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Shannon Berry

ECONOMICS

The current situation regarding economics in the biblical world is both parlous and promising. It is parlous because we lack a workable model of that ancient economy, operating with a vacuum that is filled by unexamined assumptions. It is promising since interest in the question of economics is growing rapidly, cutting across the subfields of biblical criticism. As an example, at its opening session in 2011 the "Economics in the Biblical World" program unit of the Society of Biblical Literature attracted almost 200 participants.

Still we lack an explicit framework with which to work, critique, and reassess. With this in mind, I make a proposal, assuming that without such an explicit model we implicitly import all manner of unexamined assumptions.

Before outlining the proposal, I offer a brief survey of current debate, a survey that needs to take into account the wider debates in ancient Near Eastern studies. Amid the volumes of critical work, two features stand out:

First, older assumptions and models are falling away in light of both the availability of new data and the greater technical and theoretical sophistication of the analysis of the data, both old and new. In particular, evolutionary models, moving from simplicity to complexity, are giving way to the awareness of the particularities of situations and their changes, the variations across places and times, and in particular the looping process whereby complexity may often precede simplicity or what seemed to be simple is far more complex than was assumed. To take two examples: reconsiderations of the state no longer see a band-tribe-chieftain-state process, but rather the lived and diverse complexity involving the agency of communities and individuals (Bolger and Maguire, 2010). Moreover, the history of economics does not move from nascent and unsophisticated forms of protocapitalist exchange to the fully fledged form that we know now. This means that Adam Smith's account of the simple tribe-cum-frontier township, in which individuals naturally gather stockpiles of objects they produce and thereby "barter, truck, and exchange one thing for another," is a quaint myth of human nature, with little bearing on real human interactions (Graeber, 2011).

This last observation leads to the second feature of contemporary debates: they are caught between advocating older, quasi-Marxist approaches and those that seek to apply terms from neoclassical economic theories of capitalism. Each side tends to caricature the other, but the deeper question concerns whether the ancients were radically different (substantivist position) from us, in terms of our desires, hopes, loves, and economic tendencies, or whether they were largely the same (formalist position). On

the one side, we still find the names of Karl Polanyi and Moses Finley invoked, who emphasized the sheer difference between us and them, while on the other Adam Smith and David Ricardo (and his theory of “comparative advantage”) still appear in claims that the ancient Near East (ANE) was “partly capitalist” (Algaze, 2008, p. 23). Obviously, the opposition is itself problematic because some elements reinforce the sense of distance from the ancient world, while others remind us of our similarities.

In the spirit of overcoming this false dichotomy, I offer the following reconstruction, focused on biblical societies. It makes use of archaeological, biblical, and theoretical resources, carefully cognizant of the need to assess each critically. Based on the realities of life, it makes the theoretical point that economies are never entities unto themselves, but that they are always socially determined, part of the wider networks of human relations. On a similar basis, I begin not with the assumption that such determined economies are naturally given to equilibrium in an optimum state, but rather that disequilibrium and crisis constitute the normal condition. Thus, the crucial question becomes not why a crisis has occurred, but why and how a period of stability has been achieved. In this light, the idea of *homo economicus* may be seen as untenable because in the real world such a hypothetical human being would not survive. The reconstruction below offers first a synchronic analysis, outlining key categories, before presenting briefly a synchronic analysis.

Institutional Forms. The building blocks may be described as institutional forms. These are the key elements, which combine in unique fashions, with one or more dominant during some periods and then others in other periods.

Subsistence-survival. The first form is subsistence-survival, which characterizes life of the vast majority, the 95 percent engaged in agriculture. Subsistence-survival relates to both maintaining herds and cultivating crops. Recent zooarchaeological research (see especially Sasson, 2010) has shown that the typical formation of herds involves two-thirds sheep and one-third goats. Sheep provide vital fibers and high-yield meat, along with milk, while goats are hardy

and versatile animals. Both reproduce quickly. Having the two types of animals ensures that should disease affect one type, the other type would remain to ensure survival. Herds were culled at regular intervals to maintain health and herd size. By contrast, bovines were few and the evidence indicates that they died at an advanced age. That means they were used as draft animals for plowing and not primarily for food.

The fields traversed by the bovines produced the necessary crops for subsistence-survival (wheat, millet, barley, legumes, and occasional vegetables). The primary concern in relation to the land was usufruct and labor. Notions of private property or the permanence of land were irrelevant. Agricultural villages used a system of land tenure or share (*Helēqat haśadeh*)—a practice widespread in societies focused on subsistence-survival. This term refers not to a field or plot of land, which is demarcated in terms of land measurement, surveying, and clear demarcation from neighbors. Instead, a land share is a moveable strip or strips of land that are constantly reallocated on the basis of use and need. The perpetual process of the reallocation of these land shares was undertaken by an authority, most often the village-commune, but also a patron (Guillaume, 2012).

Two further points may be made concerning this basic institutional form. First, it is remarkably consistent from the time of sustained crisis in the ANE (twelfth century B.C.E.) and through the later centralization of power and great empires. Given the marginal status of the Levant, periodically subject to external empire, subsistence-survival remained a dominant form through the late Bronze and Iron Ages. This form constitutes a response to a situation of crisis—the population of the Judean highlands by local peoples—that both picks up older strategies of risk aversion and sustains them during later periods. Second, the nature of subsistence-survival is to engage in periodic nomadism. One may settle for a time, during the growing season, only to move about with the herds to prevent overgrazing. Here it is not a situation of nomads interacting and trading with settled peoples, but a situation where those who were settled engaged in regular nomadism, while

those who were nomadic often settled for a time. In other words, the opposition of desert and sown begins to break down.

Kinship. Other institutional forms concern, on the one hand, the organization of labor and usufruct, and on the other what one does with the produce of the crops and caprine herds. This produce was not spectacular or voluminous. Farmers worked to ensure survival in the face of the perpetual threat of chaos (disease, pests, taxes, attacks, droughts, etc.). This entailed production at a level below maximum capacity, so that something—in optimal conditions—was kept in reserve. Further, the processes of herd and crop management were infused with the sacred. “Religion” was not a compartmentalized feature of life, an ideology distinct from the realities of agriculture. Rather, it was inescapably woven in with the birth of healthy sheep and goats, with the rains and full crop yields, with the myriad determinations of the threats to that production. The gods gave and the gods took away.

We may distinguish between further institutional forms that focus on allocation and on extraction, although there are overlaps between them. A key form of allocation was based on kinship. The flexibility and adaptability of kinship (and genealogical lists) is well known, but its central role in economics is not recognized so often. Kinship organized the patterns of allocating (both equally and unequally) the produce from herds and flocks along tribal lines, but it also determined the organization of labor, land shares, and herd management. Two examples, among others, may be given from the Hebrew Bible. The first, “inheritance” (*naḥālâ*), is more expected. However, *naḥālâ* means less “inalienable property,” as often defined, and more the process of transition (*nḥl*), of taking possession (Qal), allocating (Piel), and giving (Hiphil). Stories such as Boaz’s acquisition of Elimelech’s (and Mahlon’s and Chilion’s) land shares in Ruth 4, Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings 21, and Jeremiah’s (ch. 32) inheritance from his cousin are concerned with variations on the process of transition. They push at the margins, explore novel modes, but they concern transition. The second example is unexpected because it concerns insights—by way of

negative example—from laws concerning incest and fidelity (Exod 22; Lev 18, 20; Deut 27). Instead of separating stray laws from their context—concerning “incest” in terms of blood lines, bestiality, etc.—we should see them in their larger context, a context that involves a range of unacceptable sexual practices, whether with blood relatives, nonblood relatives, or animals. Let us now invert the negative to the positive: the result is a much wider sense of the clan or family because it goes not only well beyond blood lines, but also beyond the human-animal divide. The economic point here is that domesticated animals were not so much managed and allocated in terms of kinship lines, but that they formed part of the flexible kinship structures themselves.

Patron-client, military, and judiciary. A further institutional form of allocation was the patron-client relationship. Patronage is an ambivalent form, however, because it may operate both alongside kinship and against it. The *‘ab* (paterfamilias) may function as a patron, influencing patterns of allocation and reallocation. Yet, the patron may also cut across clan lines, seeking clients in a way that challenges familial organization. Thus, patronage leaves itself open to extractive forms of economic relations: the patron demands products in exchange for protection (“welfare”), uses his band to enforce his will, and fosters a code of honor and shame (characteristic of gangsters as well). A biblical example is the story of David, before he becomes king. His band of followers cuts across clan lines, owes allegiance to him, fights for his cause, in return for security and the allocated products of plunder and agriculture.

This brings us to the military, another form of economic allocation. The mode of acquisition is not so much in terms of herds and crops, but in terms of reallocated plunder. At this level, the military is inevitably bound in with extractive patterns. Someone else had to produce the goods plundered, whether more immediately in terms of herds and crops or in terms of the accumulated—over a long time—treasures of temples and palaces. It is easy to see how this becomes primarily extractive. However, the military also functions in a directly allocatory manner. In this respect, it is a militia, formed of all

able members of a community or tribe. Enmeshed with kinship, the militia's role is to protect against marauding bands and launch raids (note the connection too with the patron's band). But it also provided a means of allocating the produce of agriculture and of those raids. Given the closeness of the militia to kinship, those patterns of allocation may be almost indistinguishable from kinship. However, the militia introduces its own particular features, especially in terms of the influx of captured goods that need to be allocated, as well as captives from raids and the incorporation of these captives within kinship structures (the story of capture of the daughters of Shiloh for the decimated Benjaminites in Judg 21:15–25 is a good example).

A further institutional form of economic allocation was judicial. At the level of tribe and village-commune, the judiciary (as paterfamilias, patron, or elders) functions to reallocate land shares periodically, arbitrate disputes over mundane but crucial matters such as boundary markers (Deut 19:14, 27:17; Prov 22:28, 23:10), weeds, plow lines, etc. Like the military, however, the law may mutate, in the hands either of a patron or of a ruling class that has seized the machinery of state. Now it becomes a form that reinforces their respective economic interests.

Tax tribute. The remaining institutional forms are primarily extractive: tax-tribute, credit-debt, and exchange. It has been held now for more than three decades that tribute or tax was the primary method of extracting surpluses. Gottwald (1999 [1979]) was the first to propose a complete mode of production, a tributary one, based on this institutional form. Without acknowledging Gottwald, Banaji (2010) has recently proposed the same term for the whole ANE. The mechanisms of taxation are obvious, providing resources for a government to function, the needs of those who do not work. However, I wish to focus on the "surplus" taxed. To begin with, the difference between tax and plunder is a matter of semantics rather than reality. They are both appropriated by those who have not produced them and they both require a combination of force (military) and persuasion (law and ideology).

But is it really a surplus? For agriculturalists, it is difficult to regard it as such. As noted earlier, subsis-

tence-survival agriculture produces occasional and small surpluses as a precaution against crop failure or herd losses. This means that any appropriation of agricultural goods and its vital labor (in terms of corvée tax) undermines subsistence-survival. It is in the interest of a government not to extract too much tax because otherwise it threatens the reproducibility of agriculture and its labor, let alone its own viability. But rational action in light of one's own interest (Adam Smith's point) rarely measures up to real life (see 1 Kgs 4:22–28). All too often, rulers did demand taxes that threatened survival; hence the common response of tax refusal, abandonment of villages, moving outside the control of government, and the value of more wide ranging nomadism.

Debt-credit. A further primarily extractive form is debt-credit. This may operate in two ways. As a loan provided by a patron, ruler, or landlord, the function was not so much to generate profit (see below) or acquire property, but to secure labor. Given the wide availability of land and shortage of labor, the issue was to secure manpower. A nonlaboring ruler needed labor: to forestall labor melting away, debt functioned as one mode of labor security and control (another method was deportations of manpower, deployed by the large empires).

The other dimension concerns credit, which tends toward an allocatory function. Rather than a primarily financial procedure (as we understand it), credit is here a system of customary trust. It involves the cow and plow briefly borrowed, the cloak passed around, the metal tool given to a neighbor. This type of credit assumes a village-commune, a community of pastoral nomads, in short one in which people know one another well. Typically, such credit operates without systematic coinage, which first arose during a period of sustained economic and political chaos. Remarkably, coinage first arose in three different parts of the world (China, India, and Lydia), using very different technologies (casting, punching, and pressing), at a similar time (ca. 600 B.C.E.) for very similar socioeconomic reasons. During the economic disequilibrium and incredible violence beginning around 800 B.C.E. (the infamous "Axial Age"), systems of mutual credit broke down. What

was needed was an objective mode of transaction. The mercenary soldier was a bad credit risk, as were the villagers who readily moved to avoid one form of disaster after another, if not to join a marauding band in the hills. So one needed a weighable, quantifiable form of payment that both parties could trust, given one would not see the other again after the transaction. Coinage is thereby like the drug-dealer's suitcase of cash. The mercenary could acquire supplies from a pastoral nomad; the warlord could impose taxes in coinage to pay hired soldiers; the pastoralist knew that he had an objective item of value in exchange for his grain, legumes, and meat. Needless to say, coinage is yet another signal of the underlying norm of economic crisis. It also provided the economic conditions that fostered new modes of abstracted thought (since coinage is an abstraction of value), both creative and critical, characteristic of the age.

Exchange. I have left the question of exchange ("trade") until last, for good reason. To begin with, exchange has generated an inordinate amount of scholarly attention because the limitations of what counts as "economics." Gradually restricted from Adam Smith's emphasis on barter, truck, and exchange and through the further demarcations and mathematization of Léon Walrus and others, economics became a distinct discipline with its own carefully protected and free-floating field of analysis. So trade and the assumed "market" became the core of economic analysis. However, the market in the ancient world is not what it is often assumed to be. Contrary to the assumption that markets are driven by the profit motive, it is worth noting that most markets in history have not been profit-making ventures (Graeber, 2011). Markets have had many functions, beginning with the village market where one exchanges a few local agricultural goods for others, to the secondary development of markets when a ruler sought mechanisms to feed his army.

In this light, the question is whether "trade" was a primarily institutional form in ancient economic life. Here I take sides in an ongoing debate; in light of recent, sophisticated archaeological analysis, it is clear that what trade existed—even long-distance

and at great expense and risk—was overwhelmingly in preciousities rather than bulk staples. Royal courts and the small ruling class acquired exotic and expressive items, whether for useless decoration, clothing, weapons, lavish gifts offered to other rulers, or building materials for constructions by the state (1 Kgs 10:14–22). The motive was acquisition, and one would reward handsomely a middleman who took the risk to acquire items for pomp and glory. Even those who argue for the centrality of trade need to argue that such preciousities were more important economically than they actually were (Algaze, 2008). Further, if we focus on agriculture, the primary concern of economic activity, then subsistence-survival is not geared to generating surplus for trade. As noted earlier, the occasional small surpluses were for reserves against risk rather than for trade (Sasson, 2010). Extensive analysis of economic exchange in Iron Age Palestine also indicates the exchange was overwhelmingly local and limited, focused on agricultural goods (Milevski, 2011). That is, the evidence is pointing toward a secondary rather than a primary role for exchange; at a subsistence level, its function was allocatory; at a ruling-class level, the motive was the gaining of influence, or the acquisition for one's own aggrandizement. Here it becomes a subset of tax-tribute.

Three Regimes: Subsistence-Survival, Tax-Tribute, and Plunder. In sum, these are the institutional forms of the ancient Near Eastern economies, within which biblical societies were located. Thus far the analysis has been largely synchronic, but what of diachronic analysis? Here the key question concerns the means of achieving stability over against crisis. Such periods depended on different combinations of the institutional forms outlined above. One combination, with dominant and subordinate forms, may achieve relative stability for a longer or shorter time. When it succumbs to crisis, an effort may be made to restore the same combination or develop another. I propose that we designate these periods of stability as "regimes" (Boyer and Saillard, 2002 [1995]). Each regime entails a set of compromises to achieve stability for a time.

Focusing on ancient Palestine, the first relevant period—appearing late on the scene—is that of the

sustained crisis from the twelfth century onward. With the collapse of the league of powerful states in the ANE, there appear those much-studied settlements in the Judean hills. In this context, allocatory institutional forms dominate. Subsistence-survival is the key, with the allocatory dimensions of patronage, militia, and customary law playing their roles. Credit is the common form of interaction members of pastoral nomadic groups and their village-communes. With the absence of strong states, tax-tribute and ruling class exchange of preciosities is minimal. This may be called the subsistence regime. Lest we think this was in any way egalitarian or ideal, we need to remember that such a regime is not usually equal and that it is immediately defined by the ever-present economic chaos to which it responded. Threats of marauding bands, warlords, diseases, drought, and pests constantly undermine the thin line of subsistence.

With later efforts at centralization of power and the reestablishment of states, the regime shifts to reintroduce extractive tax-tribute and debt as important forms. The paradox with this shift is that it is developed to provide a stronger response to crisis, yet it produces other layers of threat to subsistence-survival. Debt becomes a mechanism to hold labor, while taxation undermines the small security surpluses and actual needs of subsistence-survival. The allocatory institutional forms that have extractive potential may also tend in that direction. For instance, patronage takes on all too easily the nature of underworld gangsterism, with its codes of honor and shame. The militia becomes a standing army to enforce the ruler's will and ensure taxes continue to flow, while the judiciary also shifts (or gains another dimension) to provide a framework for the ruling class. Note also that allocatory ideologies (inevitably of the sacred) are often used to justify the shift to significant extractive forms. For example, the tithe maintains an allocatory framework even as it functions as taxation. The ruler claims the role of patron, as one who provides for widow and orphan (the "just king").

I suggest a distinction between three types of extractive regime. The first is characteristic of small,

weaker states, constantly at war with one another and with a minimal ruling class. It may be designated a weak extractive regime, dominated by tax-tribute. It is found in the entirely new network of states—some recoveries of older states, others new—that began to emerge after two centuries of chaos at the opening of the first millennium B.C.E.: Assyria, Babylonia, Urartu, Elam, Phoenician harbor cities, Neo-Hittites, Medes, Phrygia, Lydia, Aramaeans, the small Omride state in northern Israel (if one accepts Carter's proposal [1999]), and many other smaller states. It is also found in late Bronze-Age Palestine, which precedes the twelfth century. And it continues in the "little kingdoms" that existed on the peripheries of the later empires (see below). In this regime, extractive forms operate at a low level, in tension with but not overwhelming allocatory forms. It is potentially long-lasting, given the compromises made between the forms in tension.

The problem is that such regimes find it difficult to maintain such a tension. Extractive forms have a tendency to expand their range and seek clear dominance, in what may now be called a plunder-based regime. The primary type of tribute gathering becomes plunder rather than taxation; the military becomes the prime mechanism of plunder, waging annual campaigns in search of ever new plunder. The reason is that the needs of imperial centers—payment of large armies, lavish palaces and temples, a vastly increased bureaucratic network—cannot be met by the taxation extracted from subsistence-survival agriculture. The Assyrian Empire is the first full instance of this plunder-based regime, although it took until the seventh century B.C.E. for Assyria to dominate fully. Such a regime teeters on the perpetual edge of collapse: the need for ever more plunder requires perpetual expansion because the plunder gathered is itself the result of long years of gathering riches in the states conquered. The problem is that such plunder is a nonrenewable resource. As long as ferocious expansion continues, this regime can be maintained. But as soon as it reaches its limits, it collapses spectacularly. Soon after Assyria achieved complete dominance in the seventh century B.C.E. it was gone. Such destruction did not prevent efforts at

reestablishing plunder-based regimes, notably the Neo-Babylonian, which was even harsher than the Assyrian, leaving large areas destroyed. But its dominance was even more short lived, ending in 539 B.C.E.

By contrast, the Persians developed what may be called a strong extractive regime. Alongside plunder and devastation, the Persians realized the need for systematic taxation, turning the whole empire into a regulated system of provinces (including that of Judaea) that was simultaneously highly centralized, yet recognizing linguistic and cultural diversity. To overcome the limitations of taxation, the Persians constructed an empire of greater scale than all those that had gone before (from India to northern Greece, from central Asia to southern Egypt). Plunder was part of the expansion, but the size of the empire and systemic organization and enforcement of taxation enabled a slightly more stable form, lasting two centuries.

Modes of Regulation. Two points in conclusion: First, the crisis-determined subsistence-survival form and other allocatory forms remained part of the combinations. As noted earlier, this was because of its function in facing the perpetual threat of crisis, especially in the marginal territory of ancient Palestine. Second, such regimes require cultural and ideological elements, along with institutional structures, to ensure the perpetuation of the various compromises and reconfigurations of the different institutional forms. These ideological factors comprise what may be called a mode of regulation: they are made up of assumptions, beliefs, and justifications, which in biblical societies took the form of the sacred. The well-documented tensions between different types of sacred ideologies (theologies) may be understood in terms of the larger context of tensions between different institutional forms within the regimes. Given the thorough interweaving of the sacred with the institutional forms and regimes that I have traced, the sacred is as much a cause as an effect of economics. Even here the perpetual threat of socioeconomic chaos is embodied in the myths, in which chaos is overcome and order established (the city becomes a model of such order, as Babylon shows), only to threaten its return at any moment.

[See also Family; Honor and Shame; Imperialism; and Kinship.]

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Roland Boer

EDUCATION

Anyone approaching the Bible and its environment with modern ideas about education as upbringing and/or culture brings prejudice to the topic.

Biblical conceptions emerge from Mesopotamian and Egyptian developments over long periods. Biblical information is relatively scarce.

The Ancient Orient and Egypt. Written evidence of legal regulations, religious instructions, wisdom literature, and instructions for the individual and social behavior implies educated persons in the Ancient Near East and Egypt.

Mesopotamia and the Near East. In addition to oral transmission, development of writing in Mesopotamia in the late fourth millennium served for recording regulations of temples and public administration.

Individual written characters and administrative terms from about 3000 B.C.E. hint at an education system. Evidence exists from about 2600 B.C.E. in Fara, and education may be presumed in other cities. Both the content and the writing materials were relatively uniform, the latter consisting mainly of clay tablets of the same size and shape on which pupils practiced writing. Lists of names of gods, prayers, letter forms, and historical events served for practice in the period of Akkad (2340–2200 B.C.E.). The Neo-Assyrian king Šulgi (ca. 2093–2046 B.C.E.) writes in the earliest archaeological evidence of the education of a prince: “From childhood I was in school and learned the art of writing on tablets of Sumer and Akkad.” Slaves, probably of the palace, were trained for the needs of business, government, and diplomacy. This is probably true for priests. Reconstructions of the Babylonian process of teaching in the first half of the second millennium posit writing exercises of fixed characters as the first step, followed by syllabic signs, proper names, lexical lists, and Sumerian proverbs. Writers tended to acquire specialized skills only after this general basic phase.

The apparently small number of students likely indicates a domestic system. It is not certain whether there was a teaching profession outside of family contexts in which fathers trained their own children. Students also learned foreign languages, such as Aramaic in Mesopotamia. In Ebla, the development of education was similar to the Babylonian model. The same applies to Assyria from the second millennium onward and in the second half of the second millennium B.C.E. to the Hittites and to Ugarit, where an