



Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Protecting Creation, Generation to Generation

**From Apologetics to New Spirituality:
Trends in Jewish Environmental Theology**

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Our natural environment today faces a threat unparalleled in human history. The world's religions have a crucial role to play in providing moral leadership for the protection of the earth.

Over the past 30 years, Jewish scholars have written a wide variety of works on the environment, but the greatest challenge lies ahead. Judaism needs a comprehensive, contemporary, environmental theology—one that can serve as a foundation for a thorough code of ethics. It is time for Jews of all denominations and perspectives to devote their energies to this task. Beyond that, Judaism must provide guidelines for day-to-day living by creating a body of environmental law, or *halakhah*, and by infusing Jewish ritual and liturgy with an ecological awareness.

This paper reviews Jewish scholarship on the environment to date, distills the major themes and outlines the critical work that remains to be done.

The Development of Environmental Ethics

The modern environmental movement took hold in the 1960s with the widespread recognition that industrial society, despite its benefits, had polluted the air and water, poisoned the landscape and driven many species to extinction. One of the great inspirations to the movement was the marine biologist Rachel Carson, who warned of the dangers of chemical pesticides in her 1962 book *Silent Spring*.

As the movement grew, it gave rise to a scholarly field of environmental ethics, marked by the debut of the journal *Environmental Ethics* in 1979. A crucial debate concerned the primacy of human beings relative to other forms of life. Those adhering to the classic Western view considered humans paramount. For these anthropocentrists,

environmental degradation is immoral because it harms people. Biocentrists, on the other hand, objected to an ethic that always privileges human needs. They placed value on all living forms, regardless of their importance to the ecosystems that support human life.

One of the challenges for non-anthropocentrists is to balance the sometimes competing interests of various species and to keep in mind the sustenance of the ecosystem as a whole. In their search for a holistic ethic, some scholars turned to the earlier work of the conservationist Aldo Leopold (1886-1948), who adhered to what he termed a “land ethic.” In his 1949 book, *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold wrote, “A land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.”¹

Some non-anthropocentrists were attracted to Deep Ecology, a school of thought that goes beyond ethics to develop a kind of environmental spirituality in which all things are interconnected. Deep ecologists consider the distinction between the self and the natural world to be ultimately an illusion. This perspective calls on us to identify with nature and to understand that the destruction of the natural world is self-destruction. Biocide is suicide.

In addition to pondering the relation of human beings to the natural world, the field of environmental ethics has mixed with politics to encompass a range of issues. Environmental justice, for example, is concerned with economic and racial inequity, emphasizing the distribution of resources and the disproportionate effect of pollution and toxic waste on the poor and people of color. Social ecology examines the role of capitalism and consumerism in the degradation of the environment. Eco-feminism is

concerned with the role of patriarchy—the relation between dominance of nature and dominance of women. Finally, pragmatic environmentalists have deemed philosophy largely irrelevant. They believe that interested parties should resolve environmental issues in their local context, engaging with one another to find a democratic solution.²

The Religious Response

The early environmental movement was largely secular, at times even anti-religious. But on the sidelines, a small group of Christian theologians were wrestling with the issues. They had been meeting since the 1950s to reach a new understanding of the relationship of God to humanity and the natural world. They were influenced by the writings of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), a British mathematician and philosopher, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a French scientist, philosopher and Roman Catholic priest. Both men tried to fuse science and theology.

One theologian in the group, Richard Baer, Jr., suggested a series of principles as a foundation for a Christian environmental ethic: the world belongs to God; God likes the world; and God values the harmonious web of life. From these principles, Baer concluded that to destroy the environment is to sin against the order of Creation.³

The publication of *Silent Spring* was as much an impetus to the theologians as it was to secular environmentalists. The Christian movement gathered momentum, and in 1964, the National Council of Churches created a Faith-Man-Nature Group that would meet annually for the next decade. For the most part, this group held an anthropocentric view while asserting human responsibility for stewardship of nature. Some members

went further to develop a theocentric perspective, maintaining that God considers Creation to have its own value and right to life.⁴

In 1967, the religious world was drawn into the thick of the environmental movement by a provocative essay in the journal *Science*. In a piece titled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” the historian Lynn White, Jr. asserted that the Bible was largely to blame for Western thinking about the natural world. He cited God’s commandment to the first humans to have dominion and subdue Creation:

And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and God said to them, “Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth.” (Genesis 1:27–28)

Jews and Christians alike were compelled to respond. A number of Jewish writers countered White, trying to show that their religion was in fact consistent with environmentalism. Other responses were more apologetic. The most thoughtful and creative responses acknowledged the unprecedented nature of current environmental degradation. They combed their traditions and sacred texts for aspects that could form the basis of a distinctly religious environmental ethic.

White’s piece provoked Jewish scholars to assess what their tradition taught about the relationship between human beings and the natural world. Biblical scholars have generally agreed that White’s interpretation of Genesis is wrong on several counts.⁵ The text does not grant general permission for environmental abuse; rather, it appoints humans as stewards on behalf of God over Creation: “The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it” (Gen. 2:15). This stewardship includes many restrictions, enumerated throughout the scriptures. Biblical scholar Nahum

Sarna has written that the God-given power of humans is not a general license to destroy nature, because the human race is not “inherently sovereign, but enjoys its dominion solely by the grace of God.” Sarna also notes that the Bible depicts a primordial world in which all creatures relate in harmony. Humans still need divine permission to eat vegetation and are not yet permitted to eat the flesh of other creatures.⁶

Even if White had given a correct reading of the original meaning of Genesis, he was wrong to assume that Jews and Christians have interpreted the Bible over the generations as a license to exploit Creation. As Jeremy Cohen has written, White and his sympathizers erred in bringing ancient texts to bear on modern issues without considering how communities interpreted these texts over the course of history. As Cohen demonstrates, rabbinic teaching portrays human nature as both God-like and animal-like. In their God-like aspect, humans have power over the rest of Creation as well as freedom to act against the will of God. In their animal-like aspect, they have physical limitations that connect them with other creatures and bind them to the order of Creation.⁷

Though White had a mistaken view of Genesis, he did make a contribution by provoking people to question typical attitudes about nature, which are informed perhaps less by the Bible than by other traditions and institutions, including Greek philosophy, modern science, capitalism, consumerism and patriarchy.

Eight years after White’s piece, another essayist set off a controversy when he asserted that alienation and confrontation with the natural world were essential characteristics of Jewish religion and culture. In a famous (or perhaps infamous) piece called “The Unnatural Jew,” published in *Environmental Ethics* in 1984, the late philosopher Steven Schwarzschild asserted that any theology that tried to identify God

with nature was heresy. Within the framework of Judaism, only a stewardship ethic was possible.⁸ David and Joan Ehrenfeld were among those who argued otherwise, noting that Jewish practice revolves around the cycles of Creation, and that the liturgy is filled with blessings thanking God for the bounty of Creation.⁹

Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan contends that Jews have shown a lack of concern for the physical world because they have lived primarily as an urban people for the last 1,000 years. Denied the opportunity to engage in agriculture and forced into mostly mercantile occupations during the Diaspora, the only real land for Jews was the symbolic land of Israel in their sacred texts and prayer book.¹⁰ Many in the Zionist movement envisioned the return to Israel as an end to this estrangement.

Any suggestion of alienation, however, should take into account that urban life was once much closer to nature than it is today. The cities and towns of our ancestors were relatively small and close to the countryside. There were no streetlights to block the stars at night, and none of the modern conveniences that insulate us from the vagaries of the weather.

Contemporary Jewish Theology and Ethics

The past 20 years have seen a growing body of theological literature on Judaism and the environment. Writers have focused on these questions: Does Judaism support the anthropocentric view that Creation is for the benefit of humankind? Or does it support a theocentric view that Creation has its own value, beyond human understanding? Can classical Jewish theology accommodate a perspective that is neither anthropocentric nor theocentric, such as Deep Ecology? Does Judaism teach an essential antagonism or harmony between humanity and the natural world?

The responses are varied and draw upon diverse sources and texts. When we look at the whole of classical Jewish sources, we cannot say whether the tradition is clearly green. The picture is murky. Tirosch-Samuelsan suggests that Judaism harbors a genuine tension in regard to nature, as it encompasses two distinct beliefs. One is that God is revealed to us through Creation, or nature.¹¹ The other is that God is revealed through Torah, or law. While the Torah sets forth a stewardship ethic, humans remain predominant over other forms of life. A Creation perspective, on the other hand, is more holistic and allows for a universal ethic, one that need not be specifically Jewish.

While Judaism encompasses diverse theological views, contemporary environmental theologians seem to share the view that their religion teaches reverence for all Creation. Torah and Creation can each provide a basis for Jewish environmental theology.

Revelation Through Torah

The Torah describes humanity as created in the image of God. People possess God-like capacities of power, consciousness and free will. In the ideal world, humans act as wise stewards, maintaining the order of Creation while benefiting from it. The responsibility of stewardship, set forth in Genesis, extends to future generations (Deuteronomy 29:13-14, Gen. 9:12). Creation belongs to God, not humans. (Gen. 1-2, I Chronicles 29:10-16, Leviticus 25:23). “The earth is the Lord’s and all that it holds the world and its inhabitants” (Psalm 24:1). Furthermore, Creation is good and has a harmonious order so as to serve God:

*Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise Him on high...
Praise Him, sun and moon,*

*praise Him all bright stars.
Praise Him, highest heavens,
and you waters that are above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for it was He who commanded that they be created.
He made them endure forever,
establishing an order that shall never change.*
(Psalm 148)

The Jewish concept of a perfect world is one of harmony among all creatures. This can be seen in the famous vision of Isaiah (Isaiah 11:1-10) in which no creature kills for sustenance and there is no war or injustice in human society. This reconciliation between humanity and the rest of Creation evokes a return to the Garden of Eden.

In keeping with this theological framework, Jewish scripture provides a number of ethical teachings for care of the environment.¹² One is *ta'ar baalei chayyim*, or prohibition against causing unnecessary pain to animals.¹³ Another is *baal tashchit*, the prohibition of wanton destruction of Creation (Deut. 20:19-20). In addition, the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year provide for periods of rest and renewal for the earth (Lev. 25:1-24).

Nonetheless, of all God's creations, only human beings have the power to disrupt this order through their improper use of free will. We must realize that we are tenants on the earth and are to guard Creation on behalf of God. The flood story in Genesis is an example of what can happen when human evil disrupts the order of Creation. The danger of crossing the boundaries of Creation is also evident in the in the prohibitions of forbidden mixtures of animals, seeds and clothes (Lev. 19:19, Deut. 22:9-11).

Beyond Stewardship

While some scholars are satisfied with the traditional stewardship ethic in Judaism,¹⁴ others think it necessary to recast Judaism to respond to the present environmental crisis.¹⁵ They are attempting to create a new Jewish environmental spirituality by following the age-old Jewish tradition of making *midrash*, that is, offering new interpretations of old texts and seeking to adapt their religion to the values and concerns of the day.

As they ponder modern environmental issues, contemporary scholars have reexamined two philosophers of an earlier generation: Hans Jonas (1903-1993) and Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972). Within Judaism, Jonas has been one of the most neglected philosophers of the 20th century. In broader environmental and scientific circles, however, he is highly regarded. His writings are esteemed in bioethical circles¹⁶ and in discussions of the relationship between religion and science. Europeans have shown great interest in his writing on environmental ethics.¹⁷

Jonas is the only Jewish philosopher who has fully integrated philosophy, science, theology and environmental ethics. He maintained that humans have a special place in Creation, manifest in the concept that humans are created in the image of God. His philosophy is very similar to that of Alfred North Whitehead, who believed that God is not static but dynamic, in a continual process of becoming as the universe evolves. This Process thought has informed much of Christian environmental theology and has found some Jewish adherents as well. It could have a major philosophical impact on Jewish environmentalism.¹⁸

In coming to terms with the Holocaust, Jonas rejected the idea of an omnipotent God who directed historical events. He believed rather that God created the universe and

left its care to humanity. Many Jews would reject such a notion. At the same time, the Holocaust and the advance of science have led many theologians over the past 50 years to turn away from the concept of a God of history as revealed in the Torah. Jewish creation theology has become a growing area of interest even outside of environmentalism.¹⁹

Heschel wrote most of his work before the modern environmental movement and never dealt explicitly with ecology. Nonetheless, current theologians have drawn on his theocentric perspective.²⁰ Heschel saw in Creation an evocation of wonder, awe and humility, as we perceive how small we are in the universe and the history of evolution. Reverence for Creation should engender modesty in our desire to use it for our own purposes.

Heschel saw humanity, indeed the whole world, as objects of divine concern.²¹ Edward Kaplan and Mitchell Thomashow have suggested that if people are able to see themselves in this light, they might adopt an “ecological identity,” appreciating their connection to the cycles of the natural world.²² With such insight, they might respond in a more personal, active way to protect the environment.

In exploring a new environmental theology, some Jewish thinkers have drawn on *Kabbalah*, the Jewish mystical tradition.²³ *Kabbalah* teaches the essential unity of all existence, which could underlie a Jewish form of Deep Ecology. Arthur Green writes: “We are the One: each human mind is a microcosm, a miniature replica of the single Mind that conceives and becomes the universe. To know that oneness and recognize it *in all our fellow beings* is what life is all about.”²⁴ This awareness should engender a greater concern for the environment. Green has called for a “post-kabbalistic” mysticism that can incorporate modern science. Of those who are trying to connect *Kabbalah* and

environmentalism some are beginning to look to the writing of 20th century Kabbalist Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935)²⁵. Others, however, find *Kabbalah* problematic. From their perspective, traditional mystical teaching does not cherish the natural world for its own sake but rather sees it as a symbol for another, ultimate reality.²⁶

Jewish Law and Religious Practice

Judaism has yet to translate environmental principles into contemporary, down-to-earth guidelines for daily living. There is no substantial, current body of law guiding environmental practice. In general, Jewish law, or *halakhah*, is continually in the making, as religious authorities attempt to answer modern questions in keeping with tradition. Each Jewish denomination has a body of scholars who draw on the Torah and Talmud to issue judgments, or responsa. In the field of bioethics, for example, all the major denominations have issued numerous responsa in recent decades, as medical technology and genetic research continually raise new issues. If the Jewish community is to take environmental issues seriously, the denominations must provide *halakhah* related to such issues as consumption, biodiversity, population and climate change.²⁷

One area that has seen some *halakhic* consideration is *kashrut*, or the laws of food. Some Jewish environmentalists have called for the creation of an *eco-kashrut* that sets standards for growing and processing food in a way that is ecologically sound and morally just. Some have advocated a vegetarian diet as the most environmentally sound way to keep kosher.²⁸

The American Reform movement has issued a small collection of environmental responsa, but it tends to address minor issues, such as responsibility toward pets and recycling of sacred books.²⁹ The Orthodox and Conservative movements have produced

responsa regarding genetically modified food, although the judgments have conflicted with the environmental movement. At least the issue has been raised and likely will be considered again.³⁰

Jewish law is not the only area that needs an infusion of environmentalism; so does ritual and liturgy. The writings of Heschel offer a source of inspiration in this area. Prayer, according to Heschel, helps us to see the world as a blessing. It creates an awareness of the sacred, taking us out of ourselves and allowing us to see our place within all Creation. In praying we relinquish control, so that we might feel the presence of God and “see the world in the mirror of the holy.”³¹

Prayer also helps us to recognize that everything we are, everything we have and everything we use ultimately comes from God (*Babylonian Talmud*, Berakhot 35a). When we say a blessing, we create a moment of holiness, a sacred pause.

Heschel’s writing on the Sabbath has influenced the Jewish environmental thinkers Ismar Schorsch and David Ehrenfeld, who see the day of rest as a practice that fosters a uniquely Jewish environmental consciousness. Shabbat is a weekly celebration of Creation and is the here-and-now symbol of that harmony. On Shabbat we become merely citizens of the biotic community, united again with our fellow creatures. As Schorsch has written, “Shabbat reminds us of our earthly status as tenant and not overlord.”³²

Religion, Science and Politics

Over the years, the environmental movement has gradually brought together the political, the scientific and the religious. The first international, interfaith religious conference on the environment took place in 1986 in Assisi, Italy, sponsored by the

World Wide Fund for Nature. From this gathering emerged the “Assisi Declarations,” which were statements by most of the world’s major religions on the environmental ethics of their respective traditions. In a statement for the Jewish community, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg of the World Jewish Congress wrote, “Man was given dominion over nature, but he was commanded to behave towards the rest of creation with justice and compassion. Man lives, always, in tension between his power and the limits set by conscience.”³³

Since then, international meetings on the environment have often included representatives of the world’s religious communities.³⁴ The Assisi conference led to the formation of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation in 1995, and the alliance held a conference with the World Bank in 1997. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) created the Environmental Sabbath program in 1987, which designated the first Sabbath in June as “a sabbatical for our beleaguered planet—an Earth Rest Day to be celebrated annually by faith communities.”³⁵

In the United States, a group of eminent scientists issued an “Open Letter to the Religious Community” in 1990 that called on religious leaders to respond to the environmental crisis:

As scientists, many of us have had a profound experience of awe and reverence before the universe. We understand that what is regarded as sacred is more likely to be treated with care and respect. Our planetary home should be so regarded. Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred... [T]here is a vital role for both religion and science.³⁶

The appeal sparked the formation in 1993 of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE). The group has promoted a major environmental effort within each religious community. The Jewish member of the partnership is the Coalition

on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), established by a joint effort of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.³⁷

In the late 1990s, the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School held a series of conferences on religious traditions and ecology. The conferences led to a series of volumes compiling scholarly essays.³⁸ The project aimed to identify and examine ecological attitudes, values, and practices that are distinctive to certain religions, and to find the common ground among the traditions.³⁹ The project also sought to create new theologies and ethics that promote respect for the natural world. The project has produced one of Judaism's most thought-provoking books on environmentalism, *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*.

Looking Forward

Judaism and Ecology is part of a small but growing body of literature on Judaism and the environment. The publications are predominantly anthologies of articles.⁴⁰ A number of general works on religion and environment include sections on Judaism,⁴¹ and some Jewish organizations, like Hadassah and United Synagogue Youth, have developed teaching materials for internal use.⁴² Occasionally environmentalists of Jewish background have drawn on religious sources in their general work.⁴³

Though the literature is expanding, it remains quite limited relative to the work flowing from other religious traditions, particularly Christianity. The Jewish community came late to the cause of environmentalism, perhaps because of preoccupations with the Holocaust, the state of Israel, and the meaning of Jewish identity in a pluralistic society. And Judaism has been slow to catch up. In contrast to Christian institutions, Jewish

academic departments and seminaries have yet to provide for scholars working full-time on Jewish environmental theology or ethics. The rabbinical schools have yet to introduce Jewish environmental theology and ethics into their curricula. Christian theologians are engaged in lively dialogue about the relation of science to religion, and a great deal of literature has emerged from the discussion.⁴⁴ By contrast, Jewish environmental theology has barely been born. The works of Hans Jonas and Arthur Green are exceptional in their scope and rigor.

Jewish thinkers should not be afraid to admit the radical challenge of environmental issues and to create new theology. We need a fresh, deep, comprehensive approach. Taking inspiration from Hans Jonas, we must try to marry theology with science, from biology to physics to cosmology. We need to explore new territory rather than simply revisit old texts and ideas.⁴⁵

Judaism needs an environmental ethic that goes beyond stewardship. We should try to reconcile a traditional Jewish perspective, which gives moral primacy to humans, with a philosophy that moves past the limitations of anthropocentrism.⁴⁶ We should try to integrate Creation and Torah to form a holistic Jewish environmentalism. Judaism also needs guidelines for daily living: new laws, new rituals and liturgy, and recasting of traditional religious practice to foster an environmental consciousness. The work is daunting, but that is no reason to shrink from it. As the second-century sage Rabbi Tarphon taught, “You are not obligated to finish the task, but neither are you free to neglect it” (*Pirkei Avot* 2:20 & 21).

Notes

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- ¹ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970 [1949]), 238-9.
- ² This survey is based on J. Baird Callicott, *Environmental Ethics: An Overview*, from the website of the Harvard Forum on Religion and Ecology, <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/disciplines/ethics/index.html>. Two good introductions to environmental ethics are Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler, *Environmental Ethics: Divergence & Convergence*, 3rd edition (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004) and Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce, *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book: Philosophy, Ecology, Economics* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1994).
- ³ Marc Swetlitz, ed., *Judaism and Ecology 1970-1986: A Sourcebook of Reading* (Wyncote, PA: Shomrei Adamah, 1990), 1.
- ⁴ Swetlitz, *ibid.* See H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985). Many themes of Jewish environmentalism appear in Santmire from a Christian perspective.
- ⁵ Neal Loevinger, "(Mis) reading Genesis: A Response to Environmentalist Critiques of Judaism," in Ellen Bernstein, ed., *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit: Where Nature and the Sacred Meet* (Woodstock, Vt.: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998), 32-40.
- ⁶ Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 12-13.
- ⁷ Jeremy Cohen, "On Classical Judaism and Environmental Crisis," in Martin Yaffe, ed., *Judaism and Environmental Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 73-79; Jeremy Cohen, "Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It:" *The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). See also Lawrence Troster, "Created in the Image of God: Humanity and Divinity in an Age of Environmentalism," in Yaffe, 172-182.
- ⁸ Steven S. Schwarzschild, "The Unnatural Jew," in Yaffe, 267-282.
- ⁹ David and Joan G. Ehrenfeld, "Some Thoughts on Nature and Judaism," in Yaffe, 283-5.
- ¹⁰ Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan, ed., *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), xxxiii-xxxvi.
- ¹¹ Tirosh-Samuelsan, "Nature in the Sources of Judaism," *Daedalus: The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 130 (4), Fall 2001.
- ¹² Good summaries of this material are found in Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), *To Till and To Tend: A Guide to Jewish Environmental Study and Action* (New York, COEJL, 1994), 20; Eric Katz, "Judaism," in Dale Jamieson, ed., *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 81-95.

¹³ The prohibitions are many. See, for example, Exodus 20:8-10; Leviticus. 22:27-28; Deuteronomy. 22:6, 22:10 and 25:4. For further examples see Richard H. Schwartz, *Judaism and Vegetarianism* (New York: Lantern Books, 2001), 15-39.

¹⁴ Cf. David Ehrenfeld and Philip J. Bentley, "Judaism and the Practice of Stewardship," in Yaffe, 125-135; Daniel Speber, "Jewish Environmental Ethics," *The Edah Journal*, 2(1), 2002.

¹⁵ Cf. Lawrence Troster, "Created in the Image of God"; Bradley Shavit Artson, "Our Covenant with Stones: A Jewish Ecology of Earth," in Yaffe, 161-171; Arthur Green, "A Kabbalah for the Environmental Age," in Tirosh-Samuels, *Judaism and Ecology*, 3-16.

¹⁶ After Jonas died in 1993, the Hastings Center published a special issue of the *Hastings Center Report*, 25 (7), called "The Legacy of Hans Jonas." It included articles on Jonas' philosophy, his bioethics, his environmental ethics and his political influence.

¹⁷ Jonas' writing had an impact on the Green Party in Germany. See Lawrence Vogel, ed., *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Cf. William Kaufman, *The Evolving God in Jewish Process Theology* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997); Sandra B. Lubarsky and David Ray Griffin, *Jewish Theology and Process Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

¹⁹ Cf. Lawrence Troster, "Cross Generational Retribution and Genetic Engineering: Reflections on Chance and Freewill," *Conservative Judaism*, 54(3), Spring 2002; Norbert M. Samuelson, *Judaism and the Doctrine of Creation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); David Kraemer, *The Meanings of Death in Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 142-149; Arthur Green, *Seek My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992).

²⁰ Cf. Kaplan in Tirosh-Samuels, *Judaism and Ecology*; Swetlitz in Ellen Bernstein, ed., *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit*; Mitchell Thomashow, *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); Mitchell Thomashow, *Bringing the Biosphere Home: Learning to Perceive Global Environmental Change* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

²¹ Cf. David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

²² Edward Kaplan, "Reverence and Responsibility: Abraham Joshua Heschel on Nature and the Self," in Tirosh-Samuels, *Judaism and Ecology*, 407-422; Thomashow, *Bringing the Biosphere Home*, 57-59.

²³ Numerous essays from a kabbalistic perspective are presented in Ari Elon, Naomi Mara Hyman and Arthur Waskow, eds., *Trees, Earth, and Torah: A Tu B'Shvat Anthology* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999).

²⁴ Arthur Green, "A Kabbalah for the Environmental Age," in Tirosh-Samuels, *Judaism and Ecology*, 11.

²⁵ Rabbi Ebn Leader, for example, has written a paper for COEJL's Scholarship project titled "Growing into the World : The Mystical Theology of Rav Kook and the Environmental Challenge."

²⁶ Tirosh-Samuelson, *Judaism and Ecology*, lii-lv and 389-404. The problem of using Kabbalah as a source for environmentalism can be seen in Lawrence Fine's description of the tension in Isaac Luria's view of the natural world. "On the one hand, his cosmogonic teachings exhibit an anticosmic dualism in which the material world is deprecated in favor of a divine one from which all being derives... Nevertheless, these views did not translate in an utter devaluation of the natural world. On the contrary, the natural world for Luria was a means by which to encounter the divine." *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003) p. 356.

²⁷ On consumption cf. Eliezer Diamond, "'The Earth is the Lord's and the Fullness Thereof:' Jewish Perspectives on Consumption," in David A. Crocker and Toby Linden eds., *Ethics of Consumption: The Good Life, Justice and Global Stewardship* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 391-402. This is a good summary of Jewish teachings related to consumption, but it is not *responsa* and thus has no force of religious obligation.

²⁸ Arthur Waskow, *Down to Earth Judaism: Food, Money, Sex and the Rest of Life* (New York: William Morrow, 1995), 118-129; Arthur Green, *Seek My Face*, 87-89; Richard Schwartz, *Judaism and Vegetarianism* (New York: Lantern Books, 2001), 79-94. See also the website of the Eco Kashrut Network (www.ecojew.com/ecokashrut/index.html).

²⁹ Walter Jacob and Moshe Zemer, *The Environment in Jewish Law: Essays and Responsa* (New York: Berghan Books, 2003).

³⁰ Cf. Avraham Israel Reisner, "Curiouser and Curiouser: The Kashrut of Genetically Engineered Foodstuffs," *Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly*, YD 87:10, 1997.

³¹ Quoted in Edward Kaplan, "Reverence and Responsibility," in Tirosh-Samuelson, *Judaism and Ecology*, 409.

³² Ismar Schorsch, "Tending to Our Cosmic Oasis," in COEJL, *To Till and To Tend*, 20; David Ehrenfeld, "Judaism and the Practice of Stewardship," in Yaffe, 132-4.

³³ Quoted in Libby Bassett, ed., *Earth and Faith; A Book of Reflection for Action* (New York: Interfaith Partnership for the Environment and the United Nations Environment Programme, 2000), 11.

³⁴ Steven C. Rockefeller and John C. Elder, *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment is a Religious Issue* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 1-14.

³⁵ Quoted in Interfaith Partnership and UNEP, *Earth and Faith*, p.5.

³⁶ “An Open Letter to the Religious Community,” January 1990, from the website of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, www.nrpe.org/openletter.html.

³⁷ At the Consultation on the Environment and Jewish Life, the conference in 1992 which helped to establish COEJL, a statement, entitled “On the Urgency of a Jewish Response to the Environmental Crisis,” was issued which was signed by leaders of all the major Jewish religious denominations. It said in part that the Jewish community recognizes the seriousness of the environmental crisis and that the Jewish tradition calls us to be partners with God in the protection of Creation. It also insists that protection of the environment must be part of the communal Jewish agenda. It can be read at www.coejl.org/about/founding.shtml.

³⁸ To date nine have been published and two more are in preparation.

³⁹ Tirosh-Samuels, *Judaism and Ecology*, xxiii.

⁴⁰ Ellen Bernstein, ed., *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit*; Marc Swetlitz, ed., *Judaism and Ecology*; Martin Yaffe, ed., *Judaism and Environmental Ethics*; Arthur Waskow, ed., *Torah of the Earth: Exploring 4,000 Years of Ecology in Jewish Thought*, two volumes (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000). For major bibliographies of Jewish environmental literature see Tirosh-Samuels, *Judaism and Ecology*, and Yaffe.

⁴¹ See Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, and Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Dale Jamieson, ed., *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*; Martin Palmer with Victoria Finlay, *Faith in Conservation: New Approaches to Religions and the Environment* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2003).

⁴² For example, see Ellen Bernstein and Dan Fink, *Let the Earth Teach You Torah* (Wyncote, PA: Shomrei Adamah, 1992); Earl Schwartz and Barry D. Cytron, *Who Renews Creation* (New York: United Synagogue Youth, 1993).

⁴³ See Eric Katz, *Nature as Subject: Human Obligation and Natural Community*, (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 1997); Mitchell Thomashow, *Ecological Identity and Bringing the Biosphere Home*.

⁴⁴ See, for example, the works of Holmes Rolston III, the Catholic scholar John Haught and the Protestant scholar Ian Barbour.

⁴⁵ Tirosh-Samuels, *Judaism and Ecology*, lviii. In the Christian world, for example, some years ago the Vatican Observatory, in partnership with the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley, California, held a series of conferences on Divine action and the natural sciences. These conferences were sparked by a speech of Pope John Paul II on the 300th anniversary of the publication of Isaac Newton’s *Philosophia Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687). In his speech, the Pope called for a serious dialogue between religion and science. Scientists and theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, attended the conferences, and their papers were published in series of books. During the past 40 years there has also been an extensive Christian literature on the science and religion dialogue. In many of these works, environmental theology is integral to the discussion. See, for example, the work of John Haught or Ian Barbour.

⁴⁶ I discussed this with Professor Louis Newman, a leading Jewish ethical theorist, and he indicated to me that he knows of no discussion in Jewish ethical writing on this particular problem.

Appendix **A Timeline of Jewish Environmentalism**

Major Events in Jewish Environmentalism

- ◆ 1967 “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” by historian Lynn White, Jr., appears in *Science*.
- ◆ 1970 First Earth Day.
- ◆ 1986 Assisi Declarations (World Wide Fund for Nature).
- ◆ 1987 Founding of the Environmental Sabbath program of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- ◆ 1988 Founding of Shomrei Adamah, a non-profit organization promoting the connection between ecology and Jewish tradition. *Shomrei adamah* is Hebrew for “guardians of the earth.”
- ◆ 1992 Consultation on the Environment and Jewish Life in Washington, D.C.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At the conference, more than 178 governments adopt Agenda 21, a plan for global, national and local action.
- ◆ 1993 Founding of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL).
- ◆ 1994 The Jewish Theological Seminary and COEJL sponsor a Consultation on the Development of a Jewish Philosophy of the Natural World in Pawling, NY.
- ◆ 1998 Harvard University Conference on Judaism and the Natural World.

COEJL retreat for rabbis on Judaism and Nature in Pawling, NY.

Heschel Center for Environmental Learning and Leadership established in Israel.

Major Publications on Judaism and the Environment

- ◆ 1989 Jeremy Cohen, “*Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master it:*” *The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text*.

- ◆ 1990 Mark Swetlitz, ed., *Judaism and Ecology 1970-1986: A Sourcebook of Readings*, published by Shomrei Adamah.

- ◆ 1991 Lawrence Troster and Miriam Wyman, eds., Special Issue on Judaism and the Environment, *Conservative Judaism*, XLIV(1).

Rabbi David E. Stein, *Garden of Choice Fruit*, published by Shomrei Adamah.

Special Issue on Judaism and Ecology, Part I, *Melton Journal*, No. 24.

- ◆ 1992 Arthur Green, *Seek My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology*.

Aubrey Rose, ed., *Judaism and Ecology*. Part of a series on world religions and ecology published in England by the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Ellen Bernstein and Dan Fink, *Let the Earth Teach You Torah*, published by Shomrei Adamah.

Special Issue on Judaism and Ecology, Part II, *Melton Journal*, No. 25.

- ◆ 1993 Dan Fink, *Judaism and Ecology*, a study guide published jointly by Shomrei Adamah and Hadassah.

- ◆ 1994 COEJL, *To Till and To Tend*.

- ◆ 1998 Manfred Gerstenfeld, *Judaism, Environmentalism and the Environment*.

Ellen Bernstein, ed., *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit: Where Nature and the Sacred Meet*.

- ◆ 1999 Ari Elon, Naomi Mara Hyman and Arthur Waskow, eds., *Trees, Earth and Torah: A Tu B'Shvat Anthology*.

- ◆ 2000 Arthur Waskow, ed., *Torah of the Earth: Exploring 4,000 Years of Ecology in Jewish Thought*, 2 volumes.

- ◆ 2001 Martin D. Yaffe, ed., *Judaism and Environmental Ethics: A Reader*.

Special Issue on Judaism and the Environment, *CCAR Journal: A Reform Jewish Quarterly*, Winter 2001. CCAR is the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

- ◆ 2002 Hava Tirosh-Samuels, ed., *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*.