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nineteenth century, the category of Revelation has received the most attention because of the impact of the historical analysis of the Bible.² In recent Jewish environmental theology Creation has been the central concern, while the categories of Revelation and Redemption have been mostly ignored.³ This lack of theological attention has created a disconnection between Jewish environmental theology and the other major concerns of modern Jewish theology, and it has also meant that Jewish environmental theology has been unable to generate the creative new moral imperatives and ritual practices necessary to deal more comprehensively with the environmental crisis.

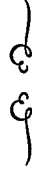
In his article on Process Thought and Judaism, Brad Artson shows how a process theology of revelation can emphasize human partnership with God in an ongoing dynamic relationship. While he shows how this approach is fully compatible with Jewish sources, he does not go far enough in showing the radical implications of such a theology of revelation. In particular, he does not integrate sufficiently the implications for theology of the modern scientific worldview. In this article I will show how a process theology of revelation can broaden and deepen Jewish environmental spirituality and ethics.

A theologian who has fully explored the implications of Process Thought for modern eco-theology is Thomas Berry, who asserted that, in this age of environmental crisis, *Creation itself* must be our primary source of revelation. According to Berry, reading Creation today means learning the new "story" of Creation from the modern sciences of cosmology, evolutionary biology, and ecology. This new theology of revelation must be formulated in the context of science, historical analysis of the Bible, and the ways people spiritually respond to the natural world. In creating this eco-theology of revelation, I will be following the method that Process theologian David Ray Griffin calls "Constructive Post-Modernism":

It seeks to overcome the modern worldview not by eliminating the possibility of worldviews as such, but by constructing a postmodern worldview through a revision of modern premises and traditional concepts. This constructive or revisionary postmodernism involves a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic,

The Book of Black Fire: An Eco-Theology of Revelation

LAWRENCE TROSTER



Rabbi Pinhas says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish: The Torah that the blessed Holy One gave to Moses was given as white fire written on black fire. It was fire, mixed with fire, hewn from fire, and given by fire, as is written: "From His right, a fiery law to them" (Deuteronomy 33:2).—*JT Shekalim* 6:1

Introduction

What does it mean when we say we believe in the revelation of the word of God? In the Abrahamic faiths, this usually refers to the belief that God has communicated with humans through a prophet (or prophets) and that communication was then written down. Thus those who identify themselves as fundamentalist Christians claim that the (Christian) Bible is "the true word of God" and, therefore, inerrant and unchangeable. Revelation, however, whether from a biblical or a modern theological perspective, is in fact a more complicated process. And when one considers the creation of a modern religious response to the environmental crisis, what we believe about how God communicates will have a significant impact on the way that response will be shaped—for revelation creates and shapes the values and normative actions of a religious community.

In rabbinic Judaism, revelation is one of the three central categories of divine action—Creation, Revelation, and Redemption—which have been codified in the traditional liturgy.¹ In modern Jewish theology since the

and religious intuitions. It rejects not science as such but only that scientism in which the data of the modern natural sciences are alone allowed to contribute to the construction of our worldview.⁴

Through this methodology science can help illuminate meaning in the universe, while religion can infuse science with ethical responsibility. In fact, following Thomas Berry and also the work of Norbert Samuelson, the facts of modern science are essential to a modern theology of revelation.⁵

Jewish Law and Environmentalism

In a Jewish context, a theology of revelation is pivotal as well as to how *halakhab* is created and changed. Judaism *per se* never treated the text of the Bible as fundamentalists do today; there was always a certain element of openness as the Jewish legal tradition needed to respond to new situations. For example, after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., Rabbinic Judaism reconstructed Jewish practice to account for this loss.⁶ This created a legal system which had to be both true to the past and yet flexible enough to deal with new situations. As Gordon Tucker has argued, the normative rabbinic Jewish legal system assumes a positivist stand towards itself. This means that it "begins by positing the canonicity of basic norms, from which all derivational pathways must begin."⁷

In the past, traditional *halakhab* was able to respond well to new situations that arose through a combination of precedent, legislation which expanded existing laws, and the evolution of local community ordinances and customs. In the modern period, however, extremely divisive issues like the status of women and the status of gays and lesbians has often caused traditional *halakhab* to run into a legal dead end. As Tucker has pointed out, "[a] vision of a legal system in which a sufficiently long period of inertia (as has admittedly been the case in the matter of homosexuality) engenders stasis into the indefinite future is not a vision of striving and building; but these are the very endeavors that are, in fact, the human destiny."⁸

In criticizing the Conservative movement's responses to the status of gays and lesbians in Judaism, Tucker asserted that it must be true to its

own theology in which "... the text of the Torah is not necessarily God's word, and thus not an infallible expression of God's will ..."⁹ Following from this point, Conservative theology tends to accept that human beings within religious communities play a central role in revelation. As such, Torah and *halakhab* are not a specific documentation of the divine will but rather "... a record of the religious quests of a people, and of their understanding of how God's will commands them."¹⁰ This means that the religious community has a fundamental function in the generation of the content of revelation. Its experiences create new stories which must be incorporated into the legal responses to radically new situations. Tucker's halakhic philosophy follows the legal methodology of Robert Cover as articulated in his seminal essay, "Nomos and Narrative."¹¹

Cover's legal theory allows for the inclusion of non-legal material to have an impact on the creation of new law in situations where previous law has become untenable. One of Cover's examples is the civil rights movement, where previous interpretations of the Constitution permitted discrimination. The civil rights movement created a new "story" of the Constitution that demanded change. Cover refers to this method as *juris-generative*.¹²

Like the new responses to the status of women and the status of gays and lesbians, there is a critical need to create new Jewish environmental *halakhab*, as developments within the tradition have reached a theological and legal dead end. Jewish theological and halakhic environmental writings have centered on a small number of traditional sources, which have proven insufficient in producing a significant Jewish communal response to the environmental crisis. For example, Jewish environmental writers since the 1970s have noted that Deuteronomy 20:19-20, the *mitzvah* of *bal tash-hit*, could be used as a Jewish environmental law against conspicuous consumption. But despite the repeated invocation of the biblical text, there has been only minor progress in changing Jewish consumption habits.

While traditionally the *mitzvot* were divided into those which deal with human-to-human relations (*bein adam la-haveiro*) and those which deal with human-to-divine relations (*bein adam la-makom*), Israeli environmentalist Jeremy Benstein¹³ has created a new category: between people and

the world (*bein adam la-olam*). Included in this category would be traditional mitzvot such as *bal tash-hit* and *tza'ar ba'alei hayim*, the prohibition of cruelty to animals. It would also include an enriched form of stewardship envisaged by Ibn Ezra in his commentary to Psalm 115:16, *tikkun* ("repair"), the partnership with God in the process of Creation, and the laws regarding the obligation to rescue innocent people from injury or death based on Leviticus 19:16. While Benstein recognizes that there may be other sources in the development of Jewish environmental *halakhah*, he himself does not really go beyond these traditional texts and categories.¹⁴

Thus Jewish environmental theology and *halakhah* have stayed for the most part within a fairly narrow textual approach. Even in liberal Jewish circles, there has been too much willingness to act as if biblical and rabbinic texts are so canonical that only they can be sources of environmental action. In Jewish environmentalism, we are now at the legal logjam that Tucker has spoken of: a new situation has arisen that cannot be dealt with by the system and so a new narrative must be created, one which will produce whole new areas of concrete responses. This new narrative may come from different voices: non-legal traditional sources, new theologies, academic studies, and new grassroots practices, liturgy, and ritual. This new narrative has already begun to take shape.¹⁵ But it still lacks a creation-centered theology of revelation. A process theology is *that which connects a dynamic idea of revelation to creation*.

Torah as a Book—The World as Torah

Since rabbinic times, a theological dogma of revelation was that the Torah, both written and oral, was divine in origin. Even though this concept of Torah was theologically very broad, in practical terms the status of the *halakhah* within certain boundaries of communal action and custom became much more narrowly fixed.

Starting in the nineteenth century, under the influence of the modern historical analysis of Bible, many non-Orthodox Jewish theologians came to reevaluate the traditional idea of revelation. For such modern theologians as Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and Abraham Joshua Heschel, revelation was no longer understood as the content produced by the divine/

human encounter, but rather as the encounter itself. The texts of revelation thus became secondary or interpretative products of that encounter.¹⁶ The theological implication of this change, whose central point is the human role in revelation, is central to the development of a Jewish environmental theology of revelation and in consort with a process perspective in that in such encounters the divine presence is at most compelling and not coercive. Revelation as encounter also allows for the possibility of new revelatory experiences which will then be concretized in new content, new stories, new symbols, and new rituals—and which will eventually produce new *halakhah*. New revelatory encounters will not necessarily cancel out the old revelation, if the old revelation still evokes spiritual power in the communities that cherish it.

Aside from the problem of the modern critical analysis of the Bible, there are other theological problems with the idea that the text itself is revelation. If revelation is made up of propositional content, then it is the ultimate *unnatural* event that cannot be explained by science. Even while the content of this kind of revelation is contained in a *book* (or books) and written in a particular language, it is claimed that it is not historically determined. It is primordial and its imprint is on all of creation. According to this understanding, the natural world is a product of the revelation—and the revelation is not a secondary product of creation. In fact, modern Orthodox theologians maintain that only this understanding of revelation contains any possibility of religious truth.¹⁷

Because of this belief that God can be primarily experienced through the study of a text, Rabbinic Judaism tended to exalt the study of Torah above all other religious activities (while not neglecting them), which made Torah study the central rabbinic spiritual practice. As a result, Rabbinic Judaism thus tended to textualize the world. According to Edward Feld,¹⁸ this retreat of the Rabbis from the real world into an ideal world of the text was a response to the catastrophe of the destruction of the Second Temple and the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt (c. 132–135 C.E.). This textualization and retreat from the world continued and intensified a process that had begun after the destruction of the First Temple (c. 586 B.C.E.), when prophecy came to an end and the word of God was canonized in the books of the Tanakh.

As Moshe Idel has pointed out, the creation of a sacred text produces a process of arcanization and dearchanization.¹⁹ The Torah text, as the word of God, becomes the source of all knowledge since it must contain the primordial wisdom of God: it has both exoteric and esoteric meanings.²⁰ Those who can penetrate the text open it up to new interpretations and ideas. Thus the Torah begins as a source of sacred and secret knowledge (arcanization), and then this knowledge is extracted, interpreted, and promulgated (dearchanization).

In Rabbinic Judaism this process is particularly revealed in the midrashic idea, articulated at the beginning of Genesis Rabbah, that the Torah is the primordial blueprint of the universe. In this midrash, the Rabbis connect the Torah with the Wisdom tradition found in Proverbs 8:22-31, in which Wisdom is the co-creator with God of the universe.²¹ In the midrash presented as the epigraph to this paper, the earthly Torah is but a reflection of the primordial heavenly Torah. The earthly Torah is black ink written on white parchment while the heavenly Torah, the source of all wisdom and the blueprint for creation, is described as "black fire written on white fire." Thus the earthly Torah becomes a gateway to the heavenly Torah.

The kabbalistic tradition took hold of this idea of Torah as primordial blueprint and created numerous theological speculations which saw it as something far beyond a text or even normal language. In one well-known passage from the Zohar, the written Torah is compared to an angel who must, upon coming down to earth, assume the guise of a human being in order to be seen and comprehended:

... And if this is true even of the angels, how much truer it is of the Torah—with which He created them and all the worlds and through which they all subsist ... The tales of the Torah are only her outer garments. If anyone should suppose that the Torah herself is this garment and nothing else, let him give up the ghost. Such a man will have no share in the world to come. ... Come and behold: there are garments that everyone sees, and when fools see a man in a garment that seems beautiful to them, they do not look more closely. But more important than the garment is the body, and more important than the body is the soul. So likewise the Torah has a body, which consists of

the commandments and ordinances of the Torah which are called *gufei torah*, "bodies of the Torah." This body is cloaked in garments which consist of worldly stories. Fools see only the garment, which is the narrative part of the Torah; they know no more and fail to see what is under the garment. Those who know more see not only the garment but also the body that is under the garment. But the truly wise, the servants of the Supreme King, those who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, look only upon the soul, which is the true foundation of the entire Torah, and one day indeed, it will be given them to behold the innermost soul of the Torah. . . .²²

This is an example of how the kabbalistic tradition further textualized the divine-human encounter and, in doing so, turned the whole of the natural world into a code for something other than it is. Until the nineteenth century, Kabbalah had a profound affect on Jewish perspectives on the natural world. The idea that creation and Torah constitute one entity, reflective of an aspect of God's own Self, can, on the one hand, reduce the natural world to a kind of codebook, a means to discovering the mysteries of the inner workings of God; while on the other hand, it can paradoxically open up revelation in a radical way. Expanding Torah to encompass all of creation and working within a modern historical perspective on the development of the biblical text opens up the sources of revelation to the whole of the natural world, including science and human experiences. This also allows a view of revelation that can flow from a process conception of God.

The Possibility of Revelation

But is it still possible to believe in revelation as an encounter with God, rather than the creation of propositional content? Revelation as encounter still seems to be a supernatural event where God is breaking through into the world from outside. Here is where our modern worldview, and how it has an impact on our idea of God, is essential to a theology of revelation as encounter.

In a traditional theistic idea about God in which the Divine is entirely separate from Creation, (above or *super* natural), revelation also has to be

supernatural. John Polkinghorne²³ once suggested that if the universe is a "block universe"²⁴ in which time doesn't really exist, then a classical theistic god who is separate from the universe is the most likely theology. Revelation then *must* come from outside the universe and thus be supernatural.

But if the universe is, as in Process Thought and as suggested by many scientists, a "universe of becoming," then God knows the universe temporally. "This requires a true divine engagement with time, the gracious acceptance by the eternal God of a temporal pole within the divine nature."²⁵ The eternal/temporal duality in God must be akin to a process, or pantheistic, god. In this kind of universe with this kind of god, revelation can only come from within the universe which contains the temporal aspect of God. Revelation can therefore be a natural time-dependent event in which God is self-revealing through the elements of creation itself. Process Theology is essentially pantheistic and thus rejects the dualism of spirit and matter.

One of the key insights about the nature of God that Process Theology expresses is that God does not exercise power by coercion, but only by persuasion. This persuasion can only come through a concept of revelation that does not violate natural law. The second key factor is the idea that a Process God experiences the evolution of the universe *in time* and not outside of the real experiences of life as it is lived. In the philosophy of Hans Jonas, which is akin to Process Thought, God is a becoming God, "emerging in time instead of possessing a completed being that remains identical with itself throughout eternity."²⁶ Therefore, any kind of revelation is not a message from outside of the temporal universe from an external source devoid of connection to the universe, but rather from within that God as a form of self-revelation.

There are also other ways in which God could communicate with humanity without suspending the laws of nature.²⁷ Hans Jonas conceived of a God who did not interfere with the universe beyond the initial creation,²⁸ but he nonetheless suggested that God could continue to act in relation to the universe, not through direct supernatural actions that contradict the laws of the natural world but rather through the inspiration of certain individuals.²⁹ Just as our freedom to act in the world is scientifically compatible with causality, so too it is possible to accept a kind of divine causality that comes into our inner self that does not conflict with the

human free will.³⁰ This is for Jonas revelation, although not a revelation in which there is propositional content—rather, he too postulates a version of "revelation-as-encounter." This is similar to the position of Norbert Samuelson, who sees all kinds of inspiration as a form of revelation—which he believes to be the most believable and the most authentically Jewish interpretation of revelation.³¹

But there is a difference between artistic inspiration and revelation. Inspiration usually takes place within an individual while revelation is created within a faith community. A community turns individual inspirational and revelatory experiences into sacred text, ritual, and ethical action. Communities also help to regulate revelation to avoid radical breaks with tradition, by setting boundaries to help create their own identities and differentiate them from other communities. But, like Thomas Kuhn's idea of a paradigm shift, communities can undergo radically new responses to new situations which, in the past, they would have perhaps unconsciously reinterpreted as part of the original revelation.³²

Creation as Revelation

If revelation is the divine-human encounter, what is the primary source of that encounter if not Creation itself? Even in the Hebrew Bible most revelatory experiences seemed to have occurred in the natural world, outside of human society (e.g., in a burning bush). And while biblical revelation is mostly auditory, the *presence* of God is revealed in natural images such as smoke, fire, and wind. And while God's presence (often referred to as the *kavod*) can be concentrated in one place when encountering humans, God nonetheless fills the whole of creation. In his famous vision of God in the Temple, Isaiah hears the seraphim chanting, "Holy, holy, holy! The Lord of Hosts! His presence (*kavod*) fills all the earth!" (Isaiah 6:3). The seraphim's announcement of God's appearance reveals the paradox of the *kavod*: God can appear in one place and yet the *kavod* fills the whole of creation. If God chooses to have the *kavod* appear at one place, this in no way limits its scope. All of creation contains the Presence of God, if we but look for it. The meeting of God and humanity also reveals that creation is an expression of divine intention beyond human artifice.³³

A creation-centered theology of revelation incorporates the vast new knowledge of the universe that has come from modern science: Thomas Berry once wrote that "the universe is the primary revelation of the divine, the primary scripture, the primary locus of divine-human communion."³⁴ Berry's concept of the Earth as Sacred Community includes the empirical knowledge of the universe as presented by scientific inquiry in the fields of cosmology and evolution. If the universe is not just a random accident, if we consider the universe *creation*, then what we learn about the universe is also about revealing the presence of the Divine. Catholic theologian John Haught has written:

Revelation is not just God's self-manifestation in history, let alone the communication of divine information in propositional form. We need to think of revelation in more cosmic terms. The universe itself is the primary revelation. In its 15 billion-year evolution the cosmos is the most fundamental mode of the unfolding of divine mystery. The mystery of God is revealed gradually in the evolution of matter, life, human culture, and the religions of the world (and not just in biblical religion either).³⁵

Revelation is thus as much an act of humanity discovering the divine in creation as it is a divine reaching or calling out to humans from within creation. In the ongoing meeting that takes place between discovery and calling, perhaps Wisdom can be perceived.

From Creation to Sacred Text

If creation is the primary revelation, then all textual revelation is a secondary human-created midrash about the human experience of the divine within the created world. While the old texts will still continue to hold power, it is important to open up revelation to new sources which will produce new ethical and halakhic responses to the environmental crisis. There are three possible categories of such new material: scriptural counter-voices, experiential voices, and scientific voices.

Scriptural counter-voices are those biblical texts that go beyond the

human-centered texts found mostly in the five books of the Torah. These texts would include Psalm 148, which depicts a creation choir of harmonious order in which humans have no primacy of place; Psalm 104, which shows how the diversity and beauty of creation reveals the wisdom of God; and Job 38-41, where humans are not even mentioned.³⁶ Counter-voices can even be found in biblical texts within the Torah itself. Jeremy Benstein points out that the Hebrew word for "wilderness" (*midbar*) has the same root as the word "to speak" (*m'dabbeir*). The Book of Numbers is called Bemidbar in Hebrew after the first verse: "God spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai." From this connection between divine speech and wilderness, he draws the conclusion that

We have lessons to learn from wilderness itself, from being there. The wilderness is the place of Torah, contrasted with the mighty civilizations of Egypt and its corruption that the Israelites left behind. God can speak (*m'dabbeir*) better in the desert (*midbar*).³⁷

Even Genesis 1 can be interpreted to hear a counter-voice. Ellen Bernstein's creative interpretation of this chapter shows how all of creation is infused with the presence of God, from which we can learn real values and ethical action.³⁸

One final example of a scriptural counter-voice is Exodus 25:1-31:17, where the laws of the building of the Tabernacle are found. Modern biblical scholarship considers the source of these chapters to from the Priestly School, which was also responsible for writing Genesis 1. Scholars³⁹ have long noticed that the description of the Tabernacle in Exodus 25:1-31:17 has structural and literary parallels with Genesis 1. There are seven sections of this part of Exodus, each beginning with the phrase, "Adonai spoke to Moses saying."⁴⁰ While each section does not necessarily correspond to a particular day of creation in Genesis 1, there do seem to be direct allusions to that text. The seventh and final section, Exodus 31:12-17, is devoted to a command to keep the Sabbath as a sign of creation, which is a direct parallel with the seventh day of creation in Genesis 2:1-4a.

In the sixth section, Exodus 31:1-11, God commands Moses to appoint Bezalel to build the Tabernacle, God having "endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft" (Exodus 31:3). The phrase for "divine spirit," *ruah elohim*, is the same term used to describe God's creative presence at the beginning of creation (Genesis 1:2).⁴¹ Thus Bezalel is given a measure of God's own creative power to build the Tabernacle. This is significant because the Tabernacle was seen as a microcosm of creation. Since the sixth day of creation marked the creation of humanity, the underlying message is that humanity, as the earthly image of God, has responsibility for the maintenance and ongoing creation of earthly creation. While this gives humanity a powerful role in creation, this Exodus text undercuts the interpretation of Genesis 1:28 that "dominion" or "mastery" means unrestricted human use of natural resources by limiting the scope of human activity to that which falls within the purview of *ruah elohim*.

The experiential voices can be found in contemporary narrative and poetic literature stemming from the environmental movement, as well as in a wider variety of literary and spiritual sources. These voices emphasize the idea that the experience of the natural world, whether in the wild or even in the human world, can produce a sense of wonder and awe. For example, Kathleen Dean Moore⁴² has shown how Rachel Carson's book, *The Sense of Wonder*,⁴³ connects the sensual experiences that one can feel in the natural world with a moral imperative to protect that world. To Moore, Carson's concept of wonder is identical to Abraham Joshua Heschel's idea of radical amazement: both are ways of seeing that produce an "attitude of openness or receptivity that leads a person from preoccupation with self into a search for meaning beyond one's self."⁴⁴ The ethical response to wonder and awe is the revelation of our times that is coming from creation itself. Hans Jonas once wrote that we must heed the revelation contained in the "outcry of mute things" if we are not to be destroyed.⁴⁵

But the experiential voices also include the outcry that comes from human communities, primarily those who are poor and/or of color, which have most suffered from the ravages of environmental degradation. In Christian theologian Karen Baker-Fletcher's book *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*,⁴⁶ personal story, family history, poetry, environmental facts, and Christian theology are used to create an earth spirituality tapestry. One of

the most powerful stories that Baker-Fletcher related was the response of an African-American woman named Monica, whom she met when she co-led an "interactive, meditative session with women of color at the Claremont School of Theology."⁴⁷ While all the other participants in this session spoke of the beauty and wonder of the natural world, Monica spoke of its ugliness and danger where she lived. This brought home to Baker-Fletcher how economic injustice can lead to a world of filth, danger, and violence—and not beauty. The biblical prophets connected the degradation of society with the degradation of the earth (for example, Isaiah 24:4-5; 41:17-20; 45:18). Today's revelation also contains those same cries from communities that are economically, racially, and politically marginalized and who suffer disproportionately from the environmental harm that have come from our over-consumption of creation.

The scientific voices that come from ecology, cosmology, evolutionary biology, and other disciplines teach us to have what environmental educator Mitchell Thomashow calls an "ecological identity":

... how people perceive themselves in reference to nature, as living and breathing beings connected to the rhythms of the earth, the biogeochemical cycles, the grand and complex diversity of ecological systems.⁴⁸

When we are able, through the sciences, to understand the real relationship that we have with the natural world, then we will change our perspective from a human-centered worldview to an ecological worldview in which we are able to see ourselves as part of an ecosystem where all living things are interconnected and interdependent. Then, perhaps, we will be motivated to act to protect the whole of creation and not just human society. Ethically, this can be expressed by Aldo Leopold's idea of the "Land Ethic," in which humans expand their ethical circle to include "the soils, waters, plants, animals, or collectively: the land."⁴⁹ This new ethical stance changes our relationship to the earth from "conqueror of the land-community, to plain member and citizen of it."⁵⁰ This is Thomas Berry's Sacred Earth Community that we must realize we are inextricably part of. Our interconnectedness with all creation is one of the central revelatory messages that modern science has brought us.⁵¹

How will we decide which of these new sources is revelation and which is not? We will do it in the same way that the books of the Bible themselves were canonized: if the new voices find "existential value" within the diverse forms of the Jewish community, then eventually they too will come to be seen as revelation and will be incorporated into liturgy, ritual, and text.⁵²

The Book of Black Fire

Jews are not going to give up their traditional sacred texts, since they still speak powerfully to the community and still shape its character, whatever the denomination. And Jews will continue to pursue the study of these texts as a major source of their spirituality. Nonetheless, if the Jewish tradition is going to be able to develop new responses to the environmental crisis, new voices of revelation must be heard and new *halakhah* developed. The Torah itself understands revelation not to be a heavenly entity, but a collection of teachings that God gave Israel for its benefit (Deuteronomy 30:11–14).

The idea that Torah is an expansive teaching beyond the text of the Pentateuch is appropriately found in the midrash quoted at the beginning of this paper. It is a book of black fire on white fire. Fire is a dynamic process, both beautiful and dangerous. These characteristics of God, embedded in creation itself, continue to be revealed to those who open their eyes to the mystery of the Book of Black Fire. Maimonides wrote in the introduction to the *Guide of the Perplexed*⁵³ that true knowledge cannot be easily acquired. It is like someone seeing the flashes of lightning in the night. For a brief second all is illuminated, but then the night falls upon us again. Some only see a single flash; others see a series of flashes, so that they seem to be in the continuous light of day. That is how the Book of Black Fire is revealed to us, like flashes of light on a black page. Both the page and the light are the fire and both reveal the Wisdom of God.

God called to him out of the bush (Exodus 3:4)—A gentle asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korhah: Why did the blessed Holy One speak to Moses from the midst of a bush [and not from the midst of a tree that has more grandeur]? He replied: Had God spoken from a carob or a sycamore, you could have asked the same question, but I cannot let you go away empty-handed.

Why [did God speak to Moses] from the midst of a bush? It is to teach you that there is no place that is devoid of the Shekhinah—not even a thorn-bush (Exodus Rabbah 2:5).

NOTES

1. In the daily morning service, for example, the recitation of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Numbers 15:37–41), the central Jewish declaration of monotheism, is preceded by two blessings and followed by one blessing. In the first two, God is described as Creator and Revealer of Torah and, in the third blessing, as Redeemer in the past, present, and future.
2. Arthur Green, *Speak My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992), p. 53. See also Elliot Dorff, "Medieval and Modern Theories of Revelation," in *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York: RA and USCJ, 2001), pp. 1401–5.
3. See Lawrence Troster, "From Apologetics to New Spirituality: Trends in Jewish Environmental Theology," <http://www.coej.org/scholarship/jethology.pdf>, November, 2004.
4. Sandra B. Lubarsky and David Ray Griffin, *Jewish Theology and Process Thought*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. ix.
5. Norbert Samuelson, *Jewish Faith and Modern Science: On the Death and Rebirth of Jewish Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), and see Samuelson's essay on pp. 152–162 below.
6. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006); Lawrence Troster, "Journey to the Center of the Earth: *Birkat Ha-Mazon* and the Quest for Holiness," *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 47, No. 2, (Winter 1995), pp. 3–16.
7. Gordon Tucker, "*Derash Vekabel Sechar* [Seek and Receive a Reward]: Halakhic and Metahalakhic Arguments Concerning Judaism and Homosexuality," unpublished manuscript, p. 8. See also his earlier article, "The Sayings of the Wise are Like Goads: An Appreciation of the Works of Robert Cover," in *Conservative Judaism*, 45:3 (Spring 1993), pp. 17–39.
8. Tucker, *Derash*, p. 9. See also p. 11–12.
9. Tucker, p. 19.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Robert Cover, *Narrative, Violence, and the Law: The Essays of Robert Cover*, Martha Minow, Michael Ryan, and Austin Sarat, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 95–172. The essay was first published in the *Harvard Law Review* in 1983.
12. Robert Cover, *Narrative, Violence, and the Law*, p. 146–48.

13. Jeremy Benstein, *The Way into Judaism and the Environment* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006), pp. 88–93.
14. I have attempted to do this with the issue of species extinction and biodiversity. See Lawrence Troster, "God Must Love Beetles: A Jewish View of Biodiversity and the Extinction of Species," *Conservative Judaism*, Volume 51, No. 2 (Spring 2008), pp. 3–21.
15. For example, in the last twenty years the very minor observance of the New Year of the Trees (Tu B'Shevat) has been turned into a Jewish Earth Day. For other developments see Mark X. Jacobs, "Jewish Environmentalism: Past Accomplishments and Future Challenge," in Hava Tirosch-Samuelson, ed., *Judaism and Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 449–80.
16. See Elliott Dorff, "Medieval and Modern Theories of Revelation," and Norbert M. Samuelson, *Revelation and the God of Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Abraham Joshua Heschel once famously wrote, "As a report about revelation the Bible itself is a *midrash*" (*God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*, [New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1955], p. 185).
17. See, for example, Norman Lamm's statement of belief in literal textual revelation in *The Condition of Jewish Belief* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 123–31.
18. Edward Feld, *The Spirit of Renewal: Crisis and Response in Jewish Life* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), pp. 63–71.
19. Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 1–2.
20. See, for example, Philo of Alexandria (first century C.E.): "We ought to rather look on the outward observances [of the Torah] as resembling the body, and their inner meaning as resembling the soul. Just as we then provide for the body, inasmuch as it is the abode of the soul, so we must attend to the letter of the laws. If we keep these, we shall obtain an understanding of those things of which these are the symbols and in addition we shall escape the censure and accusations of the multitude" (*The Migration of Abraham* 93, transl. Colson and Whitaker in *Philo*, vol. 4 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968], p. 168). Compare also the rabbinic saying in M. Avot 5:25 (early third century C.E.): "Ben Bag Bag said, 'Turn it [the Torah] and turn it, for all is in it; and look in it and grow gray and old in it, and turn not away from it, for there is no better rule for you than it.'"
21. Genesis Rabbah 1:1. The midrash makes a connection between the word "beginning" in Genesis 1:1 (*b'reishit*) and the word "beginning" in Proverbs 8:22, "The Lord made me [Wisdom in Proverbs, but understood as Torah by the Rabbis] as the beginning (*reishit*) of His way." Thus Genesis 1:1 could be understood as: "By means of *reishit* (i.e., Wisdom/Torah) did God create the heavens and the earth."
22. Zohar III 152a, trans. G. Scholem, in "The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish

- Mysticism," in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 64. See also Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 45–79.
23. John Polkinghorne, "Space, Time, and Causality," *Zygon*, Volume 41.4 (December 2006), pp. 975–83.
24. Block Universe: "A view of spacetime that affords equal (ontological) status to all points in spacetime, thus regarding temporality as an illusory human construct with no reference to reality as understood by modern physics." *The Internet Encyclopedia of Science*, http://www.daviddarling.info/encyclopedia/B/block_universe.html, accessed October 5, 2009.
25. Polkinghorne, "Space," p. 982.
26. Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," in: *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, Lawrence Vogel, ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 137.
27. See Ian Barbour, *Nature, Human Nature, and God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), pp. 25–30. Barbour elucidates four main trends: God as designer of a self-organizing system, God as determiner of indeterminacies, God as top-down cause, and God as communicator of information. See also Robert John Russell, Nancy Murphy, and Arthur R. Peacocke, eds., *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Berkeley: The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1995), pp. 9–13, and Lawrence Troster, "The Order of Creation and the Emerging God: Evolution and Divine Action in the Natural World," in Geoffrey Cantor and Marc Swetlitz, eds., *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Darwinism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 225–46.
28. Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," p. 138. See also, Lawrence Troster, "Hans Jonas and the Concept of God after the Holocaust," *Conservative Judaism* 55:4 (Summer 2003), pp. 16–25.
29. Hans Jonas, "Is Faith Still Possible?: Memories of Rudolf Bultmann and Reflections on the Philosophical Aspects of His Work," in *Mortality and Morality*, pp. 144–64.
30. Jonas, "Is Faith Still Possible," p. 156.
31. Samuelson, *Revelation and the God of Israel*, pp. 237–38.
32. To those who would see revelation as only a kind of function in the brain, see George F. R. Ellis, "Intimations of Transcendence: Relations of the Mind and God," in Robert John Russell, Nancy Murphy, Theo C. Myering, and Michael A. Arbib, eds., *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory Foundation, 2002), pp. 470–74. Reducing revelation and/or inspiration to a kind of psychological disorder or an expression of neurons is a kind of what I call "nothing-but-ism," as in the declaration, "Humans are nothing but naked apes."
33. See Psalm 104 and Job 38–41. See also Stephen A. Geller, "Nature's Answer: The Meaning of the Book of Job in Its Intellectual Context," in Hava Tirosch-

Samuelson, *Judaism and Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 109–32.

34. Thomas Berry, *Evering Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, Mary Evelyn Tucker, ed. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), p. 70.

35. John F. Haught, *The Promise of Nature* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2004), p. 96.

36. For an environmental analysis of these texts see, Lawrence Troster, “God Must Love Bees.”

37. Benstein, *The Way*, pp. 139–40. He also references I Kings 19, where the prophet Elijah has to go into the desert to hear “a soft murmuring sound.” (NIPS translation; others, “a still, small voice.” Literally: “the sound of a thin silence.”)

38. Ellen Bernstein, *The Splendor of Creation: A Biblical Ecology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005).

39. See for example Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus: The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), p. 155–56 for a summary of the scholarship.

40. Exodus 25:1–30:10; 30:11–16; 30:17–21; 30:22–33; 30:34–38; 31:1–11; 31:12–17.

41. The only other person described as having the *ru-ah elohim* prior to Bezalel is Joseph, in Genesis 41:38.

42. Kathleen Dean Moore, “The Truth of the Barnacles: Rachel Carson and the Moral Significance of Wonder,” in *Environmental Ethics*, Volume 27.3 (Fall 2005), pp. 265–77.

43. Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998 [1965]). This book was originally written for the magazine *Woman’s Home Companion* but meant to eventually be part of a larger work.

44. Moore, “The Truth of the Barnacles,” p. 269. The reference to Heschel is to *Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Farrar Straus and Young, 1951), pp. 12, 13, 15.

45. Jonas, “The Outcry of Mute Things,” *Mortality and Morality*, pp. 198–202.

46. Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit: Womanist Wordings on God and Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

47. Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust*, p. 69.

48. Mitchell Thomashow, *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. xiii, 12–13.

49. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970 [1966]), pp. 238–40, 262.

50. *Ibid.*

51. See Thomas Berry’s “12 Principles for Understanding the Universe,” in *Evering Thoughts*, pp. 145–47. See also Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), pp. 281–84. Norbert Samuelson rightly decries the fact the modern Jewish philosophy (and, by

extension, modern Jewish theology) is based on outmoded scientific worldviews. He proposed a series of ways that modern science can affect the classic theological categories of Creation, Redemption, and Revelation. See Norbert M. Samuelson, *Jewish Faith and Modern Science: On the Death and Rebirth of Jewish Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009).

52. The term “existential value” in relation to sacred text and how it is created within the Jewish community as canonized Scripture is taken from Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp. 172–73. As mentioned in note 15 above, this process of translating the ecological worldview into community practice has already begun.

53. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), vol. I, p. 7.

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