Introduction

Jewish ecological thought and the challenge for scriptural theology

One planet, one experiment.

E. O. Wilson

We live in a wondrous place, this Earth, filled with beauty and surprise. A world where the merest sparkle on the surface of the water can suggest in its variation the infinitude of the universe, the "*ru'ach Elohim m'rachefet*" – the spirit of God hovering, fluttering on the face of the waters; a world where all our senses can be filled and overflow; a world in which we share so much with even the wildest and least known creatures. As human beings we have the potential to be enchanted by all those creatures, to act in love and in faith toward them, and toward the greater mystery and unity that is all Being and that transcends all Being. As human beings, we have the potential to feel compassion for all people and all creatures we meet, and yet we have such passions and dispassions as to make us forget compassion.

Compassion does arise, naturally and spontaneously, from the moment we encounter an Other. Moral reflection can extend the reach of that compassion, even beyond the neighbor, and beyond the span of a single lifetime. But our moral vision is too easily limited to what we can imagine in our mind's eye. Religion at its best serves to magnify the power of compassion and moral vision beyond the naked eye and the "naked mind", to extend it over hundreds or thousands of years. Religion can teach us how to act to preserve life far beyond the horizon of what any of us can calculate or plan for. Religion, ritual, faith, tradition, all of them exist as guides, not just for one lifetime or for one generation, but for the proverbial seven generations, that is, for as long as any civilization will last, potentially for tens of thousands of years.

This truth is embedded in the Torah's plea to each person she addresses: "Choose life, so that you and your seed will live!" [Dt 30:19] If this is the anthropological, psychological, and metaphysical truth of religion – one of the

purposes of religion, as I believe – then aside from a handful of indigenous traditions that are threatened with extinction, religion is failing. One could say that religion has already failed.

Yet we have not entirely lost our compass. Even as religion is struggling to catch up with its purpose, science can help us reclaim the inner truth of that purpose. The first way this happens is that we are becoming ever more awake to the profound miracles and intricate processes that constitute what we call life. Science has been developing the capacity to recognize, model, and study the extraordinary complexity, diversity, munificence, and wondrousness of living creatures and systems, in ways that were unimagined (to all but mystics) as recently as a few decades ago.[3] New insights into the deep nature and structure of life, at the microscopic, macroscopic, and astronomical levels, are enabling us to perceive and receive the more-than-human world we call Nature on its own terms, beyond human projections and human needs.[4] It takes only a slight shift into the language of the sacred to recognize that this knowledge practically commands us to stand in awe of Creation.[5]

Of course, science also brings us technology, and it is our technology that is bringing us to what may be the brink of a collapse. And yet, even as science teaches us how to leverage our power to move mountains, and to destroy them, science also enables us to study how human action impacts the world, and to understand how systems as enormous as the climate of the entire planet can change.[6] That is another way that science can help us recover the purpose of religion: it is enabling us to see and measure how the fabric of life can be torn apart by human profligacy and greed.[7]

[3] This is a consequence of many factors, including development of new technologies, especially in computing and the study of genetics, and application of the mathematics of complexity and chaos.

[4] David Abram coined the phrase "more-than-human world" in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996) to replace the term "Nature". Abram's terminology uproots the culture/Nature dichotomy – "more-than-human" includes the human – conceptualizing the environment that surrounds us as inclusive of humanity. It not only embraces a world that is both immanent and intimately related to us, but also acknowledges that this world transcends our needs, purposes, and knowledge. See pp.34 (esp. n.102), 54, 207, and n.19 on the concept of "more-than-human". I capitalize "Nature" (except when the term is within quotes) whenever it refers to the whole natural world.

[5] Throughout, I capitalize "Creation" to refer to the universe, while "creation" refers to God's process of creating. Some quoted passages have been altered to reflect this usage.

[6] How can it be that the science of climate change incites such consternation in some fundamentalist believers of the Bible when the Torah is so insistent that climate change, and climate disaster, are the consequence for a society living out of balance, the consequence of a society that does not respect "God's preference" (to borrow the term used by Liberation theologians) for the poor and for the land? The rationalist tendency to redline those parts of the Torah that describe climate disaster as a divine consequence of sin is also problematic – for example, after much debate, the final version of the Reform movement's newest prayerbook, *Mishkan Tefila: A Reform Siddur* (New York: CCAR, 2007) once again omitted the second paragraph of the *Sh'ma`* prayer, Dt 11:13–21, (discussed n.412).

[7] The way science can gift us with wonder, foreboding, and tragedy was neatly exemplified over a three-day period in March 2014. On the 16th, an extraordinary announcement came that

From the Gulf oil catastrophe of 2010 to melting glaciers, to extreme weather events like 2013's Hurricane Sandy,[8] to poisoned and depleted aquifers, to acidification of the oceans (which are more acidic than they have been in 300 *million* years[9]), the human impact is planetary in scale.[10] So too is it pervasive at the cellular level, where disruptions of fertility and growth due to petrochemicals, ozone depletion, carcinogens, and mutagens have the potential to affect any birth any place on Earth.[11] And on the level that we register most easily with our senses, the human scale of animals and plants, of valleys and rivers, species in every nation and ecosystem are imminently endangered. One does not need complex computer models to know that we are degrading Earth's carrying capacity.[12] Even without global climate change, simply by taking more and more land and habitat out of natural ecosystems and putting it into our service, we are disfiguring the face of our planet. It is at best a kind of gallows

scientists had detected the polarization of "gravitational waves" in the cosmic microwave background – evidence for cosmic inflation close to the beginning of time. (Whether these results will hold up is uncertain.) On the 17th, a team announced that even the most northern ice sheet in Greenland was rapidly deteriorating due to climate change (Shfaqat A. Khan et al., "Sustained Mass Loss of the Northeast Green- land Ice Sheet Triggered by Regional Warming", *Nature: Climate Change* 4 [2014]: 292–9, doi:10.1038/nclimate2161). The next day, a study of the genetic diversity of the last moas in New Zealand confirmed that 600 years ago, humans were the cause of their extinction (Morten Erik Allentoft et al., "Extinct New Zealand Megafauna Were Not in Decline before Human Colonization", *Procedings of the National Academy of Science* 111:13 [2014]: 4922–7).

[8] One cannot know that a particular storm is "caused" by climate change, but the probability that climate change played a factor in it can be estimated. More broadly, one cannot determine what the weather would have been in the absence of climate change, because the weather itself is the change, and cause and effect are indistinguishable. This quality, related to nonlinearity, is reflected in the mathematics of chaos, which is one tool science uses to model weather.

[9] The acidity of the oceans, driven by the concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere, is also estimated to be increasing even more quickly than at the time of the mass extinction at the end of the Permian period. See Bärbel Hönisch et al., "The Geological Record of Ocean Acidification", *Science* 335:6072 (Mar. 2, 2012): 1058–63.

[10] Not to mention the Great Pacific Garbage Patch – and the astonishing choice we have made to base our way of life on things that are intended be used once and thrown away, and to manufacture those things out of material that will last for thousands of years.

[11] "Earth" is capitalized when I am specifically referring to the whole planet as such. Otherwise, "earth" is used, including in cases where the meaning is "the entire earthly realm", and in translations. See n.61.

[12] If we take a moment to think outside our anthropocentric frame, which equates carrying capacity with "maximum number of human beings that the planet can sustain", the simple fact that so many species are at risk tells us that the Earth's capacity to nourish Life is being diminished. Calculating a numerical upper limit on Earth's "carrying capacity" is in any case naïve, because in a world that nurtures abundance, diversity, and symbiosis, the maximum sustainable human population will increase – life augments the conditions for more life. But with the resilience of Earth's systems decreasing while (and because) the human population is increasing, the limits to growth could come crashing down upon us precipitously. It may not be possible for us to know the point at which catastrophic change will occur until we have already passed it. See Marten Scheffer et al., "Catastrophic Shifts in Ecosystems", *Nature* 413 (Oct. 11, 2001): 591–6.

humor that even as so many wondrous creatures are becoming endangered or extinct, corporations are creating and patenting new sub-species.

Many scientists estimate the current rate of extinction to be precedented only by the five mass extinctions in Earth's history.[13] Add in climate disruption, and we may witness the loss, over the next 100 years, of well more than half the species that have existed on Earth for the past 20 to 55 million years.[14] And so, during the next century, we will witness the irrevocable consequences of the past century and a half of technological development. E. O. Wilson writes, "[I]f enough species are extinguished, will the ecosystems collapse, and will the extinction of most other species follow soon afterward? The only answer one can give is: possibly. By the time we find out, however, it might be too late. One planet, one experiment."[15]

Within the most industrialized societies, environmental movements have responded by calling for a transformation of culture and technology. In the less developed nations, environmentalists have called for resistance to Western technologies and to the Western path of development. In many places, the Transition Town movement, started in England and inspired by the principles of permaculture, seeks to create alternative systems of living that are resilient and sustainable. But our ability to care about what is happening arises not just from science and politics, but also from love, which, along with awe, is one of the roots of religion. And religion in turn is one of the strongest vessels for husbanding love toward social transformation.

The transformation we need to carry out will affect every aspect of human culture.[16] It has already had a profound impact on religious thought, leading to the re-evaluation of older theologies and the creation of "ecotheologies". Often

[13] Many consider our epoch to be the sixth mass extinction. See Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014) for a popular exposition of the science behind this conclusion. If this is so, the beginning of this mass extinction event dates to well before industrialization. There have already been widespread losses, for example, of all the megafauna (including elephants, saber-toothed cats, giant beavers, etc.) in the Americas and in Europe, the many species of giant bird in New Zealand (see n.7), and many of the marsupials of Australia. These losses occurred tens of thousands of years ago – even before the spread of agriculture. It is perhaps vital to notice that many of the indigenous cultures that grew in the ecological shadow of these catastrophes are profoundly sensitive to living in harmony with the Earth and the land. On this pattern applied to Hebrew thought, see p.8. This phenomenon may bear witness to the capacity of human culture to undergo exactly the kind of profound change we need today.

[14] M. C. Cadotte, B. J. Cardinale, and T. H. Oakley, "Evolutionary History Predicts the Ecological Impacts of Species Extinction", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 105 (2008): 17012–17. Paleontologists identify 55 million years ago as the time when mammals and birds began to radiate into all the species we see. Other branches of the Tree of Life are quite a bit older.

[15] *The Diversity of Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 182.

[16] This is true not just because we must "retool" our society to become sustainable; it is also rightly argued that the roots of environmental ruin are in the bedrock of Western culture. See esp. Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*

this creativity gets channeled toward the utilitarian purpose of making theology "relevant" to contemporary political and spiritual concerns. It is religion catching up to the present. What is at stake is far greater than that, however. Unless we can find a balance with the more-than-human world that can sustain the lives of the multitude of species, we will be awakening to a present that has no future.[17] The work of theology therefore must be directed toward the future.

It is the coming generations who will bear witness to the answer to Wilson's question. We who can only anticipate the answer are left with two fundamental questions: How can we begin turning the course of human civilization toward sustainability? And, can we begin to create the spiritual resources necessary for those generations to come who will face the problems we are creating – resources that will help them keep intact their humanity and sympathy, for all people and all life, and ultimately to thrive?

I have chosen as the focus of this book the fundament of Biblically based theology that is often the greatest source of disconnection from the natural world: the image of God. Modern and traditional theology have interpreted God's image as something that not only elevates us above Creation, but also separates and isolates us from the rest of Creation. Can we revalue the divine image, and envision Creation and all creatures as participating in this image?[18] This question is connected to many other ecological issues – animal rights, intrinsic value, stewardship, biodiversity, etc. – all of which have political implications.

But the challenge to culture and religion goes far beyond any of the explicitly political issues and ecological dangers mentioned so far. This challenge is also an opportunity to become closer, as it were, to God, to Creation, and to ourselves.

There is another reason why the question of God's image ought to be foremost in our minds. The meaning of "human", as sign, being, and species, has

(Oakland CA: AK Press, 2005) and "Death of a Small Planet", *The Progressive* (Aug. 1989): 19–23.

[17] While humanity might decimate the planet's biosphere, life will continue in other forms and will eventually thrive again, as it has done after every mass extinction event. We are neither able to destroy nor to "save" the Earth. However, Stephen Jay Gould ("The Golden Rule: A Proper Scale for Our Environmental Crisis", in *Eight Little Piggies* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1993], ch.2) talks about a "golden rule", a time-scale that relates to our lifespan as a species. We are only some 200,000 years into our lifespan, and yet we are facing (and causing) the end of the conditions on Earth that favor us to be here. But, as the Midrash teaches, God made and destroyed worlds before this one (n.779).

[18] The concept of "participating in God's image" is broader than the idea of "being in God's image". The term "participate" allows room for different kinds of relationship to *tselem*; different orders of Being such as rocks or animals may participate in God's image in different ways (see p.59ff.). I am drawing especially on Yosef Ashkenazi for this concept (see p.254; see also Aquinas, nn.54, 84). "Orders of Being" is a secular terminology corresponding to "orders of Creation / *sidrey v'rei'shit*", which is one comprehensive way of talking about Nature within rabbinic tradition (see n.936). (On space before or after a forward slash, see Notes on Transliteration.)

already been transformed by the ecological and physical sciences. The concepts of ecosystem and biodiversity, as well as ecophilosophy's critique of the cultural idea of wilderness and of Nature in general,[19] compel us to recognize that there is a more intimate relationship between culture and multifarious Nature than the Western intellectual tradition has assumed. The development of ideas of non-human agency and the recognition of emotion and of forms of language in non-human animals have led many scientists to reject Cartesian notions of the animal. Moral philosophy has begun to encompass an ecological ethos in which non-human lives and communities can be seen as ends-in-themselves. Evolutionary and genetic sciences have given us greater and greater comprehension of the relations between all life forms, while complexity and chaos theory have given us tools to quantify and affirm intuitions about the aesthetic unity of life and the more-than-mechanical coherence of the physical world.[20] The idea that humanity stands apart from Nature, and that the more-than-human world exists to serve our needs in whatever we desire, is as untenable as it is demeaning to "what the Creator has wrought".

In every dimension, we need to overcome the disconnect between our real relation to and dependence on this physical living world, and our tendency to value only those needs and ends that are strictly human. Ecological insights have altered the way we think about everything from economics to salvation. Even if there were no ecological crisis, we would still need to ask anew, in the face of deeper knowledge of who and what we are: What is God's relation to the cosmos? How does Creation, if indeed it be created, teach us about the nature of the Creator? What responsibility for the well-being of other species comes with the ever-expanding knowledge of our connection to them? As our understanding of humanity evolves, so must our theology.

[19] Ecophilosophers mostly reject the romantic idea of wilderness as a place empty of human presence or impact. See Max Oelschlager, *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1993) and Peter Van Wyck, *Primitives in the Wilderness: Deep Ecology and the Missing Human Subject* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1997). Culture, society, and Nature are always in dialogue, and there is no place on Earth empty of human traces. The fact that scientists detect levels of human-generated pollution in the most remote icefields and oceans underscores the reality that no phenomenon is completely isolated. Even biomes at the bottom of the ocean can be impacted by humanity, not just because of deep-sea drilling, but even because as the ocean warms, there is less mixing of layers, which means less oxygen is available.

The idea that Nature and culture are separable is difficult to defend. But much of the ecophilosophy on this question critiques the dualism between culture and Nature from a cultural-linguistic perspective; that is, "Nature" as a concept is never more than a cultural construct. The deeper (and, I would say, spiritual) implications of overcoming this dualism are explored by authors who focus on the living continuity of mind, body, and earth, such as Abram in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (the source of the term "more-than-human world"). See n.102.

[20] Scientific information related to these themes can be found in sources on the Web, so specific citations are only occasionally given, mostly where the information is new, not easily accessed, available only from a few sources, or disputed.

This work of evolving new ways of thinking about God, human, and cosmos is what we call constructive or creative theology. It differs from what is sometimes labeled theology in academia in that it is ultimately not about what Jewish theologians said in the past, but rather about what Jewish tradition can and should speak to the future. This may sound inimical to a clear-eyed appraisal of the history of Jewish thought. What I hope will become clear in the course of this work, however, is that all these new perspectives and questions not only push us to evolve theology, but also illuminate for us, in critical ways, the meaning of ancient texts and ideas, and the history of those texts and ideas.

JEWISH ECOLOGICAL THOUGHT

In the past thirty years of Jewish environmentalism, great leaps have been made in Jewish thought, awareness, and practice. One purpose of *Kabbalah and Ecology* is to push that work forward in a significant way. The central question of this book is: "Can we, on the basis of traditional Jewish sources, say that creatures other than human beings are in God's image?"[21] Asking this question lets us break down the wall that separates our humanity from our connection to other species, to life in general, and to the Earth itself. An ancillary question to consider is: Can we expand the meaning of God's image in a way that has integrity with the past, with tradition, and with the deepest insights of religion before modernity?

I want to acknowledge several authors who have already taken important steps toward an ecological vision of Judaism. In particular, Arthur Green, Eilon Schwartz, and Arthur Waskow have each extended Jewish ecology in new directions.[22] Arthur Waskow's work probably reached the widest audience up

[21] There are several significant figures for Jewish ecology whose theology will not be dealt with herein because their work does not address this central question – in particular, Bachya ibn Paquda (eleventh century, Spain) and Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–92, Poland, United States), both of whom show extraordinary sensitivity to the natural world. On Bachya, see n.60. On Heschel, see p.96 herein, and Mike Comins, *A Wild Faith: Jewish Ways Into Wilderness, Wilderness Ways Into Judaism* (Woodstock VT: Jewish Lights, 2007), ch.4, 20–25. There are also areas of Jewish thought valuable for ecotheology that do not bear on this question, such as non-Hasidic *Muṣar* (ethical) literature, which is a rich resource for thinking about how to develop appreciation of and transcend consumerist attitudes toward Nature.

[22] On the contributions of all three, see Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Judaism", in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 52–3. Others whose work has significantly advanced the field include Everett Gendler and Hans Jonas. On Gendler, see Eilon Schwartz, "Judaism and Nature: Theological and Moral Issues" in *Torah of the Earth*, 2 vols., ed. Arthur Waskow (Woodstock VT: Jewish Lights, 2000), vol.2, 159–73; 163 (see n.25 for other editions of this article). On Jonas, see Lawrence Troster, "Caretaker or Citizen: Hans Jonas, Aldo Leopold, and the Development of Jewish Environmental Ethics" in *The Legacy of Hans Jonas: Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life*, eds. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Christian Wiese (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 373–96, as well as Tirosh-Samuelson, "Judaism", 55–6.

until the millenium,[23] though Arthur Green may have outpaced him since the publication of *Seek My Face, Speak My Name*.[24] I will return to their work in Chapter 13. Eilon Schwartz, in his article "Judaism and Nature: Theological and Moral Issues to Consider While Renegotiating a Jewish Relationship to the Natural World", questions the validity of the rigid boundary between Judaism and "paganism".[25] Evan Eisenberg's book *The Ecology of Eden* also broke new ground.[26] One of its central ideas, that the Biblical tradition may have emerged from the response of pre-Biblical Hebrews to the ecological collapse of Mesopotamian civilization, has become an important element in Waskow's teaching and in my own.[27] On a broader cultural level, the project to create a gender-liberating Judaism in the United States dating from the 1970s raised the issue of embodiment, which is an essential ingredient of a more eco-centric Judaism.[28]

[23] Besides *Seasons of Our Joy* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1982), his early and influential work on the Jewish holidays and cycles of Nature, Waskow's publications include two edited collections: *Torah of the Earth* and (with Ari Elon and Naomi Hyman), *Trees, Earth, and Torah* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1999). On Waskow, see n.58, pp.238, 240, 332ff.

[24] *Seek My Face* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1994); "A Kabbalah for the Environmental Age", *Tikkun* 14:5 (1999): 33–40; *Ehyeh: A Kabbalah for Tomorrow* (Woodstock VT: Jewish Lights, 2002), esp. 106–19; and *Radical Judaism: Rethinking God and Tradition* (New Haven CT, 2010). Green's work is discussed on pp.231, 238, 333–4.

[25] First published in *Judaism* 44:4 (1985): 437–47, "Judaism and Nature" was reprinted in both Waskow, *Torah of the Earth*, vol.2 (see n.22) and *Judaism and Environmental Ethics*, ed. Martin Yaffe (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 297–308 (hereafter cited as "Yaffe"). All subsequent page references to "Judaism and Nature" refer to *Torah of the Earth*.

The nexus between Judaism and "paganism" deserves a book-length treatment. Further discussion is found at nn.34, 52, 403, and pp.9 (esp. n.29), 23, 122–3, 232, 272, and in *Methods*. Schwartz's work parallels a class I have taught since 1993 on what I sometimes call, tongue-in-cheek, "pagan monotheism". Jill Hammer's more recent article, "An Altar of Earth: Reflections on Jews, Goddesses and the Zohar" (*Zeek* [July 2004], www.zeek.net/spirit_0407.shtml [Mar. 2012]), touches on the same theme. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz's *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) opened up space for this kind of discussion.

[26] (New York: Knopf, 1998). Eisenberg's brilliant work has not had the impact on Jewish Studies or ecotheology that it deserves. A briefer statement of Eisenberg's thesis, "The Mountain and the Tower: Wilderness and City in the Symbols of Babylon and Israel", can be found in Waskow, *Torah of the Earth*, vol.1, 18–54.

[27] See nn.13, 551. J. Richard Middleton also reads the Bible as a critique of Mesopotamian culture in *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 195–234, esp. 204–12.

[28] See Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 153–4. Some of the most important work in this area has been in Biblical studies. See esp. Tikva Frymer-Kensky's work *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1993). Jewish feminism has however largely focused on an anthropocentric egalitarian approach (cf. *Standing Again*, 231, where Plaskow's brief mention of environmental issues is the exception that proves the rule). Nevertheless, the need to account for the sensual, embodied dimensions of Jewish ritual leads to work that supports ecological reconstruction. See *Bridges*, ed. Clare Kinberg, esp. 5:2 (Fall 1995) and the article I

While some authors like Eilon Schwartz have started unearthing (or "re-earthing") a Judaism freed of the prejudices of the nineteenth century, the outdated dichotomies of that time continue to be repeated by others, particularly those who see themselves strictly as academics. Even one of the best scholars on the subject, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, writes that, "From a Jewish perspective, 'biocentrism' is just another form of paganism that must result in idolatrous worship of nature."[29] Now, biocentrism simply means the belief that all living things have some intrinsic moral standing; there is hardly an idea that could be more compatible with ancient Jewish tradition.[30] In fact, the "Jewish perspective" that Tirosh-Samuelson refers to is not a traditional perspective at all. It is rooted in the *Haskalah* and *Wissenschaft* movements, which recast Judaism in terms of an imagined opposition between rationality and history on the one hand, and myth and Nature on the other.[31] But, as Ismar Schorsch wrote, "The celebration of 'historical monotheism' is a legacy of nineteenth century Christian-Jewish polemics, a fierce attempt by [modern] Jewish thinkers to

co-authored with Irene Diamond, "Sensuous Minds and the Possibility of a Jewish Ecofeminist Practice" in *Ethics and the Environment* 4:2 (2000): 185–95 (repr. in Roger Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, 2nd edn. [New York: Routledge], 391–400 and in Waskow, *Torah of the Earth*, vol.2, 245–60). Frymer-Kensky's work also has deeply ecofeminist underpinnings, as can be seen in her article "Ecology in a Biblical Perspective" in Waskow, *Torah of the Earth*, vol.1, 55–69, which does for ecology and the Bible what *In the Wake of the Goddesses* does for feminism: show that the Biblical transformation of earlier myths was broadly speaking a move toward liberation and respect, rather than a move toward oppression. See also Jeanne Kay, "Concepts of Nature in the Hebrew Bible", *Environmental Ethics* 10:4 (1988): 309–27; repr. in Yaffe, 86–104.

[29] "Nature in the Sources of Judaism", *Daedalus* (Fall 2001): 99–124; 116. Tirosh-Samuelson's example is all the more important because she provides in this same article one of the finest summaries of the subject that has been written. Tirosh-Samuelson prefaces these words with:

> [I]f Jews wish to ground their approach to ecology in Jewish sources, they must come to terms with the fact that certain assumptions . . . 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.

Up to this point, what she says is accurate. But when Tirosh-Samuelson polemicizes against "paganism", she incorrectly interprets aspects of ecology and of Jewish tradition. For example, in comments on Nazism, paganism, and Nature (in "Judaism", in *The Oxford Handbook*, 54), she writes, "nature is also violent, competitive, ruthless . . . Nature does not care about the sick . . . Nature does not establish moral values that can create a just society." Here Tirosh-Samuelson is working from an outmoded view of both evolutionary theory (see n.75 and p.29) and moral theory (n.67). The polemic against paganism, endemic to modern Jewish thought, can lead to extreme positions, as in Manfred Gerstenfeld's "Neo-Paganism in the Public Square and Its Relevance to Judaism" (*Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints* 392 [1998], at www.jcpa.org/jpsr/gersten-s99.htm [Oct. 2012], see esp. beginning of the section "Nature's Image").

[30] Some people draw a distinction between biocentrism, which may emphasize the moral value of individual lives, and ecocentrism, which places moral value on living systems; others use "biocentrism" to indicate both. For our purposes here, the latter usage is intended. On animal rights, see Chapter 5.

[31] For further discussion, see pp.23–4, n.81, and *Methods*.

distance Judaism from the world of paganism."[32] Tirosh-Samuelson's labeling of biocentrism as "idolatrous worship" has its roots in these polemics.

The Jewish environmental movement began among quirky outsiders searching for resonance with their ideas in the mainstream community.[33] The movement has rarely questioned the dichotomy between history and Nature, which plays such a major role in the modern self-understanding of Judaism, or the dichotomy between Judaism and paganism,[34] though neither dichotomy is historically accurate. While Jewish environmentalism has moved far beyond the first stage of collecting what I sometimes call "pretty sayings about trees",[35]

[32] Schorsch adds, "But the disclaimer has its downside by casting Judaism into an adversarial relationship with the natural world." ("Tending to Our Cosmic Oasis", *The Melton Journal* 24 [Spring 1991]: 3, available at www.neohasid.org/pdf/Schorsch_OurCosmicOasis.pdf [Sep. 4, 2014].) For further discussion, see n.72 and *Methods*. In Chapter 3, I analyze an example of this depiction of Judaism. See n.363.

[33] The 1982 Jewish Environmental Conference organized by David Ehrenfeld at Rutgers University, which I attended as the youngest participant, may be seen as one of the starting points of Jewish environmentalism as a movement. The first draft of *Kabbalah and Ecology* was finished almost exactly 30 years after that conference. On this history, see Seidenberg, "Jewish Environmentalism in North America" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (hereafter *ERN*), eds. Bron Taylor et al. (New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005), 909–13, rev. www.neohasid.org/ecohasid/jewish_enviro_history/ (Mar. 2011). The earliest groups that formed were largely supplanted or absorbed by Shomrei Adamah (founded 1988), which was itself supplanted by the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL, founded 1993).

[34] Among notable exceptions are Jill Hammer and Taya Shere's organization The Kohenet Institute, founded in 2007; Hammer's work very much parallels my own. "Paganism" is an ill-defined term that has no reality or relationship to the lifeworld of the ancient Hebrews. According to one definition of "pagan" by a scholar of the ancient world, it simply meant "'people of the place,' town or country who preserved their local customs" in the face of Christianity (Pierre Chuvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans* [Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1990], 9). If we are going to apply "pagan" anachronistically, it certainly includes ancient Judaism. Long-held local customs are in fact almost always related to local ecosystems. On this point, see Seidenberg, "Kashroots: An Eco-History of the Kosher Laws", www.jcarrot.org/kashroots-an-eco-history-of-the-kosher-laws (Nov. 2008); rev. www.neohasid.org/torah/kashroots (Sep. 2009), §§2, 4–6. I discuss there the rules that determine a kosher land animal: cloven hooves mean an animal can graze on rocky land unsuited for farming; chewing cud means it can thrive eating food that is not edible to people and that grows without cultivation. These rules are precisely tuned to the agriculture of hilly Canaan. Cf. Aloys Hfttermann, *The Ecological Message of the Torah: Knowledge, Concepts and Laws which Made Survival in a land of Milk and Honey Possible* (Gainesville FL: University Press of Florida, 1999), 72. Hfttermann describes ancient Hebrew society as "the first society which ever lived on this globe to establish a sustained yield form of agriculture" (201).

One curious aspect of ancient Hebrew culture is that even though it is so clearly indigenous and attuned to the land where it evolved, it insists on describing itself as not indigenous – Abraham came from Mesopotamia, the tribes invaded from Egypt, and just as "you were strangers in Egypt", so "you are strangers and sojourners" [Lv 25:23] even in the land of Israel. This subject merits in-depth treatment.

[35] See Lawrence Troster, "From Apologetics to New Spirituality: Trends in Jewish Environmental Theology" (www.greenwisdomrabbi.com/from-apologetics-to-new-spirituality-trends-in-jewish-environmental-theology/ [Oct 2014]). The first stage may be thought of as a kind of