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Ritual, Economy, and the Religion of Ancient Israel

Part One

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Acommon trend in the study of religions inclines to assess religious phenomena from external perspectives. This means that the scholarly study of religion is marked by a unique preference. It largely ignores inner terms of reference and, instead, emphasises external ones. Religions, then, are observed in their propensity to function in settings that are not primarily their own but more encompassing ones. Since in many cases religions tend to mark boundaries that allegedly should not be crossed, either from or to the outside (= conversion), their study in a larger cultural setting is likely to proceed counter clockwise. Such studies ignore the declared interests of the religions studied. In other words, when the religion of Ancient Israel is studied in the context of the ancient Near East – Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Egypt – this may lead in two opposite directions. In this case, the religion of ancient Israel is shown either as emerging out of the ancient Near East, or else, as marking polarised opposites. The Hebrew Scripture indulges in, what may be referred to, as long discourses that state difference. The religion of ancient Israel, in its scriptural appearance, is shown as fighting everything that the "other" religions stand for. Here, the concept of idol worship receives polemical prominence. "They" are idol-worshippers, or worshipping "other" gods; "we" believe in the God (the uppercase is not accidental) of the pa-

triarchs, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Ritual practices and theological notions powerfully emphasise this notion of God and, consequently, enact a policy of highlighting cultic differences. Thus, any comparative effort has to be handled with caution: It should largely make its points in stating differences rather than similarities.

Furthermore, internal accounts usually give expression to the supernatural factor in religion: God is the creator of the world; he manifests himself in speech or vision to his believers; he works miracles; and his omniscience is the scale by which morality is set and measured. In other words, based on its internal evidence, religion is likely to appear in its propagandistic, that is, theological aspects. Comparative studies, however, incline to universalise frames of reference. In this respect, universalising the evidence means its relativisation. Thus, people following the scholarly assessment of a certain religion are led to see in it cultural factors that are severed from their basically internal purposes. In a comparative setting religion is likely to be viewed as a tool enhancing sociological, and even economic, purposes. Thus, the difference between one religion and another is described as reflecting different social settings and needs, that is, accidentals rather than essentials. Religions are viewed as either coming into being, or brought about, by factors that are not the ones voiced by

their internal evidence. That evidence is examined and then assessed on the basis of external data. The overall result of this approach often is that a somewhat negative value judgement is attached to the scholarly study of specific religions. This kind of judgement prevails in widely spread circles, many of which declare themselves secular, and therefore rationally critical. Evidently, this approach interferes with the possibility of studying a religion in its own terms of reference, without necessarily indulging in matters of historical truth.

What complicates matters is the fact that, even when a religion is studied in its own terms of reference, often a selective array of scholarly approaches (*i.e.*, historical, text-critical, sociological) receives prominence. Thus, a scholarly examination of ritual factors, to give one notable example, is hardly given any attention. Thus, if we wish to let historians, literary critics, and philologists exercise their scholarly skills in the study of religion, this is done at the expense of leaving important aspects of the religion out of consideration. It must now be clear that if a major shift in the study is desired a new approach should seek legitimisation. With all due respect to the regular areas of study and scholarship, their research procedures can serve their own interests.

Fortunately, matters have recently begun to change. Scholars are now more given than in the past to studying and understand religious phenomena in their own settings. Here subjects pertaining to the experienced sides of religion, such as rituals and alternate states of consciousness, begin to play a major role. Studying religions from within pays its due to the experienced phenomena. One result is that rituals, as a prominent example in this respect, are no longer stud-

ied for their theological content or liturgical history but for what they pertain to achieve on their own, self-defined, terms of reference. That is to say, they are viewed as structured and targeted means for purposes that are not substitutes for anything that is not oriented toward their own purposes. Ritual practices and performances are basically oriented to bringing about transformative processes. They are done so as to change certain aspects in the "cosmos" in which the performing person or group lives. This "cosmos" has various configurations. It comprises individual, spatial, social, and universal aspects. In this respect, rituals primarily preserve a "cosmos" or alternately cause it to change.[1]

In other words, in a more open approach to the experienced, as opposed to the doctrinal, aspects of religions, rituals should receive the kind of priority that they deserve in scholars' attention. Foreign considerations often made scholars locate rituals in the material, that is, in the less favoured aspects of religion. At best, they were treated as symbolic expressions of ideas. However, if we view rituals as a unique manifestation of the mind – working in and through the practised acts – then rituals naturally receive a higher status in the study of religion. Mind shapes ritual acts as structured events. Every ritual has its own performative rules and specific modes of practice. Consequently, the study of rituals can become an interesting subject in its own right. Still, not too many scholars have been enfranchised from the prejudice that had made them view rituals as the second best in the study of religion. According to the new scholarly approach, scholars have to disengage themselves from any considerations that over-estimate the ideologi-

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[1] The present writer takes up the issues of ritual and ritual theory in a series of forthcoming publications. At present, see, Ithamar Gruenwald, "The Relevance of Myth for Understanding Ritual in Ancient Judaism," *Annual of Rabbinic Judaism*, Vol. III (2000), pp. 3-31.

cal (*i.e.*, theological) concerns of the religions studied. Rituals have to be moved to the centre of the scholarly discussion. I believe that this new approach bears interesting results for the more advanced forms of the study of religions.

In short, rituals are at least as relevant to the study of religion as are its theology, history and its various forms of textual incorporation. In other words, a wider range of considerations has to come into effect if an open-minded, hence, an unbiased approach to the study of religions is allowed to set in. In the present context ritual will be discussed in two different, though, complementary phases of the religion of ancient Israel. These two phases will be designated by two terms – "ethos" and "religion." "Ethos" here means the early stages in which a religion is building up to become a more structured entity. It is connected to a particular life style that people choose. That life style is an extension and enactment of basic cultural drives. We shall later on see what constituted the "ethos" stage in (the religion of) ancient Israel. Suffice it here to say that similar forms of ritual behaviour characterise both stages, ethos and religion, alike; but the respective configurations thereof as well as changes of status are essential factors, in this respect.

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It is here assumed that in addressing issues of religious ethos, one comes closer than before to the scholarly realisation of what religion is about. Ethos combines complex forms of interaction between the life of the people, their chosen forms of cosmos – individual, social as well as universal – and the manner in which they communicate with the fullness (plenitude) of these multi-structured forms of cosmos. Evidently, that fullness includes the realms of the divine. In fact, the notion of the divine shapes for religious people models for maintaining their life style, or ethos.

Highlighting the ethos stage in religion has a considerable advantage. It allows for including in the framework of the religious a number of general life-factors that are not evidently associated with religion, such as the economic order. The main question, then, is: *How does a certain religion shape and live out its own economic order and what linkages are created between the prevalent economic conditions and the religious life of the people?* In other words, it is all a matter of integrated attitudes. In real life, these attitudes are first and foremost translated into ritual behaviour. A pivotal question has to be addressed in this connection. It concerns the kind of ritual ethos that is created or assumed to exist when in a certain religion material conditions, measured by their economic impact, are allowed to play a cultural role. Here ethos once again is a relevant notion. The sense in which "ethos" is here used implies the presence of certain attitudes that mark the coalescing of economic and religious factors in building a structured life style.

The advantage of discussing religions from this particular angle is that it opens a window on those aspects of religion that can be discussed in their own terms of reference. Theological considerations, in as much as they are introduced at a later stage more often than not involve the divine. In leaving these considerations aside, a non-confessional approach is allowed to prevail. Furthermore, the view that is gained enfranchises the scholarly discourse in religious studies from the need to hide behind agenda that entail value judgements. The particular

angle adapted for the present purpose focuses on religion primarily in the context of larger factors. They are here viewed as *cultural* ones. Culture here includes a wide range of phenomena and factors that create the self-identity of the people concerned. These factors include matters that are not primarily viewed as specifically religious. Economics is one part of them. Once viewed from this angle, economy may become a central factor, first, in religious ethos and then in any structured religion. That is to say, it provides people with the conviction that their life style is culturally and religiously *meaningful and functional* even when dealing with mundane transactions. Unlike its self-contained place and function in modern life (*i.e.*, the separation of state and church), economics for a very long time was one of the major factors that adduced overall coherence to the religious life of the people. Coherence in this case implies a clear notion of cultural self-identity. I use "culture" here as indicating walks of life and forms of behaviour that are not necessarily religious, but may well become such if the necessary conditions prevail.

Furthermore, when an economic system coalesces with a religious way of life, it is made to abide by sacred rules only with the help of special principles of adaptation. Only then it can creatively make its point in the shaping of essential features of that religion. It does so on a number of levels, the chief ones of which relate to the manner in which people view their daily life. If they see it as an extension or enactment of their religious norms, then such practical aspects as economy are easily incorporated in the system. Hierarchical social structures and institutions that sustain the existence of a religious community are part of the same layout, namely, the life enhancing factors of religions. Some of them are not necessarily religious, but they can easily become religious. In short, economy always is a major

factor in the life of the people. Its organisation in terms fulfilling cultural and religious purposes may create an ethos-environment that has religious characteristics. But points of difference have to be borne in mind. In the modern world economy is mostly viewed as the fuel that sets cultural events and institutions in motion. In the ancient world, however, it was also the mental compass that indicated to people forms of life style that are preferred from a religious point of view. In these forms of life style, normative polarisation played constitutive roles. It may, thus, be argued that under such conditions economy does not only serve cultural ends; it may well become the sum total of culture.

In other words, economy can well become more than it usually is on the material plane. To begin with, economy is the harmonics that structurally holds together the social cosmos. Humans live in this cosmos and adjust their needs and desires according to what they sense are the reasonable rules of productivity and reciprocity. When these rules are broken, the social balance is disturbed and disaster is likely to set in. To sustain their prevalence and validity these rules are given special status. In many respects, this status entails some form of ritual. Among other things, this ritual maintains that any breech of the system is declared existentially destructive and its abandonment punishable. Speaking, then, of religion in the ancient world, economic concerns could well be fitted into such a system. In contrast to modern, that is secular, notions of economic behaviour, the religious ones entailed a divinely inspired mandate. Religion and economy presented two complementary entities in which respective scales of value merged to create one existentially relevant structure. Before it became a fully-fledged religious entity, that structure could be referred to as ethos, or a structured life style.

The life style that will be discussed in the present study is that of the ancient Israelites. In the scriptural narrative it was configured as the life style of nomads. As we are going to see, in its scriptural configuration it involved a number of interesting features that, in the mind of people, are not always associated with it. In the ancient world, nomads were generally viewed as a threat to the established order, which in that world was identified with civilised urbanity. In the scriptural narrative, however, nomadism is positively identified with sheep herding. Its contrasting opposite was viewed as connected to another kind of development, namely urbanisation and the maintaining of real-estate economy.[2] Whether nomadism set in as a criticism of urbanisation, or whether urbanisation developed as a more advanced form of life, or whether the two forms of life developed side by side – all these are interesting questions, but they cannot be conclusively discussed here. The rules of the game and the actual borderlines between these two forms of economy changed from time to time and from place to place. However, it is safe to say that nomadism is more likely to be associated with tribalism, while urbanisation is the groundwork upon which monarchic systems build. The dialectic of these contrasting life-styles shaped the historical narratives of the ancient Israelites. It is of no concern to us here whether this narrative was the real – "archaeological" – truth in the history described, or fabricated for one purpose or another.[3] In other words, whether this was historical verisimilitude or history as it was conceived in the minds of certain people is an irrelevant question when it comes to the discussion of *what* the documents in question tell and pertain to convey. We are interested in what certain people said about themselves, their own history and life style. The archaeological truth, so-called, is mostly hidden from us. Thus, determining the presence of an external or secret agendum that is allegedly behind the story is guesswork, at best, and will not occupy us here.

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One of the major problems in the study of religions is determining their religio-cultural background and the essence of the, mostly textual, materials at hand. The present paper, therefore, addresses several issues that have direct bearing on the discussion of this problem.[4] The paper takes us back in time to the ancient world and particularly to modes of life and behaviour that were active, or operative, in the shaping of ritualised life-structures and cultural patterns in ancient Israel.[5] As will be shown, the pendulum here swings between forms of ethos and structured religion. At both ends,

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[2] A recent discussion of processes of urbanisation in the ancient world is found in W. E. Aufrecht *et al.* (eds.), *Urbanism in Antiquity: From Mesopotamia to Crete*, Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996. Many of the observations made in the present study find interesting support in the studies published in that volume.
[3] Various aspects of these problems are discussed in the collection of studies, *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* [In Hebrew], (ed. Nadav Na'aman and Israel Finkelstein), Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi: Jerusalem, 1990.

[4] Several versions of this paper were written for different purposes and on different occasions. The present version is a substantially revised one. Among other things, it emphasises the connections that the subject matter has with ritual. The footnotes, however, were only slightly changed. The present version is updated to October 2000.
[5] The Greek word "ethos" means 'custom,' 'habit.' In modern usage, however, it is often taken to designate 'principles of life-style.' In using it here its modern sense prevails.

attention will be given to factors that persisted for a long time in the ancient world. They were also active in the shaping of ancient Christianity and particularly of New Testament Christology. Curiously, though, the forms of ethos that will be discussed here are rarely brought up in the scholarly discussion as an issue deserving systematic study and methodological discussion.

As a point of departure, I shall refer to two notions. The first one is the "Faithful Herd" (in Aramaic, *Ra'eya Mehemna*) attributed to Moses in a few midrashic sources and in Medieval Jewish mysticism. The second one is the notion of Jesus as the Lamb of God. Numerous studies, representing a variety of aspects of religious idea and practice, have been devoted particularly to the second appellation and its significance. Usually, it is said that in his capacity as "Lamb of God" Jesus gives expression to human compassion, meekness, and sacrificial pathos. However, on a more profound level, the notions of "Faithful Herd" and "Lamb of God" seem to convey theme-engaging and complex ideologies that are often overlooked. It will be shown here that they refer back to a basic ethos in ancient Israel. This ethos shaped the cultural lifestyle of the people in a more profound manner than is often thought.

Our knowledge of this kind of life-style derives mainly from the first chapters of the Book of Genesis.[6] The manner in which the scriptural narratives are structured seems to make more sense when understood as portraying a life-style rather than creating accidental strings of events. The story of Cain and Abel, to take one example, exemplifies the problematic issues involved in featuring this kind of ethos.[7] Viewed from a cultural perspective, this story shows a paradigmatic structure. Cain is portrayed in a prototypal manner as the farmer who cultivates the land and grows "the fruits of the earth." Abel creates the cultural contrast. He is a prototypal shepherd. If the ensuing scriptural stories are read carefully, one can see how in the eyes of the writer(s) two types of herding compete for prevalence. Prevalence in this respect is an economic decision and it means a cultural ethos. The first is TSON-herding, that is sheep, goat, and lamb, herding; the second is BAQAR-herding, that is, cow and oxen herding. Apparently, the two were conceived as antithetical contrasts. Paradigmatically speaking, then, *Tson* and *Baqar* were not viewed as being raised in the same household. Since oxen were commonly used for ploughing the land,[8] *Baqar*-herding signified agriculture, hence, the settling down on the land. However, *Tson*-herding was, as it still is today, the occupation of nomadic people. In other words, *Tson*-herding principally signified a nomadic ethos. In pointing in the direction of farming and agriculture, *Baqar*-herding

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[6] This study is not written from the vantagepoints of the biblical scholar. Nor are the special methods of Bible scholarship applied here. This is basically a study of religion and culture, and it addresses issues that can more fruitfully be conceived, when the accepted strictures of Bible scholarship are somewhat suspended. This allows for greater attention to the literary sequence of the narrative of Scripture. The story of Genesis is multi-layered from the point of view of its "source"-materials. What matters here, though, is how the "editor(s)" wished the material to look and what kind of message they wanted it to convey.

[7] 'Ethos' is here used in a similar sense to 'form' as defined by H. Frankfort, *The Birth of Civilization in the*

Near East, Doubleday Anchor Books: Garden City (NY), 1956. Frankfort writes: "… the 'form' of a civilization… is implicit in the pre-occupations and evaluations of the people. It imparts to their achievements – to their arts and institutions, their literature, their theology – something distinct and final, something that has its own peculiar perfection. Therefore a discussion of the emergence of form entails a knowledge of a civilization in its maturity, a familiarity with its classical expression in every field" (*ibid*. p. 25).

[8] The term *Miqneh*, cattle (literally, though, 'owned property'), is often used in this connection. However, it is not always clear as to when it refers to *Tson* only or also to *Baqar*.

did the opposite. It culminated in urbanisation and in establishing the monarchy. The ethos of *Tson*-herding requires a less powerful regent: He is mostly a charismatic figure and in many cases also prophetic.

In conceiving of herding in terms of an ethos, one should keep in mind that, in the ancient world, livelihood was not chosen by accidence, either because it was an interesting and lucrative occupation. The choice fell on it, because it reflected the basic ethos of the clan or of the family. *Tson*-herding was the main occupation of the Patriarchs, Abraham and Jacob. Isaac, however, tilled the land and, characteristically, raised – both – *Baqar* and *Tson* (*Gen*. 26:12-14). In this respect, Isaac's story raises complicated issues.[9] One may even argue, in this connection, that it is not a mere accidence that the story known as "The Binding of Isaac" (*Gen*. 22) makes Isaac, at least temporarily, a substitute for a lamb. Allegedly,

by bringing his son as a sacrificial offering, Abraham signalled his dissatisfaction with his son's life-style. Indeed, Isaac's story marks a breach with the family tradition, or ethos. This breach is indicated by the fact that Isaac added the sowing of the land to the family tradition of sheep herding. In doing so, Isaac apparently endangered the existence, and even the survival, of the clan.[10] His blindness, too, cannot be accidental, in this connection.[11] In short, the history of patriarchs makes a cultural statement. It does so with different materials. Among them the family narratives that highlight economic preferences are not the least important ones.

It is particularly in the stories about Abraham, as also of Jacob and his sons, that *Tson*-herding is emphatically highlighted.[12] One should not forget, in this connection, that Moses, too, was the *Tson*-herd of his father-in-law.[13] Furthermore, the culmina-

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[9] Isaac, in this respect, was an exception. Although he, too, "had possession of flocks and herds" (*Gen*. 26:14), he was principally a man of the field. Of the three Patriarchs he was the only one that "sowed in that land" (*Gen*. 26:12). Furthermore, it may not be totally accidental that the scriptural narrator tells that Isaac met Rebecca in the field (*Gen*. 24:63), and – later on – asked his son, Esau, "to go out to the field and hunt game for me" (*Gen*. 27:3). It was Rebecca, his wife, who insisted that Jacob should prepare another kind of meal: "Go to the flock, and fetch me two kids" (27:9). The blessing that Jacob received from his father was once again a token of Isaac's "ethos-preference": "May God give you… the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine" (*Gen*. 27:28). It should be remarked that when Rebecca dressed Jacob with "the best garments of Esau her older son… and the skins of the kids she put upon his hands, and the smooth part of his neck" (*Gen*. 27:15-16), she actually dressed him up as live totem. When Isaac touched and smelled Jacob, he made his decision. He ignored the kids' skin – the token of the family ethos – and preferred the smell of the field of Esau's garments. Thus the rivalry between Jacob and Esau had another dimension, too: flock herding versus agriculture, or even the wild life of the field. As indicated above, one may see in the story of the binding of Isaac a dramatic denial on the part of the father of his son's life-style.
[10] See, Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel*, The John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London, 1998, pp. 3-21:

"Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel." F. M. Cross stressed the importance of the clan in the shaping of the history of ancient Israel. Isaac, in this respect, constituted a threat to the clan.
[11] Interestingly, a midrashic saying refers his blindness to the fact that weeping angels dropped tears on his eyes while he was bound on the altar. *Bereshit Rabba*, Parashah 65.
[12] It should be pointed out, though, that in spite of the fact that Jacob, and then his sons, were depicted as principally living on sheep-herding, Jacob's animal-household was more varied; see, *Gen*. 32: 5, 14-15.
[13] One may see in the fact that Jacob and Moses, respectively, were the shepherds of their fathers-in-law a literary motif that eventually builds into an ethos. The respective stories of meetings their future wives by the well from which the shepherds used to draw waters for their flocks is another literary motif of the same kind. The transition from literary motif to ethos can be located in the fact that these details are worked into a symbolic structure in which a rite of marriage is enacted. In that rite, the future son-in-law is tested by his ability to assist – even rescue [in the case of Moses the term "redeem" is used: *Ex*. 2:17] – the shepherdess that is to become his wife. This is the ordeal by which he shows his integrity, strength, and determination. In the context of an ethos, giving water to the flocks has more than symbolic meaning. The ethical and cultural implications of this act need not be specified here.

tion of the history of the Israelites in Egypt – their redemption from slavery – was reached when they were told to slaughter a lamb. This lamb, with all its sacrificial functions, was the first ritual act leading up to act of redemption. Evidently, such an act, viewed in a wider context, prefigured – in Christian eyes – everything that the Christ stood for, particularly in his sacrificial capacity as the Lamb of God. What ritual does, in our case, is making a historical occurrence into a repeatable event and for that matter also something that is ongoing and shareable in the life of the people. In this sense, ritual makes history present. Furthermore, ritual sharing means the creation of an organic cosmos. Every member counts in that cosmos in which the ritual act is shared. Individually sponsored self-exclusion, or deviation from the common goals of the community, affects the whole body politic. In this respect, social structure is not a formal accumulation of individuals but a coherent system that is integrated as an organism. Thus, the grid that ritually sustains a community is not a formal behavioural structure but a life-enhancing factor. Finally, in ritualising an event one reaches the point of transition between an ethos-act to an act that is part of a structured religion.

Speaking of the messianic lineage, we should not forget that David began a *Tson*-herd.[14] He was the king who established what *post factum* has become the messianic lineage. It is not insignificant in this respect to note that the ultimately rejected king Saul is a *Baqar*-herd and not a *Tson*-herd (*1 Samuel* 11:5).[15] As mentioned before, *Tson*-herding is principally nomadic. It constitutes a life style that is diametrically opposed to farming and agriculture, and ultimately to the process of urbanisation. As indicated, *Baqar*-herding links herding to agriculture. In this respect, the ox (and the donkey[16]) served as the counterpart of the modern tractor on a farm.[17]

What does this short survey amount to? I think that it shows that, conceptually speaking, herding – and especially *Tson*-herding – entailed something that was more engaging from a cultural point of view than just the daily routine from which people drew their livelihood. It was the major feature in an economic system that easily translates into a style of life and a cultural ethos. It, furthermore, constituted the major components in the sacrificial cult of ancient Israel. In short, major events in the life of the people turned around this pivotal lifestyle. It dictated a conceptual framework that was clearly defined. It constituted a language of is own. Without mentioning all the details now, the scriptural narrative gives interesting expression to all these elements.

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[14] This aspect of messianism is seldom mentioned, not to mention discussed, in scholarly writings.

[15] We may refer here to the negative tones – associated with *Baqar* – in regard to the Bull-*Ba'al* of the Canaanite pantheon. These tones are also echoed in the *'Egel*-worship of the Israelites, both in the Sinai Desert and in the days of King Jeroba'am.

[16] See, for instance, *Deut*. 32:10. The ass, however, was more often used for riding: *Num*. 32:22-23.

[17] As H. Frankfurt (*Op. Cit.* p. 32) rightly points out, primitive agriculture had also nomadic aspects. After a while the land exhausted itself and people had to look for more fruit-lending land. However, after the conquest and the settling down in strictly defined tribal sub-boundaries, the ancient Israelites had to obey the *Shemitah* rest-year. Every seventh year it was strictly forbidden to till the land. After a cycle of seven such *Shemitah*-years the jubilee year came; see, *Leviticus* 25. The *Shemitah* to all likelihood kept people to their legally owned land, without having to wander about and upset the whole system agrarian system. Sold land returned to its original owners on the Jubilee year.

iv

At this point, however, a few concluding methodological comments are in order. They concern the manner in which scholarship handles the Scriptural accounts regarding the shaping of life in ancient Israel. Arguably, these comments are also relevant to the understanding of the split between Christianity and Judaism, both on the ethos-axis and the religion-axis.

Scriptural materials can rarely be discussed in the natural environment in which they were created. Since scriptures are basically religious documents, their contents should be studied in a framework that is most fitting and conducive to their study. However, as a rule almost, Scripture is studied in a context mostly conducive to the discussion of hermeneutic problems. In that context, questions of exegesis, philology, history, and literature create the scholarly agenda. Although theological matters are relevant to the study of the scriptural materials from a religious point of view, theology is targeted at formulating ideas that concern believers rather than the students of religion. In this respect, theology, too, belongs into a sphere of studies in which exegesis and hermeneutics prevail. It brings the text to the home of its reader rather than the reader to the home of the text.

One result of this scholarly attitude is that the factors that were operative in the shaping of the religion of ancient Israel are seldom raised as a subject deserving the attention of those interested in religious behaviour. The same holds true of the factors contributing to the rise of Christianity and its split with Judaism. In my view, religious studies should concentrate on phenomenological aspects, the study of which dictates a different scholarly strategy and orientation from the one applied in the study of

religion from a hermeneutic point of view. Briefly, religious studies imply, among other things, attentiveness to factors that shape the life of the individual and the community. Here ritual patterns and practices play a major role. Rituals are shaped in a process that takes its beginning in stories that have the status of myth. Myths are stories with ritual consequences. Somewhat differently expressed, myth is here viewed as a story that is linked to a ritual. Myth creates the background that explains a specific ritual and constitutionally justifies its practice. As already indicated above, rituals aim at accomplishing transformations either in the performer, in a given situation, or in one of the gods to whom the ritual gesture is made. However, in the context discussed here, rituals are consolidating factors in establishing certain life-styles and streamlining the right behaviour in them. In this respect, it is correct to say that the patriarchal narratives in the Book of Genesis emphasise certain events and activities that are conducive to the preservation of shepherding and nomadism.

Summing up this part of the study, one may express the hope that in adapting a strategy that takes its departure in religious studies those aspects that are singularly characteristic of this area of studies will receive the needed attention. Rituals and processes of ritualising are two of the outstanding features, in this respect.[18] However, special attention is given here to "ethos," that is, to life styles that shape the cultural layout of people without being, or before becoming, a structured religion in its own right. The cultural layout of people consists of a number of factors. They all operate in various combinations. Among these factors one can name the social and

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[18] The ensuing discussion makes use of another study on the nature of ritual that is now in the process of preparation.

economic ones. They always play a major role in the processes under discussion. In many ways they also shape the ritual modes of behaviour of the people concerned. To make our point as clear as possible, attention is here drawn to the fact that what is at stake is not a sociological or economic explanation to religious phenomena. Instead, we examine the manner in which these and a few other factors play their respective roles in the shaping of the cultural ethos of the people in question. Culture and religion are here viewed in a way that creates important distinctions but equally assesses complementary features.[19]

Part Two

i

In reading the scriptural narratives collected in Genesis and arranged in what appears to be a coherent historical sequence, one is struck by one aspect of the material that is placed at the heart of these narratives. It is connected with two aspects of livelihood or economy, cultivating the land and sheep herding. It is interesting that initially Adam was placed in the "Garden of Eden" as the narrative puts it "to till it and to keep it." Thus, the Garden of Eden is the epitome of agricultural work. Apparently, in these paradisal conditions animals could find their own food without threatening each other (see *Is*. 11:6-9). However, to cut a long story short Adam's sin is in the category of a "farmer's sin." Thus his curse is that the *land* (in Hebrew: *adamah*) would not yield its power to man. Unless hard work is invested in tilling it, nothing will come out of it. Briefly, then, the way from Eden to farming is a straight one and it involves a curse. No wonder, then, that Cain, the "bad boy," could not but be a farmer. The consequences are known: He killed his brother, the *Tson*-herd. He was punished to roam the earth, that is, he was doomed not to settle down and begin *farming* all over again. However, he built a city (*Gen*. 4:17). If farming is the economic structure that culminates in, and sustains, urbanisation, as even modern economic theory thinks, then in building a city Cain simply repeats Cain's sinful rebellion. He tragically aggravated his sinfulness, and thus brought upon himself final destruction. Lemech inadvertently killed him.

What does this story show? It shows a negative curve. This curve may be referred to as the *adamah*-curve. Adam was carved out of *adamah*, and received his name from it. *Adamah* is cursed on account of Adam's sin in the Garden (*Gen*. 3:17). *Adamah* is described as participating in the killing of Abel: It has opened its mouth to swallow the blood of the murdered brother (*Gen*. 4:11). Finally, Cain is cursed even more than the *adamah* that was already cursed in the days of his father (4:11). It would be interesting to follow all the instances in which *adamah* is mentioned in a negative context in the Book of Genesis, and elsewhere in Scripture. One thing is clear, though: In many cases *adamah* is the negative opposite of

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[19] See further, Ithamar Gruenwald, "A Case Study of Scripture and Culture: Apocalypticism as Cultural Identity in Past and Present," in: Adela Yarbro Collins (ed.), *Ancient and Modern Perspectives on Bible and Culture: Essays in Honor of Hans Dieter Betz*, Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1998, pp. 252-280.

erets or *ha-arets*. *Erets* is the more neutral term, signifying populated "world" as opposed to the "agricultural land."

Reference has been made here to the negative sense in which farming, agriculture and urbanisation are treated in the *Genesis*-story. However, speaking in terms of a persistent cultural ethos that is contextualised in this negative attitude, we may for a brief example go to another end in the history of ancient Judaism. In telling the story of John the Baptist, special attention is given to the fact that he lived in the desert and that he baptised people in the River Jordan.[20] Whether Jesus himself was baptised by John or not is a matter of dispute among the gospel writers. At least one Gospel – that according Luke – argues King Herod had arrested John the Baptist before the latter had a chance to baptise Jesus. What all the synoptic gospels agree on is the fact that John led a primitive life-style in the desert. In many respects, this life style served as a model for Christian hermitic life and the rusticity of monastic life.

What does the "desert" imply in this context? In many respects, it is more than simply a geographical designation of desolate and uninhabited land, which is the lexical meaning of *midbar* in Hebrew. It is a "topos." Historically and culturally speaking, it signified a unique ethos in the life of people in the ancient Near East, including for that matter ancient Israel. People living in the "wilderness" constituted a threat to urban civilisation.[21] Redemption from Egypt and the conquest of the Land of Canaan were marked by a transitional ("liminal") stage of life in the desert. Closer to the times of early Christianity, we find the "desert"-ethos, or motif, signifying the unique life-style cherished in the writings of the Qumran Community. In every respect possible, *midbar* is the opposite of the city. For the Qumran people, "desert" epitomised criticism of life in the city, *i. e.*, Jerusalem. To all likelihood, this was the context in which the story of John the Baptist evolved.

It should be noted, though, that if the sources at our disposal can be trusted from a historical point of view, John the Baptist did not only opt for the desert as a place of living. He also accompanied his choice with a certain ritual, that of baptism. Although in everyday life Christians can be baptised in places that are not "desert" in any extended sense of the term, initially it was the desert where John practised baptism. Furthermore, he dressed like a hermit, and lived on a special diet. For him, all these practices signified a "return" (this is the original sense of the Hebrew word for 'repentance, *teshuvah*). Allegedly, they prepared the way to the redemption through Jesus. In doing these things, John the Baptist advocated a life-style that clearly had certain ritual aspects. He thought that this ritual was an essential act. Thus, everything that John the Baptist did had a transformative function and value. It prevailed until Paul, and others, elaborated on the ritual aspects of ancient Christianity.[22]

What do I mean by "ritual"? Briefly, as

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[20] As will be pointed out later on, the "desert" became a topos of Christian theology. The most recent study I am aware of is, D. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism*, Oxford University Press: New York & Oxford, 1993.

[21] Of course, there is much more that is implied in the "desert"-criticism of the city than mentioned here. Included in that criticism were the social corruption, the

monarchy, the economic system, the priestly hierarchy and the Temple. The preference shown to life in the desert, thus, meant criticism of the social and priestly establishment and a total rejection of everything that it stood for. However, we need not discuss all these factors in detail here.

[22] Paul's attitude to ritual is discussed in my paper "Paul and Ritual Theory: The Case of the 'Lord's Supper'" (forthcoming).

already mentioned above, rituals constitute a sequence of structured acts that in a defined context bring about transformation. Transformation is the key term here. It should be noted, too, that importance is attached in this definition to the factor of context. In other words, transformation is brought about by certain actions that do that in a specific context only. Similar actions that have no such context do not bring about the same kind of transformation or no transformation at all. In speaking of context and ritual, one cannot avoid mentioning the notion of myth.[23] Thus, I define myth as the context-endowing narrative of ritual. Every ritual, or ritual process, presupposes the existence of a sustaining narrative. This narrative establishes a specific ritual. It also shapes the nature of the desired transformation. Referring to these narratives as myths means that they function as context-creating factors in regard to ritual. Myth can be any story, event or fact that is linked to a ritual. It can serve ritual purposes right from the beginning, but it can also receive its mythic function and structure at a later stage, when the relevant facts, events or stories are linked to specific rituals. In short, myth and ritual are mutually contextualisable. Thus, for instance, even if the story of John the Baptist as told in the Gospels is fictitious, as some people did in fact argue, it exists by force of its creating a context for basic Christian rituals.

In endowing narratives with mythic status a certain hermeneutic often plays a key role. That hermeneutic can endow the event to which it refers with the mythic layout as desired. This happens, in our case, when John the Baptist is identified, in the words of the Book of Isaiah, as the "voice calling in the desert." We have already referred to the "desert"- motif, or ethos, and its implied criticism of urban life. Thus, John the Baptist is hermeneutically envisioned as enacting a verse in *Isaiah* 40. In other words, John the Baptist is a living Midrash. The Midrash crystallises in the ritual dimension rather than in the learning process. In any event, from an economic point of view John the Baptist, and Jesus after him, advocates austere ways of life in which property has to be given up.

In other words, I suggest seeing in the desert-centred negation of the Jerusalem-type of life-style and values as a cultural statement enacted on a ritual plane. It implies a specific social and religious ethos. Ethos is the mental disposition that, culturally speaking, lends structure and context to ideas and acts. In my usage of the term "ethos," I would like to point to systemic, long-term, principles that shape and organise the life of a certain group of people in relation to their own history, memory, and identity. The opposite pole is cultural redundancy: forgetting, oblivion, and loss of identity. Occasionally, what people are expected to forget *is* part of their ethos, too. To use the terminology coined by Matthew Arnold, the "everlasting Yes" also indicates an "everlasting No." Thus, cultural criticism and all that is involved in its negation and rejection of the opposite pole is part of a given ethos. Opposites are shaped so as to fix typologies and paradigmatic dichotomies. These are viewed as the basis of a specific culture. In many cases they are the basis of the ethics implied. Urban life and its criticism thus point in two opposite directions. They configure the "*yes*'s" and "*no*'s" in a certain ethos.

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[23] See footnote 1, above.

ii

Returning to the history of ancient Israel, we found that the nomadic life-style was sharply delineated from its counterpart, urban life, in terms that created a cultural ethos. As an idea, the concept of nomadism – including for that matter tribal structuring, sheep breeding and herding – clearly marks the social antidote against the corruption of city life and the monarchy. In practice, though, several intermediary stages between these conflicting life-styles prevail. They mark historical, social, and economic necessity. Once the tribal structure is abandoned for the sake of a larger state, with a king at the top of the political pyramid, more complex forms of economy must take over. This is what the scriptural narratives highlight from the Book of Genesis down to the monarchic period.

How deep and far-reaching these economic dichotomies were can be seen right from the beginning, that is the creation stories. In this respect, the Eden story is told with a view on its historical and cultural consequences. In any event, it sets the thematic context for the present discussion. As indicated above, the question of historical truth of the story and all its consequences need not bother us here. What matter are the cultural paradigms that the story wishes to establish. More specifically, these stories establish ritual patterns and for that reason they are here defined as having mythic functions. Myth, as was argued above, is not a fiction about deities, but a narrative oriented toward establishing ritual patterns of behaviour. Ruining for themselves the prospects and benefits of an idealised type of rural life, such as the Garden of Eden symbolically provided, Adam and Eve prepared the way for the ensuing drama in which their offspring were predestined to play a major role. In that drama the norms of good and evil, righteousness and sin, are

delineated in a unique manner. They are not stated as an ethical code or manual, but in the form of a narrative, in which there are "good chaps" and "bad chaps." The good ones are those who abide by the practice of sheep herding, the bad ones are those who till the land. The ethical assumptions on the basis of which the respective distinctions are made are never specified as outspoken cultural-principles. Instead, one was expected to draw the relevant conclusions from the manner in which the stories were preserved and told.

In terms of a sociological and economic ethos, then, two types or ways of life are here presented as a cultural dichotomy: vegetable farming and agriculture *versus Tson*-herding. As already indicated above, farming and agriculture are viewed, even in today's economic theory, as the basis of a process of urbanisation. People are tied to the land. Such ties are the basis of urbanisation. Eventually, people build an economic system that seeks centralisation. The city serves as the centre that protects all the satellite farms and sets the rules of the economic exchange. Furthermore, urbanisation requires the building of water systems, similar to those that are used for extensive farming. In contrast, *Tson*-herding does not require watering systems. As the stories in *Genesis* amply illustrate, *Tson*-herding is closely connected to wells. *Tson*-herding builds tribal clusters or nomadic "colonies" of tents. Economy is on the road, so to speak. So are the places of worship.

Temples were built where cities were founded. Temples and cities are interlinked factors. In the stories of the book of Genesis altars were the preferred places of worship. In the desert stories, the wandering sanctuary was the place of worship. The real change happened, when the Book of Deuteronomy consolidated the ideal of one

place of worship. In any event, there are good reasons to think that economic diversity as described above makes any economic decision a matter of establishing preferences for a particular type of ethos.

Once economy is conceived in these terms, it becomes a key factor in the shaping of culture. It sets behavioural and ideological norms. Thus, living outside of the city, as the Qumran people and John the Baptist did, made a real cultural difference. It was a statement that had deeper implications and wider repercussions than is usually thought. The rural-nomadic life-style set a special form of ritual. In contrast to the agricultural life-style, it was not linked to a special place and, what is of particular interest to us here, to a cyclic turn of events and feasts. Cyclic patterns of ritual are mostly connected with seasonal changes that have direct impact on rain and guaranteed water supplies. Nomads can seek water. However, water has to be brought to the vegetables and the corn. Wells can supply the needs of shepherds, but they cannot satisfy the needs of a complex agricultural system. Furthermore, nomadic life in ancient Israel was basically non-priestly. The need for regional or local priests arose only after the conquest of Canaan had been terminated (*Jug.* 17-18; *1 Kings* 12:25-33).

We may add here that the manner in which the creation of the luminaries on the fourth day is described easily links to the cyclic type of rituals (*Gen.* 1:14).[24] A more emphatic and detailed expression of the cyclic processes in nature is given after Flood. To all likelihood, this is done in anticipation of Noah's decision to plant a vineyard (*Gen.* 19:9). Characteristically, Noah is descried as tiller of *adamah*, the land that is cursed.

We have to view this fact in light of *Gen.* 5: 29, where Noah's name is explained as promising relief from the curse that God had cursed the *adamah*. In short, there are no rituals mentioned in the patriarchal stories in the Book of Genesis. Even the Sabbath is not mentioned there. Matters begin to change in Ex. 12, with the introduction of the Passover ritual. It is the corner stone upon which all the other seasonal rituals in ancient Israel built.[25] In due course it was linked to another cycle, that of the sanctuary and the temple.

The events after the flood clearly lead in the direction of urbanisation. Here the building of the "Tower of Babylon" becomes an arch symbol of the cultural departure from the nomadic life style. In fact, the Tower as described in Genesis was a temple built in the midst of the city that the people had founded (*Gen.* 11:4). As the scriptural narrative sees matters, God was displeased with what people had done, so they were forced to scatter all over the earth. That is to say, they were forced into migration, which implies nomadism turned into a punishment. In this line of development, Abraham's family, too, was (forced into) searching a new place of living. Abraham ultimately came to the Land of Canaan, where he prospered from *Tson*-herding.

The story of Cain and Abel requires some additional fine-tuning. In killing Abel, Cain is viewed as committing a crime. Since the story is linked to a sacrificial ritual, it makes a statement about sacrificial preferences. Thus it functions as a myth. It is told that Cain unilaterally attempted to establish a certain kind of sacrificial norm. However, God rejected this norm and

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[24] It should be noted, though, that the creation story of *Genesis* 2 is linear. No days or weeks are mentioned. Cain and Abel bring their sacrificial offerings without notifying us of any special occasion or festivals.

[25] See Mishnah *Rosh Hashanah* 1:1 – "There are four new-year [days]: The first day of Nissan [= the month in which Pessach is celebrated] is the new-year [day] for kings and festivals…"

prefers another one. It implied the opposite kind of ethos. Cain's punishment signified an attempt to take revenge and to impose on him the kind of social or cultural ethos – nomadism – one that he had tried to abolish. Since the kind of life-style that was en-

forced on him worked counter his basic ethos, Cain rebelled. He did so by way of going to the opposite extreme. He built a city. Significantly, he calls that city after his son's name Hanoch (Enoch).

iii

Here we enter a new phase in the narrative as well as a new stage in the deployment of the cultural ethos of ancient Israel. As is well known, the story of Enoch is a key element in ancient apocalypticism. However, it should be noted that there are two Enoch-figures in the *Genesis*-story. One is the son of Cain and the other – the son of Yered. A significant cultural drama unfolds between these two Enoch-figures. Only the second one is viewed as a positive figure, being highly praised and valued in both apocalyptic circles and in the New Testament. Is the predilection shown to the second Enoch just a result of his "apocalyptic potentials" (he was believed to have undergone heavenly ascension[s]), or is it because he was viewed as representing something that, culturally speaking, was more profound and engaging?

Genesis 4:16-17 says this about the first Enoch: "Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch, and he built a city and called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch." The information given in these verses contains several details to which, to the best of my knowledge, scholarship has not yet given the kind of attention that they deserve. On its face value, the writer of this passage indicates that in spite of the fact that Cain was doomed to wander about without settling down in any specific place [the expression "*Erets* Nod" to all likelihood re-

flects the *n'a va-nad* segment of his punishment], he built a city. Furthermore, he called it by the name of the son, Hanoch.

If I understand the ethos implied by this story correctly, the name of Cain's son entails more than is usually attributed to it. The name is connected to the verb H.N.KH, used in Scriptural Hebrew to indicate the inauguration, or consecration, of a house (*Deut*. 20:5), the sanctuary/temple (*Num*. 7:11/*1 Kings* 8:63), or the city walls (*Neh*. 12:27). In light of these cases, the question may be asked: In what sense is the verb used in *Prov*. 22:6? To all likelihood, it is used in the sense of bringing a child to his final maturity. Since the first occurrence of the name Hanoch in Scripture is in connection with the founding and consecration of a city (calling the name of the city is tantamount to consecrating it), the linguistic linkage cannot be accidental. In terms of the cultural ethos discussed here, we may argue that the cultural aspects connected with the process of urbanisation are implied. When Cain founded a city and consecrated it, he established a cultural factor, or ethos. Thus, the immediate sense in which this act can be viewed is yet another attempt on Cain's part to break away from sheep herding and nomadism. This act entailed a decision on an ethos level. First Cain killed his shepherd-brother, Abel, and then he founded a city. In both cases he is viewed as committing a grave sin. For the second one he suffers death. This is how the narrator gave expression to his preferences in terms of an

ethos-narrative that entailed a moral code.

As indicated, something more profound may be implied here by way of a coded insinuation. In line with the above, we may argue that building a city is not only a breach with a nomadic life style but also an expression of a monarchic drive, or ethos, that is typical of "later times." In other words, what is activated in building a city is the groundwork for the monarchic rule. Its somewhat disguised form should not mislead us. It is a dominant presence. Monarchy inferentially implies the giving up of the tribal-nomadic life-style for the sake of a "Hebron" or a "Jerusalem," the symbol-cities of the Davidic monarchy! Such a transition, or transformation is also typically and dramatically implied by the official biography of David, the first dynastic king in Israel's history. *Tson*-herding was given up for the sake of kingship. How powerful and dramatic the narrative is and how fatal the consequences. We all know the story: Kingship is described in Scrip-ture – as breeding – even in the case of David – moral corruption. Later on, in the days of King Solomon, idolatry was introduced on a monarchic scale. Eventually, the nation was split into two, and the historical process snowballed down to the abyss of final destruction.

As an afterthought, we may mention the fact that the transition to full urbanisation and monarchy was accompanied by some pain. Samuel collected every bit of persuading sagacity to convince people that kingship would cause economic and social pain, and even havoc. Generally speaking, opposition to the city was part of the prophetic ethos in ancient Israel. The predilection for what the Qumran people called the "Desert of Damascus" is clearly the epitome of their cultural and political ethos, both affirmatively and critically expressed. No surprise, then, that both John the Baptist and Jesus lived, and proclaimed, a nomadic life-style. Significantly, too, both were executed in the city that was the seat of the ruler-king.

iv

One direction in which the present sequence of arguments goes is the assessing of the transition from Judaism to Christianity in terms linked to this ancient dichotomy. Although Jesus does not explicitly preach nomadism, his praise of poverty, in whatever sense is attributed to it, is clearly stimulated by the corruption he saw in the cities. "Tax collectors" represented in his eyes a vampire type of economics that demanded that the farmer feed the bureaucracy stationed in the city. He gathered around him disciples that were identified as villagers and vagabonds. Obviously, this is not exactly the biblical type of nomadism. However, it definitely points to a prevalent anti-urban attitude. Thus, it may not be completely accidental that pastoral leadership is a basic Christian institutional notion. "Pastor," or herd, is a reflection of the ancient ethos discussed here. Viewing the members of the congregation as "the sheep" fitted well into this kind of ethos, or world picture.

One may, of course, argue that nomadism was dialectically invented so as to criticise urbanisation and the monarchy. However, even if this were the case, the dynamics of transformation is still preserved, though on a more structural than historical level. Whether historically grounded, or paradigmatically maintained, nomadism and urbanisation reflect the two opposites of a cultural drive. As we saw, ritual processes are involved in that ethos. In fact, the whole concept of religious worship in Ancient Israel and Early Christianity is based on the

basic [tribal]-nomadic ethos. Revelation, too, is connected with tribal nomadism (Sinai is in the desert) as also the whole structure of the prophetic ethos.

We need not enter here a discussion of the other interesting examples that can be found in the various parts of Scripture and which make clear how widely spread the phenomenon was. However, if, once again, the subject of Enoch can be brought up, the question may be asked: How should one understand God's decision "to take" (translating literally the Hebrew verb *LaQaKH*) the second Enoch, the Son of Yered? In line with what has been said above, I would suggest – basically on interalinguistic grounds – that the second Enoch "was taken" because he *was* a righteous person. However, Scripture does not specifically state what his righteousness consisted of. In fact it says quite enigmatically: "w*a-yitʾha-lekh Hanokh ʾet Ha-Elohim.*" Enoch walked [with God]. Some of the rabbinic sages interpreted it pejoratively. However, more commonly, the meaning of this phrase is interpreted as righteous behaviour. The question can still be asked: Why is the verb *HaLaKH* used in this connection? What is implied by the term?

I think that the clue to the understanding of the term lies with what God told Abraham: *qum hitʾhalekh ba-arets* (*Gen.* 13: 17; "go and walk the land"). One may argue that when God told Abraham to walk the land, something was intended that referred to an ethos or life-style rather than an *ad hoc* commandment to measure the land by feet. In every respect possible, it had ritual significance and status. Abraham never settled permanently in one place. Principally, he lived in tents. Even when he settled down in Beʾer Shevʿa, for a longer period of time, all that Scripture says is that he planted one(!) tree. In other words, Abraham does not abandon the kind of nomadic shepherding that was the ideal ethos of ancient Israel.

Planting a tree is not tantamount to making agricultural decisions. Lot, to make a suggestive comparison, is viewed as doing the wrong thing when he settled down in the territorial vicinity of Sodom. This city eventually became the notorious symbol of abomination and corruption. Were it not for the "angels," Lot would have perished there and then. His wife, who looked back, that is, still favoured the life of the city, perished. She became part of the surrounding "desert."

Mentioning the second Enoch, one may argue that his righteousness, expressed by this unique verb engaging the semantic field of walking, to all likelihood implied that he abstained from taking part in a process that entailed settling down and urbanisation. In this respect, the verb used to describe Enoch's righteousness resonates more loudly than is usually assumed. In fact, I see it as a code. Walking is the real issue here. I see in it a total rejection and negation of city-life. In other words, one phase of the ethos of ancient Israel, one that is expressly depicted in the Book of Genesis, and was then transferred with some modifications to early Christianity, is basically anti-urban and by implication politically anti-monarchic.

As indicated above, this particular aspect in the ethos of ancient Israel is quintessentially represented in the apocalyptic Enoch-literature. Briefly, apocalypticism maintains that there is no hope in the political regime of the here and now. That regime is monarchic, whether Hasmonaean or Herodian. If all goes according to the divine plan, so the apocalyptic visionaries argue, the messiah will replace the earthly ruling class(es). In the terms used in *Isaiah* 11, the days of the messiah will be marked by the peaceful rural conditions that evidently entail a return to paradisal conditions. It may not be accidental that Isaiah speaks of this condition in terms of "The wolf shall dwell

with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid….” The life of the flocks will not be endangered. The economic system will be secured. In the meantime, so the apocalyptic visionaries believe, God will provide for the heavenly mansions that signify an eschatological asylum. In a more messianic context, before everything undergoes transformation and re-enacts its original divine quality, extremely radical changes have to set in. In other words, an opening is here made for apocalypticism to be included in the context of broader considerations the essence of which is contained in the various trends of a cultural ethos as mentioned in this study.

Let me fine-tune this line of argumentation. The verb *Hitʾhalekh* really deserves a full- scale semantic study. Interestingly, it is used in connection with Enoch, Noah (*Gen.* 6:9), and Abraham. Thus, it may not be altogether accidental that the writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* (chapter 11) mentions the three sages just before he says

(verses 9 and 10): “By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land in tents… For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” We need not quote here the rest of the chapter. This statement makes its point powerfully clear, even without comparing it with the obvious, namely, Paul’s utterances about the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem.

One may actually say, by way of a summary, that three different anti-urban channels present themselves to us. They are somehow inter-connected, but should not be confused. One strand maintains an anti-urban ethos, *per se*. Another one assumes a link between anti-urbanisation and anti-monarchism. The third one displays a more radical type of anti-urbanisation. It is more eschatological or messianic in nature, and, in a sense, is the most spiritual one of them all. At its very beginning, Christianity easily identified with the trend to abandon terrestrial forms of government.