

## Nature in the Sources of Judaism

### INTRODUCTION

**A** LONG WITH CHRISTIANITY, JUDAISM has been indicted as one cause of our current environmental crisis. In his famous essay, Lynn White Jr. alleged that the anthropocentrism of the Judeo-Christian tradition “made it possible to exploit all nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.”<sup>1</sup> According to White, the biblical command “to fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28) is *the* proof that the Judeo-Christian tradition puts humans above the rest of creation and regards all other forms of life as subordinate. The many environmentalists who endorsed White’s views have thus charged that Judaism and Christianity are directly responsible for the kinds of human conduct that have brought about the depletion of the planet’s natural resources.

Christian thinkers have arisen to defend Christianity against this challenge, thereby articulating a Christian-based environmental ethics.<sup>2</sup> The Jewish response to White’s charges emerged at the same time, but environmentalism has generally remained a marginal concern of Jewish thinkers.<sup>3</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, the physical and spiritual survival of the Jewish people, rather than the survival of the planet, have been paramount for Jews.

Nonetheless, since the early 1980s a small group of Jewish environmental activists, educators, religious leaders, and theologians have placed clean water, nuclear waste, biological diversity, climate change, and sustainable development on the

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*Hava Tirosh-Samuelson is associate professor of history at Arizona State University.*

Jewish agenda.<sup>4</sup> As a result of their efforts, the Jewish ideal of *tikkun olam* (“repair of the world”), the Jewish passion for justice, and the Jewish ethics of responsibility have been extended to the physical environment in an attempt to protect humans and other species from environmental degradation. The Jewish environmental movement has yet to produce a systematic environmental ethics and philosophy, but it has already made a cogent case that Judaism can inspire sound environmental policies and that Jewish religious life can be enriched through sensitivity to ecological concerns.<sup>5</sup>

The very existence of a Jewish environmental movement suggests that the blame for the current environmental crisis cannot be simply placed at the door of Judaism or the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition. A much more nuanced and informed discussion is needed in order to do justice to the diversity of attitudes toward the natural world in the religious sources of Judaism and in the history of the Jewish people. The Jewish tradition, this essay argues, can be part of the solution to the current environmental crisis, because its deepest religious beliefs are consistent with environmental protection. However, it would be a mistake to assume that Judaism is “environmentally correct,” or to treat the Jewish sources apologetically.<sup>6</sup> An honest examination of the Jewish tradition does suggest that Judaism harbors a genuine tension in regards to nature that can be traced to the relationship between two of Judaism’s central beliefs: the belief that God created the universe, and the belief that God’s will was revealed to Israel in the form of Law, the Torah.<sup>7</sup> This essay highlights the dialectical relationship between the doctrines of creation and revelation in the Jewish tradition. It argues that while the beliefs of the Jewish tradition are consistent with environmental protection, the Jewish understanding of the place of humans in the created order conflicts with some convictions of secular environmentalists.

#### CREATED WORLD VERSUS REVEALED WORD

Judaism is grounded in the belief that God is the sole creator of the universe. How exactly God brought the universe into existence remains beyond the ken of human knowledge, but that the

world as we know it through our senses can teach us something about the creator is taken for granted in the Jewish tradition. The doctrine of creation facilitates an interest in the natural world that God brought into existence. In fact, the more one observes the natural world, the more one comes to revere the creator, because the natural world manifests the presence of order and wise design in a world in which nothing is superfluous.<sup>8</sup> Psalm 19:1 expresses this point poetically: “the heavens are telling the glory of God / and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.” Psalm 147 (vv. 7–9; 16–18) illustrates how human awareness of the regularity of nature leads to thanksgiving, while according to Psalm 148 (vv. 8–10), all of creation is engaged in praising God and recognizing God’s commanding power over nature. Awareness of nature’s orderliness, regularity, and beauty, however, never leads the Psalmist to revel in nature for its own sake. In the Psalms, as in the rest of the Jewish tradition, nature is never an end in itself. It always points to the divine creator, who governs and sustains nature.<sup>9</sup>

Although the details of the creative act remain inscrutable, the act itself is broadly understood to be one in which God willfully imposed order by separating the heavens from the earth, dry land from water, animate from inanimate things, the human from other animals. In Scripture and in post-biblical Judaism, the act of establishing boundaries serves as the rationale for the distinction between the sacred and the profane, the permitted and the forbidden. Thus the prohibitions on mixing different seeds in the same field, the interbreeding of diverse species of animals, the wearing of garments of mixed wool and linen (Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:11), and the differentiation between clean and unclean foods are all traced back to the setting of boundaries at the moment of creation.<sup>10</sup> The emphasis on orderliness of creation explains why in Judaism we do not find glorification of wilderness (so cherished by the environmental movement), and why the cultivated field is the primary model for the created universe in the Bible.<sup>11</sup> Humans are commanded by God to cultivate the earth as a way to preserve and care for what ultimately belongs to God.

The Jewish tradition affirms that God created an orderly world and that God continues to sustain the world through

benevolent care and attention to the needs of its inhabitants. Even miracles, in which God directly intervenes in the created order, are understood to exhibit both the orderliness of God's creation and God's control over the created order.<sup>12</sup> The greatest miracles of all, however, are to be found not in the natural world but in the way God operates in human history, especially in the history of the Chosen People. Divine intervention in human affairs, culminating in the revelation of the Torah at Sinai, is the utmost expression of God's creative power and benevolence. Yet it is this revelation of God's will that posits the Torah of God as above and beyond nature.

In the created order, the human being is given a privileged place. The human species alone was created "in the image of God" (*zelem elohim*) (Gen. 1:26), even though the human species was also fashioned from the dust of the earth to which the human returns at death. The precise meaning of creation in the divine image was debated by Jewish theologians in the Middle Ages. The rabbis made it clear that the superiority of human beings over other animals does not entail a license to subdue and exploit. Rather, creation in the image of God entails human responsibility for the whole of creation. Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabba 7:13 expresses human responsibility toward nature as follows: "the Holy Blessed One took the first human and passing before all the trees of the Garden of Eden said: 'See my works, how fine and excellent they are? All that I created, I created for you. Reflect on this and do not corrupt or desolate my world; for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you.'" This Midrash makes clear that humans must neither be indifferent to nature nor bring about its destruction; they must protect nature through their own effort, thereby becoming partners of God, although not co-creators.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the belief that the world and all things in it belong to God is consistent with the notion of human stewardship over the earth, which in turn can be translated into conservationist policies.<sup>14</sup> Precisely because the natural world is God's creation, the value of nature in Judaism cannot be simply utilitarian: the natural world does not belong to humans, but to God, and the world was created not for the sake of human needs, but for God's sake. On the basis of Isaiah 43:7 the rabbis expressed this point

succinctly when they stated that “Whatever God created, He created for His own glory” (Avot 6:12; Yoma 38a).

Whereas the doctrine of creation evokes awe and reverence toward the natural world, the belief that God revealed God’s will in the form of Law to Israel assumes a certain distance between the believer and the nonhuman natural world (even though the doctrine does not entail such distance). From the priestly reforms that produced the Book of Deuteronomy, through the Pharisaic interpretation of Judaism during the Second Temple, and into the rabbinic Judaism of the Talmudic period, Judaism treated the Torah as the sacred medium for communication between God and Israel. The framers of Judaism called on all Jews to make the Torah the exclusive object of love, devotion, and veneration. To worship God, Israel should study the Torah and behave according to its commandments as expounded by the authoritative interpreters of the Torah, the rabbinic sages and their heirs through the generations. In rabbinic Judaism, then, the exclusive study of the Torah and the acts that follow from it stand in some tension with the worship of nature. Mishnah Avot 3:7 summarizes the tension between the life of the Torah and the appreciation of nature when it states in the name of Rabbi Jacob: “he who travels on the road while reviewing what he has learned, and interrupts his study and says: ‘How fine is that tree, how fair that field!’ Scripture regards him as if he committed a grave sin.” The admiration of nature, then, distracts the believer from devotion to God’s revealed Torah, which the teachers of Judaism regarded as the sole preoccupation of the ideal Jew.

Rabbinic Judaism views the world that God had created as good, but the world itself is neither perfect nor holy. To become perfect and holy, the created world requires the intentional acts of humans, who follow God’s commands by performing prescribed rituals. Through observance of religious rituals, the recipients of divine revelation consecrate themselves and the natural order, and thereby enter into an intimate relationship with God.

The notion that nature can be sanctified through human acts thus bridges the gap between the doctrines of creation and revelation. By the second century B.C.E., we find the notion that

God's wisdom, manifest in the orderliness of the universe, coincides with the primordial, preexistent Torah, which served as a blueprint for the creation of the world. As we shall see below, medieval philosophers and Kabbalists would explore the correspondence between the Torah and the created world. But already in rabbinic Judaism, the revealed Torah (both written and oral) was understood to complete and perfect the created world. It is through the revelation of God's will, as interpreted by the authoritative tradition, that one can know how to conduct oneself in the world, including behavior toward the physical environment.

Rabbinic Judaism posed an elaborate program for the sanctification of nature. In daily prayers, the Jewish worshipper sanctifies nature by expressing gratitude to the Creator "who in his Goodness creates each day." The prayers recognize the daily changes in the rhythm of nature—morning, evening, and night—and recognize the power of God to bring these changes about. Similarly, the blessings that Jews are required to utter when they witness a storm or observe a tree blossoming bear witness to God's power in nature. Even more poignantly, the observant Jew blesses God for the natural functions of the human body and for the food that God provides to nourish the human body. By means of these blessings, all acts from which the worshipper derives either benefit or pleasure are consecrated to God. To act otherwise is considered a form of theft.<sup>15</sup>

A Jewish life punctuated by blessings is thus not divorced from events in nature and involves the natural functions of the human body. Yet it is the consecration of the natural order to God that endows all activities with proper religious meaning.

#### THE SANCTIFICATION OF NATURE—THE COVENANTAL MODEL

The Jewish tradition views the giving of the Torah to the people of Israel as a historic event that established an eternal covenant between God and Israel, the Chosen People. The covenant expresses the unconditional free love of God and Israel for each other and the mutual obligations that flow from it, including obligations toward the earth. These obligations are best seen in regard to the land of Israel, the paradigm of proper manage-

ment of the earth in Judaism. Given by God to the people of Israel, the land of Israel is viewed as collateral in the eternal covenant. To ensure that God's land flourishes, the people must observe God's commands. When Israel conducts itself according to the laws of the Torah, the land is abundant and fertile, benefiting its inhabitants with the basic necessities of human life—grain, oil, and wine. But when Israel sins, the blessedness of the land declines and it becomes desolate and inhospitable (Lev. 26:32; Deut. 11:13–21). When the alienation from God becomes egregious and injustice overtakes God's people, God removes them from the land of Israel. The flourishing of the land and the quality of the people's life, then, are causally linked, and both depend on obeying God's will. The proper management of the land of Israel illustrates the close link between the sanctification of space, time, the human body, and social relations in Judaism.

### *Sanctification of Space*

The various land-based commandments in the Bible express the belief that "God is the owner of the land of Israel and the source of its fertility, while the Israelites working the land are God's tenant-farmers. The tenants are obligated to return the first portion of the land's yield to the owner in order to insure the land's continuing fertility and the farmer's sustenance and prosperity."<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, the first sheaf of the barley harvest, the first fruit of produce, and two loaves of bread made from the new grain are to be consecrated to God. In the Mishnah (codified about 200 C.E.) these gifts are to be made only from produce grown by Israelites in the land of Israel, in contrast to all other cereal offerings and animal offerings, which may be brought to the Temple also from outside the land (Mishnah Men. 8:1; Mishnah Parah 2:1). Some of the consecrated produce is to be given to the priests and Levites, whereas others are to be eaten by the farmer himself.

Scripture likewise regulates the cultivation of trees. Leviticus 19:23 commands: "When you come into the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall regard their fruit as forbidden." During the first three years of growth, the fruits of newly planted trees or vineyards are not to be eaten (*orlah*),

because they are considered to be God's property. Deuteronomy 20:19 articulates the principle of *bal tashit* (literally: "do not destroy") that governs conduct toward trees during wartime: "If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down."<sup>17</sup> While this law is undoubtedly anthropocentric, it also suggests that Scripture recognizes the interdependence between humans and trees, on the one hand, and the capacity of humans to destroy natural things, on the other. To ensure the continued fertility of the land, human destructive tendencies are curbed by Scriptural law. In the Talmud and later rabbinic sources, the biblical injunction of "do not destroy" is extended to cover "the destruction, complete or incomplete, direct or indirect, of all objects that may be of potential benefit to man."<sup>18</sup> Applying the principle to numerous nonmilitary situations, as the Talmud does, may serve as a useful guideline to prevent all forms of harmful conduct toward the physical environment.<sup>19</sup>

While the Jewish tradition places the responsibility for the well-being of God's earth on humans, the tradition is not insensitive to the well-being of nonhuman species. Proper management of the created order is a human responsibility, and the Torah itself specifies how humans should take care of other species. Deuteronomy (5:14, 14:21, 22:6, 22:10) requires sensitivity to the needs of animals, and with these verses in mind the rabbis articulated the principle of *tza'ar ba'aley hayim* ("distress of living creatures").<sup>20</sup> Humans are forbidden to cause needless pain to animals, enjoined instead to exercise mercy. The rabbis prohibited the eating of a meal before giving food to the animals, and prohibited the purchase of any animal or bird, tame or wild, unless the purchaser had first made adequate provision for feeding the animal. The concern for unnecessary suffering of animals underscores the precaution Jewish law takes about slaughtering animals for human consumption; all are meant to minimize pain. Though the tradition allows for the slaughtering of animals fit for human consumption, it forbids a "destructive act that will cause the extinction of species even though it has permitted the ritual slaughtering of that spe-

cies.”<sup>21</sup> In short, Judaism prescribes a sensitivity to all of God’s creatures as part of the command to confer dignity on all things created by God.

*Sanctification of Time*

Ancient Israel was an agrarian society that lived in accord with the seasons and celebrated the completion of each harvest cycle by dedicating the earth’s produce to God. Yet already in the Bible the agricultural festivals were given a different meaning when they were situated in the linear, sacred history of the Jewish people and its covenantal relationship with God. For example, Sukkot (Feast of Booths) originally celebrated the end of the summer harvest and the preparation for the rainy season in the land of Israel; it was later associated with the redemption of Israel from Egypt. In Leviticus 23:42 Israel was commanded to dwell in booths for seven days so “that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” Removed from the protection of their regular dwelling, the temporary booth compelled the Israelites to experience the power of God in nature more directly and become even more grateful to God’s power of deliverance. In addition to dwelling in a sukkah, the Israelites were commanded “to take the fruit of the goodly tree, palm branches, foliage of leafy trees, and willows of the brook and you shall rejoice before your God for seven days” (Lev. 23:40). In this manner, nature became a means for Israel’s fulfillment of the commandment to rejoice before God. After the destruction of the Temple, the complex rituals of this pilgrimage festival could no longer be carried out in the Temple.<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, the rabbis elaborated the symbolic meaning of the sukkah, viewing it as a sacred home and the locus for the divine presence. They homiletically linked the “Four Species” to parts of the human body, ideal types of people, the four patriarchs, the four matriarchs, and to God.<sup>23</sup> Nature’s “eternal return” thus received a different historical and ethical meaning in Judaism.

The ritual transformation of nature is also evident in another Jewish festival that celebrated the rhythms of nature. First mentioned in the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1), the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat, which coincides with the beginning

of bloom of almond trees after the period of dormancy during winter, was celebrated as “the new year for trees.” The celebration apparently originated in the secular activity of paying taxes on fruit trees, but it received a religious meaning when the day was interpreted as God’s judgment of trees, analogous to the judgment of people at the beginning of the Jewish year.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, during the Middle Ages, when the Jews no longer dwelled in the land of Israel, the festival assumed a new symbolic meaning, with new prayers and new customs. Fruits grown in the land of Israel were eaten by diaspora Jews and a special set of Psalms was added to the daily liturgy. The most elaborate ritual for the holiday was constructed by Kabbalists in the sixteenth century, for whom the land of Israel was no longer merely a physical place, but rather a spiritual reality. Modeled after the Passover service, the Kabbalistic ritual for the “new year for trees” endowed it with the capacity to restore the flow of divine energy to the broken world. The very fact that for the Kabbalists everything in the world was a symbol of divine reality facilitated the creation of new rituals and endowed natural objects with a new spiritual meaning. Nature was absorbed into the sacred narrative of Judaism.

### *Sanctification of the Human Body*

The covenantal model posited the ideal that Israel must become “holy, as I the Lord am holy” (Lev. 11:45). To live in the holy land, the holy people must conduct themselves in a holy manner first and foremost in regard to their own bodies. The commandments regarding the land ensured the production of food pure enough for consumption by the people of God. The production and consumption of holy food was especially important for the priests, who came into more direct contact with God than ordinary Israelites. A code of permitted and forbidden foods was established by the priestly class during the First Temple period and further elaborated by the Pharisees during the Second Temple period and the rabbinic sages who perpetuated their traditions. The Pharisees, who began as an exclusive table fellowship, extended the purity code beyond the precincts of the Temple to the household and the marketplace, and expected all Jews, and not only those who belonged to priestly families, to

abide by it.<sup>25</sup> Over time, the Pharisaic conception of purity would become normative in Judaism.

In addition to taking extreme care in the production, preparation, and consumption of food, ritual cleanliness governed all other aspect of the human body, especially sexual activity. Detailed laws governed the emission of bodily fluids (such as semen and blood), and prescribed specific modes of purification for various types of ritual pollution. Immersion in water and the sacrifice of animals were the major ritual means of removing pollution. Likewise, all sexual activities were carefully governed in rabbinic Judaism, in order to assure the purity of the human body. Only a ritually cleansed body could serve as the proper abode for the soul, which by the rabbinic period was believed to be a separate, noncorporeal substance. At death, it was believed, the body and the soul were separated: whereas the former disintegrated into its natural components, the soul continued to live in an eternal abode, provided the individual had observed the commandments of God and devoted life to the study of the Torah, to worship, and to acts of loving kindness. The body and the soul will be reunited in the final redemption of Israel, an eschatological drama that will include the resurrection of the dead. In short, the natural human body itself has to be carefully managed and properly sanctified to God, so that Israel can remain a proper partner in God's covenant.

#### *Sanctification of Social Relations*

What makes the Jewish approach to nature most distinctive is the links it establishes between the human treatment of God's earth and social justice. Since not all members of the community own land, those who do have the moral and religious obligation to support those who do not. Parts of the land's produce—the corner of the field (*peah*), the gleanings of stalks (*leket*), the forgotten sheaf (*shikhekhah*), the separated fruits (*peret*), and the defective clusters (*olelot*)—are to be given to those who do not own land: the poor person, the widow, the alien resident, and the Levite. By observing these particular commandments, the soil itself becomes holy, and the person who obeys these commandments ensures the religio-moral purity necessary for residence on God's land. A failure to treat

other members of the society justly, so as to protect the sanctity of their lives, is integrally tied to acts extended toward the land.<sup>26</sup>

The connection between land management, ritual, and social justice is most evident in the laws regulating the Sabbatical year (*shemittah*).<sup>27</sup> It was a year of prescribed rest analogous to the Sabbath. According to the earliest mention of the Sabbatical year (Ex. 23:10–11), the Israelites must let the land lie fallow and the vineyards and olive groves untouched so that the poor people and wild beasts may eat of them. In Leviticus (25:1–7; 18–22), the fallow year is referred to as “the Sabbath of the Lord,” a year of complete rest for the land, promising the divine blessings on the crop of the sixth year to those who suspend their work on the seventh. Deuteronomy 15:1–11 commands the Israelites to observe every seventh year as “year of release” when debts contracted by fellow countrymen are to be remitted. In the Jubilee year, all slaves are to be freed and returned to their families (Lev. 25:11). While people and debts are to be released in the Jubilee, Scripture insists on God’s eternal ownership of the land: “The land shall not be sold forever; for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me” (Lev. 25:23).

Regardless of how the laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee year were interpreted and adapted during the Second Temple period, one aspect of these law remained unchanged: the Torah enjoined human beings to allow nature a period of rest and regeneration. As Shlomo Riskin puts it: “Shemitta is to the world of space what the Sabbath is to the world of time.”<sup>28</sup> As Israel “tastes” the possibility of transcendence each week in the celebration of the Sabbath, so does the land enjoy the possibility of renewal in the Sabbatical year. By returning the earth to God, nature’s vitality is restored and protected from human use and abuse.<sup>29</sup>

In sum, the sanctification of space, time, the human body, and human relations is illustrated in the relationship between the people of Israel and the land of Israel, the token of God’s covenant with the Chosen People. These laws and prescribed attitudes demonstrate clearly that the Jewish religious tradition is especially sensitive to the well-being of the natural environ-

ment and upholds a special human responsibility for its proper management. God's covenant specified how humans should protect God's created world and how they should ensure their own purity. To live on God's land requires the residents to be holy by observing ritual and moral prescriptions. Only those who live by God's will can properly enjoy the bounty and beauty of God's earth.

COSMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS: RATIONALIST PHILOSOPHY  
AND KABBALAH

Rabbinic Judaism was developed after the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 C.E. With the loss of the Temple, communication with God was severely disrupted and Jewish theodicy dictated that the responsibility for the catastrophe be placed on human actions. Human sins, especially the sin of "senseless hatred," brought about the exile of the people from God's land. The Judaism of the rabbis was a comprehensive program for repairing the broken relationship with God. Ironically, it was the comprehensiveness of rabbinic Judaism that enabled the Jews to live meaningfully outside the land of Israel and defer the return to the Holy Land to a remote messianic future. In exile, the Jews continued to hope for their return to the Promised Land. The land itself became an ideal, a spiritual reality. And the possibility of eventually returning to the land became one of the key hopes that sustained Jews who lived outside the Holy Land.

The primacy of the land of Israel in Jewish self-understanding and the historical conditions of the Jews in exile help explain the relatively little attention paid to the physical environment by Jewish thinkers in the premodern period. For example, heavy land taxes levied on Jews as second-class, protected subjects in Islam, and restrictions on Jewish ownership of land in most of medieval Christendom, transformed the Jews from agricultural people to urban dwellers who derived their livelihood from commerce, trade, finance, and crafts. To the extent that premodern Jews were interested in the natural world, it was a purely theoretical interest that reflected theological and cosmological concerns. In the Middle Ages, two theological

programs—rationalist philosophy and theosophic Kabbalah— theorized about nature in an attempt to specify the connection between creation, revelation, and redemption. As ideal paths for religious perfection, rationalist philosophy and theosophic Kabbalah flourished simultaneously, cross-fertilizing each other.<sup>30</sup> While rationalist philosophers and theosophic Kabbalists developed distinctive conceptions of the natural world (which in turn makes it difficult to generalize about nature in the sources of Judaism), it is only in these sources that the term “nature” (*teva*) appears as an abstract concept.<sup>31</sup>

Rationalist Jewish philosophers speculated about nature in two main contexts: reflections about the origin of the world (viz., whether the world is created out of nothing or out of something),<sup>32</sup> and reflections on the origins of morality (viz., whether the moral code is part of the created order, or revealed by God).<sup>33</sup> Jewish rationalist philosophers did not agree on these issues, but in general they regarded nature as the manifestation of God’s wisdom. Since God is absolutely one, in God there is no distinction between what God knows and what God does. Divine activities in the physical environment manifest divine wisdom and God’s continued care for the world, that is, divine providence. The philosophers studied the natural world in order to understand the mind of God, emphasizing the orderliness, stability, and predictability of nature. The human ability to understand how God works in nature was ascribed to the human capacity for reason, which the philosophers equated with the “image of God” mentioned in Genesis.<sup>34</sup> By virtue of reason, humans are able to understand the orderliness and purposefulness of nature, which Jewish rationalist philosophers interpreted in accord with medieval Aristotelian cosmology and physics. The study of nature by means of the human sciences, culminating in metaphysics, was thus understood as a religious activity: the better one understood the laws by which God governed the world, the closer one might come to God.

The worldview of medieval philosophy was hierarchical: all beings were arranged within the Great Chain of Being, each occupying its natural place and acting in accord with its inherent *telos*. The hierarchical order of existence ranged from the most spiritual of beings—God—to the most material. Human

beings stood just below God in this schema. The main task of the thoughtful human being was to contemplate and comprehend the structure of reality on the basis of empirical observation. The greatest of the medieval Jewish philosophers—Levi ben Gershom (1288–1344)—designed an instrument to measure the relative distance of celestial objects so as to gain a better understanding of the laws of nature.<sup>35</sup> For most medieval Jewish philosophers, however, the focus of philosophical activity was not astronomy but the human body itself. Often deriving their livelihood from the practice of medicine, the Jewish rationalist philosophers sought to explain the interdependence of the body and the soul.<sup>36</sup> Human well-being, they maintained, could be attained only when one followed the commands of God explicit and implicit in the Torah. Their interest in the natural world was decidedly subordinate to their interest in the health of humans.

During the early modern period, Jewish philosophers became increasingly more interested in the flora and fauna of their natural environment. Jewish philosophical texts from this period abound with information about minerals, plants, and animals, but such information is still framed by the theological assumptions of the older rationalist tradition. Natural phenomena are to be understood in the light of the Torah, since the Torah is the blueprint of creation.<sup>37</sup> Observation of natural phenomena must be consistent with a correct reading of the biblical text. For the medieval and early modern Jewish philosophers, there was no division between nature and Scripture: each made manifest an aspect of divine activity.

The Torah and nature were similarly interpreted in tandem by the Kabbalists. But whereas the rationalist philosophers stressed the regularity of nature's laws, the Kabbalists focused on the linguistic aspect of the creative act. Scripture, of course, depicts creation as an act of divine speech. In late antiquity, the anonymous Jews who composed *Sefer Yetzirah* (The Book of Creation) and its cognate literature identified the "building blocks" of the created world with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>38</sup> Understood as units of divine energy, the various permutations of the Hebrew letters accounted for the diversity of nature. All created things were various manifestations of

linguistic information.<sup>39</sup> Nature itself was viewed as a text that could be decoded and manipulated by anyone who grasped its grammar, so to speak. The code itself was known only to an initiated few, because of the dangers inherent in possessing such knowledge: the one who knows how to decode nature can manipulate not only physical phenomena but the inner life of God. Esoteric knowledge about the Torah assumed magical and theurgic dimensions.

Kabbalah produced two distinct approaches to the natural world. On the one hand, the textualization of the natural world made all references to natural phenomena a hermeneutical activity. Indeed, most Kabbalists (unlike the philosophers) had little interest in collecting empirical data about nature. Though the Kabbalists often employed references to nature in their symbolic interpretations of the Torah, the very textualization of nature removed these premodern Jews from any close study of nature as it actually existed. For this reason, the Kabbalists could view the world of nature as a battleground between divinity and the forces of evil (*Sitrah Ahra*). On the other hand, some sixteenth-century Kabbalists highlighted the capacity of human beings to manipulate the forces of nature. A Kabbalist who knew the linguistic formulas that governed all life could claim to draw spiritual energy into the corporeal world by bringing down rain when needed, by healing the sick, and by easing childbirth.<sup>40</sup> These forms of “practical Kabbalah” manifest a “hands-on” approach to nature; it is an activist attitude that closely aligned Kabbalah with magic and alchemy. Such wisdom was considered effective only because the Kabbalists claimed to possess the knowledge of invisible, occult forces of nature created by divine speech. Thus, since the Kabbalists affirmed the human capacity to activate a divine energy that pulsates throughout the universe, they remained committed to the primacy of humans in the created order.

Medieval philosophy and Kabbalah were transformed in the early modern period. The gradual dissolution of medieval Aristotelianism eventually made the medieval synthesis of Greek philosophy and Judaism untenable. Though Jews did not participate in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century in a significant way, eventually the secularization of Western

culture and the emancipation of the Jews led to the emergence of modern Jewish scholars who no longer looked at the natural world through the prism of the Torah. When the liberal professions and the universities opened to Jews in the nineteenth century, many Jews flocked to study the natural sciences, and many were at the forefront of new discoveries in the fields of chemistry, physics, biology, botany, and others. The scientific study of nature by born Jews, however, had little to do with Judaism. In fact, for many of them, the scientific study of nature was thought to be in conflict with the Jewish religious tradition and often provided modern Jews an ideological context in which they could be modern without being practicing Jews.

Kabbalah, by contrast, continued to underscore the traditional understanding of the Torah, giving rise to East-European Hasidism in the eighteenth century. Here nature played a different role. Based on the principles of sixteenth-century Lurianic Kabbalah, Hasidic theology treated all natural phenomena as ensouled: divine sparks enlivened all corporeal entities, and not just human beings. The divine sparks sought release from their material entrapment.<sup>41</sup> Through ritual activity, the Hasidic master (a modern version of the Kabbalistic *magus* of words) attempted to draw closer to the divine energy, the liberation of which will result not only in the sanctification of nature but also in the redemption of reality and its return to its original, noncorporeal state. The worship of God through the spiritualization of corporeal reality became a major Hasidic value, complementing the general deemphasis on formal Torah study in Hasidism. Hasidic tales were situated in natural rather than urban settings, encouraging the Hasidic worshipper to find the divine spark in all created beings. This is not to say, however, that all Hasidic masters were concerned with the well-being of the natural environment, or with the protection of nature. In fact, to reach their desired spiritual goals, Hasidic meditative practices attempted to dissolve the corporeality of existing reality (*bittul ha-yesh*) and to eliminate the selfhood of the one who meditates on nature (*bittul ha-ani*).<sup>42</sup> The spiritualizing tendencies of Hasidism, therefore, are quite contrary to any concrete concern with the natural environment, even though Jewish environmentalists can find in Hasidism a profound re-

spect for all living creatures and an awareness of their intrinsic sacredness. In so doing, they would follow in the footsteps of Martin Buber, who correctly understood the kinship between his own philosophy of dialogue and the teaching of Hasidism.<sup>43</sup> If we were to treat the natural environment as a “Thou” rather than an “It,” as Buber suggested, perhaps we could halt or slow down the degradation of our natural surroundings.<sup>44</sup>

#### JUDAISM AND THE CONTEMPORARY ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

As the preceding account shows, the Jewish religious tradition is rich and varied; anyone so inclined will find plenty of support in sacred sources for sound environmental policies. Above all, the principle of “do not destroy” can provide religious support for a range of environmental policies, such as conservation of natural resources, prevention of water pollution, reforestation, proper disposal of waste products, energy conservation, recycling, and reduction of material consumption.<sup>45</sup> All of these policies highlight human responsibility toward the physical environment.<sup>46</sup> In this regard, Judaism can be part of a solution to the contemporary environmental crisis.

However, the primacy of learning in Judaism, the bookish culture it produced, the idealism inherent in the Jewish prescriptive approach to life, and the economic reality of Jewish life in the premodern period have also all combined to give rise to a religious lifestyle that is either indifferent to nature or consciously aspires to transcend it. How one wishes to interpret Judaism in regard to ecology thus becomes a matter of personal choice, resulting in an ideological diversity that is the hallmark of the Jewish condition today.

Still, if Jews wish to ground their approach to ecology in Jewish sources, they must come to terms with the fact that certain assumptions, widely taken for granted by secular environmentalists, conflict with Jewish tradition. For example, a Jewish environmental philosophy and ethics cannot be based on a simplistic version of pantheism that acknowledges only the world and nothing beyond the world. From a Jewish perspective, “biocentrism” is just another form of paganism that must result in idolatrous worship of nature.<sup>47</sup> An environmental phi-

losophy that merely reveres what is, while ignoring what should be, is not viably Jewish. To speak authentically from the sources of Judaism, one must affirm that God created the world and that divine revelation is possible.<sup>48</sup> It is precisely because humans are created with the capacity to transcend nature that they are commanded by God to protect nature. Therefore, a Jewish environmental philosophy and ethics cannot give up the primacy of the human species in the created order, notwithstanding the fact that “species-ism” is now regarded as an unacceptable view by some proponent of Deep Ecology. In a view true to Jewish teaching, human beings must first love and respect themselves, if they are going to be able to love and respect other species. But the love of one’s fellow human beings goes hand in hand with human responsibility toward other species created by God.

Similarly, Jewish environmentalism cannot simplistically preach zero population growth. The obligation to procreate is unambiguously articulated in Genesis, and has become a necessity after the Holocaust. Of course, it is possible to interpret the injunction “to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” to mean “to reach the maximum population sustainable at an acceptable standard of living but do not exceed it.”<sup>49</sup> But it is the prior commitment to environmentalism that dictates such an interpretation of the traditional sources, not the sources themselves.

A Jewish “ethics of responsibility” does make plausible an ethic of “stewardship” over natural resources.<sup>50</sup> While this ethic has been criticized as “shallow ecology,”<sup>51</sup> it seems to me that “stewardship” is not a useless idea. A sense of responsibility toward other species need not be dismissed as mere condescension and arrogance. To exist and to thrive, humans must take note of the needs of other species without losing sight of human distinctiveness and the obligations that flow from it.

The obligation to respond to the needs of the other is at the core of the covenantal model, the foundation of Judaism. The covenantal model establishes the everlasting relationship between God, Israel, and the land of Israel. If extended to the earth as a whole, a covenantal model would spell out the obligations of humanity toward the earth and its inhabitants as

one manifestation of humanity's obligations to God.<sup>52</sup> Minimally, this might mean that humanity is obligated to perpetuate the diversity of other species created by God. Does that mean that human beings must never harm individual members of other species? I do not think so. There are many cases in which harming members of other species is necessary from a human perspective, the only perspective available to humans. But since that perspective also includes awareness of other species, humans are obliged to ensure the perpetuation and thriving of other species, to the best of their ability. Biological diversity and human distinctiveness are not mutually exclusive, but the justification for their reconciliation should be based on the covenantal notion of obligation rather than the "biotic rights" of animals, soil, and water.<sup>53</sup>

The covenantal model asserts the causal connection between the moral quality of human life and the vitality of God's creation. The Jewish covenantal model in this way provides a religious justification for social ecology. The corruption of society is closely linked to the corruption of nature. In both cases, the injustice arises from human greed and the failure of human beings to protect the original order of creation. From a Jewish perspective, the just allocation of nature's resources is indeed a religious issue of the highest order. The principles that should guide contemporary deliberations are stated in Scriptural legislation about the treatment of the marginal in society. Concomitantly, the rabbinic values of loving kindness, humility, moderation, and self-control can all offer valuable inspiration for policies that take into consideration both the needs of humans and the needs of nonhuman beings. This is the meaning of "Eco-Kosher," a concept advanced by Arthur Waskow to illustrate the connection between the care of others, the endorsement of a simple lifestyle, and the rejection of greed and possessiveness.<sup>54</sup>

In sum, from a Jewish perspective the current failure to interact respectfully with the physical environment is symptomatic of a deeper human failure to accept the existence of a creator and recognize the created status of all beings, including human beings. Human hubris has inflicted considerable damage on the environment, but humans also have the capacity to

heal the damage. The Jewish tradition places the responsibility for the well-being of the environment on humans while asserting the dependence of humans on their physical environment. The Jewish tradition, however, does not worship the natural world for its own sake, and does not accept what is given as the end of human life. Jewish life is shaped by a long list of duties and obligations that encompass all aspects of life. Still, it is possible and desirable to treat ecology in accordance with the deepest values of Judaism and, thereby, ensure the well-being of God's created world and its preservation for generations to come.

ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1205.

<sup>2</sup>For an overview of the Christian response to Lynn White and the history of Christian thinking about the environment consult Roderick Nash, "The Greening of Religion," in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 194–229.

<sup>3</sup>Norman Lamm, a leader of modern orthodoxy and the president of Yeshiva University, was among the first Jewish respondents to White's charges. See Norman Lamm, *Faith and Doubt: Studies in Traditional Jewish Thought* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1972), 162–185. Although Lamm identified all the pertinent elements of a Jewish perspective on environmentalism, his work did not give rise to a Jewish environmental movement. Jewish environmentalism emerged a decade later as part of the so-called Jewish Renewal movement. It brought Jews who were already committed environmentalists to anchor their ecological sensibility in the sources of the Jewish tradition.

<sup>4</sup>At the forefront of this movement is Ellen Bernstein and the organization she founded, Shomrei Adama (The Keepers of the Earth). For a sample of Jewish environmental writings consult Ellen Bernstein, ed., *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit: Where Nature and the Sacred Meet* (Woodstock, Vt.: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998). In 1993 the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) was founded to educate Jews about environmental concerns and inspire them to lead an environmentally sound life, based on Jewish values as expressed in the sacred sources of Judaism.

<sup>5</sup>For an overview of Jewish responses to the contemporary environmental crisis, consult Eric Katz, "Judaism and the Ecological Crisis," in *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim (Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 55–70; Eilon Schwartz, "Judaism and Nature: Theological and Moral Issues to Consider while Renegotiating a Jewish Relationship to the Natural World," *Judaism* 44 (1995): 437–448.

- <sup>6</sup>A typical example of both these approaches can be found in Aubrey Rose, ed., *Judaism and Ecology* (New York: Cassell, 1992).
- <sup>7</sup>This tension, and hence the tenuous relationship of Judaism to environmentalism, was pointed out by Steven S. Schwartzchild, "Unnatural Jew," *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 347–362.
- <sup>8</sup>Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 77b.
- <sup>9</sup>For a fuller discussion of the representation of nature in the Book of Psalms, consult Gerald Blidstein, "Nature in 'Psalms,'" *Judaism* 13 (1964): 29–36.
- <sup>10</sup>See Edward L. Greenstein, "Biblical Law," in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. Barry W. Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 90–96.
- <sup>11</sup>Many have noted the etymological connection between the Hebrew word *adam* (human beings) and the word *adamah* (land). However, it is important to note that the word *adamah* refers to arable land and is identified with land that humans farm to survive (Gen. 3:17–19). See Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 35. Conversely, the word *midbar* does not mean "wilderness" (as it is normally translated) but a "rugged land of seasonal pastorage unfit for cultivation." See Jeanne Kay, "Concepts of Nature in the Hebrew Bible," *Environmental Ethics* 10 (1988): 309–327, esp. 325. The Bible does not despise wilderness but it clearly links the aridity of the desert with divine punishment and the dialectics of blessing and curse. The successfully cultivated land manifests the presence of God in the life of the people, and, conversely, disloyalty to God incurs divine punishment in the form of loss of life's necessities.
- <sup>12</sup>Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 53b; the relevant passage is cited in Lamm, *Faith and Doubt*, 167.
- <sup>13</sup>On humans as co-creators see Philip Hefner, "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," in Ted Peters, ed., *Cosmos as Creation: Theology and Science in Consonance* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 211–233.
- <sup>14</sup>See Jonathan Helfand, "The Earth Is the Lord's: Judaism and Environmental Ethics," in Eugene C. Hargrove, ed., *Religion and Environmental Crisis* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 38–52.
- <sup>15</sup>Mishnah Berakhot 6:3: "Rav. Judah said in the name of Samuel: To enjoy anything of this world without a *berakbah* is like making a personal use of things consecrated to heaven."
- <sup>16</sup>Richard Sarason, "The Significance of the Land of Israel in the Mishnah," in *The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives*, ed. Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 114. For a modern reworking of this biblical view see Samuel Belkin, "Man as Temporary Tenant," in *Judaism and Human Rights*, ed. Milton R. Konvitz (New York: Norton, 1972), 251–258.
- <sup>17</sup>For further analysis on this principle in Talmudic literature consult "Bal Tashchit," *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, vol. 3, 335–337.

- <sup>18</sup>Jonathan I. Helfand, "Ecology and the Jewish Tradition: A Postscript," *Judaism* 20 (1971): 332.
- <sup>19</sup>Several rabbinic sources speak specifically against harming trees, especially fruit trees. See Yosef Orr and Yossi Spanier, "Traditional Jewish Attitudes towards Plant and Animal Conservation," in Rose, ed., *Judaism and Ecology*, 54–60.
- <sup>20</sup>A comprehensive analysis of this principle is provided by Noah J. Cohen, *Tza'ar Ba'ale Hayim: The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Its Bases, Development and Legislation in Hebrew Literature*, 2d. ed. (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1976).
- <sup>21</sup>Nahmanides, Commentary on Deuteronomy 22:6. See Helfand, "Ecology and the Jewish Tradition," 333.
- <sup>22</sup>Jeffrey L. Rubinstein, *The History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995).
- <sup>23</sup>For a full discussion see Arthur Schafer, "The Agricultural and Ecological Symbolism of the Four Species," *Tradition* 20 (1982): 128–140.
- <sup>24</sup>See Ellen Bernstein, "A History of Tu B'Sh'evat," in Bernstein, ed., *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit*, 139–152.
- <sup>25</sup>For an overview of the Pharisaic transformation of Judaism, consult Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973).
- <sup>26</sup>This biblical principle is the foundation of contemporary Jewish social ecology. An example is Richard G. Hirsch, *The Way of the Upright: A Jewish View of Economic Justice* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1973).
- <sup>27</sup>For an overview of these laws consult Gerald Blidstein, "Man and Nature in the Sabbatical Year," *Tradition* 8 (4) (1966): 48–55; reprinted in Martin D. Yaffe, ed., *Judaism and Environmental Ethics* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2001).
- <sup>28</sup>Sholmo Riskin, "Shemitta: A Sabbatical for the Land," in Rose, ed., *Judaism and Ecology*, 72.
- <sup>29</sup>The Sabbatical Law could not be observed during the extended period of exile but its observance was renewed in the modern state of Israel. See Benjamin Bak, "The Sabbatical Year in Modern Israel," *Tradition* 1 (2) (1959): 193–199. For a contemporary reflection on the relevance of biblical legislation see Arthur Waskow, "From Compassion to Jubilee," *Tikkun* 5 (2) (1990): 78–81.
- <sup>30</sup>On the interdependence of philosophy and Kabbalah in the Middle Ages consult Elliot R. Wolfson, "Jewish Mysticism: A Philosophical Overview," *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 450–498; Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "Jewish Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity," in *ibid.*, 499–573.
- <sup>31</sup>The meaning of the concept of nature in medieval philosophy and Kabbalah requires a more extensive discussion than space allows. The pertinent issues

are explored in the essays by Shalom Rosenberg, Lenn E. Goodman, and Elliot Wolfson in Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, ed., *Judaism and Ecology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press and Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, forthcoming).

- <sup>32</sup>Consult Norbert M. Samuelson, *Judaism and the Doctrine of Creation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
- <sup>33</sup>See Abraham Melamed, "Natural Law in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Philosophy" [Hebrew], *Daat* 17 (1986): 49–66; Melamed, "Natural, Human, Divine: Classification of the Law among Some Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Italian Jewish Thinkers," *Italia* (1985): 59–93; David Novak, "Natural Law, Halakhah and Covenant," *Jewish Law Annual* 7 (1988): 45–67; idem, *Natural Law in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- <sup>34</sup>Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), I:2.
- <sup>35</sup>On the scientific activity of Levi ben Gershom, also called Gersonides, consult Gad Freudenthal, ed., *Studies on Gersonides: A Fourteenth-Century Jewish Philosopher-Scientist* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).
- <sup>36</sup>Maimonides (*Guide for the Perplexed*, II:40; III:27) best articulated the interplay between the well-being of the body and the well-being of the soul that was the foundation of medieval philosophical ethics.
- <sup>37</sup>See Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Theology of Nature in Sixteenth-Century Italian Jewish Philosophy," *Science in Context* 10 (4) (1997): 529–570.
- <sup>38</sup>The dating of *Sefer Yetzirah* is disputed among historians of the Jewish mystical tradition. While it is reasonable to assume that some of the material is as early as the second century, the redacted text that came down to us is of a much later, medieval vintage.
- <sup>39</sup>On the textualization of nature in *Sefer Yetzirah* and its cognate literature, consult Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 9–26.
- <sup>40</sup>Consult David B. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic and Science: The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Physician* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).
- <sup>41</sup>The relationship between God and the world in Hasidism is by no means easy to define, since Hasidic thought is very rich and diverse. The dominant view in Hasidism is pantheism, namely, the claim "that the world exists within the divine being, as part of its substance. The pantheistic view assumes that the Divinity is both immanent in the world, its substance dwelling within it, and also transcendent in relation to it and beyond it." See Yoram Jacobson, *Hasidic Thought* (Tel Aviv: MOD Press, 1998), 23. Hasidism, however, has often been understood to advocate a pantheistic view (namely, a view that identifies divinity with the totality of the world itself), and thus comes dangerously close to the position that rabbinic Judaism recognizes as an idolatrous form of paganism. For a contemporary critique of Hasidism's presumed pantheism consult Lamm, *Faith and Doubt*, 175–180.

- <sup>42</sup>On this dialectic see Rachel Elior, "The Paradigms of Yesh and Ayin in Hasidic Thought," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London and Portland, Oreg.: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), 168–179.
- <sup>43</sup>On Buber's approach to Hasidism consult Moshe Idel, "Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem on Hasidism: A Critical Appraisal," in *ibid.*, 389–403.
- <sup>44</sup>Buber's dialogical philosophy has inspired many contemporary, non-Jewish environmentalists. A typical example is found in Brian J. Walsh, Marianne B. Karsh, and Nik Ansell, "Trees, Forestry and the Responsiveness of Creation," in Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth*, 423–435. While the distinction between the two paradigms of human relations—the "I-Thou" and "I-It"—has been commonly employed in environmental literature in regard to nature, a systematic analysis of Buber's own philosophy in regard to nature is yet to be undertaken.
- <sup>45</sup>For a specific program for action to Jewish individuals and institutions consult Vicky Joseph, "Action on the Environment: A Practical Guide," in Rose, ed., *Judaism and Ecology*, 119–127.
- <sup>46</sup>An example of such application by Jewish environmentalists is articulated by Ellen Bernstein and Dan Fink, "Bal Tashchit," in Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth*, 549–569. The essay illustrates the kind of educational activities Jewish environmentalists must do in their attempt to bring ecological concerns to the awareness of contemporary Jews.
- <sup>47</sup>On that tension see Schwartz, "Judaism and Nature."
- <sup>48</sup>Many secular Jews do not endorse these claims, because they regard them, perhaps mistakenly, to stand in conflict with the truths about the world that contemporary science teaches. A Jewish environmental philosophy and ethics needs to be articulated within the contemporary dialogue between science and religion.
- <sup>49</sup>Norman Solomon, "Judaism and the Environment," in Rose, ed., *Judaism and Ecology*, 40.
- <sup>50</sup>The point is well taken by David Ehrenfeld and Philip J. Bentley, "Judaism and the Practice of Stewardship," *Judaism* 34 (3) (1985): 301–311. For a Christian formulation of the principle consult Bruce R. Reichenbach and V. Elving Anderson, *On Behalf of God: A Christian Ethic for Biology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 40–109.
- <sup>51</sup>See Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movements," in George Sessions, ed., *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century: Readings in the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism* (Boston: Sambhala, 1995), 151–155. That Arne Naess's eco-philosophy is deeply indebted to Spinoza should not be cited as an example for a Jewish influence on Deep Ecology. It was precisely because Spinoza rejected the revealed status of the Bible and severed the connection between creation and revelation that his philosophical monism could inspire the principles of Deep Ecology.
- <sup>52</sup>This is by no means an original idea; many Jewish authors have noted that the attitude toward the land of Israel is to be understood as the paradigm for the appropriate attitude toward the earth as a whole. See Evert Gendler, "On the

Judaism of Nature,” in *The New Jews*, ed. James Sleeper and Alan L. Mintz (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 233–243; Monford Harris, “Ecology: A Covenantal Approach,” *CCAR Journal* 23 (1976): 101–108.

<sup>53</sup>See Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal,” in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, ed. Michael E. Zimmerman et al. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1998), 26–40.

<sup>54</sup>See Arthur Waskow, “What is Eco-Kosher,” in Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth*, 297–302.