property of farmers. It was governance policy to release the barter-tax-crop back into the market during economic down-turns, in order to stimulate the economy. As Genesis makes clear, crop was sold through the market back to farmers. This can also indirectly support empirical-historical suggestions such as Silver's (1983, 800–801), who discounted Polanyi's argument on claimed non-market grain trade in Pharaonic Egypt and how North (1977) assessed Polanyi.

Fourth, Joseph set up a property rights reform for the organization of crop farming and livestock breeding (Gen. 47: 13–21): The original Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible speaks in this respect of “Joseph moving the people to the cities” (Gen. 47: 21) (DAVIDSON 1979, 297–288; RAD 1963, 405; WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2015, 43). A “move of people to the cities” directly links to rising urbanization, the commodification of agricultural labor and the better securing of agricultural and other economic surpluses through the coming of city farmers. Such commodification processes are doubted to be feasible by Dale (2013, 181) — for the historical-empirical realities of the ancient Near East. Textual counter-evidence from the Old Testament may raise certain questions here. Moreover, in the later Septuagint version of the Hebrew Bible, the same phrase of “Joseph moving the people to the cities” was rendered as “Joseph reduced the people to slaves”. Obviously this conveys a different meaning than what the Hebrew text explicitly says about property rights arrangements; e.g. fruits from production (apart from the barter tax) remaining the property of farmers. Early on, Coulagnes (1980, 52–53) raised the important point on the historic roots of this type of property, which was separated from land ownership. Such arguments leave land ownership and the trading of land potentially to be insignificant for an economic understanding of ancient Near Eastern cities and societies, both textual and real ones. In this respect, comments can be re-assessed as made by Stone (1999, 206; 2008, 142–143) regarding the role of the “monopoly over arable land” in ancient Near Eastern cities.

In a similar vein, criticism such as Dale's (2013, 174) that Polanyi did not have a theory of trade in agricultural land may not be relevant. Or, some comments of Silver (1983, 807–808) against Polanyi may miss their target since private ownership in land in the ancient Near East may not have greatly mattered, at least not so at certain points in time.

Importantly, through the institutional economic reconstruction of bureaucratic hierarchy, promotion schemes, the delegation and tax systems, and property rights arrangements, etc., the Old Testament gets economized and in this sense modernized. Here, the paper questions historic economic research on urbanization and its claims that changes in modern urbanization, for example for the early and mid-twentieth century, are “. . . so recent that even the most urbanized countries still exhibit the rural origins of their institutions” (DAVIS 1969, 6; also PINDER 2005, 7–8). Textual evidence to the contrary is provided by the cities of the Joseph stories with their non-rural economic institutions (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2013a, 2015). From such textual counter-evidence, the question arises regarding the actual historic situation of the specific societies from which these stories emerged some 3000–4000 years ago. This has implications regarding the tracing of the history of capitalism (Also GOODY 2006; SILVER 1983, 825–829; WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2014a).

The reconstruction of institutional economic concept from the biblical text implies that “economics as ethics” can be aligned with the text: The Old Testament can be seen as a differently religious text, mirroring modern institutional economics, typifying a different moral precepts approach. This economically textured concept of religion, which emerges from the biblical text, we can term “rational religion”, to follow Smith (1976, 789–793). That we can still claim religion at all rests with the insight that the Old Testament text is foundational and instructive for religious practice; that the Bible reflects religious text (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2013a; 2014a; 2015).

Assertions can be challenged that the text conveys an understanding of religion as an exclusively private, spiritual religious matter and that in Antiquity religion did not exert influence on the political-economic sphere. I agree with Jacobsen (1960, 63) that any “city is held together by common rule” but would discount his claim:

While groupings of individuals by common language, religion, custom and so forth undoubtedly existed [for ancient cities of Mesopotamia], such affinities do not seem . . . to have formed the basis for concerted action on the political scene. Rather these features existed as cultural



distinctions between individuals on a purely private level inside the political unit. (JACOBSEN 1960, 64)

As outlined, for the Joseph stories, the paper traces a rationally religious approach that reflected modern ideas on institutional economic governance. In this respect, rational religion is not relegated to the private level. Rather, it exerts social and organizational economic normative influence through the text; and the paper added a cost rationale to this suggestion (Figure 4).

Interestingly, the political-economic is visible in Genesis not only for rational religion but also for spiritual religion. Already the early Genesis stories of Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba can be seen to have positioned, in degrees, spiritual religion as a political economic governance concept for the city; especially so when the early patriarchs as spiritual religious leaders erected altars in the city's political governance zone, at the "city gates" (see above).

For the stories of Joseph, we can then suggest that the pluralistic vision of Shechem was realized. There are a number of indicators for this. First, there are the departure points of the story: Joseph departs from Hebron and sets off from Shechem to Egypt (Genesis (37); or, in Genesis (46: 5), Jacob "left Beersheba" to migrate to Egypt. These departure points symbolize the spiritual religious city — which were left behind. Second, the patriarchal son and with him the descending nation differed from the earlier patriarchal tradition. Now the patriarchal tradition favored economic institutions for organizing interactions in the city. Third, the pharaoh respected Joseph's value system, acknowledging that Israel's God had revealed truth to Joseph (Gen. 41: 38–39). Joseph was not merely tolerated as a stranger in the pharaoh's religious world view, but the very nature of his religiously differing views received respect. Fourth, Joseph married the daughter of a high priest of Egypt (Gen. 41: 45). In various degrees, we find here the inter-cultural society with religious pluralism manifesting itself, rather than tolerance merely becoming the prevailing interaction condition (regarding the distinction of "tolerance" from "pluralism", see HARE 1982, 178; SAGI 2009, 11–13; STERNBERG 2010). Equally, value problems and other behavioural threats to cooperation were relegated to the private level (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2009; 2010; 2014a). Examples are the betrayal of Joseph by his brothers (Gen. 37: 18–20, 26–28) or the attempt of Potiphar's wife to seduce Joseph (Gen. 39: 7–18). Indeed, such problems at the private level were in considerable degrees remedied through economic governance. For example, in the case of Potiphar's wife, Joseph recovered quickly (from

being wrongfully imprisoned) through the new occupational responsibilities he could acquire in the existing skills-based hierarchies and open promotion system of the prison, becoming the prison warden (Gen. 39: 21–23; Gen. 41: 9–14).

The suggestion that religious pluralism was absent in Genesis and Antiquity appears questionable now. The Enlightenment tends to stake this claim, when assessing the political-historical realities of the cities of the Middle Ages (e.g. as reviewed by KIPPENBERG & STUCKRAD 2003, 24–28; PARKER 2011, 24–25; REVENTLOW 1984, 411–414; 2001; STUCKRAD 2013, 9) — also not examining Antiquity and biblical religion. It agrees with skepticism such as:

The further back one shifts [historic] attention, the more similar appears the economic position of the temple in Antiquity to that of the [monotheistically dominating] church and especially of the monastery in the early Middle Ages. . . . However developments in Antiquity did not take a course similar to that of the Middle Ages, towards an increasing separation of state and church and mounting autonomy of the area of religious dominion. (WEBER 1958, 194; similarly WEBER 1976, 67; 1978, 1335)

Goody (2006) is here critical regarding a Eurocentric focus of western Enlightenment philosophy and I share into such criticism — with a view to interpretations derived from biblical economic research. In the stories of Joseph, “state” and polity, interpreted in institutional economic terms of structures for city organization, were separated from “church”: The pharaoh left the economic ordering and running of Egypt’s cities to Joseph and he did not interfere with the values and beliefs of the Israelites. The text conveys religious pluralism both inside the text, as to how Egyptian and Israelite religions co-existed, and outside the text, as to how normative messages follow on regarding religious practice, regarding the economizing of religion as rational religion and regarding the support of religious pluralism.

In the end, Joseph received the most favorable blessing from Jacob as the “fruitful vine of Israel” (Gen. 49: 22–26). Despite not being the first-born son, Joseph seemingly emerged as the patriarchal successor. Interestingly, at the point of the blessing (Gen. 49: 5–7), Jacob now openly distanced himself from Simeon and Levi (which has implications for later books of the Bible; WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2009, 151, 158, 217, 231; 2012). Reasons for Jacob’s deselection of Simeon and Levi can be linked to the events in the stories of Joseph, which in a sense healed the atrocities from Shechem.

In the end, Egypt mourned once Jacob died and accompanied and protected the Israelites on their journey to Jacob’s homeland to bury him near Hebron (Gen. 50: 3, 13). Figuratively at least but in certain respects literally as well, the spiritual religious social contract, as symbolized by the cities of Hebron, Bethel and Beersheba, was here, with the burial of Jacob, laid to rest too. A rationally religious, quasi-modern, institutionally economic governed city prevails when Genesis concludes.

*Cost and Gains Effects of Rational Religion in the Joseph Stories*

In the early Genesis stories, the city portrayed spiritual religion and connected with socio-economic behavioural ordering. This mirrored successful institutional ordering at this point (Bethel, Hebron, Beersheba). However, economically, these cities were at best mildly successful: They remained small; division of labor was hardly visible; internationalization of trade was absent; etc. In contrast, in the Joseph stories we see the modern and large city develop with rational religion, institutional economic ordering, wealth and pluralism rising. We see a switch in a moral precepts approach from spiritual religion to rational religion (see Figure 4); accompanied by a switch in economic ordering. In these respects, Figure 5 relates economic wealth and growth for the cities of Genesis to questions of pluralism.

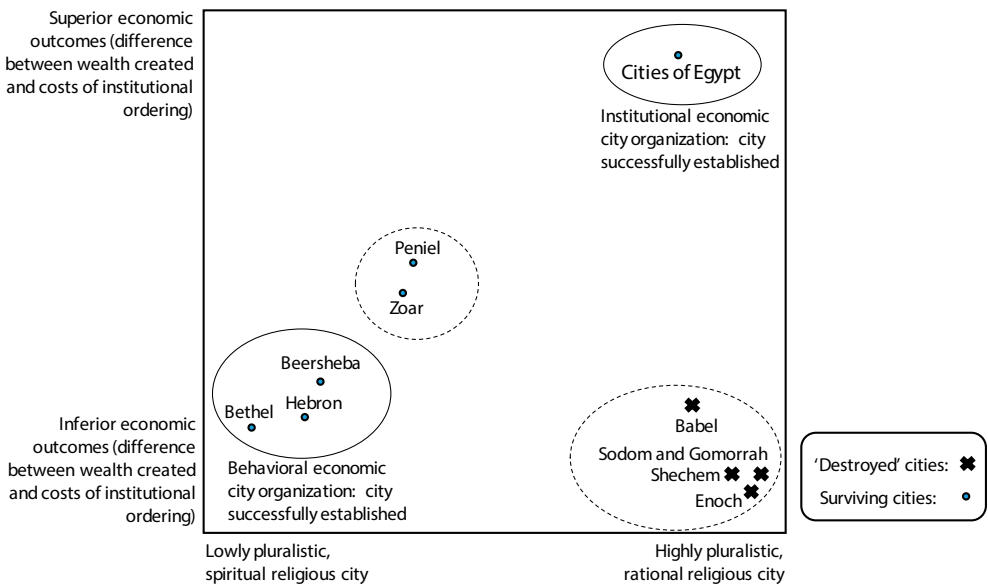


Figure 5. Religion and the economics of city organization.

Figure 5 reveals that the cities of Enoch, Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, or Shechem were caught up in transitional phases, which had disastrous consequences for them. In a sense they tried to depart from Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba and the kind of spiritual religious and behavioral economic ordering these cities reflected, but they failed or were prevented from developing new religious and economic approaches. That changes in the Joseph stories became feasible is geographically reflected by locating these stories outside Israel's homeland and far away from the cities that Genesis had constructively engaged with earlier on. Egypt's cities were the opposite to a tribal, closed society; they were large-scale in the biblical context described in the Old Testament. There was a high ethnic mix, Egypt being an open society with a constant influx of foreigners. The text then portrays institutional economic structures as compared to the behavioral economic concepts of the earlier stories. As reviewed, we find bureaucratic hierarchy, specialization, promotion schemes, delegation systems, property rights arrangements, internationalization of trade, taxation systems, etc. Egypt's cities were clearly not "primate cities" in a developing country and neither could they be described as unproductive "parasitic cities" (BREESE 1966, 48–49; also DAVIS 1969, 8; KLUCKHOHN 1960, 401–402). Rather, to use a phrase of Weber, in these cities "citizens as economic men" dominated: couched by economic institutions, as reviewed, and the kind of changes Joseph had introduced. Yet, this sheds critical light on Weber's suggestion that only "citizens as political men" ruled the ancient world and that organization structures and economic institutions of "the modern Western state" did not exist for ancient societies (WEBER 1978, 223; also WEBER 1976, 67). Here, Algaze (2008, 18–24) or Goody (2006) are critical of Weber (or Marx). Algaze specifically discounts claims for ancient Mesopotamia that wealth creation and capitalist behavior were absent. I agree with Algaze on this point but project to textual conceptual ideas and symbolic data aligned to the Old Testament, with a view to economic institutionalism and rational religion. A comparable argument like Algaze's is developed for the ancient Near East by Silver (1983): He critiques Polanyi and comparable arguments of North (1977), they arguing that price-making markets were absent in Antiquity. This issue of price-making markets is not central to my economic argument since the current paper draws on economic institutionalism. However, if an understanding of market trading is widened to institutions that organize market trading, I would line up with some of Silver's empirical comments that contest Polanyi and North. Concepts of economic institutionalism, as reconstructed for the biblical text and biblical religion, reveal economic system that organized exchange to a considerable degree.

The paper argues that the emergence of the new economic institutions in the Joseph stories can be projected to changes in costs and gains that came with this different way of organizing the city. Egypt's cities can be viewed as "generative, commercial cities" (see above) in an economically, comparatively highly developed society — because, according to my argument, they had established new economic institutions, i.e. bureaucratic order, hierarchical delegation, specialization of labor, taxation systems, and well-functioning property rights structures. A wealthy, highly productive and internationally cooperative society resulted. Substantial wealth and growth was created for its leaders but also throughout this society (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2009, 123–131; 2015, 41–45).

Only in the Joseph stories, could a substantial wealth creation emerge in Genesis. Buchanan's, North's, Ostrom's and Williamson's research would point out that economic institutions and changes to them are the sources for generating mutual gains, economic growth and rising societal wealth. Because of Joseph's economic policies, all of Egypt and even its neighboring countries benefitted: "There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food" (Genesis 41: 54). Indeed, ". . . all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph" (Genesis 41: 57). In the end, Joseph in the wake of his successful governance could support the Israelites too: "I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land" (Genesis 45: 18); the Israelites then ". . . acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in numbers" (Genesis 47: 27). Genesis then concludes with the vision of a "community of people" (Genesis 48: 4) and Jacob bestowing the highest blessing on Joseph as the "fruitful vine of Israel" (Genesis 49: 22–26).

The paper has spelled out that change in economic institutions drove such wealth creation, and this was inter-connected with change in the culture pattern. This gives new and added meaning to the concession that ". . . culture helps explain why some societies [their urban landscapes] grow (or not) at an accelerated rate as compared to their neighbors" (ALGAZE 2008, 6). The current paper here has singled out cultural changes from spiritual religion to rational religion as it can be traced in the biblical text and as these are connected with changes to economic ordering.

## V. Conclusions

With the paradise setting having collapsed, Genesis turned to the city. Possibly surprisingly, the first cities of Genesis, Enoch, Babel, and Sodom

and Gomorrah, potentially symbolize modern settings, not least so because of the presence of moral disagreement, even corruption and wickedness, as numerous interpreters of Genesis put this. However, Genesis did not constructively engage with these cities. The opposite happened. The line of patriarchal descendants and their cities was repeatedly cleansed at this point in relation to moral disagreement (i.e. pluralism) or what Genesis called “wickedness” and “corruption”. Cain’s city (Enoch), Ham’s cities (Sodom and Gomorrah), or the cities of Ham’s descendants (Babel) are prime examples.

The early patriarchs, Noah, Abraham and Isaac, did stay away from Enoch, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Babel. Their spiritual religious leadership personified different cities, specifically Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba. These cities reflect a spiritual religious covenant that God closed with them. These early covenants and the kind of governance approach to the city it mirrored can be surmised to be efficient. In their own ways, Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba could resolve the institutional problem at low costs, when corruption and wickedness could arise (the problem of the war of all). The present paper has specified this capability with regard to low attack/defense costs and low transaction costs of premodern city organization, as they are matched by its specific interaction contexts. Clearly, even for this type of social contract, we can selectively raise economic concepts, reflecting a behavioral socio-economics, spiritual religion and their superior cost and gains effects at this point (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2009, 74–82) (see Figure 4), rather than an exclusively non-economic approach. In this way, we can re-interpret Mumford’s (1961, 49) reference to the “religious potencies of the [premodern] city” in economic terms. Yet, a comparatively anti-pluralistic concept of religion manifested itself in the text, and the critical economic question is whether these cities could engage in a substantial growth and mutual gains program. A key indicator that they did not so here is that Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba remained small.

With the Jacob stories, the situation changed. Jacob moved away from the quasi-holy spiritual leadership approach of Noah, Abraham and Isaac. He got economized in his interactions with Esau, Isaac and Laban and in his fight with God. At the city of Shechem, the Jacob stories became entangled in a debate of inter-tribal relations. However, the outcome was a disaster: Religious pluralism was literally buried by Jacob “under the oak at Shechem” (Gen. 35: 4). Jacob remained caught up between premodern Bethel and modern Shechem, finally choosing Bethel.

The Joseph stories tell of the turning towards the modern, pluralistic city in Genesis, when Egypt’s cities become the topic. Importantly, the

problem of organizing and ordering the city was then addressed through non-behavioral institutional economics, not dissimilar to the tradition of Buchanan, North, Ostrom or Williamson. Substantial mutual gains were assured as outcome and religious pluralism could be sustained for the cities of Egypt.

Like Jacob, Joseph reflected an economized figure; he rose to the top of Egypt's hierarchies because of his economic managerial skills; there was ethnic mixing within an open society; international trade was prolific; and the pharaoh fully respected his religion. We then find cities and social order that can be projected in institutional economic terms to modernization — but not necessarily to a rejection of religion or 'secularization'. Secularization is similarly contested, but with a view to modern contemporary society, by Reventlow (1984, 411), Iannaccone (1994, 738, 743; 1998, 1466), Inglehart & Baker (2000); Berlinerblau (2005), McCleary & Barro (2006) or Stuckrad (2013, 2). The current paper here set out an answer to what comes after secularization already so for ancient times, when connecting to the Bible, economics, and rational religion.

Can we then question Weber, as he claimed in *Ancient Judaism*, that it was only in the Book of Joshua that the concept of the city came into full bloom in the Old Testament:

These shifts are indicative of deep-going transitions in political organization as well as military structure. In the historical tradition, the single Israelite tribe is to be found in all stages of transition from quasi-Bedouinism to quasi-nomadic small-stock-breeding and from both through the intermediary stage of occasional agriculture . . . to urbanization as ruling sibs, as well as to settled agriculture as free and corvée-rendering peasants. The almost universal transition to urbanism appears complete in the political geography of Palestine as given in the Book of Joshua. (WEBER 1952, 42–43)

Here the paper has probed Weber on two accounts: that it was merely in the Book of Joshua that the city came to be fully realized in the Old Testament; and that the ancient cities of the Bible were necessarily premodern. Already for Genesis, the paper has argued for a theory of modern urban development: spiritual religion and a behavioral socio-economics can be seen to be contested by rational religion and a non-behavioral institutional economics, with pluralism emerging in the course of this contest, exemplarily so in the Joseph stories.

On these grounds, the paper has pointed at a theory of rational economic religion emerging in the biblical text and in Antiquity. Rational religion reflects a different moral precepts approach as compared to spiritual religion, which the paper found for the early patriarchal tradition. It mirrors economics as ethics in the modern Smithsonian tradition of the *Wealth of Nations* (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2014a; 2014b; 2018). This generally contests the proposal that “. . . cultural and ethical dispositions [of ancient Near Eastern societies] . . . were quite unlike those that prevail in market societies . . . and that a societal ethic of individual gain-seeking . . . and wealth accumulation . . .” was absent then (DALE 2013, 176; similarly FINLEY 1994; 1999; for further references, see WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2014a).

Indeed, the economized concept of rational religion facilitated religious pluralism and the co-existence of different concepts of spiritual religion, exemplarily so in the Joseph stories. In different ways and degrees, this alliance of economics with rational religion, with the Bible, and with Antiquity was thought to be impossible by sociologist, economists, and philosophers alike; economists include Smith, Keynes, Buchanan, North, or Williamson to name but a few (see above); as did sociologists like Weber or Marx approach religion only as spiritual religion; or the Enlightenment conceptualized its brand of rational religion irrespective of biblical religion, ancient world, and economics (as reviewed by KIPPENBERG & STUCKRAD 2003; REVENTLOW 1984, 2001; STUCKRAD 2013).

Figure 1 initially set out the conceptual map for the religious and economic analysis of the cities of Genesis: regarding the increasing economization of social contract and religion; modern urbanization; and the emergence of pluralism. Figure 6 reconnects to Figure 1, summarizing patterns and interrelationships amongst religion, economics, modernity and pluralism.

Figure 6 sets out a theory framework on biblical religion and biblical economics that is supported by data: i.e. the textual data of Genesis. In this respect, the framework can address concerns that comparatively abstract theory on urban development, as it is also reflected by Figure 6, “. . . cannot logically get down to observation” (SMITH 2011, 168). Nevertheless, Figure 6 should not be read as a two-dimensional table. Rather, it covers four or even five concepts, coupling pairs of “variables” or dimensions (types of biblical religion; types of biblical economics) with other concepts (premodern/modern city contexts; anti-pluralistic/pluralistic outcomes); and inside the table, a process is described (starting with Field 1, leading to Field 4).



Biblical Economics \ Biblical Religion	Behavioral institutional socio-economics and anti-pluralistic outcomes	Non-behavioral institutional economics and pluralistic outcomes
Spiritual biblical religion (moral precepts approach-type I) and pre-modern contexts	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b></p> Behavioral economic, social contract in the early patriarchal tradition (Noah, Abraham, Isaac): spiritual religion economically superior. Context: pre-modern; anti-pluralistic outcomes (Bethel, Beersheba, Hebron)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p> Emergent, (non-behavioral) institutional economic, social contract in the early patriarchal tradition: land separation (Noah / Lot); water rights (Abraham / Abimelech); hostage taking (God / Isaac); work relationship (Jacob / Laban). Context: pre-modern; emergent pluralistic outcomes (also Zoar, Peniel, Shechem)
Rational biblical religion (moral precepts approach-type II) and modern contexts	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p> The paradise outcome and the collapse of the social contract: failure of behavioral institutional economics, and the foreshadowing of rational religion (also, Cain, Enoch, Ham). Context: emergent modern; anti-pluralistic outcomes (city of Enoch, Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b></p> Non-behavioural, institutional economic, social contract in the later patriarchal tradition (Joseph; Jacob in Egypt): rational religion economically superior. Context: modern; pluralistic outcomes (cities of Egypt)

**Figure 6.** Emergence of rational religion and the modern, pluralistic city in Genesis.

Comparatively stable states are depicted by Fields 2 and 4, while Fields 1 and 3 appear in flux.

The framework reveals a fundamental contest for religion and economics in the biblical text, with the cities of Genesis driving this struggle. The text and how it sets out the patriarchal tradition shifts from spiritual religion and a behavioral socio-economics as a first solution to the institutional problem to a markedly different concept of religion and economics at the end of Genesis. This shift was initiated by the paradise outcomes and the early wicked cities of Enoch, Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah, where spiritual religion failed to solve the challenges at hand and cities got destroyed (Field 1). Field 2 sees the premodern anti-pluralistic city, spiritual religion and behavioral socio-economic ordering succeed; mirrored by the early patriarchal tradition of Genesis. It is especially Field 2 that connects to conventional understanding of what the ancient city and religion in Antiquity must have been about, as typified at this point by the cities of Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba. They may be comparatively close to St. Augustine’s (1958) ideal of the heavenly *City of God*. In Field 3, we find

modernity looming, for example in the land separation problem of Abraham and Lot and the interactions between Abraham and Abimelech over water rights (WAGNER-TSUKAMOTO 2009, 84–85, 95–96). The roots of the commons dilemma show, wherein a group faces the problem of sharing a communal asset (meadow) for grazing livestock that are owned by individual farmers (HARDIN 1968; OSTROM 1990). Field 3 then marks a turning point in Genesis, with premodern contexts still prevalent but getting exhausted, while modern pluralistic outcomes are not yet fully achieved. Shechem is the prime example. Still, there is now at least some attempt at constructive solutions rather than exclusively destructive reactions to the different threats that modernity may pose. For Field 4, we see the modern, pluralistic city emerge in the Egyptian context, with rational religion coming into view and non-behavioral institutional economic ordering succeeding, in the later patriarchal tradition of Genesis. This city can clearly reflect a positive image of urbanism too, albeit a different one from the one attributed to Field 2. Nonetheless, suggestions that Genesis only reflected “negative biblical attitudes toward the city” (RODDY 2008, 11) can be questioned from both sides.

Figure 6 then captures a confrontational theater of urbanization processes as to how cities evolved and with them citizenship, religion and the institutionalization of polities. As Breese (1966, 145) noted: “It is in the cities that the political future of a country may well be determined. Here will be found the theater for the working out of the drama of nationhood” (also PARKER 2011, 18). In Genesis, we glimpse this theater: The ancient text offers a prime conceptual resource that captures processes of urban development as of the development of capitalism, when the premodern is increasingly contested. Spiritual religion was backgrounded and rational religion advanced; accompanied by changes to economic concept from behavioral socio-economics to non-behavioral institutional economics; and pluralism increasing. The religious culture pattern changed dramatically, as did the economic one, when the cities of Egypt rose. With this on-setting development we see, whether we appreciate this or not, the coming of capitalist economics and what some describe as empire. Here, the paper encourages us to recognize anew religion, economics and the Old Testament text and how they can be differently seen to engage in world-making and sense-making.

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