

CENTRAL TO the creation of a new Jewish environmental theology is the necessity of grounding this theology in the recent discussions about the relationship between science and religion, found mostly so far in Christian circles. In his approach to creation theology, Arthur Green has suggested a typology for that relationship in which religious language and scientific language exist in separate but equally valid realms. Ian Barbour, one of the foremost scholars in the field of the science/religion dialogue, has called this approach the Independence model. In this model, science and religion speak of differing truths, use different methods, and have their own sphere of action and influence. They therefore can never be in conflict.

Historically this model was expressed in a metaphor that Christian scientists in the 16th to 18th centuries often used called the "Two Books of God": the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. Each "Book" had its own truth, and neither could contradict the other. As Galileo was reported to have said, "Science teaches us how heaven goes while Scripture teaches us how to go to heaven." This metaphor allowed the scientists to pursue the secrets of the "Book of Nature" without coming into conflict with the truth of Scripture.

This metaphor never existed in Jewish sources because, in Judaism, there was only one book, the Torah, in which all wisdom was contained. However, Maimonides came closest to expressing the idea that the natural world could also be a source of revelation. In his understanding of the commandments to love and fear God (Deuteronomy 6:5, 13), he wrote: "When a person observes God's works and God's great and marvelous creatures, and they see from them God's wisdom that is without estimate or end, immediately they will love God, praise God and long with a great desire to know God's Great Name...And when a person thinks about these things they draw back and are afraid and realize that they are small, lowly, and obscure, endowed with slight and slender intelligence, standing in the presence of God who is perfect in knowledge." (*Mishneh Torah, Sepher Madah, Hilkhot Yesodei Ha-Torah* 2:1-2)

For Maimonides, to "observe" the works of God meant what we would call the scientific

study of the natural world. For Maimonides, the two "Books of God" were not separate realms of truth, but complementary sources of the knowledge of God.

Ian Barbour has also delineated a model of the science/religion relationship called the Integration model, where science and religion engage in a unified quest for knowledge and each discipline complements and enriches the other. It is a new version of the Two Books metaphor, more in the Maimonidean mode. It is this model that is essential to creating a Jewish environmental theology.

Science grounds us in the interrelationship between humanity and the rest of the natural world. This interrelationship is both subtle and deep. That most people don't understand this relationship has led to our disconnection from creation and to our despoliation of the environment. A Jew-

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ish environmental theology begins with the reading of the Book of Creation. We are thus filled with love and a sense of connection to a greater order of things; we feel a sense of awe and humility as we perceive how small we are in the universe and within the history of evolution. We create what environmental educator Mitchell Thomashow calls an “ecological identity,” the state in which “people perceive themselves in reference to nature, as living breathing beings connected to the

rhythms of the earth, the biogeochemical cycles, the grand and complex diversity of ecological systems.”

This new perspective is urgently needed, as we are now engaged in tearing out the pages of the Book of Creation. The philosopher Hans Jonas once wrote that, “The latest revelation... is the outcry of mute things themselves that we must heed by curbing our powers over creation, lest we perish together on a wasteland of what was creation.”

Traditional Jewish Theology and the Feminist Critique

Tamar Ross

RADICAL FEMINISM teaches that if the Torah is a book that places men at the center, then the world that it constructs in order to make sense of Jewish experience is also a world viewed from a male perspective. The problem is not merely that God is described as male, but also that religious curiosity requires an explanation of how the world came into existence, which portrays the world as an ordered realm of demarcated beings. This leads to the image of God as a transcendent being, ruling over and controlling the world. It also leads to a ritual that is law-governed, so that our religious wellbeing depends upon our performing a detailed series of mandated acts, to the centrality of a hierarchical mode of separation as a mark of holiness, and to the idea that man’s relationship to the world’s species is essentially one of dominion. All these are expressive of a set of cultural attitudes and structures suggestive of masculine thinking and patriarchal forms.

A radical feminist rendition of creation might favor an alternative assumption, yielding an alternative vision not only of God, but also of ourselves, of our relationship to God, of our relationship to each other, and of what it means to be close to God. Perhaps, instead of viewing the act of creation as God making something out of nothing, the opening chapters of the Torah could have used the analogy of God giving *birth* to the world, as we find in other religions of the time. This would have been a poetic celebration of a sense of our permanent intimacy with God in a world that often seems so hostile and unintelligible to us. Perhaps the alternative story of Genesis would have stressed the interrelated texture of the self or the immanent nature of God as

opposed to His transcendence, and a sense of the cooperative element in the relationship between God and God’s creatures instead of employing the authoritarian image.

Non-Orthodox Jewish feminists attempt to address this radical critique by incorporating alternative views of God and the world into tradition. Engaging in revisionist history and in innovative methods of biblical exegesis, such feminists attempt to locate and reclaim authoritative sources for augmenting the male imagery of monotheism. But Orthodox feminism, to the extent that it proceeds beyond acknowledging the predominantly male perspective of the Torah, has only engaged gingerly in attempts within the practical boundaries of halakhah to mitigate the injustices or anachronisms of the system. Orthodox Jewish feminism does not indulge in theological revisionism and indeed consciously avoids it out of faithfulness to the sanctified formulae of tradition. But it is precisely here that the real problem of Orthodox feminist theology lies.

The question is not whether it would be better to talk about God as a She rather than a He or to depict the nature of God in more woman-friendly terms. The real problem consists of the awareness that the male image of God and the blatantly patriarchal nature of this tradition and its hierarchical dualisms bear extremely upsetting implications for the prevailing Orthodox concepts of revelation and the divine nature of the Torah. The feminist reading of the Torah often ends up with the refusal to assign the status of divine revelation to a text that simply establishes and reinforces the injustices of patriarchy.

If the Torah is from God, it should be above any human conditionality. But if the Torah’s

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