Judaism, environmentalism and the environment: Mapping and analysis
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Chapter Two

Modern Jewish Writers and Environmentalism: Motives, Tensions and Reactions

Introduction

In order to illuminate the meeting-place between an increasingly heterogeneous Judaism and the multi-faceted field of environmentalism, an inquiry has been made into the scholarly texts and modern essays which are pertinent to Jewish views on environmental matters.

The literature on this subject is limited. There are very few books; most of the literature consists of articles in journals. The following classification may be made:

- Publications that specifically address how Judaism views environmentalism, nature and related issues; this is the focus of this chapter.
- A broad category of articles and a few books of relevance to the subject, but which do not address Judaism and environmentalism as one theme.

First the method used to identify the articles will be explained. Motives for Jewish interest in the field and important themes will then be reviewed.

Method

Systematic research of scholarly and essay literature has been conducted on various levels. One major source is the Index to Jewish Periodicals, an author-and-subject index to more than 100 English-language journals of general and scholarly interest. I have focused on the more important general Jewish journals, in which most of the articles appear that are closest to this study's subject.

Another source is the Rambi, a Hebrew index of articles on Jewish studies published by the Jewish National and University Library, and also available on the Internet. This has yielded some insightful articles, although few in number. There are several years for which no single article is listed under the heading 'Environment'. A further search was conducted at the National Library in Jerusalem.
The bibliography of some publications has yielded additional sources. Further articles have been obtained via other methods, such as conversations with scholars in related fields. A search via the Internet with various searching methods has yielded only marginal results.

Approximately 35 publications emerged from this search that specifically address Judaism's attitudes toward environmentalism.

No structured debate

The number of writings on environmentalism by contemporary Jewish writers is scant. This is worth underlining, as the field of environment has taken on major global interest, resulting in an ongoing stream of publications. Amongst the Jews, however, all that exists is a body of independent, mostly incidental writings.

This trickle of publications over a 30-year period relates to a large variety of issues, although several themes do sometimes recur. These include reactions to outsiders who have criticized Judaism or quotations from classical Jewish sources, whose potential connection to environmentalism is the most apparent.

Thus there is no structured Jewish debate on environmentalism. Jewish writers on the subject do not interact much with either their non-Jewish counterparts or their fellow Jews. The 'spoliation of nature' debate is among the few topics which has attracted several Jewish writers, but even here it can hardly be said that they enter into interactive polemics.

Encounters of different kinds

Indeed, Judaism's meeting with environmentalism leads to encounters of many different kinds. Occasionally, Jewish and non-Jewish writers from the environmentalist camp deal in their own ways with related problems. Sometimes similar conclusions are reached, though the reasoning is different. Issues of specific relevance to Judaism are occasionally mentioned in broad environmentalist discussions without consideration of their Jewish aspects.

While the two worlds frequently share paths and practical positions, they are sometimes also diametrically opposed. There are several frictions and potential conflicts between them.

More than 30 years after modern environmentalism's absorption into mainstream Western thinking, the process of consolidating Jewish thought on the environment is still at a very early stage. Most of its strategic beacons have yet to be lit. Its detailed topography will take a long time to develop.
The Jewish environmental discourse's origins

For a long time, the origin of the Jewish environmental discourse has determined the tone and focus of subsequent Jewish writings on the subject. These publications have often been apologetic. They began mainly as a reaction to accusations by Lynn White and others, who claim that Bible texts justify the destruction of nature.

Out of these attacks a new stereotype began to emerge: the Bible, the holy book of the Jews – later also integrated in their canon by Christianity – was the primary idea source of the spoliation of nature. From there, the – often implicit – accusation developed that Judaism did not care about the destruction of the ecosystem.

These accusations against Judaism led slowly to a number of, mainly American, Jewish reactions to these attacks. The writers looked for a variety of issues in classical Jewish sources which expressed a concern for the environment in a manner as similar as possible to those of modern environmentalism. These were presented as ‘the Jewish position on the environment’. However, this approach fell far short of an integrated view of the subject, as will emerge later in this study.

The focus of modern Jewish reactions to the accusations was on some individual aspects of the environment problem complex, rather than on Jewish positions on environmental matters in general. Paradoxically, had it not been for these attacks, Jewish interest in environmental matters would have been even smaller and would have started later.

Specific attacks on Judaism

The ‘spoliation of nature’ debate refers to how Judaism was initially drawn into the discussion on the causes of the deterioration of the ecosystem. In the late 1960s and early '70s, some lecturers and publicatons – mainly in America – claimed that Christianity and its Biblical roots had laid the ideological basis for the environmental crisis thousands of years ago.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one Biblical text which came under particular attack was Genesis 1:28: “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.’”

Referring to the Jewish roots of Christianity’s attitudes to this issue, the American historian Lynn White Jr. stated in 1967 that this verse expressed the dualism of man and nature, and God's will that man exploit nature for his benefit.

In his often-quoted article, The historical roots of our ecologic crisis, White apportioned particular blame for the present crisis to
medieval Christianity. He stated that Christianity – especially in its Western form – was the world's most anthropocentric religion, and concludes: "Hence we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man."

While White did not specifically analyze Judaism's attitudes with respect to the environment, there were a few passing references to Judaism and one accusation: "Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as nonrepetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve, to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image."  

Furthermore, historian Arnold Toynbee wrote that, while the Genesis 1:28 verse "in 1661 read like a blessing on the wealth of Abraham in children and livestock, in 1971 it reads like a license and an incentive for mechanization and pollution." 6

Even before the emergence of modern environmentalism as a mainstream movement, the American conservationist Aldo Leopold had already claimed that certain Biblical passages had a negative impact on the protection of the environment: "Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man, nor for us to reap from it the esthetic harvest it is, capable under science, of contributing to culture." 7

Further on he wrote: "In the biotic community, a parallel situation exists. Abraham knew exactly what the land was for: it was to drip milk and honey into Abraham's mouth. At the present moment, the assurance with which we regard this assumption is inverse to the degree of our education." 8

Jewish responses

Several Jewish responses to such criticism also refer to a New York Times article of 1 May, 1970 about a "Theology of Survival" conference in Claremont, California on Protestant approaches to pol-
lution. The article was entitled *Christianity Linked to Pollution.* However, its subtitle, ‘Scholars Cite Call for Man to Dominate Life’, clearly referred to the passage from the first chapter of the Bible. The article also mentioned that the “group of Protestant theologians asserted that any solution to the current environmental crisis would require major modification of current religious values.”

Eilon Schwartz, who has analyzed White’s and other attacks, summarized them as follows: “Both Judeo-Christian culture and Greek-Roman culture are said to have subscribed to dogmas which are either explicitly or implicitly antagonistic to nature. They assume a categorical distinction between the human being and the rest of the natural world, a distinction which devalues the rest of the nature while it elevates human worth.”

White has made a significant impact on determining religion’s image in the environmental debate. As his article has been quoted so often, his unsubstantiated statement about Judaism has been copied frequently and is still occasionally reproduced without either source of proof. So, for instance, ten years after White, the president of the European Institute of Ecology, biologist Jean-Marie Pelt, in a prize-winning book formulates it once again: “Judeo-Christianity marks, through its historic evolution, a break with nature: not feeling any obligations besides those towards God and his brothers, man undertook to liberate himself of natural constraints; but, he also found in this effort, consciously or not, an alibi for his inclination toward domination.”

More recently, Paehlke also presents the same thesis as if it no longer requires discussion. He refers to the myth of human dominance and then says: “Lynn White, Jr., and others have traced the roots of that myth back into the Judaeo-Christian past. Humanity has given itself dominion over the beasts of the field and over everything else on this planet. This arrogant self-appointment is rooted deep within our religious, philosophical, and ethical past.” Contributions to the spoliation of nature debate will be reviewed later in this chapter.

The question of animals in society

An attack of a different nature blamed Judaism for the denial of rights to animals. The 19th century philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer considered this “a barbarianism of Western society, of which the source lay in Judaism.”

J. David Bleich refers to this statement as follows: “Whether denial of rights to animals is, or is not, barbaric is a value judgment regarding which reasonable men may differ. Whether or not Judaism actually denies such rights to animals is a factual matter which is readily
discernible. The Bible abounds in passages which reflect concern for animal welfare. Concern for the welfare of animals is clearly regarded as the trait of a righteous person..." \(^16\)

The discussion on various aspects of the role of animals in society precedes mainstream environmentalism by many decades and is also, to some extent, outside it. Thus the Jewish reactions to this are also partly outside the mainstream debate on the compatibility of Judaism and environmentalism.

I. The Motives for Jewish Interest

In the mostly unstructured debate Jewish writers write from a variety of motives. They seem to share almost no common view on the subject of the environment other than the motivation to write about it, and the belief that it is a genuinely problematic issue. Jewish writers on the environment may be classified in six categories, according to their motives:

(i) those who feel the need to react to criticisms of Judaism;
(ii) those who consider the environment important to society as a whole and warranting comment from a Jewish point of view;
(iii) those who are confirmed environmentalists and seek to reconcile this with their Jewishness;
(iv) those who vehemently reject certain environmental concepts or attitudes;
(v) those who believe the environment is a useful tool for bringing Jews back into the fold of Judaism; and
(vi) those for whom nature has had a significant impact on their personal experience.

Several writers may fit into more than one of these categories.

The number of Jewish writers who explain their motives may be small, but, as will be seen, their range of viewpoints is wide: from catastrophists to 'contrarians'. The positions they take are strongly influenced by their perception of how serious environmental threats are. Few of them attempt to substantiate their assessment of the extent of the environmental crisis.

Reviewing these motives

The writers' motives will now be reviewed in more detail.

The first category of writers is drawn to the subject by the occasional criticism of Judaism by writers with an environmentalist interest. They cannot let such criticism pass unanswered and take offense
to attacks on the Bible and the Jewish world of thought. However, they usually agree that there are also serious environmental problems, and that Judaism should address them. This category includes writers such as Robert Gordis, Eric G. Freudentein, Jonathan Helfand, and Norman Lamm.

Lamm reacted to the criticisms with an attack on the Protestant clergymen who participated in the earlier-mentioned symposium on “The Theology of Survival” at the School of Theology in Claremont, California. He coined their conclusions “theologian masochism” and quoted the New York Times report on the conference: “Virtually all of the scholars agreed that the traditional Christian attitude toward nature had given sanction to exploitation of the environment by science and technology and thus contributed to air and water pollution, overpopulation, and other ecological threats”, and commented “In truth, such public ‘theological self-flagellation’ should occasion no surprise. After experiencing the convulsion of Radical Theology in the 1960s and the attempt to write the obituary for the Deity and debunk His best seller, there is nothing particularly startling about His deputies and interpreters asserting in the 1970s that religion (and in this context ‘Christianity’ is intended to be synonymous with Judaism, since the culprit is identified as the Bible and the ‘Judaeo-Christian tradition’) is responsible for our dirty planet, and that the solution requires another one of those ‘major modifications’ of current religious values.”

In a 1996 lecture Lamm cites the elimination of species from the earth as one example of our need to deal with complex environmental problems. He then comments, perhaps ironically: “As Jews we should be particularly sensitive to the disappearance of whole species, because one imperiled species of the family of Homo Sapiens is – the Jewish people...”

From there he moves to another implicit reason to refer to the subject, following up on his 1971 statements: “The ecology issue has inspired a new pollution problem – a fall-out of silliness in the theological environment. This breaks into two opposing tendencies – one highly critical of the Bible for purportedly supporting the relentless abuse of the natural environment, and the other co-opting the Bible as an uncritical ally of environmentalism.”

Albert Vorspan, Michael Wyschogrod and Steven Schwarzschild belong in the second category: those who consider the subject of environment important to society as a whole, and warranting comment from a Jewish point of view.

Albert Vorspan writes: “What we face today, it is now clear, is not merely another crisis. It is the stark question of survival. In
Deuteronomy, God enjoins man: ‘See, I have placed before you the blessing and the curse, life and death. So why should ye die, ye children of Israel? Therefore, choose life – choose life and live.’ Whether man, in our generation, has the will to choose life will determine the destiny of the human race.”  
Wyschogrod's driving motive for attention to the subject is also the destruction of nature. He writes about the harmful effects of some technological innovations which might initially be considered harmless. “The serious condition in which the natural world finds itself... is of world-wide interest and concerns all human beings. The more specific question of Judaism and its view of the natural world is also of great importance and it has had a deep impact on our thinking in the past several decades.”

Steven Schwarzschild refers to the same issue in a paradoxical way. He acknowledges that “no reasonable person” will fail to share concerns about dwindling natural resources, and makes a distinction between a dislike of nature and disrespect: “I am known to be at odds with nature. So I am. My dislike of nature goes deep: nonhuman nature, mountain ranges, wildernesses, tundra, even beautiful but unsettled landscapes strike me as opponents, which as the Bible commands (Genesis 1:28–30), I am to fill and conquer.”

Confirmed environmentalists

Among the confirmed environmentalists seeking ways to integrate this with Judaism, we find writers like Everett Gendler, Miryam Wyman, Jeremy Cohen, Jeremy Benstein and Eilon Schwartz. Miriam Wyman's attitude is explicit. She describes how she has tried to link her environmentalism to her Judaism: “I am a Jew and an environmentalist. For a long time I felt that these categories were at odds, or certainly not well integrated.”

For Ellen Bernstein, the founder of Shomrei Adamah, the contradiction does not seem to exist: “For me... ecology and religion – and Judaism in particular – teach the same thing. The underlying principles are interdependence and cycles. Ecology is totally about community, and Judaism is totally about community. Ecology is also about the past, about evolution. So is Judaism. Both teach us a sense of place, give us a sense of humility. They speak to the same chord inside of me.”

Two other confirmed environmentalists are somewhat self-critical. In the 1990s, Jeremy Cohen mentioned that, twenty years before, he had looked to Judaism to provide politically correct answers on ecology. Now he returned to an argument which had already been made by Helfand two decades earlier: that there is a risk that Jews,
trying to be fashionable, would over-emphasize the environment-friendly attitudes within Judaism. Lamm also draws attention to the fashionable character of environmentalism.

A similar feeling is also expressed by the environmentalist Jeremy Benstein: "Being a Jew with strong environmental concerns, one is often led to study the Sources with an eye for those particular teachings that are inspirational for – or at least compatible with – one’s own predetermined ‘green’ positions, and thus avoid challenging oneself with texts that don’t fit current environmental wisdom. All three sides – Judaism, environmentalism, and ourselves – suffer from this sort of superficial understanding of what it means to learn Torah – or to interact with any age-old wisdom tradition."

Other categories

The category of contrarians includes (albeit for different reasons) the American economist Julian Simon and the Israeli lawyer Michael Wigoda.

Arthur Waskow and Mordechai Liebling, both well-known personalities from an American Reconstructionist background, take yet another position. They consider the environment a major tool for interesting peripheral Jews in Judaism.

Reconstructionist rabbi Samuel Weintraub considers that a new ecological extension of the dietary laws may not only "enhance the observance of kashrut, but also heal the split that tragically, many Jews feel between their Jewish identity and their ethical or humanistic concerns. For both kashrut, and the modern ecology movement, are rooted in the religious quest for the purity of human origins. And the Jewish traditions of kashrut are rich enough to serve national Jewish survival, individual spiritual growth and planetary well-being."

Michael Lerner, editor of the bi-monthly Tikkun magazine, suggests the institution of a sabbatical year for all humanity – though he admits that his vision may be generations away. He claims that Shabbat and the sabbatical year will help humanity to build a new attitude toward the world. In the context of the Jewish ecological movement, Lerner also claims that “the Jewish community should be at the center of ecological campaigns, and should make eco-kosher a halakhic requirement.”

The last category consists of those for whom nature has been an important personal experience. This includes writers like Gendler and Wyschogrod, who are mentioned above. Remembering his childhood, Aubrey Rose writes: “My parents were pre-1914 immigrants to Britain from East Europe where my father, like many Jews, grew
up in the countryside. As a child I was fascinated to see how he
turned a few square yards of earth in the so-called garden of an East
End London slum into a home for flower, vegetables, chickens, even
a vine. The memory stayed with me so that gardens and flowers
have since held pride of place among my interests.”

II. The Main Themes Regarding Interaction

Few Jewish writers on the environment are specialists. The main
interests of most lie in other fields and their forays into this one may
be considered incidental. Due to the complexity of the subject, they
are not able to analyze fully Jewish attitudes to environmentalism. Thus
they tend to deal only with the more accessible aspects of the subject.

It is important to note, however, that they reveal significant differ­
ences in attitude. In order to analyze Jewish publications on environ­
mentalism, I have classified them by themes:

(i) those who refer to many aspects of environmental conscious­
ness in Judaism, stressing harmony between Judaism and
environmentalism.

(ii) those who state that the tensions between Judaism and envir­
onmentalism, emphasized by others, are over-rated;

(iii) those who express uneasiness over the relation between Juda­
ism and environmentalism, while still referring to a partial
synthesis;

(iv) those who stress tensions between environmentalism and Ju­
daism because of an association of ‘environmental’ thinking
with suspect movements and/or countries – even Nazism;

(v) those who refer to incompatibilities between environment­
alism and Judaism; and

(vi) those who consider major environmental concerns as unsub­
stantiated.

The publications falling within these categories are not sharply
defined by their authors; what is more, some may fit more than one
category.

(i) Writers who refer to many aspects of environmental con­
sciousness in Judaism, stressing harmony between Judaism and
environmentalism.

A. Principles from classical sources

Several Jewish writers base their works on principles derived from
classical Jewish sources, bringing illustrations from the Bible and
Talmud. They usually draw on texts that emphasize regard for nature
and natural resources. From these they derive conclusions with respect to Jewish attitudes toward the environment.

One theme which occurs regularly is that day-to-day Jewish practice is defined by halakhic commandments. Rather than focusing predominantly on Jewish philosophical approaches to the environment, which mainly have to be interpreted from religious literature, one can analyze Biblical commandments and rabbinical rulings on them. This enables one to draw conclusions from a concrete base. In the next chapter the main halakhic issues will be grouped and discussed in more detail.

Gordis adheres to this view, maintaining that one does not need to “resort to inference to arrive at the fundamental Jewish teaching of man’s relationship to his environment.” He explains that it is not in abstract maxims that man’s duties and rights toward the ecosystem should be defined, as these do not obligate a practical commitment.

He also cites a number of examples of the Jewish vision of nature, concluding that there are two fundamental halakhic concepts in the Bible which guide man’s attitude toward his surroundings.

Halakhic concepts of environmental relevance

Gordis suggests that the first, za’ar ba’alei hayyim, (Hebrew for ‘the pain of living creatures’) has a corollary: the feelings of living creatures should be respected, and man should act in a spirit of mercy. He includes within this the religious laws of kosher slaughtering (shehitah), which are designed to sustain a reverence of life – it is forbidden to eat blood, and the pain of the animal is minimized while slaughtered. He also notes that, before Noah, God did not permit man to eat meat.

The second principle Gordis refers to is bal tashhit (‘do not destroy’). While the Biblical injunction refers specifically to fruit trees in times of war, Talmudic sages expanded it to forbid the destruction or damaging of anything potentially useful to man.

Basing his conclusions on the laws concerning sabbatical and jubilee years, Gordis states that, as God is the Lord of the earth and all its natural resources, “any act of destruction offends against the property of God.” Helfand also refers to bal tashhit, but adds to it the principle yishuv ha-arez or yishuv ha-olam (‘settling the land’ or ‘earth’). He provides examples such as the stipulation that all trees may be placed on the altar except grape vines and olive trees; he then concludes that yishuv ha-arez “requires man to evaluate his acts and to direct his efforts toward creating a properly balanced environment suitable for human survival and development.”
In addition to \textit{bal tashhit}, Freudenstein considers environmentally important the Levite law stipulating that common land surrounding Levite cities could not be sold. It was also mandatory for sewage to be buried, rather than dumped in rivers or strewn across the countryside.\textsuperscript{47}

Drawing on Talmudic sources, Freudenstein discusses issues such as air pollution, preventing the extinction of animal species and the protection of plant varieties. To these he adds the Talmudic prohibition of raising goats and sheep in the cultivated areas of Palestine, due to the potential of these animals to cause damage to fields and plants.

David Shapiro notes that, in the Bible, man is often reminded of his responsibility to nature: “Even though man was converted into a conqueror, he was never to forget his original relationship to the earth, which was to work it and watch over it.”\textsuperscript{48} When Cain the farmer commits murder, it is the soil that punishes him by no longer yielding crops, forcing him to wander the earth ceaselessly. He also comments that in the time of Noah, when God decided to eliminate man from the face of the earth, His intention was not to destroy the earth itself.

Samuel Dresner and Byron Sherwin refer, \textit{inter alia}, to two issues which concern Jewish attitudes to inanimate objects “which at first reading may seem bizarre. According to the first of these laws, when a priest ascends the altar to offer a sacrifice, he should be careful to take short steps so as not to uncover himself toward the stones which comprise the steps leading to the altar, lest the stones become insulted or embarrassed (Exodus 20:23, Rashi). According to a second tradition, still practiced in thousands of homes each shabbat, the \textit{hallah} is covered while the \textit{Kiddush} is being recited. According to tradition, the reason for doing so is so that the \textit{hallah} should not be insulted or embarrassed that the blessing over the wine is said first i.e., before the blessing over the \textit{hallah}.”\textsuperscript{49}

The writers claim that the consideration the Jew has toward things should be transferred to human beings, and that “for Judaism, ecological concern alone is not enough. For Jewish tradition, ecology is intertwined with ethics.”\textsuperscript{50}

Besides referring to several of the issues mentioned above, Ehrenfeld and Bentley reflect on the environmental meaning of the Shabbat. For them, the restraints imposed by the Shabbat commandments limit man’s stewardship of the earth. They write, “It is... the Sabbath alone that can reconcile the Jewish attitude towards nature with the attitude of secular environmentalism, of holistic ecology, or of the non-anthropocentric religions such as Jainism.”\textsuperscript{51}
Yehudah Levi adds another principle to the list – damage to neighbors, which in the Bible is expressed as “love your fellow as yourself.” It is in the Halakha that this abstract principle is turned into practical rules.

In his book *The Quality of the Environment*, Nachum Rakover reviews ideological and legal aspects of the environment in classical Jewish sources. He discusses how they have referred to a broad range of environmental issues, including the protection of nature, environmental pollution, noise and landscape.

Bert Keimach argues that the Bible is the key to Israel’s modern ecology: in the ancient land of Israel, the central element in people’s lives was “the interrelationship of flora and fauna in their environment, and their acceptance that the whole wonder was set in place by a Supreme Being.”

Aryeh Gotfryd, a Canadian environmentalist active in the Habad community, sees the key for the Jewish attitude to the environment in a statement by Maimonides. The latter says that man should regard himself as equally balanced between merit and guilt. Every single act can tip the balance. In a global village, every single act can affect the world’s ecological state. “The bottom line in both natural science and Torah life is that in all human deeds, speech, and even thought, one is free to choose among alternative paths leading to personal failure and ecological disaster (G-d forbid) on one hand, or personal success and global well-being on the other.”

For the physicist Herman Branover, there is a special connection between religion and ecology. His view is that the educational system should be reorganized to create “a new environmental culture”, partly based on lessons from the religious point of view and moral education.

Thus these writers provide us with a number of basic viewpoints from which Jewish attitudes to environmental issues may be extrapolated.

B. A perspective of environmental concern

Other writers start out from a perspective of environmental concern. We have already mentioned Wyschogrod and Schwarzschild (who is difficult to classify). In this category we also find the ‘catastrophists’ Waskow and Liebling.

Mordechai Liebling writes: “We are literally confronted with the challenge posed in Deuteronomy, ‘Choose life or choose death.’ A radical change is required now, in the way we live, if we are to survive both as a civilization and as a species. The Jewish tradition contains teachings, values and practices that can point the way to this transformation.”
Liebling refers to tensions within Judaism. He confronts man’s anthropocentric attitude with “the notion that divinity is present in all aspects of creation, which is designed for all of us to share.” He concludes that, as Judaism has recognized this friction, “the Jewish laws seek to protect creation by putting limits on humanity’s egoism.”

Arthur Waskow claims that the North American Jewish community is an “endangered people” and that “both the earth and the Jewish people” are “in trouble”. He views the act of addressing the environmental crisis as a tool for bringing assimilated Jews back into the Jewish fold.

The proposed Jewish agenda

Several of the writers in the first sub-category above recognize in Judaism a potential to make an original contribution to environmental thinking; others feel an almost desperate need to make the two more compatible, as will be seen below.

“We need an understanding of theology that affirms the sanctity of the natural world,” writes Liebling. “We need an eco-kashrut, which searches for the divine relationship between what we eat and the environment.”

Liebling continues: “We need to take a hard look at the system that organizes our eating – kashrut – and transform that system into one that truly upholds the holiness of life. How much pollution does the production of this food incur? How much did the animal suffer? Was the production of this food an efficient use of the world’s available resources?”

Public and community policies

Waskow also proposes the development of an ‘eco-kosher’ mentality, where Jewish institutions assess their food and consumer purchases on the basis of the harm done to the environment by these products and services. In a broader sense, Waskow wishes to change the internal behavior of the Jewish community with regard to energy, automobiles, food conservation and investment.

In recent years, public policy-makers in the Western world have been searching for methods with which to assess the environmental impact of the production, consumption and disposal of different products. Liebling and Waskow allocate the term ‘kosher’ to some aspects of this life-cycle assessment methodology, but it has no basis at all in Jewish tradition.

In another article, Waskow considers proposing to the American nation the creation of new festivals based on the ‘environmentally respectful pause’ of Sabbath, the Feast of Tabernacles and Passover
(Shabbat, Sukkot and Pesach): “We might create national festivals—
one day a week, a month or a year—when highways and airports as well as factories and offices shut down and neighborhoods share foods, songs, crafts and stories and in grass-roots town meetings we explore protecting the earth.”

In 1992, Waskow claimed that the American Jewish community should take action in the sphere of public policy. “For example: we could decide that to prevent global warming we will actively campaign to reduce the use of oil and gasoline throughout North American society, and substitute the use of renewable energy. We could actively urge and assist Israel to make itself (and its unemployed new immigrant technologists and engineers) a world center for earth-sensitive technology, including solar heating and solar-electric automobiles.” He links this with the fact that the greatest threat of an anti-Israel bias in U.S. policy comes from the oil companies.

Adam Jackson is another catastrophist who considers that humanity is destroying the earth with such speed that the planet’s survival is at risk. For him, the solution to the environmental crisis lies in a radical change of diet, particularly in eating less meat. He considers this the single most important issue at the root of the environmental debate.

Judaism, nature and the Holocaust

Among those who find harmony between Judaism and the natural world, a unique position is held by Eric Katz, who defines himself as a secular environmental philosopher. He asks whether his work has “any relevance to an understanding of the evil of human genocide? Can the study of genocide teach us anything about the human-induced destruction of the natural world, what is sometimes called the process of ‘ecocide’?”

On a journey to the concentration camps in Eastern Europe, Katz set out to comprehend the extent of the German evil in the genocide of the Jews. He then discovered that the beauty of nature at the sites prevented him “from seeing, understanding, and feeling the true dimensions of the traces of the evil” confronting him.

Katz postulates that there is a relation between the environmental crisis and the Holocaust. The control of nature and of humanity are linked. Anthropocentrism means not only domination of nature, but also leads to the domination of other human beings. “Genocide and ecocide are similar in that we conceive of our victims as less than human, as outside the primary circle of value.”

He concludes that the continuity of the Jewish people is warranted because they pass on their traditions and culture to the next genera-
Humanity must pass on to its children the idea of the preservation of nature as part of its tradition. This will make people understand that man's power has to be controlled; this in turn will halt the destruction both of mankind and the natural environment.

When Katz derives a parallel from the Holocaust experience between domination over nature and nations, he is basically restating a concept inherent in Judaism. Halakha restrains control not only of nature - as will be seen in the next Chapter - but also of other human beings. The latter is expressed, for example, in the Halakhic laws with respect to the attitude to non-Jewish slaves or a Jew's marrying of female captives.

(ii) Writers who state that the tensions between Judaism and environmentalism, emphasized by others, are over-rated.

In another category of publications, it is argued that some of the tensions between Judaism and environmentalism mentioned by others are exaggerated. Many of these publications refer to the spoliation of nature accusations. Here we find several writers who were also quoted in the first category.

In 1970, Freudenstein elaborated on a series of passages from the Bible and the Talmud to "disprove the repeated statements in the popular press that the Judeo-Christian concept of Genesis 1:28 is the cause of the destruction of our environment by western civilization." 73

He considers that "it is man's misunderstanding of this Scriptural concept and his insensitivity to the Holy Writ's concern for God's nature that should be accused. The concern for the 'guarding of the garden' in which man has been placed by Providence is implicit in the Scriptural message. It has been made explicit in the Jewish tradition as formulated in the Biblical exegesis of the Rabbis and in the legal ordinances of the Talmud." 74

Gordis

In another early modern Jewish article on the subject, Gordis reacted to the implied accusation that Judaism was responsible for the spoliation of nature. Addressing the way in which Jews interpret the words 'and subdue it', Gordis writes, "The unsensational truth is that this passage in Genesis was never invoked in order to establish a principle of action by man vis-a-vis the environment. In fact, the Talmud, by a method of interpretation all its own, related 'and subdue it' to the first part of the sentence 'be fruitful and multiply'. It then declared that since subduing enemies in war is primarily a male
undertaking, the verb ‘subdue’ teaches that the obligation to propagate the human race falls upon the male rather than the female.” 75, 76

When Gordis published his book *Judaic Ethics for a Lawless World*, he repeated the point: “Judaism’s teachings about man’s duties and rights *vis-a-vis* his natural habitat are not to be sought in high-sounding phrases which obligate him to nothing concrete; rather, they will be found in specific areas of Jewish law and practice.” 77 He expanded on this, citing further examples that refute the claim that the philosophy to be found in Judaism favors the destruction of nature.

In a later article, Gordis analyzes some of the messages in the Book of Job, concluding that “Man is not the goal of creation and, therefore, not the master of the cosmos...” 78

For Monford Harris, Jews have indeed accepted uncritically that nature is an object, that it is impersonal and can be manipulated. He sees the need for a new Jewish approach to the natural world, based on the concept of the covenant. In his opinion, man has a “covenantal relationship, community, with the natural world. Because of this covenantal relationship man cannot ‘solely prevail’. 79 The covenant is the essence of Jewish particularity. In his opinion, it has a universal environmental message for mankind.

*Rabbi Kook*

Norman Solomon, editor of the British journal *Christian Jewish Relations*, quotes Rabbi Kook in his interpretation of Genesis 1:28. He concludes: “So perverse is it to understand ‘and rule over it’... as meaning ‘exploit and destroy’ (is that what people think of their rulers?) that many Christians take such interpretations as a deliberate attempt to besmirch Christianity and not a few Jews have read the discussions as an attempt to ‘blame the Jews’ for yet another disaster in Christendom.” 80

Solomon compares Christian and Jewish attitudes on the issue of stewardship or domination: “There has been discussion among Christian theologians as to whether the opening chapters of Genesis call on humans to act as the stewards and guardians of creation or to dominate and exploit it. There is no such discussion among Jewish theologians, to whom it has always been obvious that when Genesis states that Adam was placed in the garden ‘to till it and to care for it’ (2:15), it means just what it says. As Rabbi Kook put it: ‘No rational person can doubt that the Bible, when it commands people to ‘rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and all living things that move on the earth’, does not have in mind a cruel ruler who exploits his people and servants for his own will and desires – God forbid that such a detestable law of slavery (be attributed to God) who “is good to all and
his tender care rests upon all his creatures" (Psalms 145:9) and "the world is built on tender mercy" (Psalms 89:3)."

On the other hand, Rakover also refers to Rabbi Kook’s interpretation of ‘to rule’, but does not limit himself to environmentally-inclined traditions. He quotes the Spanish medieval commentator Nachmanides on verse 1:26, who says that man “will rule with strength the fish”, and explains that man will use his power to extract copper and iron from the earth. He interprets the phrase ‘to rule’ as the manner with which an owner rules (over) a slave.

Rakover favors keeping an appropriate proportion between protecting the environment and protecting man. That means inequality between man and animal, and man’s limited ownership of nature. Love for nature should not be put before love for man: “We should be careful not to reach the levels of those who were known as animal lovers, but did not refrain from doing the worst possible things to man.”

*Linguistic interpretation*

Meanwhile, describing the right that God has given man to use the environment without abusing it, lawyer Bernard Weissman gives a philological explanation of the verse in Genesis: “In fact... the Hebrew word for subdue, koveish, means not to plunder but to make useful, and the Hebrew word for dominion, r’du, implies not a dictatorship but a protectorship. God was giving humankind the right to use our environment but not to abuse it – to use it with care and foresight and restraint.”

Ehrenfeld and Bentley point out that the word ‘dominion’ obscures a certain facet of the original Hebrew. They quote Rashi on Genesis 1:26: “‘The Hebrew ‘yirdu’ connotes both ‘dominion’ (derived from radah) and ‘descent’ (derived from yarad): when man is worthy, he has dominion over the animal kingdom; when he is not, he descends below their level and the animals rule over him.’ Here is a whole dimension of meaning which cannot be conveyed by an English translation.”

Along similar lines, Jeremy Cohen searches for an interpretation of the grammatically ambivalent text. He interprets “and rule the fish of the sea” to mean “they will descend” or “they will be ruled” rather than “they will rule.”

J. Cohen devotes an entire book to that one Genesis verse. He systematically analyzes its Jewish and Christian interpretations over the centuries, and reaches the conclusion that pre-modern readers – both Jewish and Christian – “found in it relatively little bearing on the natural environment and its exploitation. Rather, God’s initial words to human
beings, especially those words mandating sexual reproduction, repeatedly raised the theological issue of divine covenant.”  

Basing his interpretation on ancient Jewish sources, he combines the two parts of the verse to explain its meaning: “Sexuality and the divine image are the defining characteristics of the human being, and their proper expression leads directly to the reward of dominion.”

In his book, J. Cohen reaches two conclusions relevant to our subject. The first is that there is no substance to the ecology-oriented thesis of White and others: their interpretation of the verse has few, if any, roots in pre-modern Judaism and Christianity. Secondly, the focus on classical interpretations of the verse concerned other matters: “God’s relationship with all humanity” and “the tension between that universal commitment and God’s election of a single people.”

Biblical texts can indeed be interpreted in many ways. Personal attitudes and Zeitgeist influence commentators, even if their general approach remains within the Jewish tradition.

Answering Toynbee

Jewish writers on this specific subject have devoted much greater attention to White than to Toynbee. The reactions to Toynbee, however, are much more forceful due to his many prior attacks on Judaism. Indeed, for many decades his publications have touched a raw nerve in Jews.

Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, the editor of the Jewish Spectator, writes: “Historian Arnold J. Toynbee, who is known for perspicacity in tracing most evils of Western society to the ‘Judaic’ legacy of Christianity, recently ‘discovered’ that the population explosion and ecological crisis derive from – the ‘Old Testament.’”

After quoting Toynbee’s claims and stating that Ian McHarg and Lynn White Jr. had anticipated him, she quotes Henlee H. Barnette’s The Church and the Ecological Crisis: “To hold that Genesis 1:28 provides a blank check for man to exploit nature is bad hermeneutics. When man is viewed from the perspective of the total teaching of the Bible, one gets a radically different view of him and his relation to nature.”

Similarly, Shapiro states: “In some recent writings, among them by the virulent anti-Jewish and anti-Israel Arnold Toynbee, we find the Bible blamed for man’s misuse of nature.” He then challenges the basic concept that paganism is more pro-nature than the Bible. “That pagan man has produced some of the greatest destroyers of nature is apparently ignored. Pagan man worshipped all forces of nature, the good and the bad. There was no more divinity attached to beneficence than to destructiveness. Aphrodite-Venus is a goddess
and Ares-Mars is a god. Krishna, the beneficent, and Shiva, the destroyer, are both gods. Why should paganism be more concerned with the preservation of nature than the Bible? Everything that we have stated in the course of this paper points in the very opposite direction.  

Saul Berman’s view is that Toynbee wants to revert to pagan, pre-Christian sacralization of nature, and doesn’t comprehend Jewish teaching on the subject of the environment. This means that Toynbee is willing “to abandon the entire moral progress which humanity has made under Jewish influence... What price environmentalism!”  

Aldo Leopold’s accusations, however, hardly drew Jewish reactions. Martin D. Yaffe, who analyzed his remarks on Abraham as well as some on Homer’s Odyssey, thought it possible that Leopold suffered from a “scholarly- or rather unscholarly – vice of presumptuousness, i.e. of simply extending, uncritically or unreflectively, habits of thought appropriate to one area of study headlong into other areas...”  

Be fruitful and multiply  

The main criticism of Genesis 1:28 was directed toward the second part of the sentence, which mentions “dominion of the earth.” Gordis elaborated on the first part “that the obligation to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ is fulfilled in rabbinic law when two children are born to a family. The only point at issue is the sex of the children: while the school of Shammai requires that there be two sons, the school of Hillel requires one son and one daughter.”  

Among modern Jewish writers, Dresner and Sherwin are strongly in favor of population control, saying that the world cannot support the present birthrate. They comment: “Neither war, disease nor the most severe famine of modern times decimated as many people of the world over as one racist madman did the Jews.”  

Despite this fact, the average Jewish birthrate is below the average birthrate in Western countries. They conclude: “When a Jew advocates population control, it is not a case of urging others to do what one will not do personally; it is obvious that Jews in western countries, no matter what the reasons, are presently limiting their offspring.”  

Novak’s challenge  

More pointed still than White’s challenge is that posed by David Novak. Discussing the threats linked to nuclear technology, he points out that contemporary threats are different from those that began with Cain, when people began to destroy others: “The epitome of human technology is not human destruction of other humans per se but, rather, the threat of humankind’s being destroyed by the tech-
technical environment of its own making." He adds: "Our concern now is with life before death much more than life after death." Noval's comments refer to an aspect of Genesis which White does not address: "For a Jewish theologian... the charge must be faced that the Hebraic doctrine of the all-powerful and authoritative God and the human person created in the image of this God is itself largely responsible for the stance toward the environment that has led to the threat of the destruction of humankind and its earthly dwelling."

Novak then investigates what theological answers classical Judaism offers the challenge to its tradition "whose doctrine of the essence of humanness is now judged to be the source of death." He finds these in the meaning of the Shabbat. Rest on Shabbat is equally valid for all creatures, including animals. The restraint which the Shabbat laws impose sends the moral message to mankind not to exploit the destructive capabilities of the technical environment that it has developed.

However, Louis Jacobs claims that Judaism has very little to say about contemporary environmental problems: "The problem is essentially a new one, caused by the proliferation of vast industries... It is futile, therefore, to expect any direct guidance from the Jewish tradition." He sums up his position by saying: "The problem today can only be tackled with the help of experts who can advise how to exercise sufficient control over what we do so as not to impoverish the world. Obviously, Judaism cannot have anything to say about how these experts should go about achieving their aims or even whether all their dire warnings are justified. But it is clear that Judaism affirms without reservation that the world is God's creation and that whoever helps to preserve it is doing God's work."

(iii) Writers who express uneasiness while still referring to a partial synthesis.

In 1991, Lawrence Troster, a member of the editorial board of Conservative Judaism, examined the possibility of reconciling Jewish and environmental positions. While basing his argument partly on that of White, he pointed out that, from the biocentric perspective of deep ecology, "God, as the transcendent creator, is also seen as separate from nature, thus desacralizing the environment and furthering humanity's alienation from nature. The solution, according to some biocentrists, lies in a return to a pantheistic conception of God, nature, and humanity." From an environmental perspective, Troster also states that "Jewish concern for the environment is fundamentally utilitarian: human beings must preserve, protect, and not squander the environment, in striving to attain the goal of creating
the Kingdom of God upon earth. Nature is precious as a creation of God; it is not sacred in and of itself.” 111

Despite this, however, he answers in the affirmative the question, “Can a Gaian, or biocentric approach be incorporated with a Jewish perspective on the environment?” 112, 113

In his 1994 Masters thesis on the subject of environmental ethics, E. Schwartz states that “there is something to be learned in the meeting between particularly Jewish and particularly modern ethical dilemmas as to the human responsibilities to the natural world.” 114 He argues that the comparison between the two “suggests that traditional Jewish categories allow us to speak a richer language of ethics than contemporary modern categories with regard to our duty to animals and the rest of nature, similar to a language of ethics emerging from the environmental critique of contemporary culture.” 115

Schwartz is one of the few Jewish writers to systematically review the tensions between Judaism and environmentalism in the specific fields of causing pain to animals and wanton destruction. Unlike most others, who view the subject on the basis of a limited number of (usually not dispassionately-selected) sources, Schwartz researches more methodically the wealth of Jewish tradition in these specific areas.

**Toward a more modest society**

Saul Berman states that Judaism indeed addresses “the relationship between persons and nature”. However, modern society’s central pre-occupation with environmentalist concerns should not replace Judaism. One should search instead to find elements of Judaism which refer to them.

According to Berman, the pollution caused by humanity does not threaten the earth: its main potential victim is humanity. If the latter were to be wiped off, part of God’s ‘experiment on the earth’ would have ended. Thus mankind has to be saved from itself.

Teaching the Torah constitutes just such a rescue. Judaism underlines that the entire world belongs to God. Love of God means that one should also protect the earth which is His property. Mankind must be re-educated toward humility and moderation. Berman sees in this more modest humanity the solution to environmental problems. 116 He counterposes the Hebrew term *bazalah* (saving) as the short-term rescue, with *anavah* (humility) as the road to long-term rescue. 117

**Judaism’s balanced view**

Bradley Shavit Artson can also be included among those who search for a partial synthesis of Judaism and environmentalism. He claims that there are three major ways to understand humanity’s
relationship with the earth: “As a machine to be used and discarded
at will; as a living organism of superior worth to humanity itself; or
somewhere in the middle – subject to the kind of human use that
is constrained by larger ethical considerations. All three viewpoints
can claim an ancient and venerable pedigree within Western civiliza­
tion and are quite incompatible.”

Artson rejects the mechanistic approach associated with Stoic
thinking and the philosophy of Descartes: “Seeing the earth as a big
bag of toys encourages rapacity and endangers human survival and
the balance of life on earth. The time has long passed when this was
an acceptable way to see our role in the world.” Similarly, he
rejects the concept that the earth is a living organism: “Who can say
whether or not the earth is better off with living things or without?
With mammals dominant rather than roaches? Perhaps the earth is
indifferent, or would even like an extra strip mall? Only people argue
about such things and seem to express strong preferences. The earth
just keeps circling the sun.”

Artson concludes that a balanced position between the two ex­
tremes is one of stewardship, which has its roots in religion. Man
uses the earth’s resources, acting as its guardian on behalf of God
– a charge to be executed responsibly.

This position shares with the mechanists the idea that morality can
only be determined from a human point of view, but desires to avoid
unnecessary suffering to other creatures. It also has something in
common with the Gaiaists, i.e., “a sense that holiness and wholeness
emerge from the wonder and the miracle of God’s world.” On the
other hand, those who accept the stewardship position, refuse “to
deify any part of creation, humanity included.”

While Michael Gillis criticizes the extremism of some of the ecolo­
gists’ claims, he considers that Judaism takes a balanced view. As
the main basis for this claim, he cites the commemoration of Creation
in the Shabbat laws. In his opinion, Shabbat does not “deny the
value of human creativity but puts it into perspective. It in essence
stands for a limited ecologism.”

(iv) Writers who stress tensions between environmentalism and
Judaism because of an association of ‘environmental’ thinking
with suspect movements and/or countries – even Nazism.

A. The link with National Socialism and paganism

A number of elements in modern environmentalism may evoke
associations with Nazism. Jewish publications have not dealt exten-
sively with the ideology behind the movement; and Jewish writers have written little – as Jews – about these associations. This needs to be seen in the context of the modest Jewish interest in environmentalism in general.

The link between environmentalism and Nazism has been analyzed by a few writers, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Among these, Robert Pois\textsuperscript{124} (Jewish) and Luc Ferry\textsuperscript{125} (non-Jewish) are worth noting.

Historian Simon Schama points out that the Reich’s Game Law was enacted by Goering, and “provided capital punishment for anyone with the temerity to kill an eagle. Vivisection was prohibited on pain of deportation or of being dispatched to a concentration camp where the medical staff was less fussy about operating on humans than hounds.” \textsuperscript{126}

J. David Bleich, who discusses the halakhic attitude to vegetarianism, links the Germans’ concern with animal welfare to their disregard for human beings. When discussing Rabbi Kook’s position on vegetarianism, he states: “In an insightful psychological observation, Rabbi Kook remarks that even individuals who are morally degenerate seek to channel their natural moral instincts in some direction. Frequently, they seek to give expression to moral drives by becoming particularly scrupulous with regard to some specific aspect of moral behavior. With almost prescient knowledge of future events, Rabbi Kook argues that, were vegetarianism to become the norm, people might become quite callous with regard to human welfare and human life and express their instinctive moral feelings in an exaggerated concern for animal welfare. These comments summon to mind the spectacle of Germans watching with equanimity while their Jewish neighbors were dispatched to crematoria and immediately thereafter turning their attention to the welfare of the household pets that had been left behind.” \textsuperscript{127}

To add a minor observation: Among the large number of discriminatory laws against the Jews in the pre-World War years, the Nazis included one forbidding the Jews to have courier pigeons.\textsuperscript{128}

Albert Cohen writes that he is not surprised that, in view of their closeness to animals, the Hitlerian ‘People of Nature’ detested ‘Israel, people of anti-nature’.\textsuperscript{129}

\textit{Modern nature religion}

The perceived (neo-) pagan or quasi-religious character of some environmentalist currents is also discussed by several Jewish writers. Wyschogrod differentiates between two ecological concepts. The first one he calls ‘lower ecology’, which involves “protecting human beings against the damage of technology”. The second one, ‘upper
ecology', is a "conviction about the holiness of nature", which reveals a biocentric character.

Wyschogrod sees a clear relation between 'upper ecology' and both Nazism and paganism.\textsuperscript{130} He points out that Hitler's thought was heavily influenced by evolutionary concepts: "The stronger kills the weaker, and it is through this process that nature moves ahead. Hitler, of course, did not invent this theory. It has deep roots in Nietzsche." \textsuperscript{131}

For Wyschogrod, evolutionary thinking is a modern nature religion as "the basic conflict between nature and history is the conflict between the moral and the natural".\textsuperscript{132} It is in the name of evolutionary thinking that the Nazis started to murder the handicapped, considering their lives 'worthless'. This policy preceded the murder of the Jews, and developed some of their techniques for mass destruction.

Walter Laqueur finds certain affinities between the Nazis and the Greens: "'Blind industrialization', 'materialist consumerism', soulless modern society and generally speaking the excesses of modern technology were strongly opposed by the Nazi party, which always stressed the need to return to nature, to a simpler and healthier life." \textsuperscript{133}

Michael Gillis also underlines the pagan aspects of environmentalism: "Genesis can be read as a polemic against the pagan world view in which creation is a product of mythical struggles between gods... Nature is infused with the power of the divine and gods are personifications of the forces of nature. In this view where there is power and there is life, there is divine power and divine life..." \textsuperscript{134}

Gillis continues: "This pagan view can give rise to worship of animals, the sea, the soil or whatever. People are subject to these divinities and can only seek harmony with them. Such a view is manifestly ecological... Ecologism is thus secular paganism." \textsuperscript{135} For Gillis, the philosophical roots of this are the pantheism of Spinoza and the Romantics, as well as the vitalism of Bergson, with which an ethical element is fused to care for the earth, regarded by some as a living being.

Judaism, on the other hand, has always opposed the power of nature and submission to it; it permits submission to God alone. It is for this reason that Judaism is irreconcilable with the type of environmentalism which sees in the planet the supreme being of ethical concern.

B. The German Green movement

Since the Holocaust any major German development has continued to evoke caution in both Israel and the Jewish Diaspora.\textsuperscript{136} The
emergence of radical movements in Germany, on both sides of the political spectrum, has been no exception to this.

Is there no parallel to be found between the fanaticism of some currents of the German Green movement (proponents of the purity of nature) and that of their grandfathers (proponents of the purity of race)? Has the Nazi concept of ‘blood and soil’ been transformed into ‘soil’ alone? At least the newer, Green phenomenon seems to be headed in a less dangerous direction.

The active German element in European Green politics, and the fact that environmentalism’s character is felt to lend itself easily to abuse, are potential causes for unease among Jews. This is exacerbated by the sometimes extreme anti-Israeli position of members of the German Greens or Green party members of the European Parliament from other nations.

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a specific policy for dealing with European neo-Fascists, but has no parallel policy with regard to Green parties. Israeli policy-makers do not seem to view the latter as a serious threat as they are considered democratic. In Austria, for example, some Israeli diplomats have viewed them positively as allies in combating neo-Fascism.

While anti-Zionism is clearly present in Green politics, classic anti-Semitism rarely emerges. Several writers argue, however, that anti-Zionism is a new, more socially palatable form of anti-Semitism, while the old one has not disappeared. As the Greens usually consider themselves progressive, one would also have to assess to what extent the anti-Zionist attitudes of some of them fit into the often-described anti-Zionist campaigns of the German New Left, which are said to “have an unequivocally anti-Semitic character”.

Anti-Semitism exists on the right as well as on the left of the European political spectrum, and is also linked to the fact that there is a long tradition in both of open anti-Semitism. In the specific and as-yet undeciphered case of the European Greens, it may be less true.

C. Animal rightists

The perceived partial recycling of pagan thoughts in modern environmentalism is most clearly revealed in some currents of the animal rights movement. While it is true that there is a difference between venerating animals and arguing that they are similar to man, for Judaism (among others) the latter argument is heresy.

Occasionally, anti-Semitism has been mentioned in the context of the American animal rights movement. One conflict which precedes modern environmentalism by many years is the subject of
Jewish ritual slaughter. Over the decades, Orthodox Jewry has made major efforts to defend itself against the accusations that ritual slaughter is cruel to animals. Attacks on this tradition have led to the banning of shehitah, for instance, in Switzerland, and in 1997 the issue was much debated in Denmark.

Zvi Shinover and Yitzchak Goldberg, both rabbis, consider the Torah’s views antithetical to those of the Greens. However, they seem to confuse animal rightists and environmentalists, stating that, for the Greens: “animals are in the center and the individual morality of man doesn’t interest them. According to the Torah, man and his morality are central, and only therefrom derives the obligation to deal with animals with mercy and not with cruelty.”

They consider Rabbi Kook’s writings to be prophetic of our times. They conclude: “To our regret, many of the Greens ‘engage in moral libertarianism, anti-Semitism, anarchism and other inferior behavior’. According to the words of the late Rabbi Kook, this is a result of the boundaries between man and animal becoming vague, which results from an exaggerated identification with the animal and a lack of acknowledgment of the spiritual superiority of man over the animal.”

(v) Writers who refer to incompatibilities between environmentalism and Judaism.

A. Deep ecology/neo-paganism

Wyschogrod states that “upper ecology is ‘nature religion’, primarily a religious attitude toward nature... In relationship to the divine, upper ecology usually expresses itself as polytheism, the theological view that there are many gods. These gods dwell within the forces of nature and are symbols of these forces.”

Among the writers studied, Wyschogrod is the one who most unequivocally equates currents of environmentalism with paganism. Still, he is torn between his understanding that it is dangerous – especially for Jews – to worship nature, and his fear that there is a relation between the desacralization of nature and its destruction. His ambivalence is so deep that he even wonders whether the prophets in the Bible “gave a really fair presentation of the point of view and theology of the worshippers of Baal and Ashteret.”

Michael Wigoda attacks environmentalism, basing his statements on Ferry’s publications. Wigoda states: “The environmental movements, and in particular its militant arms, such as Greenpeace, enjoy much public sympathy. Also, in the eyes of those who are not en-
gaged in active struggle, these movements enjoy esteem for their blessed work for humanity.

“It is my intention to show that, behind these pleasant ecological movements, hides an extreme neo-pagan ideology of which the dangers for humanity are greater than its usefulness. Opposed to that stands the environmental approach which draws from Judaic sources.”

In a milder tone, Meir Tamari touches on the same issue: “… this theme of the importance of nature and all its components, together with the beauty thereof, must not lead us to misunderstand or to read into Judaism things which are not there. It is easy in our involvement with environmental movements not to be aware of the element of idolatry in the form of the soul and the spirit of the wind or the water. Nature is only a creation of God’s so that none of the natural elements have a power or a value of their own, over and above that given to them by God, the Creator.”

One of the first Orthodox thinkers to address neo-pagan tendencies was Aharon Lichtenstein, head of the Alon Shvut Yeshiva in Israel. He views as idolatrous that part of the environmental movement which views nature as holy.

As quoted before, Lamm had referred to “co-opting the Bible as an uncritical ally of environmentalism.” He explains: “This latter trick is achieved by a strategy of putting their ideas into the mouth of the Bible. Thus, at the recent World Ecology Conference, it was maintained that all of nature is ‘sacred’. (Lamm declined to participate in the conference because of that statement.) “There is something atavistically pagan about this worship of the earth; the first verse of the Torah immediately establishes the incommensurability of Creator and creation when it tells us that God created the heavens and the earth.”

E. Schwartz points out that, within the modern environmental movement, a large number of writers show an interest in a rebirth of paganism and a rejection of monotheism. After referring to Lynn White’s observations, Schwartz states: “Some ecofeminists have called for a renewal of pagan customs of May day, celebrations of the moon, and witchcraft; one of the more radical biological theories of our day hold that the earth is a living organism, and has named her Gaia, the name of the Greek earth goddess.” In his view, Judaism is as ideologically opposed to neo-paganism today, just as it was opposed to paganism in Biblical times.

Without referring specifically to environmentalism, philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy confronts the reading of the Bible with contemporary paganism: “There is nothing common between the meditation
of a text which always specified the struggle against idolatry and the resurgence of the 'sacred' which sings us so often the refrain of modernity. It is even against these resurgences, these regressions, and somber romanticisms, which the latter sometimes affords itself, that there is value in betting on the Name and the cold shine of the flame where I put all my hope.”  

B. Environmentalism as a quasi-religion

There are also other reasons for Jewish concern. Modern environmentalism began to emerge when people in an increasingly valueless world started searching for new ideologies. Certain currents of environmentalism demonstrate elements of a non-formalized religion which help to fill the void in belief of secularized people. For example, one finds references to claims that the evils of pollution will turn against the polluters, as an act of a higher, albeit non-Divine, justice. The flooding of part of the world as a result of global warming is one example, but there are also others. The quasi-religious character of certain currents of environmentalism are difficult to assess; however, while indicators of this phenomenon are often weak, they should not be overlooked.

The ideological perception of nature as good and the city as bad is a rather oblique stereotype which many associate with environmentalism. This correlates with the frequent belief that what is natural is benign and what is man-made is potentially dangerous. Ideological attitudes in favor of recycling are another example of the seemingly semi-belief aspects of environmentalism. To what extent they are indeed pseudo-religious expressions remains an open question.

Lamm states: “Ecology as a movement sometimes acts as a quasi-religion, one which blinds itself to the cost that it imposes on society: severe restraints upon industry with resultant economic harm to society.” He then quotes the observation by John Tierney of the New York Times on “recycling as a transcendental experience.”

(vi) Writers who consider major environmental concerns as unsubstantiated.

The beliefs of Jewish writers concerning the environment overlap with many of those in general society. Thus we also find ‘contrarian’ voices among the Jewish writers, who consider the main environmental concerns as unsubstantiated.

Julian Simon claims that the world is becoming a better, rather than a worse, place for humans to live in: “By any agreed-upon
objective measures of human welfare, the people of the world as a whole, the citizens of the U.S., and Jews at large are better off now than before.”

“As an issue, the environment is about as distinctively Jewish as white bread,” writes Simon in a discussion with Waskow in the periodical *Moment*.

Another writer who does not believe that there is reason for alarm is Max Singer. He states that, while there is much hunger in the world, the percentage of hungry people has declined drastically. The main cause of famine is political rather than an excess of people in the world. With the possible exception of energy, very few natural resources are becoming scarcer, and their importance for the economies of various nations is continuously declining.

Singer sees three consecutive stages in the environmental development of nations: “... first poverty and natural environment, then development and environmental destruction, leading later to wealth and environmental cleanup... the risk of environmental catastrophe is low and probably getting lower (because we are increasing our responsibility to respond to environmental problems). The danger from people badly acting to other people is much greater than the danger from the environment.”

Singer states that one of Judaism’s strengths is the “discipline of expressing new ideas in terms of traditional sources. These values can help protect us from dangerous and unnecessary radical changes.”

In light of this, he considers that Jewish values are needed in areas other than “non-existing global crises, or... the declining amounts of hunger and poverty.”

III. Additional Themes

**Jews, cities, apologies**

Reference must also be made to one additional theme in some of the publications quoted above. Several writers refer, sometimes apologetically, to the urban character of the Jewish people as a possible explanation for their apparent lack of interest in the environment. The uneasy feeling about this aspect of Jewish Diaspora life mainly focused, in the past, on socio-economic realities, mingling anti-Semitic projections and acquired self-images.

More than 50 years before Jewish environmentalists, A.D. Gordon lamented the lack of contact with the natural world among contemporary Jews. Gordon’s almost messianic perception of the city versus nature stereotype is not far from the claim that Jews are not
linked to the soil.\textsuperscript{163} For many decades, this argument was connected to anti-Semitism. It was linked to accusations that Jews were predominantly city-dwellers and not agriculturalists.\textsuperscript{164}

Leading non-Jewish thinkers such as Max Weber and Werner Sombart have claimed that the Jewish isolation and ghettos were voluntary rather than imposed.\textsuperscript{165} The ongoing flow of accusations has also created Jewish self-images confirming this 'rootlessness'.\textsuperscript{166}

When discussing Judaism and environmentalism in 1970, Freudenstein considers that the conditions for a more active Jewish role in society exist today, including greater involvement in environmental matters. This contrasts with the past, when Jews who lived in urban ghettos had "to struggle for survival in a hostile world which they were powerless to influence."\textsuperscript{167} Aryeh Strikovsky takes a similar position, saying that "the love of Jews for nature was ruptured by 2000 years of harsh exile."\textsuperscript{168}

\textbf{Misjudging Hasidism}

In 1985 David Ehrenfeld and Philip Bentley wrote that "it is not surprising that most people, including most Jews, are unaware that Judaism was one of the first great environmental religions – that it speaks of humanity, land, and nature not in vague generalities but in great depth and detail and with a wisdom that seems to grow more appropriate and profound with each passing decade."

They give the reason for this lack of awareness: "During the past millennium or more of Jewish history, the Jews have become, partly by choice but mostly by force, an increasingly urban people. Hedged in by laws restricting land ownership, occupations, and dwelling places, especially in Christian Europe, they often found themselves living in crowded ghettos out of touch with the natural world.

"The Hasidic Jews, who more than any other group cling to this European Jewish ghetto culture of centuries past, are like the Amish in many respects, yet a people more cut off from nature and the natural world cannot be imagined. When one thinks of Jews one thinks of merchants, financiers, shopkeepers, peddlers, professional people, artists, intellectuals, and craftsmen; one does not usually think of farmers, fishermen, or naturalists although, of course, there have been exceptions."\textsuperscript{169}

However, Ehrenfeld and Bentley have been rather superficial or one-sided in their judgment of Hasidism. Lamm points out that it was the 'mitnaggedim', opponents of Hasidism, who had no relationship with nature, while Hasidism tells man to respect nature.\textsuperscript{170, 171}

In his evaluation of the question of whether man is an animal, Israeli philosopher Joseph Agassi carries out a mocking intellectual
exercise. He contrasts the motif of the non-Jew at ease in nature with that of the Jew ‘lost in the wilderness’, speculating on the imaginary attitudes of Konrad Lorenz and Sigmund Freud.

Basing his position on the ideas of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Yehudah Levi states that Halakha prevents a city’s unchecked expansion which can damage quality of life. He refers to the obligatory ‘green belt’ around the walled city that the Torah prescribed for the Levites. The laws of this belt “completely eliminate the possibility of the unchecked expansion of these cities, and thus, the formation of the monstrosity known as megalopolis.”

These above observations must be seen in the context of the specific history of the Jewish people and their perception of their surroundings. While the Zionist movement brought a more recent perspective to the issue, the roots of such views go back several millennia.

Conclusions

Despite the limited number of publications available on the subject of Judaism and environmentalism, they raise many motifs and themes. Together, these articles provide neither a balanced nor an integrated view of the subject. What emerges is a patchy understanding of the field, and an indication that there are many directions to be taken and much material for major scholarly work to be done.

Analysis of the secondary material, however, can provide much more than stimuli for further research in the field. An assessment of modern publications not only identifies a significant number of classical sources, but also hints at how many more insights may yet be obtained by analysis of the large body of classical Jewish literature. This will be referred to in the final chapter of this study.

Few Jewish writers have published work on the subject. For most of them, these were incidental forays into a largely alien field. One has to conclude that those who are scholars of Judaism, with interests elsewhere, do not wish to invest the effort necessary to obtain a structured view on the multifaceted, complex and confused world of environmentalism.

Selective arguments

To analyze Jewish attitudes to the environment in a more detailed way, a profound understanding of environmentalism is needed. As this is usually lacking, Jewish writers address the issue by bringing to it selective arguments only. In view of the variety of themes raised and the arguments used, however, one can conclude that within
Jewish classical sources there is a significant number of issues that are relevant to the subject of the environment.

The issues which have received attention in the modern publications at hand do not cover all the important aspects of the environmental discourse. No writer attempts to integrate all issues. We are almost at the beginning of the scholarly work in this field, even if more than 25 years have elapsed since the first Jewish articles on the subject were published.

Few specific issues have been addressed in detail. J. Cohen’s book on Genesis 1:28 is one exception. Benstein’s article on the text referring to learning and nature admiration from Mishnah Avot is another. Schwartz perhaps goes farthest in the field by reviewing the spoliation of nature debate, and discussing how classical Jewish sources have interpreted two of the most often quoted ‘environmental’ principles in the Bible.

A common base

The publications reviewed reveal a diversity of religious Jewish backgrounds, from Orthodox to Reconstructionist. There is a great gap between the extremes with regard to their views on the destruction of the ecosystem. There are vast differences in their attitudes toward nature. Is there anything, then, which all the Jewish writers do have in common in their attitudes toward environmentalism?

The answer is that there is some common ground. Despite all these divergences, there are limits which Jewish writers rarely exceed. Biocentricity as a Jewish concept seems so indefensible that, with the one exception of Troster, no other Jewish writer even approaches it. Wyschogrod’s ambivalence and Waskow’s activism, in search of “empathy for Mother Earth”, both stop far short of declaring nature holy.

Well before modern environmentalism entered the mainstream of Western thought, Abraham J. Heschel, Professor of Ethics and Mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary, calibrated the Jewish attitude to nature writing: “One of the great achievements of the prophets was the repudiation of nature as an object of adoration. They tried to teach us that neither nature’s beauty nor grandeur, neither power nor the state, neither money nor things of space are worthy of our supreme adoration, love, sacrifice, or self-dedication. Yet the desanctification of nature did not in any way bring about an alienation of nature. It brought man together with all things in a fellowship of praise. The Biblical man could say that he was ‘in league with the stones of the field’ (Job 5:23).”

One can imagine some Jewish environmentalist writers cringing at several aspects of Heschel’s statement. There is nothing in their
writing, however, to indicate that any of them would dare postulate that Jews should sanctify nature. Even Troster avoids saying that.\textsuperscript{179}

\textbf{A nucleus of common ground}

However diverse the Jewish writers' views may be, there seems to be a nucleus of common ground that a number of important environmental considerations and commandments already appear in the Bible, and are part of the Jewish heritage. No writer sides with Lynn White's accusations to see in the Bible a legitimization for nature's destruction.

The furthest Jewish writers go is to consider that the socio-economic conditions of Jews in certain areas in recent centuries may have made nature apparently irrelevant to them. The playing field of Jewish thought on environmentalism may be wide, but it has distinct boundaries. Both biocentricity and caring so little about nature as to destroy it for the pleasure of destruction are beyond the pale of almost everybody.

\textbf{Being influenced by fashion}

Quite a few modern Jewish writers have been influenced by the fashionable aspect of environmentalism, against which some others have issued warnings. When reading the classical material, it is often said that the positive Jewish attitude toward protection of nature and resources has as its main goal maintaining them for man rather than being an absolute, abstract concept.

For apologetic reasons, when discussing the current subject, several Jewish writers have often made eclectic use of quotations from classical Jewish sources. One of the publications which goes furthest in this is \textit{To Till and To Tend}.\textsuperscript{180} It should come as no surprise that this is a publication for Jewish environmental advocacy. If the writers do not sufficiently qualify the emphasis laid in these texts, the erroneous impression may be given that Judaism is in some way a precursor of modern environmentalism.

\textbf{Eliminating apologetics}

Developing a strategic Jewish environmental perspective on the current subject, combined with an understanding of modern environmentalism, is more appropriate than apologetics. Rather than choosing from the many traditional sources those which suits one's cause, one can gradually develop in increasing detail a coherent Jewish view on the subject. Modern environmentalism's achievements and flaws may then be looked at from the viewpoint of an ancient and consolidated value system.
When reviewing the modern Jewish literature on Judaism and environmentalism, one finds that several writers wish to reconcile Judaism with ideological environmentalism, and make great efforts to find a common denominator in the two approaches. One may wonder whether, in today’s fragmented world, there is a genuine Jewish need for such a reconciliation, or whether this is an expression of the personal needs of some Jewish individuals.

The current study shows the need for in-depth analysis of the development of Jewish thought on the subject over the past decades. As almost all writers only express themselves once, or – at most – a few times, on Jewish attitudes toward environmentalism, there is no ongoing thought process to study. To go even a little further: among the writers analyzed, most probably only a few very environmentally-committed ones have thought about the issue on an ongoing basis.

The limited interest of Orthodox Jewry

Several Orthodox writers have taken part in the debate in the past decades, although their voice has not been very strong. Why is it that so few Orthodox thinkers have studied environmentalist literature in a limited way, rather than systematically examining a powerful movement which occupies such a central place in public interest?

The Israeli religious parties also show an extremely scant interest in environmental issues, even compared to that of several other Israeli parties. (Contrary to the situation in many Western countries, Israeli political platforms do not consider the environment a priority issue.)

There are several possible reasons for this lack of attention. Orthodox Jews do not primarily associate ‘Jewish environmental laws’ with environmentalism, but rather with religion. These are seen within the concept of God’s giving the land of Israel to the Jews and setting the rules.

Furthermore, Orthodoxy is not very outward looking, and thus the problem is not high on its list of priorities. Also, considerable study is needed in order to reach a sound understanding of the confused and fragmented character of modern environmentalism. It is difficult to imagine this featuring centrally on the study agenda of Orthodox Jews, whose focus is on understanding Jewish teachings.

Another cogent reason may also be that large sectors of Orthodoxy are usually reluctant to deal with modern currents of thought and the abstract aspects of ideologies. This is partly because so many modern currents of thought turn out to be passing fads. Orthodox
Jewry claims to represent eternal values. These are challenged in a different way by the *Zeitgeist* in each generation. Often it is only when Orthodox Jewry is directly attacked and its basic values or rituals questioned that a position is defined and expressed.

Another factor worth mentioning in this context is that Orthodoxy often hesitates to associate Halakha with usefulness. This is true for environmental matters and others such as certain hygienic aspects of the dietary laws.

**Organized Jewish activism**

Whatever one's position may be on the ideological issues, the practical tensions between modern environmentalism and Judaism are very weak. Thus there is little need for Jews to interact with environmentalism. This lack of specific challenge confirms the situation that, for the worldwide Jewish community, environmentalism seems to be a problem of society in general, with only marginal aspects of specifically Jewish import.

The organized groups of Jewish activists who attempt to raise community interest in environmental issues are small and relatively isolated. They are unlikely to be able as yet to bring environmental issues to the forefront of the Jewish agenda.

There is little reason why the Jewish community in general would change its attitude toward Jewish environmentalist activism in the near future. It is probable that environmentalism will continue to permeate society at the level of practical activity. The more it becomes institutionalized, the less need there will be for specifically Jewish roles.

**Jewish political aspects**

However, the Jewish polity cannot ignore the debate on environmental issues. Relatively little attention is given to this issue in modern Jewish publications. It is in the political interest of Judaism to make its voice heard in major national and international discussions concerning matters on which the Jewish tradition has much to say. The alternative, remaining silent, fosters the perception that this is not so; unfortunately, silence is all too often the case. In order to be able to take positions, familiarity with the interaction of Judaism and environmentalism is necessary. This should provide a stimulus for further research in the field.

Another political consideration is that certain environmental policies are relevant to the Jewish people. Developments derived from the global warming debate will impact on world energy demand in the next century, and in turn on the economic position of several of Israel's oil- and gas-producing enemies.
Jewish concern for environmental matters will have to find its main expression in Jewish participation in the actions of society in general, taking a more responsible attitude toward the environment. To the extent that environmental issues have specific Jewish aspects, these will have to be dealt with mainly in the domain of the religious and scholarly world.

Over the past decades, Israel has become in many ways the dominant force within Judaism. This is so even if, at present, and particularly in the United States, several Jewish Diaspora leaders are attempting to make their communities less Israel-centered. The fact that Israel is not very advanced in its environmental policies means that there is little – if any – initiative there to inspire the Diaspora for specific action in this field. Nor is there an external incentive to do so.

The touching points of Judaism with modern environmentalism can also be seen within a broader framework. Through analysis, one not only learns about the issues concerned, but one can also gain perspective on a variety of indirectly related subjects. These include: the nature of the environmentalist debate, the *modus operandi* of contemporary Judaism and how modern society functions.

**The lack of balance**

Though the number of modern Jewish publications on the subject of this study is small, some conclusions can be drawn as to its focus. The one theme which recurs in most of the articles is the relevance of classical Jewish sources to contemporary environmental issues. This approach fits what seem to be the two major motives for writings in the field: the need to react to environmentalist criticism of Judaism and the Jewish environmentalist conviction that the Jewish community should be active in the environmental field.

This may also explain why there is little Jewish interest in other issues such as the relationship between environmentalism and paganism or Nazism. It does not fit the two motivations mentioned and is thus largely left to others to study.
Notes for Chapter Two

1 The name Rambi is an abbreviation of Reshimat Ma'amaram leMadda'e baYahadut. Hebrew.

2 This also emerged from the discussion at the Conference on Judaism and the Natural World, Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, February 22–24, 1998.

3 Genesis 1:28.


5 Ibid.

6 Arnold Toynbee, International Journal of Environmental Studies, 1971, as quoted in Jeremy Cohen, On Classical Judaism and Environmental Crisis, Tikkun, Vol. 5 No. 2, 1990, p. 74. Cohen adds that cultural geographer Clarence J. Glacken saw “the idea of man against nature in western thought” as a derivative of Genesis cosmogony; and landscape architect Ian L. McHarg “denounced the divine injunction with greater severity still”, as it provided the sanction to conquer nature and threaten God.


8 Ibid., p. 204.


10 Ibid.


12 Historian Elspeth Whitney writes: “Over the past 25 years, White's challenge to religion to produce a more environmentally sensitive theology has generated a vast body of material both critiquing and defending the ecological stance of the Judeo-Christian tradition. White's ideas have been a crucial element in what Roderick Nash has called the 'greening' of American religion... Almost immediately after its publication, 'Roots' became a standard feature of anthologies and textbooks for its use in college courses in environmental studies, the history of technology, and science, society, and technology... The great historian Arnold Toynbee paid White the ultimate compliment by appropriating his argument twice without acknowledgment. In 1972 Senator Alan Cranston quoted Lynn White to Congress and in 1980 the Vatican made St. Francis the official patron saint of the ecologists. Reprints of the article also appeared in numerous publications directed towards the general public ranging from The Boy Scout Handbook and The Sierra Club Bulletin to The Whole Earth Catalogue and The Environmental Handbook and from the hippie newsletter, The Oracle, to the more staid Horizon Magazine. In 1970 both Time magazine and The New York Times featured reprisals of White’s essays... Overall the thesis in 'Roots' has been repeated, reprinted and criticized in over two hundred books and articles by historians, environmentalists and philosophers of technology between 1967 and the present, and its central ideas have become so embedded in the ongoing discussions of the cultural context of environmental issues that they have been described as part of environmental 'folklore’.” Elspeth Whitney, Lynn White, Ecotheology, and History. Environmental Ethics, Summer, 1993, pp. 151–169.


17 Robert Gordis, of the Jewish Theological Seminary, was one of the first Jewish thinkers to address the environmental issue for this reason, writing on Judaism and the spoliation of nature in 1971. Judaism and the Spoliation of Nature. *Congress Biweekly*, April 2, 1971, pp. 9–12. In a 1976 article, he pondered, "What is it about the Bible that makes it fair game for hunting at all times and seasons? It is a sport popular with conservatives, liberals, and radicals alike... All honor to the ecologists and the liberationists! But why distort the content and the spirit of the Bible, which still remains the great charter of human dignity and liberty. As an ancient Sage said, 'Into the well from which you drink, do not cast stones.' " The Bible As Whipping-Boy. *Midstream*, October, 1976, pp. 43, 46. When he returned to the subject in 1986, he explained why it should be of interest to explore the insights and attitudes on ecology in the biblical and post-biblical tradition. One reason was the importance of the issues involved in the ecological threat - contamination and pollution; another was the misunderstanding of the Jewish teachings in this field. Robert Gordis, Judaic Ethics For a Lawless World. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1986, p. 113.

18 Eric G. Freudenstein, also writing early on the subject, considers that the conditions exist today for a more active Jewish role in society, including involvement in the environment. This is in contrast to the past: "In modern times, the active participation of Jews in the Diaspora, in all phases of the public welfare, the reclamation of the land in the State of Israel and a general awareness of the problems of ecology, have created a new climate for a deeper understanding and acceptance of the concern for the environment evinced by the Jewish tradition. Conditions are now propitious for the ancient Jewish message of *bal tashchit* to be once again proclaimed loud and clear to all men of goodwill." Eric G. Freudenstein, Ecology and the Jewish Tradition. *Judaism*, Vol. 19 No. 4, Fall, 1970, p. 414.

19 In 1971, doctoral student Jonathan Helfand wrote an article on environmental texts in Jewish sources, motivated both by the challenge of the ecological crisis and by articles by earlier Jewish writers that "reflect a growing need to examine Judaism in the context of modern life and problems and to apply its teachings to great issues facing mankind." Jonathan I. Helfand, Ecology and the Jewish Tradition: A Postscript. *Judaism*, Vol. 20 No. 3, Summer, 1971, p. 330.

20 In 1996, Lamm confirmed once again his stand from the early 1970s, and declared that Judaism must relate to the ecological crisis: "It is widely accepted – ever since Rachel Carson's Silent Spring – that there is indeed a very real problem that must be attended to." Norman Lamm, A Jewish View of the Environment and Ecology. Lecture given at the Technion, Haifa, Israel, October 7, 1996.


22 Lamm, Technion lecture, op. cit.

23 Ibid.


Judaism, Environmentalism and the Environment

27 Everett Gendler recalls his enjoyment of nature in the city of his birth, Chariton, Iowa and during his adolescence in Des Moines, even though "in retrospect... [only] until after ordination from seminary and a period of time spent in the valley of Mexico did nature as such come more fully to my awareness. The realization of this awareness took time, its relation to my religious outlook more time still... From this, then, the re-evaluation of official Judaism, and the pained perception of its present plight: sea-sited synagogues with sea-views bricked over! tree-filled lots with windowless sanctuaries! hill-placed chapels opaque to sunsets! the astonishing indifference to natural surroundings!" Gendler then asks, "Was Judaism always this way? I very much doubt it." Everett Gendler, On the Judaism of Nature. In: James A. Sleeper & Alan L. Mintz, eds., The New Jews. New York: Vintage Books, 1971, pp. 233-234.

28 "In graduate school, studying the roots of our environmental crisis, I saw many allegations stating that the Bible implies human beings were meant to dominate and exploit the earth, that, in fact, all of creation was intended for human use. This anthropocentric perspective, whether rooted in Judaism or not, has been a pervasive, insidious problem; it probably is at the heart of our environmental crisis. While the role of the 'Judeo-Christian' tradition (a phrase that continues to trouble me) was being debated in my academic circles, I was looking at the world around me. My Jewish friends found my choice of profession interesting and curious. What I found curious was the lack of debate about environmental issues in the Jewish community, the apparent lack of commitment (and accompanying responsibility) toward causes that were not specifically Jewish, the lack of concern for the capacity of the world to continue to sustain and nourish us, and the small number of Jews professionally involved in the environment. All environmental problems are human problems. And I have always felt that human problems are Jewish problems because of our tradition's mandate for social justice, and the Jewish belief in the ability of human beings to improve themselves and to create a better world...

"I began to search for connections between my Judaism and my environmentalism, casually at first. Over the past ten years, my search has been more systematic. I began to do for environmental matters what Jews customarily do for all kinds of issues - look to our traditions. Looking with an 'environmental' eye, I found - as I might have expected - laws, precepts, rules and regulations, recommendations and precedents in the Torah and commentaries which tell us how to take care of the earth. They speak of attitudes and obligations toward the land and toward other living beings; they delineate our responsibility to care for the earth which sustains us, and our obligation to be involved in the ongoing work of creation. I have been finding in the tapestry of Judaism significant strands which were woven together in ages past and which somehow have become unraveled in our lives." Miriam Wyman, Derekh Eretz: A Personal Exploration. Conservative Judaism, Fall, 1991, pp. 5-6.


30 Elsewhere, Bernstein writes: "I have always been enchanted by place - by all kinds of places. My greatest pleasures come from exploring different environments. Gardens, overgrown corner lots, cemeteries, polluted rivers, and old, abandoned mills all find their way into my heart.

"So it is no surprise that when I first began to explore the bible for a spiritual direction, it was the places in it that spoke to me: the Garden of Eden, the Red Sea, the Sinai, the Jordan River, the Temple on Mount Zion, the waters of Babylon." Ellen Bernstein, ed., Ecology & the Jewish Spirit: Where Nature and the Sacred Meet. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998, p. 17.
A revealing comment on the need of certain Jewish currents always to be politically correct is made in the biographical note on Philip J. Bentley. "He has been a Jewish environmentalist for so long that when he first raised the subject in rabbinical school, he was told, 'The environment? That's just a distraction from the real issue – Vietnam.'" Ibid., p. 269.

Helfand issues a warning which further explains his motives for reacting to this subject: "When dealing with a current topic such as ecology, one must be particularly careful to resist the temptation to jump hastily on the bandwagon with a 'trendy' interpretation or presentation of alleged Jewish thought, simply for the sake of being 'au courant'. The principal victims of such superficial me-tooism are the Jewish tradition which it purports to represent and the halacha-conscious Jew who is genuinely concerned with that tradition. When faced with a steady stream of assorted homilies and shallow analyses on 'timely topics', the halacha-conscious Jew is repelled." Helfand, op. cit., pp. 330-331.

"Twenty years ago this spring, I worked as a high-school intern in the national offices of a Jewish youth organization. My job involved the preparation of study material on the subject of Judaism and ecology. As politicians, theologians, students, writers, and others were hastening to identify with environmental concern in general and with the ecology movement in particular, we felt that we too had to take a stand. Judaism, we presumed, had to address the fundamental questions of ecology; and, more importantly, it had to prove compatible with the correct, desired answers (just as it had to guide us properly with regard to the war in Vietnam and the civil rights movement)." Cohen then refers to the "harsh and popular indictment of Judaism's biblical foundations, which were blamed for our typically Western exploitative attitude to nature" and states that he felt that there was a Jewish answer to the accusations: "Surely, we believed, along with numerous theologians who took up the cause of the Bible, surely Judaism could not have abandoned the environment and its advocates in our hour of collective need. It was inconceivable that biblical and rabbinic literature could have left us disarmed and alienated as the decade of the sixties gave way, at times painfully, to that of the '70s." J. Cohen, op. cit., p. 74.

"The environmentalist movement, like all other high-minded and serious efforts to improve the lot of mankind or the world as such, tends to become overly fashionable, and falls into the hands of moralizers and cause-seekers who do not fear exaggeration or one-sidedness. As a result, there is developing a reaction against the alleged excesses of the movement..." Lamm, Technion lecture, op. cit.


In the public discussion at the 1998 Harvard Conference on Judaism and the Natural World, Daniel Swartz, Associate Director of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, mentioned that, from his personal experience, the issue of Jewish environmentalism has raised general interest in Judaism in Jews who are otherwise remote from the tradition.

Weintraub asks: "Are highly processed or refined foods kosher? Can we, for example, label as kosher the tomato sauce that our children eat in school cafeterias, even if it contains no meat or lard, when, as one study recently found, the actual vegetable content of some sauces is as low as eight percent? Further, since kasbrut is concerned
with the purity of our food production, as well as consumption, these classes should consider the social and natural contexts of our food manufacture. Should a Jew eat lettuce picked by California migrant workers with canisters of toxic organophosphates strung from their shoulders? We should at the very least question the kashrut of food that is the product of child or other oppressed labor, or the cause of natural perdition, as is much cash-cropping and cattle overgrazing. Nor would this concern be new to Jewish tradition, which has since the writing of Leviticus forbidden the enjoyment of the fruits of oppression.” Samuel H. Weintraub, The Spiritual Ecology of Kashrut. In: To Till and To Tend, op. cit., p. 24. Reprinted from The Reconstructionist, Winter 1991/1992, pp. 12–14.

Lerner quotes Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi’s suggestion that “we should add a new code of eco-kosher practices to our practice of kashrut. Products that are grown using earth-destroying pesticides may not be eco-kosher. Newsprint made by chopping down an ancient and irreplaceable forest may not be eco-kosher. Products that are made out of irreplaceable natural resources may not be eco-kosher. Institutions that pollute the environment or use excessive amounts of fuel may not be eco-kosher. Investments in companies that pollute the environment or are otherwise ecologically insensitive may not be eco-kosher.” Michael Lerner, Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation. New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1994, p. 336.


Ibid.

Deuteronomy 20:19.


Helfand, op. cit., p. 335.

Freudenstein, op. cit., p. 411.

Shapiro, op. cit., p. 28.


Ibid.


Leviticus 19:18.


Bert Keimach, The Bible As a Key to Modern Ecology in Israel. L’Eylah, No. 34, September 1992, pp. 8–11.

This idea originates in a baraita: “Man should always consider himself to be half guilty and half innocent. When he follows a commandment he is fortunate to have put himself on the side of being innocent. If he committed a transgression it is bad that he has put himself on the side of guilt. R. Elazar son of R. Simon says that this applies to the world as a whole.” Bavli Kiddushin 40b.


Branover sees three components here, the first one being that “damaging the environment transgresses the Divine Plan”. In his opinion, “from a religious perspective,
harming the environment is worse than inconveniencing or endangering other members of society because it spoils G-d's creation... Thirdly, we can extract valuable knowledge from how traditional religious education engenders moral and ethical values in the personality of the individual. This knowledge could be an incomparable aid to those who wish to design and enact a system of true ecological education." Herman Branover, Towards Environmental Consciousness. B'Or haTorah. No. 10, 1997–1998, pp. 14–15.


"Why would these disaffected Jews be interested? More and more Jews, mostly younger, are putting more and more thought and energy into protecting the environment. The young, especially, are worried that current air and water pollution may dose them with cancer 15 or 20 years from now, that depletion of the ozone layer may shatter the food chain in ways that may take decades to emerge and will be catastrophic in effect, that global warming may happen inch by inch and in their lifetimes will drown the great seaports and scorch the Great Plains mile by mile. "Most Jews who feel this way find secular organizations and non-Jewish religious communities convenient frameworks for their action. When they join such groups to 'save the earth', willy-nilly they withdraw their energy from Jewish life. How can we engage the desire and action of Jews to avert world environmental disaster in a way that would strengthen the Jewish community rather than divert energy from it?" Arthur Waskow, The Greening of Judaism. Moment, June 1992, p. 46.

Ibid., op. cit.

Ibid., p. 8.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 8.


Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid.

Freudenstein, op. cit., p. 413.

Ibid. Freudenstein adds: "One observation however, may be in order. Franz Oppenheimer, the social scientist, once remarked that it is not important for history to record who said something first, but rather who said something first in such a way that the world paid attention. Ancient Jewish tradition stressed the maintenance of the biosphere over three and one half thousand years ago, but during the centuries of the Diaspora, divorced from the land, the message of our venerable tradition became weak... Nor was the destruction of the world’s natural assets as yet a threat to human existence." Ibid.


See Bavli Yebamot 65b.


Ibid.
82 1195–1270.
84 Rakover op. cit., p. 18.
87 J. Cohen, op. cit., p. 75.
90 Ibid., p. 75.
91 J. Cohen, Be Fertile and Increase, op. cit., p. 6.
92 In the 1930s, when people were less aware of technology's ambiguities, Benno Jacob, a German rabbi, interpreted the term 'conquer' to mean 'trampling', i.e., that man had been given unlimited dominion over the earth. "Thus no activity, including making holes or digging down mountains, drying out or diversion of rivers can be considered a God-adverse violation. Man can only sin by immoral acts on the earth by which he desecrates her and which she senses." Benno Jacob, *Das Erste Buch der Tora Genesis: Übersetzt und Erklärt*. Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1934, p. 61. German.
93 Well before Toynbee's attacks on perceived Jewish attitudes toward population control, Israeli historian Chaim Hillel Ben Sasson had said of Toynbee's work: "When I started to read Toynbee, I noticed his hatred against the survival of Judaism. I think that he is one of our greatest ideological enemies." Ben Sasson says that, while Christianity is a synthesis of Greek and Jewish thinking, Toynbee wants to remove the Jewish element from Christianity and instead of it, bring in an element from the Far East. On the one hand, he is very Christian, on the other – he is very anti-Jewish. He would prefer a kind of marriage of Christianity and Buddhism. The difficulty with him is that he is never totally incorrect in what he says. Like an impressionist painter, he puts the wrong emphasis. For a certain percentage, all of it is true." Manfred Gerstenfeld, Interview with Chaim Hillel Ben Sasson. *Nieuw Israëlisch Weekblad*, May 17, 1963. Dutch.
97 Ibid., pp. 42–3.
100 Gordis, Judaism and the Spoliation of Nature, op. cit., p. 9, quoting Mishnah *Yebamot* 6:6; *Shulhan Arukh* Yoreh Deah 1:5.
However, one should not ignore that, today, some sectors of the Jewish community and environmentalism do have different views on the 'be fruitful and multiply' issue. For the Orthodox, having many children is considered positive, an attitude with roots in the mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust. Environmentalism and part of the Jewish people may be on opposing ends of the argument here. Those who talk so much about ethics, however, cannot expect the Jewish people to give major consideration to the views of parts of the very Western society whose leaders—only a few decades ago—actively destroyed the Jews, assisted in the process, or passively observed it.

Dresner & Sherwin, op. cit., p. 138.


Ibid., p. 151.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid., p. 121.


Ibid., p. 17.

Ibid., p. 20.

Troster states that Jews ought to think of God as both being and becoming a panentheistic deity. He writes, "Panentheism assumes that the universe and everything in it is part of God, and that God is also more than the universe... Gaia is part of God, but not all of God. Therefore, the immanence of God is displayed in all of nature... and we are part of Gaia and thus part of God. But God is more than nature, and also stands outside of nature as Creator. We are bound to this nature and bound to the laws of nature and Gaia, but we are also the 'brain cells' of Gaia. And as the zelem (image) of God, we have the mandate for the cognitive anticipation of Gaia's needs, which are ultimately our own needs." Ibid., p. 24.


Ibid., p. 2. In another article, Schwartz wishes to foster a dialog from within Jewish tradition, which may lead "to a reawakening of the natural world as a central category in our Jewish understanding of what we mean by both the human and the Divine." He hopes to influence the direction of future writing in this field by pointing to issues that need further investigation: "My not-so-hidden agenda is to reassert the Jewish perspective in the encounter between Judaism and the environment, with the conviction that a Jewish contribution to the growing debate on environmental ethics can only come from a response strongly rooted in all the ambivalence and ambiguities of the Jewish relationship to the natural world. Perhaps even more importantly, I believe that the reevaluation by the environmental movement of our modern cultural relationship to the natural world, which challenges some of the basic values of our modern culture, deeply confronts ingrained trends in Jewish thought, as well." Eilon Schwartz, Judaism and Nature: Theological and Moral Issues to Consider While Renegotiating a Jewish Relationship to the Natural World. Judaism, Vol. 44 No. 4, Fall, 1995, p. 438.

"We need to devote ourselves to the elimination of material excess in our lives, in our homes, in our offices, in what we eat and in the technology which we utilize so wastefully. Even our waste is wastefully disposed of. Only such reorientation, in which material excess is replaced with deep spiritual awareness of the ultimate partnership between humanity and the earth in the achievement of God's goals, can lay the
foundation for a new and more healthy relationship between us and our environment.”

Berman, op. cit., p. 4.


119 Ibid., p. 21.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid.


124 Robert Pois argues that both Judaism and Christianity are based on the premise that “being made in the image of the divine, humans must be seen as being ontologically superior to nature” and that, according to Nazism, any anthropocentric views must be rejected. Pois notes that Hitler emphasized the importance of recognizing nature’s power over man, and declared in a recorded conversation: “At the end of the last century the progress of science and technique led liberalism astray into proclaiming man’s mastery over nature and announcing that he would soon have dominion over space. But a simple storm is enough—and everything collapses like a pack of cards.” Pois adds: “Hitler sounded remarkably like contemporary environmentalists who, with ample reason, proclaim that a sharp-tempered Mother Nature, weary of pitiful man’s toying with her inflexible laws, will eventually avenge herself upon those who, at least since the onset of industrialization, have tried her patience.” Robert Pois, National Socialism and the Religion of Nature. London: Croom Helm, 1986, pp. 37, 42. Pois continues, “The responsibilities inherent in [man’s] so elevated but uncomfortable a position, i.e., ensconced somewhere between the natural world and the Kingdom of God must be great indeed and, as is to be expected, humans have rebelled against this demanding role. Indeed, according to some observers, such neo-pagan revivals as the search for Aryan roots and, most importantly, National Socialism, can be viewed as being in large measure rebellions of this nature.” Ibid., p. 37.

125 This argument is developed by the French philosopher Luc Ferry, who contrasts the Nazis’ love of animals and nature with their hatred of certain humans. He writes “There is nothing accidental in the fact that we owe to the Nazi regime until today the two most elaborate types of legislation which humanity has known on the subject of the protection of nature and animals.” This is a reference to the Tierschuetzgesetz – the law for the protection of animals – of 1933, the Reichsjagdgesetz (the Reich’s Game Law), which limits hunting, of 1934 and the “monument of modern ecology, which is the law on the protection of nature (Reichsnaturschuetzgesetz).” Ferry draws attention to the strange fact that one finds no mention of these laws in contemporary environmental literature – other than some marginal observations by opponents of the Greens: these laws were the first in the world “to reconcile a sizable ecological project with the desire for a real political intervention.” Luc Ferry, Le nouvel ordre ecologique. Paris: Grasset, 1992, p. 54. French.


“Listen to Hitler and his men speaking. Listen how Hess’s deputy affirms that Germany only wants to obey the laws of nature. Listen how Hitler makes himself tender toward the animals which he declares his brothers, listen how he says to Rauschning that nature is cruel and that we have to be cruel like it. Listen how he says again to this Rauschning, textually, that the Jew is much farther removed from the animal than the Aryan, that the Jew is a stranger in the natural order, that the Jew is a being outside nature. ‘Oh how much the enemy knows his enemy!’ ” Albert Cohen, *Carnets* 1978. Paris: Gallimard, 1979, p. 136. French.

Wyschogrod, op. cit.

Wyschogrod adds: “For Nietzsche – for whom Christianity was just a form of Judaism, perhaps even a degenerate one – Jewish morality was a slave morality and thus anti-evolutionary. Evolutionary morality is the right of the stronger to destroy the weaker. Nature wants the weak to perish. The weak contribute to the march of evolution by perishing; and when they refuse to perish, then the weaker have triumphed over the stronger. This is the reversal of evolution and it occurs through slave morality, which is the brainwashing of the strong by the weak in order to inhibit them from exercising their strength... The weak invent biblical prophetic morality which speaks about protecting the widow and the orphan, the poor, the disadvantaged, all those who cannot care for themselves. Evolution is thus stopped in its tracks and the weak proliferate.” Ibid.

Ibid.


Gillis, op. cit.

Ibid.

This became particularly clear at the time of German unification. Official Israeli reactions were very negative. Prime Minister Shamir said, “A strong and united Germany may perhaps try again to destroy the Jewish People.” Industry Minister Ariel Sharon said, “A united Germany embodies for the free world in general, and for Jews in particular, major dangers. We should not forget what the Germans did to us while they were united.” Michael Wolffsohn, In: Guenter Trautmann, *Die Hasslichen Deutschen?* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991, p. 76. German.

This issue is discussed by both Elisabeth Badinter and Anna Bramwell. French philosopher and writer Badinter sees a reaction to Nazi Germany in some attitudes displayed by the German Greens: “The slogan of the German Greens ‘better red than dead’ which was so fashionable in the years 1970–1980 can only be explained by the antecedents of those... who exclaimed it. Children or grandchildren of hangmen they were more than anything afraid of repeating the mistakes of their fathers.” Elisabeth Badinter, *XY de L’identité Masculine*. Paris: Odile Jacob, 1992, p. 228. French.

Bramwell points out that a Freudian psychiatrist, Jannine Chasseguet-Smirgel, “accused the Greens of wanting to write out of history the Nazi murders of the Jews; and claimed that Green interest in air pollution was a subconscious reference to the gassing of the Jews, and that they claimed that Germans were in danger of suffocation through air pollution in order to hide their feelings of guilt... at having gassed the Jews.” Bramwell, op. cit., p. 224, citing Jannine Chasseguet-Smirgel’s paper to the Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Green Theatre, 1986, pp. 10–11, 21–24, 27. Bramwell states that Chasseguet-Smirgel “interprets the German ecological movement, especially the antinuclear stance, as a subconscious attempt to pretend that Germans can be victims as well as villains.” Bramwell, op. cit., p. 273.

Bramwell adds her own interpretation: “Whatever one may think of the idea that subconscious guilt feelings can be passed down through the generations – via the blood,
the genes or the collective subconscious is not explained – it is plain that by some Greens are seen as in danger of breaching one of the main conventions of Western democracy since the war, the centrality of the Jewish experience under the Nazis. This is not because there is actual anti-Semitism among the Greens, or support for Nazi crimes such as Auschwitz, but because they implicitly turn their backs on so many of the old Enlightenment ideas: progress, emancipation, growth and utilitarianism." Ibid., p. 224.

138 From communication with former Israeli diplomats.

139 Anti-Zionism includes the extremists' position that the Jews do not have a right to their own state as well as the attitude of those who require from Israel a behavior which is not required from other nations.

140 Many proofs have been offered for this in a multitude of publications in the last decades. So the Dutch writer Philo Bregstein concludes an essay on anti-Semitism in its contemporary variations by stating as one of its main conclusions: "Anti-Zionism is often in all its ambivalent shades, as Jean Amery already wrote in 1969, 'the salon-fit expression of an honorable post-War anti-Semitism.'” Philo Bregstein, Het kromme kan toch niet recht zijn. Baarn: de Prom, 1996, p. 78. Dutch. The argument is well summarized by Dan Segre, political scientist and former Israeli diplomat, who states that the "central thread running through European attitudes toward Jews – and towards Israel – consists of long-held historical prejudices, complexes and frustrations. 'Anti-Semitism has not disappeared, ... On the contrary... it has been broadened to include anti-Zionism." Interview with Dan Segre. In: Manfred Gerstenfeld, Israel's New Future: Interviews. Jerusalem: Rubin Mass & the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1994, p. 60.


142 James Jasper and Dorothy Nelkin write that, perhaps due to the large number of Jews in both the sciences and fur industry, "Jewish researchers receive explicit hate mail". The authors give the following example: “An anonymous letter to the President of U.S. Surgical reads: 'How dare you filthy Jews steal innocent animals to torture and slaughter to look for means to make more filthy money? It's a shame Hitler did not exterminate each one of you. You're not even human.’” James M. Jasper & Dorothy Nelkin, The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Protest. New York: The Free Press, 1992, p. 49.

143 Zvi Shinover & Yitzchak Goldberg, Quality of Life and the Environment in Jewish Sources. Nachalim, Israel: Mofet, 1994, p. 60. Hebrew.

144 Ibid., p. 64.

145 Wyschogrod, op. cit.

146 Wyschogrod adds: “Maybe it is because I have been involved in too much dialogue in recent years, not with the priests [of] Baal and Ashteret, but, some might say, with priests who are not so different from the priests... [of] Baal and Ashteret. Perhaps it would have been better if the prophets had occasionally sat down with them and said, 'Tell us how you see the world.' Could there be some insights in what they taught which we need to learn? I am convinced there were; and even if we don't agree with much of what they believed, I think we would profit by better understanding their point of view.” Ibid.

147 Luc Ferry claims that, for both Judaism and critical philosophy, man is 'anti-nature'. He views this positively: “Man is the anti-nature being and as such the being in favor of the Law. It seems to me that Levinas perceived this very well in the following
sentences in his book Difficile liberté. 'The Jew discovers man before he discovers the landscapes and the towns. He is at home in society before being so in a house. He understands the world starting from the other person, rather than from the totality of being starting from the earth... This freedom has nothing sickly, nothing cramped, nothing torn. It puts in the second place the values of being rooted and institutes other forms of reliability and responsibility.' "Ferry, op. cit., p. 54. In Ferry's view, this makes it impossible for Judaism to identify with environmentalism. Man can dispose of plants and animals to a certain extent, but not at will. "According to the Pentateuch, slaughter should not only be practiced without cruelty, but also in moderation... There is no confusion possible here between animal and man in the framework of the great cosmos." Ibid., p. 101.

148 Wigoda, op. cit.
149 Meir Tamari, The Earth is the Lord's: Jewish Environmentalism. L'Eylah, No. 34, September 1992, p. 11.
151 Lamm, op. cit.
153 Schwartz continues, "This reassertion of pagan theologies, customs, and language understands paganism as a world view which sees Nature as Holy. Eastern religions are often included in the list of religions of nature, as well, with the many significant theological and cultural differences between the various historical cultures glossed over." Ibid.
155 "Pollution has become a luxury of possessors, as in Paris, where the air of the 16th arrondissement is today more polluted than that of the 11th, which is more populated. In this justice, the 'beautiful quarters' of our cities, with their fuel heating, their air conditioned buildings, grand consumers of energy, are more polluted than the industrial suburbs." Pelt, op. cit., p. 70.
157 Frances Cairncross, who reviews environmental matters at The Economist writes: "It seems to meet some deep need to atone for modern materialism, by saving some of the materials from the rubbish bin." Frances Cairncross, A Survey of Waste and the Environment. The Economist, May 29, 1993.
158 In an article in The New York Times, John Tierney writes, "Recycling may be the most wasteful activity in modern America; a waste of time and money, a waste of human and natural resources... Americans... have embraced recycling as a transcendental experience, an act of moral redemption. We're not just reusing our garbage, we're performing a rite of atonement for the sin of excess." Lamm, Technion lecture, op. cit.
159 Simon, op cit. p. 51.
161 As Theodor Herzl put it: "Emancipation had become impossible in the places where we lived. We had developed strangely in the ghetto into a middle-class nation, and so became a terrible competition for the middle class. So, after the Emancipation, we belonged to the circle of the bourgeoisie and have to survive a double pressure, both from the inside and externally." Theodor Herzl, Der Judenstaat. In: Zionistische Schriften. Berlin-Charlottenburg: Juedischer Verlag, 1905, p. 62. German.
162 Gordon had another purpose: the Jews' return to manual labor. He claimed that the Jewish people "suffered from a profound illness which needed a fundamental
investigation and radical healing... A people that has been totally detached from nature, that has been enclosed within walls for millennia, a people which was used to all types of life - except to a life of labor - cannot without the application of all its willpower become again a living, natural, working nation. We are lacking the essential: labor - not enforced - but the labor through which the people grows together with its soil and its culture." A.D. Gordon, *Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*. Berlin: Jewish Publishers, p. 50. German.

163 Israeli philosopher Eliezer Schweid writes that "The notion of diaspora which has been explained in the Zionist ideology mainly in the sense of the geographic, social, and political diaspora of the Jewish people, became with Gordon a notion which applies to modern man in general. Diaspora is the existential state of man cut off from nature, the source of his life. Diaspora is the submission of man to his inclination for power. Because of that, the return of the Jewish people to its land is not only the quest for redemption in a national sense - but also the quest for redemption in the general human sense." Eliezer Schweid, In: Yechiam Padan, ed., *Dream and Realization – Philosophy and Practice in Zionism*. Jerusalem: Israel Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1979, p. 111. Hebrew.

164 In other anti-Semitic circles, the Jews were reproached with being cosmopolitan rather than linked to the soil of one country. This is only one of the many oft-repeated anti-Semitic stereotypes which have been internalized by Jews. New myths keep emerging. One of these is that the Jews led themselves to slaughter without resistance in the Second World War. For example, in France the Jews represented one percent of the pre-war population while they were 15–20 percent of the resistance movement. B. Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

165 According to Max Weber, after their dispersion, the Jews have progressively transformed themselves into a host nation and a pariah nation. They have acted intentionally so, and not in submitting themselves to external constraints. 'The social isolation of the Jews', this ghetto in the strongest sense of the term, originated in a free choice and decision, and that reinforced itself... It is in emancipating themselves from the ritual prescriptions of the Torah, in liberating themselves from the ghetto that the Jews themselves have created, that the Christian community has been able to establish universal religion. It is also this voluntary ghetto... which is supposed to be at the origin of the moral dualism Judaism is supposed to be in its relation with others. As far as Sombart is concerned, he affirms that it is the ghetto which has made of the Jews, a cast of despised pariahs: 'We have reasons to believe that certain categories of Jews have undergone the ghetto life not out of constraints, but because that life conformed to their natural inclinations'." From Freddy Raphael, *Ghetto Subi. Ghetto Voulu*. In: *Solitude d'Israël*, Fifteenth Colloquy of French Speaking Jewish Intellectuals. Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1975, p. 98. French.

166 The following quote from Simon Schama bears this out: "I remembered someone in a Cambridge common room pestering the self-designated 'non-Jewish Jew' and Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher about his roots. 'Trees have roots,' he shot back, scornfully, 'Jews have legs.' " Schama, *op. cit.*, p. 29.


168 "An examination of Jewish ethical literature reveals very little about love for and preservation of nature. Why? The answer is our long exile. For many centuries the nations who 'hosted' us reminded us that we were not citizens with equal rights. We were not part of their landscape. When monarchs called upon Jewish advisers, it was not to ask them about the Jewish approach to environmental problems. Their purpose was to enlarge the national treasury as quickly as possible. Whenever Jews were able
to develop their own communal culture, however, they applied Jewish principles to their environment. When our Sages extended the prohibition against raising sheep and goats in the Land of Israel to Babylon, they said, “We acted in Babylon as if we were in the Land of Israel.” (Bavli *Bava Batra* 80a) Aryeh Strikovsky, *G-d, Man and Tree. B’Or HaTorah.* No. 10, 1997–8, pp. 25, 27–8.

169 Ehrenfeld & Bentley, op. cit.

170 “… while Hasidism does not directly declare nature as holy, it finds in it sufficient potentials for the sacred to allow for a greater respect for and closeness to the natural world, while the Mitnagdic dualism so completely desacralizes nature as to leave it completely neutral and irrelevant religiously, to be viewed totally objectively and without any feeling of relationship whatever... For Hasidism, which is immanenistic, man has a kinship with other created beings, a symbiotic relationship with nature, and hence should maintain a sense of respect, if not reverence, for the natural world which is infused with the presence of God. The Mitnagdic view, emphasizing divine transcendence, leaves no place for such feelings, and conceived the Man-nature relation as completely one of subject-to-object, thus allowing for the exploitation of nature by science and technology and — were it not for the halakhic restraints which issue from revelation, and not from theology — the ecological abuse of the natural world as well.” Lamm, *Technion* lecture, op. cit.

171 The statement that *mitnaggedim* do not relate to nature is only true to a limited extent. Haim Volozhyn (1749–1821) describes the coming of the Messiah as follows: “Suddenly I feel the sun shining much more powerfully than it had before. What a brightness! Then I suddenly hear the birds in the garden chirping a new tune, a stirring, enchanting melody. And then I hear a noise coming from the street below. I put my head out of the window and I see Eli the cobbler running in great excitement. ‘What is it, Eli, what has happened to the sun’s rays? How come the birds are singing so marvelously? How come the trees are suddenly blooming with new leaves? What is happening?’ ‘What, Rabbi, don’t you know?’ says Eli, staring at me. ‘The Messiah has come.’” As related by Soloveitchik. In: Pinchas H. Peli, *On Repentance: In the thought and oral discourses of Joseph B. Soloveitchik.* Jerusalem: Oroth, 1980, p. 185.

172 “A nature-boy like Konrad Lorenz can face nature and take care of himself, right in the middle of the wilderness; he knows this fact and he feels an inner glow when noticing it; he is proud to be a nature-boy. A city boy and a Jew-boy like Sigmund Freud will be lost in the wilderness; contemplating this fact he will be filled with anxiety and irritated helplessness; he will at once notice this and be filled with shame and guilt and further anxiety and further irritation. He will wish to change the subject but will feel obliged to go on — regardless of the torment or enjoying the torment, and wondering which of these two options regarding torment is true. Thus we have a full-blown neurosis on our hands — one which surfaces by a simple intellectual exercise.” Joseph Agassi, *Towards a Rational Philosophical Anthropology.* The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977, p. 104.


175 Benstein, op. cit.


179 If some Jews represent Jewish attitudes as being closer to those of environmentalism than they really are – thus distorting them – this sometimes leads people to interpretations that are even further beyond the boundaries of Judaism. For example, the dust-jacket of Ellen Bernstein’s *Ecology & the Jewish Spirit* contains two such comments on the book: “A welcome and powerful voice is now added to all those dedicated to preserving the integrity and sacred quality of the planet earth.” Thomas Berry; “This timely collection, bringing out the ecological soul of Judaism, is a cause for celebration. Its many refreshing voices call Jewish spirituality to reawaken to its own glad reverence for Earth.” Joanna Macy. Op. cit., dust-jacket.


181 In the last few years, however, it seems that Orthodox interest in the subject has been increasing somewhat.

182 One also gets the impression – even if it cannot be substantiated – that few Orthodox Jews militate in Jewish environmentalist advocacy groups.