

## Judaism

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Awareness of the ecological crisis has transformed all academic disciplines, including the humanities, the disciplines that inquire about values, norms, meanings, languages, and cultures. Beginning in the 1970s, but increasingly in the 1980s and 1990s, a growing number of humanities scholars have begun to argue that ecological issues are not marginal but foundational to their disciplines. Thus historians traced “connections between environmental conditions, economic modes of production and cultural ideas through time” (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996, xxi) and explained the interplay of physical nature and human culture. Philosophers and ethicists explored how humans should interact with the environment as well as the theoretical justifications of these directives, extending the scope of moral considerability to non-human nature and identifying objective and universal ground, or grounds for environmental value. The result was the emergence of distinct strands of environmental thought—Social Ecology, Deep Ecology, and Ecofeminism—each with its own analysis of the causes for the ecological crisis, the salient ethical dimension, and the proper response to the crisis. And literary scholars applied the science of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, giving rise to what has been known as “literature-and-environment studies,” “green cultural studies,” “environmental literary criticism,” or “ecocriticism” (Buell 2005, 11-12; Garrard 2012). Ecocritics tie their cultural analyses to “green” moral and political agendas, while insisting that the study of “the relationship of the human and the non-human throughout human cultural history” (Garrard 5) be based on familiarity with the science of ecology. Problematizing and erasing the boundaries between the “human” and the “non-human,” ecocriticism is closely linked to other interdisciplinary, postmodern, and critical discourses such as animal studies (), trans- and posthumanism, and postcolonialism. The sub-discipline of animal studies (also known as “human-animal studies”) exposes the destructive impact of the traditional assumptions about the exceptionality of humans and emphasizes the cultural significance of animals; the discourse of trans- and posthumanism endorses genetic engineering and the human-machine interface that will presumably usher a new phase in human evolution; and postcolonial ecocriticism seeks to demonstrate that the western colonial enterprise perpetuated harmful human inequalities as well as environmental abuses.

Whereas these critical discourses focus on *representations* of nature in rhetorical strategies about nature, Religious Studies has paid attention both to the science of ecology and to action on behalf of the environment. It was no coincidence scholars of religion were the first to pay attention to the science of ecology, since the science of ecology had deep religious overtones and its history was inseparable from utopian aspirations (Tirosh-Samuelsan 2011). Emerging in the 1970s the field of religion and ecology has brought together scholars, theologians, and practitioners of religious traditions to engage in “retrieval, reevaluation, and reconstruction” (Grim and Tucker 2014, 86) of their respective traditions in order to address the ecological crisis. More than other forms of environmental humanities, religion can mobilize humanity to address the ecological crisis because religion appeals to ultimate norms and values, religion links theory, experience, and action, and religion expresses itself through narrative, myth, and symbolism, the deepest forms of human self-expression. The discourse of religion and ecology combines ecological science, humanistic scholarship, religious faith, and social action.

## **Judaism and Ecology: Ambiguities and Possibilities**

As the oldest of the Western monotheistic religions, Judaism is indispensable to the discourse on religion and ecology, but Judaism also occupies an ambiguous position in this discourse. To begin, Judaism problematizes a generic definition of “religion.” Although Judaism had articulated the concepts that framed the western religious vocabulary (e.g., creation, revelation, covenant, prophecy, Scripture, redemption, and messiah), Judaism differs from other traditions because it is a religion of one group of people—the Jews. Thus Jewishness consists not only of beliefs, rituals, norms and practices that cohere into a way of life, but also a collective identity, be it ethnic or national. In the modern period, however, processes of secularization have problematized Jewish existence, giving rise to secular Jews, namely born Jews who do not live by the strictures of the Jewish religious tradition. Interestingly, secular (i.e., non-observant) Jews have been at the forefront of the environmental movement, a point that has received little recognition. For example, Barry Commoner the Jewish scientist-activist made environmentalism into a political cause. Murray Bookchin, another son of East-European Jewish immigrants in America, articulated Social Ecology, insisting that human responsibility toward nature could be carried out only if humans first eliminate social exploitation, domination and hierarchy by developing communitarianism. Peter Singer, the son of Jewish refugees from Austria who settled in Australia, theorized the Animal Liberation movement, arguing that humans have an obligation to serve the interests or at least to protect the lives of all animals who suffer or are killed, whether on the farm or in the wild. Hans Jonas, the German-Jewish philosopher and student of Heidegger, is regarded as the “father” of the European Green movement. Starhawk (aka Miriam Simos), an American Jewish feminist, created the Goddess religion, giving rise to Earth-based feminist spirituality. Finally, David Abram is an American eco-phenomenologist who coined the term “the more-than-human world” to signify the broad commonwealth of earthy life which both includes and exceeds human culture. These are all born Jews who have profoundly shaped the theory and practice of contemporary environmentalism, but without appealing to Judaism as an authoritative tradition. In some cases, their ideas reflect the secularization of traditional Jewish ideas and beliefs, and more often their environmentalist vision either substitutes for a commitment to Judaism or directly critiqued Judaism for its presumed limitations or failures.

In the context of the discourse on religion and ecology Judaism is ambiguous for yet another reason: the Bible, the foundation document of Judaism, was accused of being the very cause of ecological crisis. Lynn White Jr., the medieval historian, was the first to charge that the Bible commanded humanity to rule the Earth (Gen. 1:28), giving human beings the license to exploit the Earth’s resources for their own benefit. A lay Presbyterian, White intended the charge as prophetic self-criticism that will generate self-examination (Santmire 1984), and indeed he was exceedingly successful: his short essay (White 1967) compelled Jews and Christians to examine the Bible anew in light of the ecological crisis. Is the Bible an “inconvenient text” (Habel 2009) or is the Bible a text whose ecological wisdom has been ignored or misinterpreted? Does the Bible authorize human domination and exploitation of the Earth or rather does the Bible set clear limits on human interaction with the non-human world and commands humans to care responsibly for the Earth and all its non-human inhabitants? Since 1970 Jewish religious environmentalists have examined the Bible in light of the ecological crisis whether to defend the Bible against various (Christian) misreadings (e.g., Cohen 1989), identify a distinctive ecological sensibility (Artson 2001 [1991-92]; Bernstein 2005; Benstein 2006; Troster 2008), or articulate

Jewish environmental ethics of responsibility (E. Schwartz 1997; Waskow 2000; Troster 2001 [1991-92];). For the past four decades the close study of the Bible has made clear that the Jewish sacred text espouses deep concern for the well-being of the Earth and all its inhabitants, because it asserts that “the Earth belongs to God” (Ps. 24:1) and humans are but temporary care takers, or stewards, of God’s Earth; their task is “to till and protect” the Earth (Gen. 2:15) not as controlling managers but as loving gardeners.

A third source of ambiguity is the fact that in Judaism ecological wisdom is found not in the natural order itself but in divinely revealed commands that instruct humans how to treat the Earth and its inhabitants. Scripture declares that the world God had created is “very good” (Gen. 1:31) but it is neither perfect nor intrinsically holy. Only human beings, who are created “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:28), are able to perfect the world by acting in accordance with divine command. At Sinai God revealed His Will to the Chosen People, Israel, by giving them the Torah (literally, “instruction) which specifies how Israel is to conduct itself in all aspects of life, including conduct toward the physical environment. In the Judaic sacred myth, divine revelation establishes the eternal covenant between God and Israel, an unconditional contract whose collateral is the Land of Israel. As long as Israel observes the Will of God, the Land of Israel is fertile and fecund and Israel flourishes, but when Israel sins, the Land loses its fertility and the people suffer (Deut. 6:10-15). When the sins become egregious, God punishes Israel by exiling the people from the Land. In this manner the Bible set up the causal connection between religious morality and the wellbeing of the environment.

Biblical law spells how Israel is to treat the Earth, vegetation and animals. Viewing Israel as God’s tenant-farmers, Scripture commands that a portion of the land’s yield be returned to its rightful owner, God (Leviticus 19:23). Since creation was an act of separation, Scripture prohibits mixing of plants, fruit trees, fish, birds, and land animals thereby protecting biodiversity (Deut. 22: 9-11). The human being is indeed given *responsible authority* over other animals and is allowed to consume animals, but human consumption of animals is presented as divine concession to human craving, suggesting that vegetarianism is the ideal and radically limiting what humans are allowed to consume. Scriptural legislation is also attentive to the perpetuation of species by prohibiting the killing of the mother hen with her off-springs (Deut. 22:6) or the cutting of fruit-bearing trees in time of siege (Deut. 20:19). Compassion to domestic animals is evident in the prohibition on the yoking together of animals of uneven strength and is praised as a desired virtue. Since Scripture allows for human sacrifice of animals, the relationship between humans and animals exhibits inequality, but “this inequality is relative not absolute ... because it is based on an analogy: as God is to Israel, so is Israel to its flocks and herds” (Klawans 2006, 74). Most importantly, the Bible commands rest on the Sabbath for humans and domestic animals putting “moral limits to economic exchange and commercial exploitation” (Sacks 2012, 169). Extending the Sabbath to the land, the laws of the Sabbatical year (*shemittah*) protects the socially marginal (i.e., the poor, the hungry, the widow, and the orphan) by making sure that crops that grow untended are to be left ownerless for all to share including poor people and animals. In the Bible the allocation of nature’s resources is a religious issue of the highest order and social justice is eco-justice. Divinely revealed environmental legislation enables Israel to sanctify itself and the Land of Israel.

In the Second Temple period (516 BCE-70 CE) the Bible became the canonic Scripture of the Jews, shaping the life of the People of Israel in the Land of Israel and in the diaspora. With the

destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, Jewish political sovereignty in the Land of Israel came to an end, but Jewish religious and legal autonomy remained intact under the leadership of small scholarly elite, the rabbis. Seeking to fathom the meaning of the divinely revealed Torah, the rabbis expanded biblical legislation through creative exegesis, giving their interpretations the status of Oral Torah which became normative Judaism. For example, from Deuteronomy 22:19 the rabbis derived the principle “Do Not Destroy” (*bal tashchit*) which prohibits wanton destruction, a precept that defines the unique Jewish contribution to environmentalism: Judaism focuses on the duties of humans toward nature as opposed to the intrinsic or inherent rights of nature. Similarly, on the basis of Deut. 22:6 the rabbis articulated the general principle of *tza`ar ba`aley hayyim* prohibits the affliction of needless suffering of animals. Although rabbinic ethics is undoubtedly hierarchical and human centered, for example, cruelty to animals is forbidden because it leads to cruelty toward humans (R. Schwartz 2012), the rabbis often presented animals as moral exemplars and recognized special animals as “animals of the righteous,” who live in perfect harmony with their Creator.

While the rabbis praised virtues that can be conducive to creation care, rabbinic Judaism also generated a certain distance between Jews and the natural world, which is the fourth source of ambiguity. Because the rabbis regarded Torah study to be the ultimate commandment, equal in value to all the other commandments combined, the Torah itself (both Written and Oral) became the prism through which Jews experienced the natural world. From the second century onward rabbinic Judaism has evolved as a textual, scholastic culture that privileges the study of sacred texts at the expense of interest in the natural world for its own sake. The urbanization of Roman Palestine in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Jewish transition from agriculture to commerce and trade in the early centuries of Islam and the limits on Jewish ownership of land in the Christian West exacerbated the departure of Jews from agriculture and the emergence of Jewish culture as a text-based community. This is not to say that Jews were oblivious to their physical surroundings, but that pre-modern Jews interacted with the natural world through textual exegesis. Thus rationalist Jewish philosophers in Spain and Italy sought to fathom how the laws of nature (as understood by Aristotle) reflect the inner esoteric structure of Torah; Pietists in Germany regarded nature as a secret code that could be decoded by the use of secret magical, verbal, and numerical formulas; and kabbalists in Spain saw nature as a symbolic text that mirrors the structure of the Godhead. All three intellectual strands of pre-modern Judaism treated nature as a linguistic text that has to be interpreted rather than a physical reality that can be sensually experienced by embodied humans.

The centrality of sacred texts in Jewish life was critiqued in the modern period first by the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) and later by Zionism. For the proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment (*maskilim*), knowledge of physical nature was necessary for the modernization of the Jews and their entry into European society and culture. In their journals, novels, and satires, the *maskilim* presented knowledge about the natural world as conditional to the healing of Jews from excessive bookishness and called for the return of Jews to productive labor, especially agriculture. Going further, Zionism, the Jewish nationalist movement which was an offshoot of the Haskalah, preached the return of Jews to the Land of Israel as the solution to the ills of exilic life. The Zionist movement generated a fifth source of ambiguity in the Jewish relationship to nature. Zionism sought to create a new type of Jews as well as a new, Hebraic, modern culture that will be rooted in the remote agricultural past of ancient Israel, by passing rabbinic Judaism. Zionism endowed the physical environment of the Land of Israel, its topography, flora and

fauna, with spiritual (albeit secular) significance, inculcating intimate knowledge of the Land through nature hikes, field trips, and camping. Paradoxically, the resulting outdoor culture has enabled secular Israelis to understand the natural imagery and metaphors of the Bible, the document that legitimized the Zionist national project. More problematically, the successes of the Zionist project exacted a toll on the fragile environment of the Land of Israel: steep rise in population, rapid urbanization, the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, and initial mistakes about natural resource management have generated a long list of environmental problems (e.g., air and water pollution; soil erosion, over use of water, etc.) requiring legislative solutions. Today the state of Israel addresses these environmental challenges through a mixture of policies, legislation, and alternative technologies and environmentalism thrives in Israel through green political parties, numerous environmental NGOs, and creative educational and training programs (Tirosh-Samuels 2012). Many of these environmental initiatives and organizations deal with concrete environmental problems without reference to Judaism, but some organizations draw direct inspiration from Jewish religious sources in their theoretical justification and educational programs. The degree to which Israeli environmentalism should be grounded in traditional Jewish sources is hotly debated in Israel and the movement is quite different from its American counterpart.

### **Eco-Judaism: Practice and Theology**

In Israel, where Jews are the majority, environmentalism encompasses advocacy, education, public policy, legislation, sustainable architecture and agriculture, science and technology with limited appeal to the religious sources of Judaism. By contrast, in the diaspora, where Jews are small religio-ethnic minority, Jewish environmental public discourse has to be carried explicitly in religious categories. Since its emergence in the mid-1980s, Jewish environmental activism has brought about the “greening” of Jewish institutions (e.g., synagogues, schools, communal organizations, Jewish community centers, and youth movements). Today, a variety of organizations, programs, and initiatives promote sustainable practices (e.g., energy efficiency, elimination of plastics, recycling and waste reduction programs), reduce consumption and promote new eating habits, plant community gardens, link sustainable agriculture to urban Jewish life and education, include environmental issues in the education of youngsters and adults, organize nature walks and outdoor activities, celebrate Jewish holidays (especially Sukkot, Shavuot and Tu Bishvat) with attention to environmental agricultural themes; promote justice in food production with attention to sustainable agriculture and compassionate treatment of farm animals, and encourage Jews to live sustainably. These programs transcend congregational and denominational boundaries and are often carried out in inter-faith settings in collaboration with non-Jewish organizations. Eco-Judaism consists of environmental activism and eco-theology.

As a grass root movement, Jewish environmental activism educates Jews about environmental matters, inspires Jews to lead an environmentally correct life, implements “green” communal practices, and rallies Jews to support environmental legislation and interfaith activities. The main activities of Jewish environmental organizations and initiatives consist of nature education, environmental awareness, advocacy on environmental legislation, and community building. Thus programs of Teva Learning Alliance sensitize the participants to nature’s rhythms, inspiring them to develop a meaningful relationship with nature and their own Jewish practices.

Through traditional Jewish rituals (e.g., blessings, prayers, and reflections) participants become aware of nature as divine creation or learn about the vital connection between Judaism and environmental stewardship. In Elat Chayyim Center for Jewish Spirituality programs promote environmentally concerned Judaism as a spiritual practice and offer leadership training that teaches participants to live communally and integrate organized agricultural and sustainable living skills with Jewish learning and living. The newly reconstituted Aytzim: Ecological Judaism illustrates how environmental education, advocacy, and activism link the Jewish religion with Zionism and how the Internet is used to advance environmentalism: the website Jewcology is now managed by Aytzim. These programs and the Coalition of Jewish and Environmental Life (COEJL), which focuses on educational, legislative, and interfaith programming, illustrate eco-Judaism in practice. Attention to food is another important aspect of contemporary eco-Judaism, since food is the intersection point of humans and animals as well as of diverse social groups. Hazon: Jewish Inspiration, Sustainable Communities exemplifies the Jewish Food Movement that stresses the redemptive aspect of land cultivation and just production, distribution, and consumption of food. The Jewish Food Movement is connected with other environmental initiatives such as the Jewish Farm School, Eden Village (an eco-summer camp), Shomrei Adamah (a program in Jewish day schools that emphasizes energy flow, natural cycles, biodiversity and interdependence), and Kayam (an educational camp) all of which are designed to bring Jews to integrate hand's on knowledge about food and farming with the Jewish tradition.

The concept that gives coherence to eco-Judaism is “Eco-Kosher.” It connects concerns about industrial agriculture, global warming, and fair treatment of workers with the Jewish dietary laws about food production, preparation and eating. “Eco-Kosher” means that Jews should only consume products that meet both Jewish dietary laws as well as Jewish ethical standards, and eco-kosher consumers should encourage food producers to care for the environment, animals and their workers. Arthur Waskow translated Eco-Kosher into a full-fledged program of environmental justice in regard to economic and racial inequity, the unjust labor practices, and the causal connection between the exploitation of the Earth resources and unjust political policies, especially in Israel (Waskow 1996). Other rabbis have fused Eco-Kosher with kabbalistic principles as well as with non-Jewish traditions such as the ancient Chinese art of Feng Shui, an ecologically based art of spatial arrangement that incorporates human-made objects with natural surroundings. The concept of Eco-Kosher has also inspired Jewish entrepreneurs to market eco-kosher meat products and the Conservative Movement to issue the Magen Tzedek Initiative, a certification program that assures consumers and retailers that “kosher food products have been produced in keeping with exemplary Jewish ethics in regard to labor, animal welfare, environmental impact, consumer issue and corporate integrity” (<http://www.magentzedek.org>)

Combining sustainable agriculture, fair labor practices, and ethical treatment of animals, “eco-Kosher” generates a comprehensive life style whose goal is to bring about *Tikkun Olam* (literally, “repair of the world”). In rabbinic texts (e.g., Mishna, Gittin 4:2) “*letaken olam*” means to act in accordance to Jewish law so as to usher the Kingdom of God. This utopian notion was given an abstract, cosmic, metaphysical meaning in medieval Kabbalah, especially the 16<sup>th</sup> century version of Lurianic Kabbalah where human action can restore harmony in all levels of existence, including God. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century *Tikkun Olam* has become the slogan of Jewish social activism, including environmentalism, although few Jews

who invoke the term understand its kabbalistic connotations. In Jewish environmental organizations, the goal of *Tikkun Olam* is usually linked to two other ethical values: *responsibility and interconnectedness*. The former highlights human responsibility toward the Earth and its inhabitants and the latter insists on the relationality of all living beings. Both values are derived from biblical and rabbinic sources and are invoked in a wide variety of educational programs (Tirosh-Samuelson 2012).

Several Jewish eco-theologians deliberately build on Kabbalah and Hasidism to articulate Jewish ecological spirituality to address the ecological crisis. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, was the first to call for a “paradigm shift” within Judaism, signifying a shift from transcendence to immanence, from monotheism to pantheism, from dualistic to non-dualistic thinking, from patriarchy to egalitarianism. He called this shift “Gaian Consciousness” and argued that Judaism has a distinctive (albeit not exclusive) role to play in the healing of the cosmos: the key ecological precept of Judaism—“Do Not Destroy”—enables Jews to act in ways that prevent what he called, the crime of “planetcide.” Recasting Judaism as pantheistic monism that reframes all the major themes of traditional Judaism and gives rise to new rituals, this New-Age thinker saw his project as “trying to help the Earth rebuild her organicity and establish a healthy governing principles” (Magid 2006, 65).

Schachter-Shalomi’s friend and colleague, Rabbi Arthur Green, has gone further to articulate a systematic ecological Jewish spirituality promoted as “Neo-Hasidism.” Green’s “mystical pantheism,” fuses Kabbalah and Hasidism with the theory of evolution to depict the “bio-history of the universe” as “sacred drama” (Green 2003, 111). Green presents a holistic view of reality in which all existents are in some way an expression of God and are to some extent intrinsically related to one another (Ibid, 118-119; Green 2010). Although Green’s lyrical depiction of evolution is closer to medieval Neoplatonism than to Darwinian evolution, it offers contemporary Jews “a Kabbalah for the environmental age” (Green 2002). A systematic fusion of Kabbalah, Hasidism, and environmentalism is presented in the work of Rabbi David Seidenberg who argues that by “applying the principles of Kabbalah to constructive theology, we can train ourselves to see the image of God in all of these dimensions, in a species, in an ecosystem, in the water cycles, in the entirety of this planet, and so on” (Seidenberg 2015, 312). Seidenberg is one example of Jewish spiritual teachers, artists, story tellers, and healers who find in Kabbalah, as well as other spiritual traditions (either Native American or Asian) resources for a syncretistic Jewish ecological spirituality. The syncretism of Jewish ecological spirituality brought some critics to question the Jewishness of Jewish environmentalism and to view it as an unacceptable revival of paganism.

### **Jewish Environmentalism and Environmental Humanities**

The ecological reinterpretation of Judaism has developed with relatively little attention to the environmental humanities. Why? First, the discourse of the environmental humanities is decidedly secular, whereas Jewish environmentalism (at least in the diaspora) is a religious endeavor that uses religious categories. Second, the environmental humanities are theoretical discourses carried out within the bounds of the academy, whereas Jewish environmentalism is a grass-root movement of non-academic activists who care about praxis rather than theory. Third, the academic discourse of environmental humanities is inherently critical, displaying skepticism, distance, and irony, whereas Jewish environmentalism calls for conviction, action, and social

transformation. Finally, while some environmental humanities, especially eco-criticism, have attempted to bring the material sciences to the foreground of the humanities in order to understand the relationship between human and non-human organisms, Jewish environmentalism (and one could say Jewish public discourse in general) has been insufficiently attentive to the natural sciences. This is not to say that Jewish environmentalism cannot or should not become informed of the environmental humanities. To the contrary: familiarity with the environmental humanities (i.e., the various strands of environmental philosophy and ethics and eco-criticism) can enrich Jewish environmentalism immensely, but such dialogue could take place only if the academic interlocutors become more informed about and interested in Judaism not as the culprit of the ecological crisis, but as a tradition that could creatively address the crisis.

The dialogue between Jewish environmentalism and environmental humanities could begin in the context of postmodern environmental thought (Zimmerman 1994) and the field of eco-phenomenology (Brown and Toadvine 2003), since Jewish philosophers have greatly contributed to them. Eco-phenomenology is the merger of phenomenology and contemporary environmental thought, according to which the human cognition that “nature has value, that it deserves or demands a certain proper treatment from us, must have its roots in an experience of nature” (ibid, xi). Jewish philosophers trained in the phenomenological tradition—Martin Buber (d. 1965), Hans Jonas (d. 1993), and Emmanuel Levinas (d. 1995) and Derrida (d. 2004)—contributed to eco-phenomenology by framing the relationship between humanity to the natural world in dialogical terms, emphasizing nature as a subject to whom humans are deeply *responsible*, and by erasing rigid boundaries between humans and animals.

Martin Buber was the first to speak about nature as a subject and to call for a non-instrumental (I-Thou) relationship with nature. Although Buber was not an environmentalist, his relational, dialogical philosophy has exerted deep influence on Christian environmental ethics (McFague 1997; Santmire 2008). If Buber made nature into a moral subject with whom humans can have personal relationship, Hans Jonas endowed life itself with intrinsic moral value as he exposed the ontological basis of the ethics of responsibility, and conversely made ontology informed by ethics (Jonas 1984). Jonas’s philosophy of nature highlighted the purposiveness of all life, arguing that nature commands ultimate respect, allegiance, and final moral commitment (Donnelley 2008). It is the objective goodness of things that determines not only what ought to be but also what humans ought to feel, think, and do, since humans are an integral part of organic life. For Jonas, the “imperative of responsibility” encompasses human responsibility for the continued existence of life in a planet where life is seriously endangered by modern technology. Awareness of the looming disaster generates a “heuristic of fear” that guides us to act so as to protect nature from the possibility of destruction. Humanity is responsible for its own future and must act with concern toward future generations, ensuring that they will have the conditions for life. Jonas’s philosophy of nature was developed in response to the devastation of WWII in which Auschwitz and Hiroshima came about because of modern technology.

Like Jonas, Emmanuel Levinas saw responsibility as the core of the ethical, but went further than Jonas by arguing that responsibility comes first: each person is responsible for the other who faces him. If Jonas argued for *collective responsibility* of humanity, Levinas argues for *infinite individual responsibility*: every person has an obligation to his/her neighbor, expanding gradually to cover all living humanity. Levinas’ ethics is decidedly human-centered since he insisted that ethics is “against-nature, against the naturality of nature (Levinas 1998, 171).

However, several postmodernist environmentalists have applied Levinas' ethics to nature which is identified with the absolute Other (Edelgrass, Hatley and Diehm 2012). How Levinas's ethics should be applied to nature is still a matter of debate but no one can correctly understand Levinas without acknowledging his Jewishness.

Even more influential than Buber, Jonas, and Levinas, another Jewish philosopher trained in phenomenological tradition—Jacques Derrida—has stimulated postmodernist environmental thought and the field of eco-phenomenology. Derrida's deconstruction of traditional binary dichotomies characteristic of Western philosophy (e.g., nature/culture; human/animal; transcendence/immanence) exposed the connection between phallogocentrism and "carnivorous virility" (Gross 2015, 142). Derrida criticized the "sacrificial structure of subjectivity" and exposed the links between the hatred of the Other, the hatred of animals, and the hatred of Jews that run throughout Western history and culture (Benjamin 2011). The deconstruction of human/animal boundaries (Derrida 2008) has stimulated the newly emerging field of Animal Studies (e.g., Gross and Valley 2012) although the Jewishness of Derrida is often glossed over.

### **Conclusion:**

Any generalizations about Judaism and ecology should take into consideration the ambiguity of the term "Judaism" and the fact that the Jewish experience encompasses both religious and secular forms. Indeed, the various conceptualizations of "nature" or "environment" illustrate the complexity of the modern Jewish experience. Thus the contribution of Jews to environmentalism is more extensive and the impact of environmentalism on contemporary Judaism is more profound than is commonly acknowledged. In Israel and in the diaspora the ecological crisis has generated many Jewish responses as Jewish theologians, scholars, educators and activists have subjected the entire Jewish tradition to rigorous reinterpretation, identified relevant literary sources, distilled the ecological insights of the tradition, articulated new ecological theologies, and spelled out policies and educational programs. Jewish environmentalism is still a small but growing strand in contemporary Judaism that is attractive to previously unaffiliated Jews, to Jews who have limited or no Jewish education, to seekers who have walked other spiritual and religious paths, and to Jews who are traditionally observant. Commitment to Jewish environmentalism means different things: for some, Jewish environmentalism means extending the ethics of responsibility to include the environment, for others environmentalism means a new, holistic, ecological consciousness that overcomes the disruptive dualism of scripture and nature, and for still others, environmentalism signifies the return to earth-based spirituality that links Judaism to other traditions. However interpreted, a plethora of Jewish environmental organizations promote communitarianism, environmental and social justice, and a range of educational programs based on outdoors activities that inculcate respect for nature. Benefiting from the creation of the Internet, Jewish environmental activism disseminates ideas and information about activities through social media and the websites of these organizations make available relevant literary sources, commentaries, organized activities, fellowship programs, and leadership training. While the work of Jewish environmentalism rarely engages the environmental humanities, the dialogue between these discourses could enrich both: Jewish environmentalism could become more theoretically informed and the environmental humanities could openly acknowledge its debt to Jewish ethics of responsibility.

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