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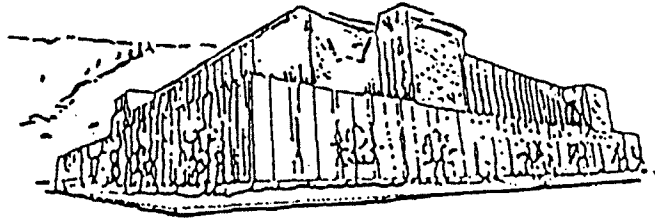
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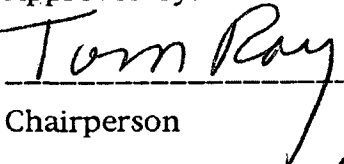
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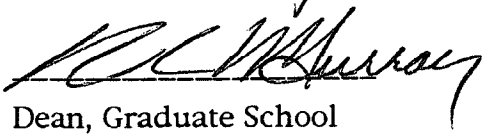
' FRIEND TO THE DESERT OWL '
Towards a Jewish Environmental Ethic

By
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B.A., Bowdoin College, 1990

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Masters of Science
University of Montana
1995

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Friend to the Desert Owl: Towards a Jewish Environmental Ethic (70 pp.)

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This thesis explores the possibility of an environmental ethic built on traditional Jewish thought. In discussions of environmental history and ethics, Genesis 1:28 is frequently cited as the source for western society's exploitative relation to the earth. I believe that on closer inspection, Biblical stories, laws and rituals have the potential to heal our relationship with the earth. They emphasize a feeling of humility and unity with creation, the intrinsic value of every being and a human responsibility to do justice.

In this paper, the Book of Job forms the foundation of a Jewish approach to the natural world to which are added elements of Jewish law, stories and prayers. God answers Job's questions about suffering by offering a vision of Creation. Job's divine revelation, in which God takes him on a God's-eye tour of the universe, is a source of Biblical ecological wisdom. In the vivid depiction of the beings and processes of wild nature there is a celebration of wildness. The desert grasses bloom in the wilderness not for the sake of a human eye but because, in the Book of Job, wild nature is the medium for the creative divine energy.

Job is awed by the grand mosaic of creation and destruction, birth and predation. He feels humbled by God's universe. The world depicted is nonanthropocentric; it is theocentric. Playing by God's rules on God's earth we learn about the human responsibility to do justice. This justice includes the morally interconnected communities of humans, the land and animals.

This Jobian approach to the world, emphasizing unity, humility and justice, is expressed in Jewish laws dealing with the treatment of animals and the land. Jewish blessings also echo Job's awe, his humility and a morally interwoven world. I believe that the experience of Job and the laws and prayers of Judaism have the potential to help heal our relationship with the earth.

Prologue

Restoring a Blessing

Esau emerged from the womb first, covered with hair and silent. Jacob came out squalling, with one hand wrapped firmly around his twin brother's heel, like the many-fingered roots of a caper clinging to a limestone cliff.

Esau fell in love with the Mountains of Edom, the pyramid peaks, the steep canyons, and the long sandy plains stretching to the valley floor. Jacob preferred the cool shadows of the tent; he was a thinker.

In the time of the new moon, Esau would wait for the heavy blanket of darkness atop a crumbling hill, embedded with tiny imprints of life from a time before Abraham and Sarah, before Adam and Lilith. On the small rise above the acacias in a dry river bed, Esau would kneel before a stone, the color of a camel's back, which had been planted in the ground and surrounded by a half-circle of rocks in the shape of a pre-festival moon. The assemblage was no Stonehenge. The hare had to crouch to conceal herself behind the rocks, and years later an angry foot would scatter them like so many seeds of a desert grass in the wind of a winter storm.

Esau awaited the mountain goats' descent to their favorite cluster of acacias. Their black tongues eagerly sucked in the green meat of leaves-- the feathery foliage of the tree which dominates this otherwise open landscape. The acacia is shaped like an inverted pyramid with foliage so sparse that he often watched the moon through its branches and missed none of the orb's subtle features. As the fire of the dawn tipped the mountains, Esau would greet the sun with loud praises and lay on the altar the choicest meat of the goat he had speared.

Esau fathered a tribe of hunters and shepherds who worshipped sun and moon, leopard and ostrich. They planted small altars of stone in the desert and knelt in front of them before the hunt. They danced in the winter rains and spoke with the many spirits of the plants.

Jacob, with a blessing stolen from their father, led a nation of shepherds and farmers who prayed to a God that they believed no stones could contain. They praised their one all-embracing God in as many ways as the wind blows and the rain falls. The earth was a sister to them, not a mother, and they would not speak with rocks or pray to figures of animals scratched into the soft sandstone cliffs. Jacob's people would eventually scatter the small stone circles and defeat the priests of Esau's nation in miracle contests. A thousand years later, Jacob's wise men would speak of the absurdity of worshipping the sun and moon and turn their peoples' heads to the book and away from the mountains.

A few months ago, wandering in the abandoned mountains of my ancestors' desert home, I stumbled upon a half-circle of rocks like a pre-festival moon, gathered obediently around a diminutive altar. The rocks, set against the dry slopes, all the color of a camel's back, pulled in my eyes. Like Esau, I cover more hills and cross more brooks than I turn pages. I have chosen to read the red canyons and the advancing storm. Now, as I find myself walking through the words of Jacob's books, I ask for Esau's blessing to be restored.

II

Have we forgotten the reconciliation of the two brothers on the plains above the Jabbok River? Do we remember their long embrace?

A middle-aged Jacob, his obstinate righteousness tempered by tempestuous dreams which left him with a limp, crossed the river to make peace with his brother. In the deep rift valley, midway between the desolate salt lands of the Dead Sea with their fantastic shapes and ruined cities, and the verdant pine-covered hills of the Sea of Galilee, Jacob shed three tears for his brother. One tear fell from his right eye, one from his left, and one hung suspended from his eyelash.

Esau approached without faltering, sure only of his readiness to forgive. Jacob was as conscious of his wrongdoing as a child is of his innocence. Thirty years after the deception, Esau accepted his brother's silent apology with the patience of a desert perennial waiting out a long drought. They embraced with the love and fear and anger only bloodlines share.

In the months that followed, Esau would shake his brother from the comfortable confines of his thoughts to stalk wild asses in the resplendent light of the festival moon, or to collect capers from the mustard-colored canyon walls. Jacob's limbs, soft from days in his tent, became dry and wiry, like branches of desert shrubs in the oven-heat of the blinding summer.

As they walked across plateaus of sharp flint, black as a goat's tongue, Jacob, always at his brother's heel, would engage the silent Esau in questions of justice and morality. Esau, who moved with the loping speed of a young hyena, was schooled in the stern responsibilities of life on God's earth.

Esau learned about the Sabbath -- a day of rest and celebration, time to meet the wildflower and the lizard on the equal terms of our shared origin. Esau came to respect the day as a time when he would abandon the sharp tools

of his trade and contemplate the underlying mystery of creation. The brothers would sit atop the small rise above the acacias in the dry river bed and greet with songs and blessings the sudden desert dusk -- which changed, if only for moments, the dusty landscape into the brilliant shades of a thirsty conflagration.

Esau praised the tamarisk and the lizard. Jacob called upon the tree and the beast to join with him in his praise of the Holy One. Esau spoke with a sun god and Jacob with his one God. However, a passing shepherd, hurrying his flock before him in the gathering darkness, could barely tell the difference between the meandering Semitic tones of their prayers.

On the eve of the following sunset, they would wait until the three stars of Orion's belt shone clearly in the black sky. Then, greeting the coming week, they burned the fragrant leaves of desert thyme, stared into the flame of a candle of beeswax, and drank dark wine from a cup carved from an onager's horn.

The brothers cultivated a small field of spelt together in the sandy valley bottom. It was Jacob's wish that they always leave the edges of the field for the poor and for the wild beasts. Practical, rather than selfish, Esau often insisted on harvesting the entire field. If they did not leave the edges for others, said Jacob, the soil would cry out for justice, and thorns and thistles would flourish in the place of the grain.

In their wanderings among the steep red canyons and the small oases, Jacob learned from Esau to tell history from the rocks, to foretell weather in the wind and to hunt gazelle and onager, mountain goat and hare.

III

But Jacob's descendants soon forgot the wisdom of the wilderness and turned their eyes instead to the books, as did Jacob in his youth. In their devotion to a God who lived not on earth, they propagated law after law and lost the taste for wandering in the desert in the light of the festival moon.

Esau's grandson Job repeated the message to Jacob's people who loved a God they thought watched their every move and was partial to human fate. Through his revelations Job taught Jacob's heirs --who had become haughty in their righteousness -- about their proper place as only one vessel for the outpouring of God's creativity. Job, like Esau before him, learned from the ostrich and the lion, the raven and desert grasses. In Job's awe before God, Jacob's descendants were reminded that the wild ass laughs at our cities, and the ostrich, running with outstretched wings, scoffs at the horse and rider.

Have we forgotten the simple democracy of all beings that pervaded the lives of Esau and Job? Esau's pact with the lizard, the moon and the limestone cliffs? How Job sang when he saw the desert wilderness explode in purple blossoms?

Are the children of Esau still banished to the heathen Red Mountains of Jordan? Have we all become Jacobs, confined to shaded tents, crooked backs hunched over books?

Before crossing the Jabbok, Jacob became Israel, "the one who wrestled with God." He is no longer Jacob, The Supplanter. Are we still trying, in his stead, to supplant Esau?

Do we think that in our books we have already been to the edge of the universe? Or can we, as did Esau, Job and a middle-aged Jacob, hear the morning stars sing?

Table of Contents

Prologue--Restoring a Blessing.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Part 1: A Friend to the Desert Owl.....	6
A Celebration of Wildness.....	8
Jobian Ecology.....	13
The Human Place in the Jobian World.....	22
Part 2: The Jobian Vision in Practice.....	36
Shmittah and Jubilee.....	36
The Righteous Jew and the Beast.....	39
Part 3: Blessings for the Wonders of Creation.....	54
Bibliography.....	63

Introduction

To Meet The World With The Soul

Where man meets the world not with the tools he has made but with the soul with which he was born. (Heschel 1951, p.38)

My thesis is an attempt to find and celebrate that meeting place within the Jewish tradition. I have tried to set a foundation for a Jewish environmental ethic which meets the eagle and the antelope with soul in hand. The splendid poetry of the Book of Job forms the central strands to which I have woven elements of Jewish law, story and liturgy from Biblical to modern sources.

I approach my thesis from two directions. As a person working to redefine our relationship with the earth, I think it is crucial to draw on all aspects of history and culture which contain ideas and ethics pertinent to our present predicament. On the other hand, as a Jew, it is important for me to find the words of my tradition which bring wisdom to today's crisis and to speak those words within my community.

Environmental philosopher Joseph Des Jardins writes:

Environmental issues raise fundamental questions about what we as human beings value, about what kind of beings we are, about the kinds of lives we should live. (1993, p.4)

These fundamental ethical questions are for many people, whether consciously or not, addressed by religion. Despite their obvious importance, religious traditions have been much maligned in the environmental movement. Not only have many people become alienated from

environmentalism's radically secular stance, but the movement's own struggle for meaning and change has been impoverished by the rejection of religious approaches.

The people of most societies in the world define their place and purpose in the world, as well as the moral code of their lives, through religion. As people concerned with transforming our relationship with the natural and human community, it is crucial that we begin to include the insights of religious perception and theology. In our quest for earth-positive ethics to guide our society, we can draw from the moral systems of various traditions.

In this context, I believe that developing an environmental ethic based upon Jewish thought brings new perspectives and vitality to the discussion surrounding our relationship with the earth

Since I will draw heavily from the Bible, my analysis will be relevant to the Christian community as well. And, inasmuch as I will be dealing with issues of spirituality and ritual, theology and morality, my conclusions will speak to people of all persuasions.

As someone within the Jewish tradition, I want to explore and to celebrate aspects of my tradition which bring wisdom to the discussion of the environmental crises. The Jewish community thrives on studying traditional texts for approaches to the world's problems. As Judaism has served as an inspiration for Jews in the social justice movements of this century, so can it serve as a guide for Jews becoming ecologically literate.

Unfortunately, until recently, environmental ethics had been missing from Jewish study. Painting a picture of Jewish approaches to the natural world will enrich the tradition and make it more capable of answering the dilemmas of modernity. For the millions of Jews who look to the tradition for

direction in their lives, a discussion of Jewish thought on the environment is much needed to empower communities to reexamine their connection to the wonders of creation.

At the University of Montana, I have listened to several lectures which used Genesis 1:28 as a starting point for the history of the environmental crises. The charge that the "Judeo-Christian tradition" is responsible for our exploitation of the natural world was led by historian Lynn White. In his article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," White blames our exploitation of nature on the passages in Genesis where humans are given "dominion" over the animals and then are told to "subdue" the earth. Because only humans are created in the divine image, he insists that animals are merely objects for our use (White 1967). This argument is widely accepted in texts on environmental history and ethics.

In my opinion, this charge is fraught with problems, most of which will become clear in my thesis. First of all, we must admit the absurdity of the phrase "Judeo-Christian tradition." Even though both Jewish and Christian traditions share the Biblical stories, their interpretations of the Bible vary strongly. Furthermore, the Jewish and the Christian communities have been separate and even hostile for almost two thousand years. Many of the laws, prayers and stories I use will be foreign to the Christian ear.

More specifically, Jewish thinkers never understood the passages in Genesis ("dominion" and "subdue") as *carte blanche* for environmental destruction. Neither did the fact that only humans were created in the divine image cause Jews to treat non-human life merely as objects for our use. From my thesis, it will be clear that the Jewish tradition emphasizes both our kinship with and our responsibility for the nonhuman world.

One way to look at Jewish tradition is in terms of aggadah, halakhah and tefillah. Although all parts of my thesis combine these three elements, each part is fundamentally based on story, law and prayer.

Aggadah are stories which entertain and teach us. I have used aggadah from Jacob to Job, as well as Jewish tales from Eastern Europe. Although I have stories spread throughout the writing, Part 1 is essentially aggadah.

Halakhah is Jewish law, the ordinances, both Biblical and Rabbinic (post-Biblical), which guide the daily actions of practicing Jews all over the world. In Part 2, I have included Halakhah concerning the treatment of animals and agricultural laws.

Tefillah is prayer. In Part 3, I have included both traditional prayers said daily, weekly or in annual festivals as well as modern secular poetry.

The emphasis on tefillah and halakhah might seem strange to the modern reader. However, traditional Judaism is a legalistic culture because it binds the actions of daily life to ethical standards and spiritual goals. Many scholars argue that Judaism's true genius lies in practice, not theoretical abstractions (Katz 1993). This strong tie between faith and practice is a crucial element of a Jewish environmental ethic.

As I have selected those parts of the tradition which support my goals, my research is by no means a complete picture of Judaism. Similarly, I have not included all of the Jewish laws pertaining to the protection of the environment of which there are very many.

I have chosen to use Stephen Mitchell's rendering of the Book of Job in verse. Mitchell has reorganized many passages and prints them without the traditional verse numbers. All of the passages which I have cited from the

Book of Job; unless otherwise noted, are from Mitchell's version and, therefore, refer simply to page numbers in his version.

Unless otherwise noted, for other Biblical citations I have used the Jewish Publication Society's 1988 translation.

My thesis speaks of the potential for the future of a Jewish relationship with the earth. I am not arguing that the ancient Israelites were the world's best stewards. However, I am using their stories and laws as examples for how we could, in our lives today, meet the world with our souls.

PART 1: AGGADAH

JOB- A FRIEND TO THE DESERT OWL

The story of Job, for my purposes, forms the basis of a Jewish environmental ethic. We find echoes of Job's experience in other parts of the Jewish tradition, in Biblical, Talmudic and modern thought. These strands can be woven together to express a view of the world which can perhaps serve as an antidote to our present case of environmental hubris.

The Story of Job

The Book of Job is one of the most enigmatic and controversial texts in the Bible. The original Hebrew is both beautifully poetic and frequently awkward. Its complex messages have been seen by some Jews and Christians as threatening to the moral order of the Bible. The ethical complexities of the text are compounded by the fact that the hero of the text, Job, is a gentile and the Hebrew is heavy with other linguistic influences.

However foreign our hero may seem to some, Job's words have found their way into the Sabbath liturgy, and the poetic images and themes of the Book of Job return in later Jewish thought. Twentieth-century Jewish scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel places Job in the prophetic tradition; the prophets all speak the language of wonder and cry out for justice (Heschel 1955). Early twentieth-century Jewish thinker Martin Buber characterizes Job as a "faithful rebel, like Abraham, Moses, David and Isaiah" (Buber 1949, p. 196).

The overall theme of the Book of Job is the place and purpose of human suffering. The text overflows with Job's pain and outrage at injustice in the world. In the conclusion, Job's vision suggests a humbling awareness of a

justice in the world that is far bigger and more complex than we, or the slighted Job, imagined at the outset.

In the beginning of the text, we are introduced to Job, a righteous man, wealthy and content. Because of a bet God plays with an angel, the good Job suddenly loses his children, animals and all his wealth. In his mourning, he remains faithful to God, until the "Accusing Angel" is given permission to curse Job's own health.

Finally, as he sits in the dust, scratching his boils with a potsherd, Job's quiet piety turns to near-blasphemous rage, and he cries out:

God damn the day I was born
and the night that forced me from the womb
On that day -- let there be darkness;
let it never have been created;
let it sink back into the void. (p.13)

It is in these images of destruction, this anti-genesis, that Job, in an argument with his three friends and with God, begins to challenge the order of the world, and finally God's justice.

What is man, that you notice him,
turn your glare upon him,
examine him every morning,
test him every instant? (p.24)

Much of the text of the Book of Job is filled with Job's poetic lamentations, his challenges to God followed by the absurdly inadequate but poetically impressive answers and rebukes of his friends. In response to Job's ideology of de-creation and his plea for justice, he receives a God's-eye tour of the universe. It is the famous "Voice from the whirlwind" speech, God's meta-answer to Job, that is saturated with ecological wisdom.

The Voice From the Whirlwind

With the sarcasm of an angry parent, God challenges Job:

Who is this whose ignorant words
 smear my design with darkness?
 Stand up now like a man;
 I will question you; please instruct me.

Where were you when I planned the earth?
 Tell me, if you are so wise.
 Do you know who took its dimensions,
 measuring its length with a cord?
 What were its pillars built on?
 Who laid down its cornerstone,
 while the morning stars burst out singing
 and the angels shouted for joy! (p.79)

I see in God's dramatic tour of the world, a celebration of untamed nature, and a Biblical definition of ecology. Job's revelation grows out of a sense of awe, a feeling of unity and humility before the wonders of creation, and a responsibility to do justice.

These concepts are not exclusive to the book of Job but are strands of the tradition that can be traced throughout the Bible, other Jewish texts, and Jewish thought from the ancients through the Middle Ages to the present.

A Celebration of Wildness

In God's speech from the whirlwind, we see a picture of the universe dominated by the processes and beings of wild nature. Unlike many other Biblical texts, in the Book of Job the wilderness is celebrated. The desert wasteland and the rain, the ostrich and the eagle are described in vivid detail as the manifestation of divine justice and creativity. They provide an oblique answer to Job's questions.

Who cuts a path for the thunderstorm
 and carves a road for the rain--
 to water the desolate wasteland,
 the land where no man lives;
 to make the wilderness blossom
 and cover the desert with grass?
 Does the rain have a father?

Who has begotten the dew?
 Out of whose belly is the ice born?
 Whose womb labors with the sleet? (pp.80, 81)

These passages celebrate wilderness and wildness. In our own time, Gary Snyder writes:

Wilderness is a *place* where the wild potential is fully expressed, a diversity of living and non-living beings flourishing according to their own sorts of order. (1990, p.12)

The world described in the speech from the whirlwind gives us a biblical definition of wild nature and wilderness very close to Snyder's concept.

In the passage from Job, the rain falls and the plants of the desert wilderness bloom, as Biblical translator and scholar Mitchell writes, "not for the sake of any human eye" (p. xxii). The rain and dew are glorified not because of the sustenance they bring to humans, but because they embody God's creative power. The powers of nature are celebrated because they are free from human need and interference.

Perhaps God is poking fun at the human efforts to control nature by understanding it on human terms. Mitchell writes:

Each metaphor describing creation in human terms has a large, ironic humor to it. As if God were really a gigantic carpenter, measuring the earth with a cord, cutting a path for the thunderstorm, etc. How else can he talk to Job about such cosmic energies, except in Job's language and with a cosmic amusement? (p. xxii)

Thus, even the human metaphors of creation in the Book of Job emphasize a "wilderness" flourishing by its own rules. The simplistic human image of the divine as judge, carpenter and "old man in the rocking chair" is blown apart. God truly is "the Unnamable," as the divine is often referred to in the Jewish tradition and in Mitchell's translation. Perhaps, as writer/farmer Wendell Berry suggests, it is the explosive divine presence that is wildness. He writes of God, "The presence of his spirit is our wildness, our oneness with the wildness of creation" (1993, p.43).

The places described in the whirlwind speech are wild and unpopulated: the "open prairie," "saltlands," the "unapproachable crag." These places and the animals which inhabit them (ostrich, wild ass, eagle) seem to refer to the deserts of Southern Israel. The "thicket" of the lioness and her cubs, and the home of the crocodile and hippopotamus (which might have inspired the Bible's mythical beasts, the leviathan and behemoth) are thought to be the banks of the Jordan River which were a haven for such wildlife in Biblical times (Feliks 1981 p. 96).

In the Bible, the "wilderness" usually refers to the desert which the Israelites, after fleeing Egypt, first encountered in Sinai and the Negev. Moses refers to the Sinai as "the great and terrible wilderness" (Deuteronomy 1:19). The Israelites, accustomed to the fertile Nile valley, complain incessantly to Moses about the desert wilderness:

"For you have brought us into this wilderness to starve this whole congregation to death." (Exodus 16:3)

The wilderness in the Bible is the uninhabitable desert. It is referred to as fearful and harsh but also as a place where one feels a pure dependence on God. The Bible extols the desert as an answer to human needs for physical and spiritual refuge.

It is these dry, mountainous lands which the ostrich, eagle, antelope and wild ass inhabit. However, in the Book of Job, the wilderness is not described as it is in Exodus or in the teachings of the Prophets, in relation to the Israelite experience, but rather as the place where the creative divine energy is best expressed. It is celebrated independent of its worth to humans. This is a far cry from the "great and terrible wilderness" concept which the European pilgrims, armed with the Bible, applied to the New World upon their arrival.

All of the animals, besides the horse, mentioned in God's speech are non-domesticated species, living according to their own rules as established by God.

Who unties the wild ass
 and lets him wander at will?
 He ranges the open prairie
 and roams across the saltlands.
 He is far from the tumult of the cities;
 he laughs at the driver's whip.
 He scours the hills for food,
 in search of anything green....

Do you deck the ostrich with wings,
 with elegant plumes and feathers?...

When she spreads her wings to run,
 she laughs at the horse and rider. (pp. 82, 83)

Both the wild ass and the ostrich scoff at human efforts to control them. The wild ass "laughs at the driver's whip" which cracks at the ear of his enslaved brother, the donkey. The horse and rider who are the targets of the ostrich's laughter are interpreted by Yehuda Feliks, a twentieth-century scholar on nature in the Bible, as a reference to ostrich hunting.

In Biblical times, ostrich hunting was done by mounted men who would encircle the ostrich and chase it from one rider to the next until the bird collapsed. However, according to Feliks, what often happened was that as the riders approached the ostrich, which was splayed out in the dust from exhaustion, the bird would spring to its feet and speed away. Ostriches run up to 50 km/ hr and often outran the hunters (Feliks 1981).

The wild ox also challenges human power:

Is the wild ox willing to serve you?
 Will he spend the night in your stable?
 Can you tie a rope to his neck?
 Will he harrow the fields behind you?
 Will you trust him because he is powerful
 and leave him to do your work?
 Will you wait for him to come back,
 bringing your grain to the barn? (p.82)

Even the horse, the one domesticated animal mentioned in Job, is described as a free, independent spirit. Under the human rein in battle, he is nevertheless full of unfettered exuberance and pride. The horse laughs at the attempt to control, to kill.

Do you give the horse his strength?
 Do you clothe his neck with terror?
 Do you make him leap like a locust,
 snort like a blast of thunder?
 He paws and champs at the bit;
 he exults as he charges into battle.
 He laughs at the sight of danger;
 he does not wince from the sword
 or the arrows nipping at his ears
 or the flash of spear and javelin. (p.83)

The ultimate challenges to human power in the Book of Job are the leviathan and behemoth. Both are thought to be composites of real animals and mythical creatures. The leviathan is a combination of a crocodile and a whale, and the behemoth is probably a hippopotamus (Feliks 1981). Both the crocodile and the hippopotamus lived in the Jordan river in Biblical times. Due to the amazing size and power of the beasts themselves, and to the fact that they were never seen by most inhabitants of the area, they acquired mythic proportions (ibid.).

Look now: the Beast that I made:
 he eats grass like a bull.
 Look: the power in his thighs,
 the pulsing sinews of his belly.
 His penis stiffens like a pine;
 his testicles bulge with vigor....

Who then will take him by the eyes
 or pierce his nose with a peg?
 Will you catch the Serpent with a fishhook
 or tie his tongue with a thread?
 Will you pass a string through his nose
 or crack his jaw with a pin?
 Will he plead with you for mercy
 and timidly beg your pardon?
 Will he come to terms of surrender
 and promise to be your slave?...

Will merchants bid for his carcass
and parcel him out to shops? (pp.85,86)

Feliks argues that the lines that mention taking the beast by the eyes and catching him with a fishhook refer to hunting. In Biblical times, hippos were hunted by gouging out their eyes with long, hooked spears (Feliks 1981).

Wild nature, as defined by Job's story "does not beg a pardon"; it is not bought or sold; it challenges efforts to tame or kill and laughs at civilization. The animals and forces of wild places are to be accepted on their own terms. The creatures in the speech from the whirlwind are "radiant in their pure being" (Mitchell 1979, p.xxxvii). Mitchell writes, "We have a whole world of the most vivid, exuberant life, where every being is at the center of an infinite circle" (p. xxiii).

American Rabbi David Shapiro writes of creation in terms which ring true to the Jobian ear:

All creatures exist for each other, but also for their own blessedness in some manner that transcends our limited knowledge and understanding. (Shapiro 1989, p.36)

God's message to Job calls for an embracing of wild nature and offers itself as the foundation for a Jewish wilderness ethic. As I will discuss later, God uses wild nature to tame the human ego.

Jobian Ecology

Present in Job's revelation is a strong sense of ecology. The modern science of ecology is a study of interactions between organisms and their environment; niche, diversity and interconnections are emphasized.

Biblical ecology describes a world in which each creature has a purpose and place, the variety of wondrous creatures is extolled and there is a strong sense of the unity of all creation. An ecology built on the Jewish

tradition also stresses moral interconnectedness. This approach to the natural world finds expression in the Book of Job and various other Jewish texts, rituals and laws.

Place and Purpose

In God's magnificent tour of the universe in the Book of Job, animals are mentioned with reference to their natural home and their behavior. The habitats are specific and descriptive: the wild ass "ranges the open prairie/ and roams across the saltlands"; the lion lies "in ambush in the thicket"; the ostrich "lays her eggs in the dirt"; and the eagle "makes his home on the mountaintop;/ on the unapproachable crag. / He sits and scans for prey;/ from far off his eyes can spot it." Animals are portrayed in their niche and with behavior vividly appropriate to their ecology.

The wild ass roaming the saltlands is not merely a poetic metaphor. Wild asses populated the saline desert flats of Southern Israel until firearms were introduced in the area by the British at the turn of the century. In the last ten years, wild asses have been reintroduced to the arid plains of the Negev Desert. Once again the Israeli desert can be, as Isaiah tells us, "a joy of wild asses" (Isaiah 32:14).

Lions inhabited the thickly vegetated banks ("thicket") of the Jordan river in Biblical times (Feliks, p. 93). Ostriches actually do, as we are told in the whirlwind speech, lay their eggs in the dirt, without a nest.

A Midrash (a traditional story which expands upon Biblical passages) from fifth-century C.E. Israel, tells us:

The Rabbis said: Even though you may think them superfluous in this world, creatures such as flies, bugs and gnats have their allotted task in the scheme of creation, as it says 'And God saw

everything that God had made , and behold, it was very good,' (Genesis 1:31). (Bernstein 1992)

That every living (and nonliving) element of nature, no matter how small or unappealing, has a specific and significant role is one of the basic lessons of ecology. Regarding poisonous weeds and stinging insects, Wendell Berry writes:

That we may disapprove of these things does not mean that God is in error... it means that we are deficient in wholeness, harmony and understanding- that is, we are 'fallen.' (1993, p.41)

The concept of being "fallen" (a consequence of original sin) is not part of traditional Jewish thought, but, nonetheless, the message of a limited understanding of the creation is relevant to Job's story.

Ecology and Suffering

Job is challenged to understand the world on its own terms, not by the human measure. In the conclusion, part of his new awareness comes from an acceptance of a reality that is not dominated strictly by health, wealth and piety but includes illness, predation, suffering, evil and death.

Mitchell argues that the world that Job is shown is not the naive paradise of the wolf lying down with the lamb that we find in Isaiah's famous eschatological vision. In Job, "The lioness springs without malice; the torn antelope suffers and lets go; each plays its role in the sacred game" (Mitchell 1979, p. xxi).

One of the important lessons of modern-day ecology is that predation, disease and death are important parts of a functioning ecosystem. The jackal and the lion are not, as Job's friend Eliphaz believes, symbols of evil and godlessness in the world (ibid., p. 17).

For Job, coming to terms with his own suffering means an acceptance of this broader and wilder reality. The book of Job brings an ecological and moral maturity to a Jewish perspective on the natural world.

Diversity

Job's experience involves an embracing of the whole of creation in all its processes as well as all of its manifestations. Even the moralistic speeches of Job and his friends include numerous animal references: jackal, owl, wolf, donkey, ox, spider, hawk, zebra, vulture, worm, cow, viper, lamb, maggot and dog. There is an awe-inspiring diversity of creatures described in God's whirlwind tour: lioness, antelope, wild ass, wild ox, ostrich, horse, eagle, vulture, behemoth, leviathan and sparrow. Altogether, the Book of Job calls into being a tremendous array of wildlife inhabiting the Biblical Near East. This celebration of diversity echoes throughout Jewish tradition and forms the rich core of a Biblical sense of ecology.

There is a Jewish blessing which is to be recited "upon seeing exceptionally strange-looking people or animals": "Praise to You, Adonai, Our G-d and Universal Ruler, who makes all variety of creatures" (Scherman 1990, p.229). It is interesting to note that the Jewish view of creation celebrated here ("Who makes," not made) and throughout the tradition emphasizes that creation is a continual process. The theory of evolution and the Jewish concept of creation are not mutually exclusive.

In the Talmud, a second-century compilation of Jewish laws and stories on the Bible, Noah, as he prepares to send the raven from the ark to find dry land, receives a seminal lesson in the preservation of biodiversity:

Said Rabbi Simeon Ben Lakhish: The raven said to Noah... You must hate me! You did not pick [a scout] from species of which there are seven, but send out a species of which there are only

two. If the prince of heat or the prince of cold injure me, would not the world be lacking a species? (Stein 1991, p.9)

In his commentary on the commandment in Deuteronomy 22:6 of not taking the mother bird together with her young, Maimonides, the famous twelfth-century Jewish scholar, writes:

Scripture will not permit a destructive act that will cause the extinction of a species even though it has permitted the ritual slaughtering of that species. And someone who kills mother and children in one day...is considered as if having destroyed the species. (ibid., p.9)

The importance of individual and diverse species of animals is the focus of a number of Jewish laws called "kilayim." Kilayim involves a prohibition against mixing species mentioned in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. God instructs the Israelites:

"You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; you shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material." (Leviticus 19:20)

From this passage, the rabbis developed a number of laws prohibiting the mixing of trees, seeds, cattle and other materials.

I believe that kilayim represents another stay on human power. There is a natural order and purpose, and we should not play God or try to improve on God's creation. Our "dominion" does not give us license to affect nature in such deep and perhaps irreparable ways as changing the nature and purpose of a being. Although many rabbis have endorsed bioengineering, in my opinion genetic manipulation is the most fundamental form of kilayim and is, as writer Bill McKibben suggests, a "spit in the face of God" (McKibben 1992, p.79).

Evident in the Book of Job, the blessings and stories, and kilayim is a Biblical endangered species protection act. It represents an appropriate application of the Biblical concept of ecology. Ideally, the protection of

biodiversity would not be a burden to naive citizens but an integral part of our responsibility to the earth and God.

Unity

In Job's awe before the grandeur of the world we find a strong sense of at-one-ness with the wild ox and the ostrich. In describing the experience of the Biblical person before the sublime, Heschel writes, "The most exalted objects such as heaven or the stars and he himself have a mystery in common: they all continually depend on the living God" (Heschel 1955, p.48). This sense of unity and interconnectedness is another central message in both Biblical and modern ecology.

In the early parts of the Book of Job, our hero compares the respect once given him by his neighbors to the abuse he now receives. Deep in despair, Job laments, "I am brother to the wild jackal,/ friend to the desert owl" (Mitchell 1979, p.72). Job expresses a feeling of kinship with the beasts brought about by his fallen position and loneliness.

However, after the voice from the whirlwind, we understand with Job, that yes, he is brother to the jackal and friend to the owl but not because of his suffering, helplessness and lowly position. The feeling of kinship comes from our shared source and a sense of divine creativity and justice. This feeling of at-one-ness with all of creation is echoed in Jewish laws and liturgy, and it forms a pillar of the Jewish mystical tradition, or Kabbalah.

According to the Kabbalists divine energy pervades all things. Through our actions, such as blessing and eating food, we release the divine spark in the food and ourselves so that the energy may unite with the all-embracing divine presence. It is our duty to maintain the cosmic order by realizing the spirit in every object and embracing the unity of all creation.

The Hebrew word for a human being is "adam" or "ben adam," son of Adam. Land or earth is Adamah. From Genesis II we are told that Adam is taken from the "adamah." Perhaps an accurate rendering for Adam is, as some have suggested, "earthling" (Bernstein 1992) or, the human who was formed from humus (Stein 1991). The Hebrew word that defines human origin speaks of an inextricable bond with the earth.

In Job's awe before the wonders of the natural world, he embraces the whole cloth of creation, which "runs seamlessly from angel to beast" (Mitchell 1979, p.xxiv). Job's proclamation after the whirlwind tour of the universe emphasizes his kinship with the beasts, birds and grasses. He is truly a human from the humus:

Therefore, I will be quiet
comforted that I am dust. (p.88)

In the sections on blessings and Jewish treatment of animals, I further examine the tradition of kinship with all of creation. These expressions of unity also speak of a moral order which connects us all.

Moral Ecology

Job challenges God to punish him, if, in fact, he deserves it. He protests:

If my land cried out against me;
if its very furrows saw me and wept;
if I took its fruit without paying
or caused its tenants to sigh--
let thorns grow instead of wheat
and thistles instead of barley. (p.74)

I do not believe that Job is merely being poetic. Biblical ecology goes beyond the modern science of ecology to include an ethical interdependence between people and the earth. If we act irresponsibly, the land calls out for justice.

The "thorns and thistles" of the land have their origins in the story of Adam and Eve. God says:

"Cursed be the ground because of you;
By toil shall you eat of it .
All the days of your life:
Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you." (Genesis 3:17)

The moral web that binds human action and the earth finds expression in the story of Cain and Abel. Again God applies the curse:

"What have you done? Hark, your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! Therefore you shall be more cursed than the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. If you till the soil, it shall no longer yield its strength to you." (Genesis 4:10)

In the Biblical moral ecology, our ethical behavior affects the purity of the land. The Israelites' connection with the land of Canaan is bound up with morality. God explains that the former inhabitants of the land defiled it with their behavior and the Israelites will replace them for this reason (Leviticus 18:24). The Israelites are instructed to behave responsibly:

"So you shall not pollute the land wherein you are:
For the blood it pollutes the land...
And you shall not defile the land which you inhabit."
(Numbers 35:33)

In a discussion of what she also terms Biblical ecology, contemporary Biblical commentator Nehama Leibowitz writes, "Man is answerable by his deeds not only for his own fate... but for that of the world" (Leibowitz 1980, p.204). Taking this kind of responsibility for human action, a position which reverberates throughout the Jewish tradition, has powerful messages for a society where corporations and government agencies deny responsibility for the results of poor land management practices and the use of harmful toxins. How different would our actions be if we considered ourselves responsible for the health of the land and the integrity of the whole world?

Early twentieth-century Jewish thinker Martin Buber explains:

What the Bible wishes to express is the existential partnership of both man and soil -- a partnership that develops into a unique solidarity. (ibid., p.202)

When we ignore the commandments, the natural order is disrupted. This "violation of the framework" (Buber) is called "hanef." Behaviors which constitute hanef include, according to medieval commentator Nahmanides, incest, idolatry and bloodshed (ibid., p.202).

However, Buber emphasizes, "the partnership between man and soil demands first of all the upright conduct of man in all that pertains to the upkeep of the field" (ibid., p.203). Under these terms, industrial agriculture constitutes "hanef." Thus, proper land stewardship is vital to the maintenance of the natural order, an argument which we hear today from Aldo Leopold and Wendell Berry.

It is not only in proper ethics and good farming that we maintain the unity of the world but also in work. In Biblical Hebrew, "avoda" means both work and worship. In Genesis II, Adam is instructed to "laavod"--to work or worship the Garden of Eden. Berry writes, "Work connects us both to Creation and to eternity." Skills are to be used "as a service to fellow creatures and to God" (Berry 1993, p.50).

Lessons from the Earth

In response to the simplistic theology of his friend's "dusty answer," Job proclaims:

But I am not an idiot;
 who does not know such things?
 Even the animals will tell you,
 and the birds in the sky will teach you.
 Any plant will instruct you;
 go learn from the fish in the sea.
 Which of them does not know
 that God created all things? (p.33)

Job is using sarcasm against the insulting “wisdom” of his friends.

However, again, I believe that in the end Job stands corrected. In the magnificent tour of the universe, God uses creation as a lesson to Job. As I have argued, Job is schooled in an ecological ethic by the leviathan and the lioness.

Jewish tradition defines the concept of the righteous path, the way of God, as "Derekh erez" -- the way of the land. The Talmud tells us that we can learn modesty from the cat, who covers up its excrement, and fidelity and devotion from the dove, who mates for life (Bernstein 1992). Certainly Job's lesson from nature goes far beyond this simple morality.

Celebrating wildness, learning from the natural world, accepting its cry of injustice, realizing our oneness through God, and recognizing the inherent goodness in the diversity of creation are all aspects of a Jewish ecological ethic, which, I believe, could offer the support of an ancient tradition to the current struggle to define an earth ethic.

The Human Place in the Jobian World

If I could paint a picture of the universe according to God's creation song in the Book of Job, the human face would be difficult to discern in the grand mosaic of the natural world. Most of the canvas would be filled with lions and antelope, stars and mythic beasts, rain and ice.

In exploring the human place in the Jobian world, I will first examine the human experience of awe before nature. Then I will move to a discussion of the human niche in the Book of Job and the responsibility to do justice.

A Sense of Awe

Caught up in God's re-creation of the world, Job says

I am speechless: what can I answer?
 I put my hand on my mouth.
 I have said too much already;
 now I will speak no more. (p.84)

Job's experience in the whirlwind of divine expression is one of awe before the wonders of creation. In that experience, we find poignant messages about awareness of our surroundings and the human place in the world. The power and potential of awe are evident throughout the Bible, the Talmud, and later Jewish thought, ritual and law.

According to contemporary Jewish theologian Arthur Green, awe gives us "a sense of magnificence, of smallness and of belonging, all at once" (Green 1992, p.xx). This certainly seems true for Job, who experiences his own insignificance but also his unity with the rest of creation. Green puts awe at the center of religious experience. The wonder we feel before nature, according to Green, is the same wonder we feel before God.

Holmes Rolston, a secular environmental philosopher, describes the experience of awe before nature in a way that rings true to the Jobian ear,

Encounter with nature integrates me, protects me from pride,
 gives a sense of proportion and place, teaches me what to expect,
 and what to be content with, establishes other value than my
 own, and releases feelings in my spirit. (1986, p.47)

Rolston notes that we, as a society steeped in science, study nature to "amend and repair it." He asks, "Is there any further study of nature that appreciates its wildness, its spontaneous generative powers, its beauty" (1986, p.11). I believe that the Jobian experience is this kind of study.

Job's radical amazement before God's vivid recreation of the universe makes him aware of the grandeur and mystery of Creation. He says in the end of his conversation with God:

I have spoken of the unspeakable
 and tried to grasp the infinite.
 Listen and I will speak;
 I will question you: please instruct me.
 I had heard of you with my ears;
 but now my eyes have seen you. (p.88)

Jewish thinkers from Maimonides to Einstein consider awareness one of the fundamental characteristics of a Jewish way of life. This awareness comes not only from Biblical-style revelations but from experiences in the natural world. We can become aware if we "keep our eyes open to the many beautiful, mysterious and holy things that happen all around us every day," as Rabbi Lawrence Kushner recommends (Bernstein 1992, p.17).

Walking in the harsh desert of Southern Israel, every spot of green, every bit of movement is a small miracle. One could easily travel through such a desolate place blind to the hidden and ephemeral life. But once you experience the wonder of a caper in bloom, or a lizard on a hunt, your eyes are open to the miracles.

Rabbi Kook, an early twentieth-century mystic, and the first Rabbi of modern Palestine, suggests;

Know the great reality, the richness of existence that you always encounter. Contemplate its grandeur, its beauty, its precision, its harmony. Be attached to the legions of living beings who are constantly bringing forth everything beautiful. (Bokser 1978, p.23)

The new awareness which a sense of awe invokes in us has the potential to bring us into closer and more meaningful contact with our surroundings. In our society's alienation from the natural world, we become blind to the forms of life which surround us.

In one of my favorite passages in Genesis, Jacob stops for the night in a place that is described only as "a certain place." The simplicity and sparseness of the place are emphasized by the fact that Jacob takes a stone for a pillow. Asleep, he has a dream of the divine presence. He awakens awed by the vision

and proclaims, "Surely God is in this place and I did not know it...How awesome is this place" (Genesis 28:16).

Jacob's relationship with the place has changed profoundly through his awareness of divine presence. In Jewish tradition, God is omnipresent. If our eyes were opened by wonder, we would treat each place with a sense of the holiness that it deserves.

In a similar vein, the sages explain that the bush which Moses saw burning was a simple thorn bush "to teach you that no place is devoid of the divine Presence, not even a thornbush" (Stein 1991, p. 67).

With open eyes, we appreciate the world more fully. Heschel writes, "Mankind will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation" (Heschel 1955, p.46). In our blindness to our surroundings, we devalue nature.

After he is shown the world of the mountain goat and the lion, I believe that Job gains a strong appreciation for the flora and fauna of his desert home. Although the Bible does not describe Job's new relationship with his environment, I cannot believe that he takes the grass in the desert wilderness, or the snow on the mountain peaks, or the strength of his horse for granted. He no longer ignores the eagle's broad shadow as it passes over his flocks, and I don't think he would lift a stone against it. I imagine that even with his new-found prosperity, he has a deep reverence for life and gratitude for the wonders of the earth.

Jews express this appreciation for the wonders of Creation in blessings. To be able to recite the blessing for seeing fruit trees in bloom, we must first be aware of the blossoms. The blessing carries an acknowledgment of our humble place on God's earth.

Humility and Humus

I know you can do all things
 and nothing you wish is impossible
 I have heard of you with my ears;
 but now my eyes have seen you.
 Therefore I will be quiet
 comforted that I am dust. (p.88)

In his awe before the natural world, Job feels humility. I do not agree with many translations, the King James version among them, which have rendered the last phrase of the Book of Job as “Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Mitchell 1979). I concur with Mitchell that Job is not expressing self-hatred but instead accepting his humble place in the universe in concord with his earthy origins: “God formed man from the dust of the earth” (Genesis 2:7). This humility, I believe, holds some ancient ecological wisdom.

Our society is radically anthropocentric; individual human interests form the center of our world-view. Our needs have become, in a sense, holy. Our desire for bigger houses, newer consumer goods and more golf courses drives a system which sacrifices woodpeckers and whales, salmon and clean air on the altar of our market-driven needs.

The Book of Job is an unmistakable attempt to dethrone the deities of human centeredness. Other parts of the Jewish tradition teach us that the earth does not belong to us, that human judgment is limited and that we must be humble on God's earth. Philosopher Mary Midgley writes:

We need the vast world, and it must be a world that does not need us; a world constantly capable of surprising us, a world we did not program, since only such a world is the proper object of wonder.
 (1978, p.362)

I believe that the Book of Job celebrates that “vast world.” It shatters the world of means and ends and recognizes a world that thrives in complete

disregard of human needs. And if we have not been sufficiently humbled by Job's experience, the rabbis explain:

Why were human beings created last in the order of Creation? So that they should not grow proud -- for one can say to them, 'Even the gnat came before you in Creation.' (Bernstein 1992, p.51)

The words of Isaiah (40:12) and Proverbs (30:2) also carry messages of humility before the wonders of creation.

Wild nature is beyond our bounds, beyond our control. The wild ass laughs at our cities, the ostrich scoffs at the horse and rider, and the wild ox ignores our commands. These are parts of creation which we do not have "dominion" over. Does that mean that we have failed to fulfill God's command to "Dominate and subdue"? I believe that Genesis 1:28 has to be understood both in relation to Adam and the garden of Eden (the command is to "work and guard" the garden) and in relation to Job's vision.

Environmental historians and philosophers have concluded that any "Judeo-Christian" environmental ethic must be based on the anthropocentric values expressed in the Genesis creation story. However, the story of Adam in the garden, the vision of Job, and many of the laws given at Sinai offer a theocentric view of the world and emphasize human responsibility towards the natural world. If in Genesis I license was given to humans to subdue the earth it is revoked, or, at least radically limited later in the Bible.

Judaism understands the arrogant potential of humans. Experiences of awe, as well as rituals and laws discussed later, serve to humble us and remind us that God, not man, is the master of the world.

Theocentrism

Were you there when I stopped the waters,
as they issued gushing from the womb?
when I wrapped the ocean in clouds
and swaddled the sea in shadows? (p.79)

The world as described in the Book of Job is theocentric. God's power over and in Creation forms the focus of much of the text. A world with God at its center creates the moral order which binds the thunderstorms, the desert grasses and the antelope, and directs our actions.

Have you ever commanded morning
or guided dawn to its place--
to hold the corners of the sky
and shake off the last few stars?
All things are touched with color;
the whole world is changed. (p.79)

God proves to Job that our laws do not apply to the rest of creation; we can't "hunt prey for the lion" or "send up an order to the clouds" for rain. Our dominance has limited boundaries. The human place is defined largely by what we don't do -- control wild nature; that is God's job.

As I mentioned earlier, the God portrayed in the Book of Job is not God the Judge, or "the old man in the rocking chair," or a carpenter measuring out the expanse of the oceans. God is that unnamable and irreducible energy that pervades all things and takes a playful joy in the creation of the behemoth and leviathan. God is the explosive energy which causes the bush to burst into flames before Moses' eyes. God teases Job in the whirlwind speech:

Where is the road to light?
Where does darkness live?...

You know, since you have been there
and are older than all creation. (p.80)

In a similar vein, Eliphaz the Temanite challenges Job's wisdom,

Are you the first man to be born
created before the mountains? (p.41)

In a sense, God is challenging Job to "think like a mountain" (Leopold 1949, p.137). The veil of simple human morality and justice is being lifted to reveal a theocentric world where we must accept suffering along with good fortune

and pastoral peace along with the clever lunge of the lion and the howl of the wolf.

In the Book of Job, God, like Leopold's mountain, is the voice of objectivity. It is this voice which blows apart Job's human-centered world of good and evil, health and illness. It is this God who proclaims:

"I make peace and create evil
I make weal and create woe--
I the Lord do all these things." (Isaiah 45:7)

Without being taken on a God's-eye tour of the world, perhaps "thinking like a mountain" is a way of reaching that level of understanding and acceptance. Mitchell writes of Job's new awareness at the end of the story:

Once the personal will is surrendered, future and past disappear, the morning stars burst out singing, and the deep will, contemplating the world it has created, says, 'Behold, it is very good.' (p. xxviii)

Judaism's theocentrism is expressed clearly in the concept of God's proprietorship of the earth. In the Psalms, it is written "The Earth is the Lord's and all that it holds, the world and its inhabitants" (Psalms 24:1). Throughout the Jewish tradition, God's ownership of the earth is central.

There is a Midrash about two farmers arguing over a strip of land which they both claim. As was the custom, they went to the rabbi to resolve the dispute. Confounded by the dilemma, the rabbi said "Since I cannot decide to whom this land belongs, let us ask the land." He put an ear to the ground, and after a moment stood up and proclaimed, "My friends, the land says it belongs to neither of you-- but that you belong to it" (Stein 1991, p.54). In a similar vein, in Ecclesiastes it is written; "The advantage of land is paramount; even a king is subject to the soil" (ibid, p.54).

If the earth is God's, and we are mere "sojourners" (Leviticus 25:23), we have no right to exploit; we have only the privilege to use. Adam is told to

"work and guard" the garden. If we do not own the earth, then we cannot subject it to our laws. God owns the earth and we must follow God's rules, which, according to the book of Job and Jewish laws and rituals, are more just than that which humans usually practice. God's way in the Book of Job seems to be more in touch with ecological reality and true justice.

The very presence of the Jewish people on the land of Israel is understood as a gift from God given to Moses and the Israelites at the doorstep of Canaan.

"Keep, therefore, all the Instruction that I enjoin upon you today, so that you may have the strength to enter and take possession of the land." (Deuteronomy 11:8)

"If, then, you obey the commandments... I will grant the rain for your land in season." (Deuteronomy 11:14)

Canaan is a land where human sustenance is completely dependent on rain, unlike the irrigated plains of the Nile. The giving of the land and the rain is contingent upon God's judgment of the Israelites' actions. Our presence on the land is conditional upon our behavior. Only by following the commandments --creating a just society-- can we dwell on the land and enjoy its fruits. Wendell Berry writes of the granting of Canaan to the Israelites,

Thus deeply implicated in the very definition of this gift is a specific warning against hubris which is the great ecological sin. (1981, p. 270)

For today's society, this challenging of our ownership of the earth could have tremendous repercussions. It could bring greater respect and appreciation for the gifts offered us from the land and perhaps encourage limitations on human use and control of nature. Perhaps the most important aspect of a theocentric world-view is that human actions have measure besides self-satisfaction.

As awed and humbled inheritors of Job's vision how are we to act?

Justice

Job questions the injustice in the world:

Why do the wicked prosper
and live to a ripe old age?

The poor, like herds of cattle,
wander across the plains,
searching all day for food,
picking up scraps for their children....

They carry grain for the wicked
and break their backs for the rich.
They press olives and starve,
crush grapes and go thirsty. (pp.52, 60)

Finally, our "faithful rebel" (Buber 1949) proclaims, "there is no justice." It is clear from Job's concerns, as well as from God's lesson of divine justice manifested in the wonders of creation, that the human duty is to create justice in the world.

Buber explains the connection between divine and human justice:

The creation of the world is justice...a distributing, a giving justice. God the Creator bestows upon each what belongs to him, upon each being and thing, in so far as He allows it to become entirely itself. (ibid., p. 195)

Our job, according to Buber, is to extend this divine justice:

Designedly man is lacking in this presentation of heaven and earth, in which man is shown the justice that is greater than his, and is shown that he with his justice, which intends to give to everyone what is due to him, is called only to emulate the divine justice, which gives to everyone what he is. (ibid., p.195)

Thus we are to create a world in which each being can grow to its full potential; and we are to realize the vision of the wilderness where "every being is the center of an infinite circle" (Mitchell, p.xxii).

In the argument with his friends, Job boasts of his life as a just man to prove that he is not deserving of the suffering inflicted upon him.

All ears were filled with my praise;
 every eye was my witness.
 For I rescued the poor, the desperate,
 those who had nowhere to turn.
 I brought relief to the beggar
 and joy to the widow's heart.
 Righteousness was my clothing
 justice my robe and turban. (p.70)

Earlier in the same speech, Job recalls the honor bestowed upon him by his neighbors and friends. The problem with Job's sense of justice which he throws into God's face is that he expected reward: There is a certain haughtiness to Job's righteousness. In his radical amazement before God's universe, he understands finally that true justice is that which is practiced humbly with love and without the expectation of reward.

Though the good-behavior-reward view of human action certainly exists in the Jewish tradition, Maimonides and Buber argue that the Book of Job subverts the simplistic moral equations of a God-Judge (Goodman 1976, Buber 1949) .

The idea that the human purpose in creation is to do justice is echoed in a traditional explanation of Genesis. According to the Talmud, one of the three reasons that humans (Adam) were created on the last day was "that he might immediately enter upon the fulfillment of a precept" (Stein 1991, p.51). The precept or commandment here refers specifically to keeping the Sabbath and generally to all the mitzvot (commandments) that a Jew is obliged to do.

The Jewish idea of justice is intimately connected with the commandments (mitzvot) which Jews fulfill as part of the covenant. In their book of curriculum on Judaism and ecology, Ellen Bernstein and Dan Fink define mitzvot: "Mitzvot offer a way of life that will insure the common good and future of the earth" (1992, p. 94).

Observing the Sabbath, keeping kosher, helping the needy and planting trees are all mitzvot. These deeds are done not out of fear of punishment or hope for reward but out of a love for God. In the mystical tradition, mitzvot are fulfilled for the healing of the world, "tikkun olam." We might not personally see or feel the effect of our good work; the system of mitzvot is not "karma."

Despite Job's pride, we can learn from his righteousness. Job's statement about the furrows of his soil weeping follows passages on his treatment of the poor and helpless. David Shapiro, an American rabbi, writes,

man must treat the soil as his mother and, as Job said, not cause its furrows to weep by exploiting it to achieve his ends through oppression of his brothers.... The earth weeps over the exploitation of its workers, as affirmed by Job. (Shapiro 1989, pp. 35, 41)

The call to do justice is echoed throughout the Jewish tradition. The prophets are driven by the goal of bringing a wicked nation back into a righteous and just life. According to the Talmud,

the prophet Micah reduced the commandments to three: 'Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.' (Strassfeld 1980, p.394)

Isaiah tells us:

Learn to do good.
Devote yourselves to justice;
Aid the wronged.
Uphold the rights of the orphan;
Defend the cause of the widow. (Isaiah 1:17)

The trees will have their justice, as well, in Isaiah's "song of scorn over the King of Babylon." The king, we are told, cut down the famous cedars of Lebanon.

How the taskmaster vanished,
How oppression ended!...

All the earth is calm, untroubled;
Loudly it cheers,

even pines rejoice at your fate
 And cedars of Lebanon;
 'Now that you have lain down
 None shall come up to fell us.' (Isaiah 14:3)

Perhaps the most famous of the Jewish sages, Rabbi Akiva, taught 2000 years ago that the entire Bible could be summed up in the commandment "Love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). Norman Lamm, in his book on Jewish ethics, argues that the test of a just society is how it treats the stranger, the "other." God instructs the Israelites,

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourself been strangers in the land of Egypt.
 (Exodus 23:9)

Renowned medieval scholar Maimonides writes, "in the case of the 'stranger', we are commanded to love with the whole of our heart" (Lamm 1974, p. 51).

Buber writes of a justice that truly emulates God's justice in Job, "The humble man lives in each being and knows each being's manner and virtue" (Strassfeld 1980, p. 394). To the humble person, no one is an "other" and nothing lacks value.

Following the voice from the whirlwind and Job's comforting epiphany, we are told the end of Job's life-story. It is a "happily lived-ever-after" conclusion with at least one unexpected twist.

So the Lord blessed Job's life more than the beginning. Job now had fourteen thousand sheep...He also had seven sons and three daughters: the eldest he named Dove, the second Cinnamon, and the third, Eye-shadow. And in all the world there were no women as beautiful as Job's daughters. He gave them a share of his possessions along with their brothers. After this, Job lived for one hundred and forty years. (p.91)

There is a curious sense of equality to this final paragraph of the story of Job. His daughters are named while his sons are not. Mitchell believes that

their names "symbolize peace, abundance, and a specifically female kind of grace" (p. xxx). Job's daughters are given an equal portion of the inheritance -- which is strikingly atypical -- and their beauty is celebrated.

Perhaps there is a sense of justice in the strong feminine presence of the conclusion. Maybe, as Mitchell argues, the balance is being restored:

It is as if, once Job has learned to surrender, his world too gives up the male compulsion to control. The daughters have almost the last word. (p. xxx)

PART 2: HALAKHAH

THE JOBIAN VISION IN PRACTICE

Justice is not merely a theoretical ideal espoused by Job and other prophets; it is a practice put into action in Halakhah. In the following pages, I will examine Jewish agricultural ordinances and laws governing the treatment of animals. I would expect that after his vision, Job lived his life according to these codes.

Shmittah and Jubilee

Mitchell considers Job's revelation "an experience of the Sabbath vision" (1979, p.xxi). The weekly Jewish Sabbath extends its celebration of Creation and emphasis on equality to the rituals of Shmittah and Jubilee. Both holidays involve a rest from all agricultural activity and a temporary or permanent relinquishing of ownership rights. God instructs the Israelites:

"Six years you may sow your fields and six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in the yield. But in the seventh year, the land shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, a Sabbath of the Lord. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard...it shall be a year of complete rest for the land." (Leviticus 25:2)

In Exodus and Deuteronomy, discussions of Shmittah focus on social justice: God instructs, and then in Deuteronomy Moses echoes the code:

"but in the seventh you shall let it rest and lie fallow. Let the needy among your people eat of it, and what they leave let the wild beasts eat." (Exodus 23:11)

"Every seventh year you shall practice a remission of debts...open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land." (Deuteronomy 15:1)

Shmittah is known as the "Sabbath of the land." In the seventh year, the Israelites were to eat whatever the land produced without their labor, let all

beings eat of their fields, and remit all debts. The passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy emphasize an equality throughout the community -- from land owners to the poor, from neighbors to wild animals.

The widest of the expanding circles of the Sabbath is in the forty-ninth year:

"It will be a Jubilee for you: You will proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. Each of you shall return his holding." (Leviticus 25:8)

In the Jubilee year land was redistributed so that every family started over on equal economic footing. Each family returned to the original share of land they had owned when the Israelites first settled Canaan. No matter what wealth of land they amassed during the ensuing forty-eight years, they become equal to their neighbors in the Jubilee.

Shmittah and Jubilee offer a beautiful blending of social justice and good land management. They teach us to care for the whole community -- the land, wild beasts and the poor. This sense of an inclusive justice is true to the Jobian vision. Humility and interconnectedness are emphasized. The earth and people are being treated in the same way, with the same sense of justice. I believe this is an expression of what Leopold and Berry, in this century, have envisioned in a land ethic.

Shmittah and Jubilee speak against selfishness and an obsession with utility. They curb greed and create a more equitable society. Perhaps most importantly, these laws remind us of our responsibility to the land, animals and our human community. We are playing by God's rules on his land.

In the Leviticus passage on Shmittah it is written that we must follow God's laws, "that you may live upon the land in security." As I discussed in relation to the gift of Canaan to the Israelites, our continual presence on the land and subsistence from it is dependent on our just behavior.

Shmittah and Jubilee are radical concepts and demanding practices. We gather that in Biblical times many did not follow the ordinances, as Isaiah and Jesus correct the people for their remission concerning Shmittah. However it gives voice to Jewish theology and law, as well as the desire for a more just society.

I don't expect our society, or even individual Jewish communities, to fully adopt Shmittah or Jubilee, although modern adaptations have been suggested and some are in place in Israel (Waskow 1979). However, I believe that the lessons they bring are invaluable.

The value of the ancient Hebrew traditions is clear in a society where social oppression and environmental degradation are often linked; where indebted countries of the South raze their forests and dislocate people to repay U.S. banks; and where South American peasants are pushed into the hilly tropical forests because of land inequities, . One of Job's fellow prophets cries out:

God hoped for justice,
and behold, injustice; For equity,
But behold, iniquity!
Woe to those who add house to house
And join field to field,
Till there is room for none but you
To dwell on the land! (Isaiah 5:7)

The Righteous Jew and the Beast

"The mark of a righteous man is his concern for the well-being of his beast" (Schochet 1984, p. 148).

The extension of justice evident in Shmittah and Jubilee is even more pronounced in Jewish treatment of animals. In Jewish stories and the laws of kashrut and tzar baalei hayyim, we find a strong expression of a Jobian sense of humility and reverence before a world that we did not create. Kashrut are the codes having to do with clean and unclean foods and the proper method of slaughter. Tzar baalei hayyim is a prohibition on cruel treatment of animals. In these laws, our dominion over the animal world is limited, and human responsibility and kinship with all beings is emphasized.

These biblical codes share a concept I would term "sanctity of life." The creative force which fills the wild ox and behemoth is part of all creatures and demands reverence and careful attention.

To understand the relationship between humans and animals, we will begin with Genesis 2, where we find a powerful commentary on the original intimacy between humans and animals:

The Lord God said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him." And the Lord God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them...And the man gave names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to all the wild beasts; but for Adam no fitting helper was found. (Genesis 2:18-20)

After the creation of Eve, Adam proclaims, "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23). It would seem that God had intended for Adam to find a mate among the animals, and it is only after "no fitting helper was found" that the possibility of a human mate was considered.

Several medieval Biblical commentators (Nahmanides, Rashi) concur with this view. Schochet writes,

What is remarkable is the intimation, however lacking in seriousness, that God could possibly have intended for animals to share such an intimate relationship with human beings! (1984, p.163)

Schochet believes that this concept would not have seemed unreasonable to the Judean farmers and shepherds who had close bonds with their animals. Certainly if animals were considered to be our potential mates at the dawn of creation, they deserve to be treated ethically. In fact, there are many examples of Jews, even famous scholars and leaders, being judged by their treatment of animals.

The young Moses' righteousness was proven by his actions. He stops an Egyptian from beating a Hebrew slave and breaks up a fight between two Hebrews. He then goes on to prove his just character in dealing with animals. He waters the flock of the daughters of Midian, who had been denied access to the well, and then takes the flock to pasture far out in the wilderness (Exodus 2,3).

The Mishnah expands on Moses' compassion for animals and explains how he was chosen by God as the leader of the Israelites. I paraphrase: Moses worked as a shepherd for his father-in-law Jethro. One day, he tracked a runaway lamb to a small pool of water. Seeing that the lamb was exhausted, Moses carried the lamb on his shoulders all the way back to the rest of the flock. Seeing this, God said, "You who have compassion for a lamb shall now be the shepherd of my people Israel" (Schochet 1984).

According to the Talmud, Rabbi Judah haNasi, a famous scholar and redactor of the Mishnah, suffered terrible pangs for many years. This is the answer for the source of his sufferings:

A calf was being taken to the slaughter, when it broke away, hid its head under Rabbi's skirt and lowed. 'Go' said he, 'for this thou was created.' Thereupon they said [in heaven] 'Since he has no pity, let us bring suffering upon him.' His pains departed one day when his daughter was attempting to kill some spiders in her path. Rabbi Judah said 'Let them be.' For it is written' and His tender mercies are all over his works." His pains ended. (ibid. p. 164)

It seems to me that Judah haNasi is punished not only for his lack of compassion but also because he told the calf that its purpose was to be slaughtered to meet human needs. Like Job, perhaps he is rebuked for assuming that humans standards are the ultimate standards.

The stories about Moses and Judah haNasi, two central Jewish figures, underline the importance of animal life in the Jewish tradition. They emphasize a justice and compassion that extends to animals and stress a kinship with the beasts. These stories are not merely folksy ideals: They express ethical standards put into daily practice in the laws concerning the treatment of animals.

Tzar Baalei Hayyim

"If, along the road, you chance upon a bird's nest, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs and the mother sitting over the fledglings or on the eggs, do not take the mother together with her young. Let the mother go, and take only the young, in order that you may fare well and have a long life."(Deuteronomy 22:6)

Tzar baalei hayyim, literally "the pain of living beings," though not stated as such in the Bible, is accepted as a Biblical ordinance on the basis of passages like the one above. This mitzvah (commandment) guides Jewish treatment of animals, especially domesticated species. Tzar baalei hayyim tries to balance human use of animals and the prevention of suffering. In these passages we find strong examples of kinship with animals, the extension of moral rights, and an emphasis on justice and compassion.

The Deuteronomy passage demonstrates several points on human responsibility toward wild animals. Many scholars have interpreted the prohibition against taking the mother and her young together as part of the “kilayim” laws, which are concerned with the protection of species. Taking both generations is seen to be a potential threat to the continuation of the species (Schochet 1984 p. 71). Schochet writes, “this is the first recorded legislation in history for the protection of birds” (p.58). Wendell Berry writes of the prohibition,

it is a perfect paradigm of ecological and agricultural discipline, in which the idea of inheritance is necessarily paramount. (1981, p.273)

Others argue that the prohibition is based on sensitivity to the birds. The mother should be shooed away and not be forced to watch the taking of her young (Schochet 1984, p.71). In this sense, this passage carries a similar ethical code as “Thou shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk” (Deuteronomy 14:21). The assumption in this interpretation is that the mother would see, or at least sense, the death of her young.

Another passage from Leviticus prohibits the separation of the young from the mother in the first week after birth.

"When an ox or sheep is born, it shall stay seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as an offering by fire to the Lord. However, no animal from the herd or from the flock shall be slaughtered on the same day with its young." (Leviticus 22:27)

For a kid, young ox, or lamb to be acceptable as a sacrifice, it must have spent at least the first seven days of its life with its mother. Maimonides writes:

When animals lose their young their pain is very great. There is no difference between the pain of humans and the pain of other living beings. (Schochet 1984, p.153)

According to rabbinical law, castration or any impairment of an animal's reproductive organs is forbidden. According to Schochet, castration

was a common practice in the ancient world, especially for the purposes of improving the animal's efficiency and working habits. Apparently the prohibition on castration put Jewish farmers at an economic disadvantage. There are accounts of rabbis rebuking farmers for their practice of selling cattle to gentiles, who castrated them, and then buying the cattle back (Schochet 1984, p. 155). Nonetheless, this important limitation on human manipulation of animal life remained in effect.

Another passage which is a basis for *tzar baalei hayyim* is the injunction against muzzling an ox on the threshing floor. "You shall not muzzle the ox while it is threshing" (Deuteronomy 25:4). The rabbinic tradition emphasizes that a working animal is entitled to its pay just like the human worker. Both animal and human laborers are allowed to eat of the produce of the field where they work (Schochet 1984, p. 154). Thus the prohibition against muzzling represents a defense of the ox's rights as well as a prevention of suffering.

A particularly interesting aspect of *tzar baalei hayyim* prevents us from applying our unjust political and social tendencies to animals.

"When you encounter your enemy's ox or ass wandering, you must take it back to him. When you see the ass of your enemy lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him." (Exodus 23:4)

As is Job, we are reminded that our desires are superseded by a higher law. It is also interesting to note that most of these laws concerning the treatment of animals are placed within portions of the text dealing with ethical human behavior-- justice is to be practiced in all arenas of human action, not merely with humans.

Tzar baalei hayyim is among the few codes which supersede the laws of the Sabbath. It is listed along with the codes which demand the desecrating of the Sabbath to save a life (Schochet 1984, p. 156). As central as Sabbath rest is

in the Jewish tradition, we are told to break the rest in order to tend properly to our animals. Such activities as feeding and milking are among the exceptions to the laws banning work on the seventh day.

The Sabbath rest also extends to animals, and they must not be made to work. Riding horses on the Sabbath is forbidden by most authorities. Animals are allowed to roam free on the Sabbath and should not be penned up (Strassfeld 1980, p. 296).

The justice which is the human niche in the Book of Job extends not only to the stranger, widow and orphan or to agriculture, but also to all the beasts of creation. Moral consideration, and thus *tzar baalei hayyim*, extends to insects and plants as well (Schochet 1984, p. 247). In the *Sefer Hasidim*, a compilation of teachings of Jewish leaders in medieval Germany, it is written, "Never inflict pain upon any creature, beast, bird, or insect" (*ibid.*, p. 246).

Aldo Leopold argues that, "philosophy and religion have not yet heard" of extending moral rights to include nature (Nash 1989, p.87). I disagree. Although in the Jewish tradition, especially, domestic animals are considered as subject to some human needs, there is a strong tradition of applying ethical standards to all of creation. Jewish thinker Elijah Judah Schochet writes:

In contemporary terminology, the world of nature may be legitimately viewed as God's ecological system, which must be neither exploited or violated. Every being within this system -- certainly the living beings of the animal kingdom -- is entitled to certain natural rights. Man is forbidden to disturb the divine ecological balance. (1984, p.4)

Medieval Jewish scholar Abraham Ibn Ezra interpreted the commandment of "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18) to include kindness towards those who are "not as thyself," particularly animals (*ibid.*, p.263). Schochet writes of the Rabbinic treatment of animals, "the way of the

hasid ('pious one') is to expand one's ethical considerations to be all-embracing" (ibid., p. 191).

Many philosophies of animal rights exclude certain organisms because it was thought that they could not reason (Bentham), or did not suffer (Singer) (Des Jardins 1993, p.133). This reflects a strong anthropocentrism; we can grant rights to those creatures who most resemble us. These positions are also difficult to include in an environmental ethic, because they focus on individual organisms. As we have seen in the discussion of "kilayim," in the Jewish tradition we have a responsibility towards species. I believe that there is the potential within the Jewish tradition for developing a holistic, creationist, or theocentric ethic of kinship and responsibility.

The famous eighteenth-century Hasidic leader, the Baal Shem Tov, taught:

A man should consider himself as a worm, and all other small animals his friends in the world, for all of them are all created. (Swetlitz 1989, p.176)

The microbe and tree have a place in God's creation with the lion and the human. Although killing a worm or insect may be technically permissible, many scholars argue that "it nevertheless should not be done" (Schochet 1984). Rabbi Isaac Luria, one of the Kabbalist masters, taught that not even irritating insects should be destroyed (ibid., p.247) because "even the most mute objects such as stones and dust and water possess nefesh (soul) and spiritual vitality" (Swetlitz 1989, p.174).

Two rabbinical stories echo the Jobian call for a democracy of all beings:

Rabbi Yohanan used to say: If you have a sapling in your hand, and someone should say to you that the Messiah has come, stay and complete the transplanting and then go welcome the Messiah. (Bernstein 1992, p.81)

A philosopher asked Rabbi Joshua b. Hananiah: 'At what time are all men equal and do the nations worship God!' He replied: 'On the day when all rejoice.' 'When is that?' asked the other. 'When the heavens have been shut up, and all are in distress, and the rain comes down, and all rejoice and praise God.' Rabbi Tanhum b. Hiyya says: "The falling of rain is greater than the giving of the Law, for the giving of the Law was a joy only to Israel, while the falling of rain is a rejoicing for all the world, including cattle and the wild beasts and the birds." (Schochet 1984, p.146)

I could have selected a number of stories to illustrate the inclusion of all forms of life in parts of the Jewish tradition, but these two carry particular power. Here we have two of the most important aspects of Judaism -- the coming of the Messiah and the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai -- discussed in relation to non-human life.

The first story can be interpreted in a number of ways. I do not want to suggest that the tree is thought of on equal footing with the arrival of the Messiah, but, nonetheless, it is hard to deny the deep consideration given to the tree. The sapling is not to be left in this crucial time with its roots exposed and dry. In the Jewish tradition, planting a tree is considered a mitzvah. It seems to me that the tree is paid a great honor.

As blasphemous as it may seem, in the second story, rain is considered to be more important than the giving of the Law. The giving of the Law to Moses at Mt. Sinai is the pivotal Jewish experience. Rabbi Hiyya argues that all life benefits from the rain, whereas only humans rejoice in the ethical responsibilities of the Law. This view seems to suggest a biocentric democracy of all beings. Both of these stories demonstrate that even when looked at in light of crucial human experiences --the Bible and the Messiah -- the natural world deserves ethical consideration.

In working for a world in which justice and compassion reign, traditional Judaism works toward the arrival of the Messiah. The Messianic age, among other things, brings an end to the injustice practiced on the animal world.

There is a story of a Jew who lived her life in expectation of the coming of the Messiah. One day, she heard a shofar sound, the act which signals the arrival of the Messiah. Her heart full of joy and anticipation, she rushed out onto the street. As she passed a farmer beating his mule, she cried, "Ah, I must have been mistaken, if the Messiah were truly here, such a thing could never happen." (Strassfeld 1980, p. 290)

Jewish discussions of vegetarianism also call upon Messianic motifs.

Jewish Vegetarianism

In his book on Animals in the Jewish tradition, Schochet argues that meat eating is not an ideal practice. He asks,

is there a divine decree demanding of man that he butcher and consume the flesh of fauna? Should meat be part of his standard, normal diet? Not at all. (1984, p.50)

Many Biblical commentators argue that the first generations of humans were not permitted to kill animals for food.

God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." (Genesis 1:30)

The emphasis on plants as food is repeated to Adam, "But your food shall be the grasses of the field" (Genesis 2:18). Ten long-lived generations later, Noah is told in a passage that closely resembles in structure Genesis 1:28-30:

"Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these. You must not however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it. But for your own life-blood I will require a reckoning: I will require it of every beast; of man, too."(Genesis 9:3)

Rabbi Kook, an early twentieth-century scholar and mystic, argues that until Noah, humans were not permitted to take animal life for food (Bokser 1978, p.319). Noah received a "temporary dispensation in deference to moral frailty" (Leibowitz 1980, p.77). After the murderous behavior of Cain's descendants, God did not consider humans morally prepared for a prohibition on meat eating.

Kook believed that in the Messianic age, our compassion will extend again to animals, "and the injustice done to them will be rectified" (ibid., p. 78). The majority of eschatological visions of the prophets predict a vegetarian diet:

They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine
They shall till gardens and eat their fruits. (Amos 9:14)

And the earth shall respond
With new grain and wine and oil. (Hosea 2:24)

And in that day
The mountains shall drip with wine,
The hills shall flow with milk. (Joel 4:18)

Schochet also envisions the Messianic age bringing "a cessation of all enmity between man and the animal kingdom" (1984, p. 51).

Other Jewish thinkers, such as Arthur Green, insist that Jewish vegetarianism should not be put on hold for the Messiah's arrival. Green refers to vegetarianism as "a kashrut for our age" (1992, p. 87). Contrary to aspects of the secular vegetarian ideology, he argues that Jewish vegetarianism should not be an "ascetic choice, but rather a life-affirming one. A vegetarian Judaism would be more whole in its ability to embrace the presence of God in all of creation" (ibid., p. 89).

However, if we ignore Green's recommendations, or side with the Messianic tradition, how should we kill to eat?

The Sacrificial Rite

As the descendants of Noah, Jews traditionally have killed animals for food. But in the laws of ritual slaughtering, we find a careful attention and sense of compassion which bespeak a deep reverence for all life. Though Jews have been allowed to eat meat, Biblical and Rabbinical laws strictly limit the taking of life for food.

In the stories of the early Hebrews -- Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel -- meat eating is mentioned many times. Schochet argues that the meals where meat is eaten are special events, such as Abraham's angel-guests (Genesis 18:8) and Isaac's last meal before his death (Genesis 27:3). Perhaps the meat eating of the early Hebrews provides an apt prologue to the laws of the revelation at Mount Sinai. Or perhaps the laws which limit the taking of life for food represent a radical ethical shift from the early stories. Whatever the case, the laws concerning the sacrificial rite, ritual slaughter and clean and unclean foods form the basis of Jewish eating habits to this day.

From the time of the covenant at Sinai until the Israelites' arrival in the Holy Land, many scholars say only consecrated sacrificial meat was eaten (Leibowitz 1980, p. 208). Chiefly domesticated animals were offered as a gift to God, to whom all of creation belongs. The standard procedure for a sacrifice was to place one's hands on the animal, kill it by slitting the jugular, and then collect the blood and pour it on the altar. Parts of the animal were then burned, and portions were consumed.

Animal life was not taken and meat not eaten unless both God and members of the human community partook. The killing of animals outside of the ritual of sacrifice was considered murder (Leviticus 17:3-4). The sacrificial

rite certainly expresses some kind of hierarchy, but it also emphasizes the kinship between humans and animals. Laws of purity cover both humans and animals. The portions of an animal which should not be eaten are considered impure in the human body as well (Schochet 1984, p. 46).

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have assigned it to you for making expiation for your lives upon the altar: it is blood, as life, that effects expiation. Therefore I say to the Israelite people: no person among you shall partake of blood." (Leviticus 17:11)

In all beings, blood is considered the seat of life. Blood, according to this passage in Leviticus, holds the power of atonement. Schochet writes, "the blood of animals, possessing the special qualities of life and atonement, rightly belongs to God, and is not to be eaten by man" (1984, p. 46).

In the discussion of clean and unclean foods in Leviticus, fat is also prohibited, "you shall eat no fat" (Leviticus 7:23). These crucial properties of blood and fat hold true for humans as well as animals.

The blood of the animal is to be poured on the altar, or, in later days, on the ground. Rabbi Kook argues that the pouring out of the blood acknowledges the shameful act of killing (Bokser 1978, p.319). I would concur with Green when he writes that the abstaining from eating blood and the careful treatment of the animal show a deep-seated discomfort with the eating of flesh (Green 1992, p. 87).

The sacrificial rite recognizes the inherent sanctity in life and the limited role that humans play in God's universe. Killing is framed in a careful context, and the privilege to take animals for food should not be abused. It seems that the number of animals killed was limited by the requirements of the sacrificial rite. Animal life is taken only in full consciousness that it will be offered to God and the community. Those portions of the animal which

represent forces beyond our knowledge and control are offered to God alone. This is a recognition of the sanctity and unity of the creative force.

Shehitah

When the Lord enlarges your territory, as He has promised you, and you say, "I shall eat some meat," for you have this urge to eat meat, you may eat meat whenever you wish. (Deuteronomy 12:20)

Although this passage seems to give free rein to the Israelites upon arriving in Canaan, it is followed by a list of qualifications. According to medieval scholar Maimonides, non-consecrated sacrificial meat is only grudgingly made lawful (Leibowitz 1980, p. 208). It is also from this passage that the rabbis, from an etymological analysis, concluded that cutting an animal's throat was the proper way of slaughtering (Schochet 1984, p. 161).

Schochet and others contend that the Jewish method of slaughter, or Shehitah, was considered the most painless method of killing an animal. Human execution was done by slitting the throat for the same reason (ibid., p.161). In the Mishnah, the rules of slaughter are carefully outlined: The knife must be inspected before use; it must be sharp and smooth, with no dents or nicks; and the cutting must be done without interruption, without tearing or undue pressure (ibid., p. 162). Maimonides comments, "the law enjoins that the death of the animal be as easy and painless as possible"(ibid., p.162).

It is interesting to note the difference between the captive-bolt slaughtering system used widely in the U.S. and Shehitah. In the captive bolt method, animals are killed by machine; there is no human hand which touches the animal, or human face which sees its pain and fear. On the other hand, in shehitah, the shochet must greet the animal face to face. It is a human hand that slits the throat. Shehitah seems to emphasize human

responsibility; the killing is done consciously and carefully. In the Jewish tradition, the important act of killing an animal cannot be done by machine.

The Jewish method of slaughter also emphasizes the bond between two living beings. Rabbi Kook writes:

The very nature of the principles of ritual slaughter with their specific rules and regulations designed to reduce pain, create the atmosphere that you are not dealing with a helpless, unprotected object, with an inanimate automat, but with a living soul.
(Leibowitz 1980, p. 55)

It is interesting to note that the ritual slaughterer must be "an individual of exemplary character and piety" (Schochet 1984, p.162). The Baal Shem Tov, the Hasidic leader who spoke of being a friend to the worm and extending compassion to all beings, was himself a slaughterer. The person who takes life is, in fact, a religious functionary in the community.

Milk and Meat

"You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Deuteronomy 14:21). From this passage, the rabbis interpreted a set of rules which prohibit the mixing of milk and meat. The separation of milk and meat is one of the central elements in kashrut.

Some scholars, such as Maimonides, see the prohibition as expressing compassion toward animals. The mother's milk should not be used to kill her own kid. Others understand the law as mandating the separation between two ultimate opposites, life and death. "Milk symbolizes life. How could it possibly be employed as the medium for the death of the entity it has nourished?" (Schochet 1984, p. 71).

Arthur Green explains that the substance through which life is carried from one generation to the next should not be eaten with the flesh, which represents the violent taking of a life: "The fluid of life may not be mixed with

that of death." He sees the prohibition as a "proto-vegetarian sensibility" (1992, p.88).

Jewish tradition gives a tremendous amount of consideration to the taking of animal life. I believe this represents a Jobian approach to life. The attention paid to the animal and the bias of the text for vegetarianism manifest a strong sense of justice which extends to the animal world. The careful treatment of blood and milk manifests an attitude of reverence and humility: Life is God's sacred gift. These substances represent the creative force of the eagle and the leviathan, forces beyond our control. In kashrut we find carefully delineated limits on our dominion over the animal world.

In ritual slaughter and the separation of milk and meat we acknowledge the life and spirit in the being. Animals are not mere objects for our control, or simple machines, but beings which share the same unifying life-breath that we carry. According to the Jewish mystics, in following the laws of kashrut, we help to maintain the cosmic order which unites all beings.

Just 30 years ago, Israeli writer Shmuel Yosef Agnon, upon receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature, invoked the lesson of Job:

Lest I slight any creature, I must also mention the domestic animals, the beasts and the birds from whom I have learned. Job said long ago (35:11): 'Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?' (Schochet 1984, p.297)

PART 3: TEFILLAH

BLESSINGS FOR THE WONDERS OF CREATION

The vision of Job is invoked daily in the blessings Jews recite.

Rebbe Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir was the village innkeeper. A Jewish wagon driver entered and asked for a glass of brandy. As he was about to drink it without reciting a blessing, the rebbe stopped him and said, "Do you realize by what marvelous laws God has produced the fruit of the soil before it became the drink that you enjoy?" The driver promptly recited the blessing, and the rebbe answered, "Amen!"

This story expresses one of the central elements of Jewish blessings: appreciation of the wonders of creation. The "marvelous laws" express a Jobian view of the world. Blessings remind us of the awe-inspiring creative force that not only brings the rain to the desert grasses and gives the ostrich its speed but also maintains the cycles on which we depend:

Blessed are you our God, king of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth;

Blessed are you, King of the universe, Who creates species of sustenance;

Blessed are you, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

These are among the most common Jewish blessings recited over bread, grains and rice, and wine. In the plaintive Semitic tones of the benedictions over food, we recognize and thank powers greater than ourselves. We are made aware of the theocentric universe which sustains us, and we are humble in our thanks. Like Job, we are reminded that everything has a purpose and a value and that the earth does not belong to us.

When we recite a blessing we echo the vision of the world in the whirlwind speech. We see the "wilderness blossom" when the rain falls and the lion cubs being fed. We thank and celebrate the creative force in the universe. These simple acts of giving thanks have great potential to heal our environmental hubris.

Blessings in the Jewish Tradition

Jewish tradition demands a blessing for all occasions, such as mourning the death of a family member, putting on a new pair of shoes, and seeing a fruit tree in bloom. Most of the blessings which Jews recite have their origins in the codification of the oral tradition called the Mishnah (C.E. 200). However, many phrases in Jewish prayers are drawn from the Bible.

Blessings are part of the commandments binding on all Jews. Rabbi Meir, a renowned rabbi of the Talmudic period (circa 200 C.E.), said, "it is a mitzvah (commandment) to recite 100 blessings every day" (Bernstein 1992, p. 58). In the Talmud, the rabbis taught that, "it is forbidden to enjoy (the use of) something in this world without first reciting a blessing" (Stein 1981, p.66). Someone who fails to recite a blessing is considered like a thief, or someone who has "misappropriated sacred property" (ibid.).

The desire to communicate with God, the expression of gratitude, amazement and dependency are all elements of Jewish prayer. Twentieth-century scholar Abraham Millgram, in his book Jewish Worship, writes,

Prayer is also born of man's sense of wonder, from his awareness of God's marvelous creation and the miracles that daily bear witness to God's goodness and love. (1971, p.9)

Pinhas Peli, in the 1970's Jewish Catalogue, describes the essence of Jewish prayer,

I proclaim that I am aware, that I do not let God's world, God's creation, pass by unnoticed. That I react. That I am alive. (Strassfeld 1980, p. 297)

In prayer, Jews daily reenact Abraham's covenant with God. We recognize the divine presence and fulfill our responsibilities.

Twentieth-century Jewish scholar Aryeh Kaplan writes:

The most important discipline of Judaism involves the blessing. When a blessing is recited before eating, then the act itself becomes a spiritual undertaking. Through the blessing, the act of eating becomes a contemplative exercise. (Stein 1991, p.38)

The act of stopping our often-mechanical daily actions forces us to open our eyes and live deliberately. We become aware of simple miracles that make life possible, and we make all our actions, and the world around us, sacred. Like Jacob in his dream, when a Jew recites a blessing, s/he recognizes the omnipresent divine force.

When a Jew recites a blessing over food, or for going to the bathroom, s/he sanctifies the simple acts and experiences of daily life. This can perhaps bring us to a greater appreciation for the value of life. Binyomin Forst in his book on Jewish blessings writes, "the text of each and every b'racha (blessing) is a testimony to the purposeful creation in which we are granted the privilege to play a role" (Forst 1990, p. 25). We are also, like Job, reminded of the purpose of the wild ox, our bodily orifices, a glass of water, or death.

A number of commonly used Jewish prayers express a dependence on the earth, a sense of awe, and a feeling of unity with all creation. I will explore prayer in Jewish mysticism and follow the tradition to some modern non-traditional poetic prayers as well. I hesitate to include much explanation, as the blessings speak for themselves.

Dependence on the Cycles of the Land

The following prayers are part of the grace after meals. The first blessing is for nourishment, the second, for the land (Scherman 1990, p. 185, 187).

Blessed are you, God, King of the Universe, Who nourishes the entire world in His Goodness...Who nourishes and sustains all...and He prepares food for all of the creatures which He has created.

We thank you, God, because you have given to our forefathers as a heritage a desirable, good and spacious land.

In these blessings, we are reminded of our dependency on the land. The blessing for the land, as well as the blessings for rain and dew, carry a strong connection to the land of Israel and express a strong, Jewish sense of place.

In the monthly ritual of the sanctification of the moon, Jews celebrate the cycles of the "lesser light" (Genesis 1:16):

To the moon He said that it should renew itself as a crown of splendor for those born from the womb, those who are destined to renew themselves like it...Blessed are you Our God, Who renews the months. (Scherman 1990, p. 613)

The Jews' dependence on God finds powerful expression in the Israelites' reliance on rain and dew. In contrast to the Nile Valley, which was irrigated "like a vegetable garden" (Deuteronomy 11:10), Canaan is a dry land. The harvest of grains and fruit was dependent on "the early rains and the latter rains" as stated in the covenant by Moses (Deuteronomy 11:14).

For you are our God, Who makes the wind blow and the rain fall...give us portions of the rain, to soften the wasteland's face, when it is dry as rock. (Scherman 1990, p., 709)

With His consent I shall speak of mysteries. Among this people, through this prayer, may they be made exultant by the dew. Dew -- bringing joy to valley and its herbage. (Scherman 1990, p. 702)

These blessings are recited in the festivals of spring; rejuvenation is a central theme. The mystery mentioned in the second blessing refers to the

two-fold powers of dew. The moisture of the heavy desert dew helps the plants grow, and the "dew of life" is the spiritual force that makes all life possible.

It is interesting to note that the dew brings joy not only to the people but to the land and the plants. Following these blessings are many passages praising the dew, "Let it drop sweetly on the blessed land... let it sweeten the honey of the mountains." God's description of the world in the Book of Job contains four separate mentions of rain, dew and water.

Blessings of Awe

In the evening liturgy, we recite the words of Job:

Blessed are You, King of the Universe, Who does great things past finding. Marvelous things without number. (Scherman 1990)

There are a number of traditional Jewish blessings which express wonder and gratitude for the beauty of the natural world. The following blessings are taken from a traditional Jewish prayer book, which includes an explanation of the appropriate event for each blessing. I have left out the formulaic "Blessed are you God, King of the Universe" and included only the specific content of the prayers:

Upon smelling fragrant trees or shrubs, we recite, "Who creates fragrant trees";

Upon seeing beautiful people, trees or fields, "Who has such in His universe";

Upon seeing exceptionally strange-looking people, or animals, "Who makes the creatures different";

Upon seeing fruit trees in bloom during the spring, "Who created a universe in which nothing is lacking, and who has fashioned goodly creatures and trees that give people pleasure."

There are several blessings specifically for the awe-inspiring events of nature. These blessings seem particularly appropriate for Jobian-style revelations:

Upon seeing lightning, "Who makes the work of creation";

Upon hearing thunder, "Whose strength and power fill the universe";

Upon experiencing an earthquake, seeing a comet, lofty mountains, or large rivers (in their natural course), "Who makes the work of creation."

The following is part of the daily prayers recited at dawn, noon and dusk:

We give thanks unto Thee and declare Thy praise...For thy miracles which are daily with us, and for Thy wonders and Thy benefits, which are wrought at all times, evenings, morn, and noon. (Millgram 1971, p. 10)

Below is one of my favorite portions of liturgy from the Sabbath morning prayer:

Even if
 Our mouths overflowed with song like the ocean's water
 Tongues sang like surf
 Lips praised sky-wide
 Eyes shone sun and moon
 Hands flying eagles
 And legs swift gazelles--
 We could still not thank you enough
 Our dear God and God of our ancestors,
 For even one ten-thousandth of the wonders
 Done for our ancestors and for us! (Stein 1991, p.66)

The Biblical and Mishnaic emphasis on the wonders of creation is continued in modern Jewish poetry. The following is a poem by Leah Goldberg, a "non-religious" Israeli:

Teach me, my God, a blessing, a prayer
 On the mystery of a withered leaf,
 On ripened fruit so fair,

On the freedom to see, to sense,
To breathe, to know, to hope, to despair. (Strassfeld 1980, p. 304)

Blessings in the Mystical Tradition

Jewish mysticism, Kabbalah, has a strong tradition of emphasizing unity with all beings as well as the human responsibility to heal or repair the world, a concept called "tikkun olam."

According to the Zohar, the enigmatic Kabbalistic commentary on the Bible, there are four stages of community prayer, each of which brings a tikkun, or healing. The first stage is the human community; the second is the natural world of creation, "which, if it were endowed with speech would join man in hymns of praise" (Scholem 1955, p. 127); then come angels and God. Our prayers have the potential to heal nature and bring about a cosmic unification of the divine energy present in various forms in the world. It is interesting to note that in these ascending stages, nature is placed above humans -- closer to the angels and God.

In Jewish rituals influenced by Kabbalah, certain plants and fruits, through their blessing and eating, carry great spiritual power for "tikkun olam," the healing of the world.

In the Fall harvest festival of Succoth, plants are blessed and endowed with spiritual power:

May it be your will...that through the fruit of the etrog tree, date palm branches, twigs of the myrtle tree, and brook willows, the letters of Your sanctified Name may become close to one another...And when I wave them {the branches} may an abundant outpouring of blessing flow from the wisdom of the Most High. (Scherman 1990, p. 631)

In the Kabbalist Tu B'Shevat (celebration of the trees) ritual, by blessing and eating fruit, and meditating on the cosmic symbolism of the

various trees and fruit, we help to restore the world to wholeness, health and justice.

May it be your will, O God, and God of our forefathers, that through our eating of the fruits which we have blessed, that the trees will be filled with the glory of their abundance to renew themselves for new blossoming and growth, from the beginning of the year to its end, so that life will be filled with goodness, blessings and Peace.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav , an eighteenth-century Hasidic leader (an Eastern European movement strongly influenced by Kabbalah), emphasized the importance of praying outdoors. He grew up in a city but moved to his wife's village when he got married. Nachman sees prayer as an act which unites all of creation:

How wonderful it would be if one could only be worthy of hearing the song of the grass. Each blade of grass sings out to God without any ulterior motive and without expecting any reward. It is most wonderful to hear its song and worship God in its midst. (Stein 1991, p.56)

The following is what is commonly referred to as Rabbi Nachman's prayer:

Master of the Universe, grant me the ability to be alone.
 May it be my custom to go outdoors each day, among the trees and the grasses, among all growing things, there to be alone and enter into prayer.
 There may I express all that is in my heart, talking with You, to Whom I belong.
 And may all grasses, trees and plants awake at my coming.
 Send the power of their life into my prayer, making whole my heart and my speech through the life and spirit of growing things. (Bernstein 1992, p.64)

I imagine Job's life after his epiphany including a blessing. I picture him under the dazzling stars of his desert home, transforming one of the curses of his days of suffering, full of destruction and pain, into a prayer of life.

The following is a poem by Hannah Senesh, a young kibbutznic who volunteered during the Second World War to parachute behind enemy lines in Hungary. She was caught and executed by the Nazis. Perhaps Job's unknown prayer would resemble this poem, now a well-known Israeli folk song:

O God, my God
May there never cease to be
the sand and the sea,
the murmuring stream,
the heaven's bright gleam,
our prayer to Thee. (Strassfeld 1980, p. 305)

**while the morning stars burst out singing
and the angels shouted for joy!**

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