Jewish Farm School



The Singing Earth: Reclaiming a Jewish Theology of a Sacred and Animate World Rabbi Jacob Elisha Fine, jacob@jewishfarmschool.org

1) David Abram, The Spell of the Sensuous, ix

Humans are tuned for relationship. The eyes, the skin, the tongue, ears, and nostrils--all are gates where our body receives the nourishment of otherness. This landscape of shadowed voices, these feathered bodies and antlers and tumbling streams--these breathing shapes are our family, the beings with whom we are engaged, with whom we struggle and suffer and celebrate. For the largest part of our species' existence, humans have negotiated relationships with every aspect of the sensuous surroundings, exchanging possibilities with every flapping form, with each textured surface and shivering entity that we happen to focus upon. All could speak, articulating in gesture and whistle and sigh a shifting web of meanings that we felt on our skin or inhaled through our nostrils or focused with our listening ears, and to which we replied---whether with sounds, or through movements, or minute shifts of mood. The color of the sky, the rush of waves--every aspect of the earthly sensous could draw us into a relationship fed with curiosuity and spiced with danger. Every sound was a voice, every scrape or blunder was a meeting—with Thunder, with Oak, with Dragonfly. And from all of these relationships our collective sensibilities were nourished.

2) Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," Science, 1967

In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.

3) Psalm 148

Praise Him sun and moon, praise Him, all bright stars...all sea monsters and ocean depths, fire and hail, snow and smoke, storm wind...all mountains and hills, all fruit trees and cedars, all wild and tamed beasts, creeping things and winged birds, all kings and peoples of the earth.

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הללו אֶת יְהֹוָה מִן הַשָּׁמֵיִם הַלְּלוּהוּ בַּמְרוֹמִים
:ב( הַלְּלוּהוּ כָל מַלְאָכָיו הַלְּלוּהוּ כָּל צְבָאָו)
:ג( הַלְלוּהוּ שָׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ הַלְּלוּהוּ כָּל כּוֹכְבֵי אוֹר)
:ד( הַלְלוּהוּ שְׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ הַלְּלוּהוּ כָּל כּוֹכְבֵי אוֹר)
:ד( הַלְלוּהוּ שְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמֶיִם וְהַמֵּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל הַשָּׁמִיִם)
:ז( הַלְלוּהוּ שְׁמֵי יְהֹוָה כִּי הוּא צִוָּה וְנִבְּרָאוֹה( יְהּ)
:ז( הַלְלוּ אֶת יְהֹוָה מִן הָאָרֶץ תַנִּינִים וְכָל תְהֹמוֹת)
:ז( הַלְלוֹ אֶת יְהֹוָה מִן הָאָרֶץ תַנִּינִים וְכָל תְהֹמוֹת)
:ז( הַחַיָּה וְכָל בְּהָמֶה רֶמֶשׁ וְצִפּוֹר כָּנָף)
:ז'( הַחַיָּה וְכָל בְּהַמֶּה רֶמֶשׁ וְצִפּוֹר כָּנָף)
:ז'ב( בַּחוֹרִים וְגַם בְּתוֹלוֹת זְקְנִים עִם נְעָרִים)
:ז'ב( בַּחוֹרִים וְגַם בְּתוֹלוֹת זְקְנִים עִם נְעָרִים)
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יִדֹן וַיְרֶב קְבֶן לְעֵמוֹ תְּהַלָּה לְכָל חֲסִידִיוֹ לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם קְרֹבוֹ הַלְּנוֹ הִיֹּלוֹ, יָהְ
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4) Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Man in Search of God, 95

[From a Jewish perspective] The earth is [a person's] sister rather than his mother. Man and earth are equally the creations of God...To think of God, man must hear the world. Man is not alone in celebrating God. To praise Him is to join all things in their song to Him.

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5) Talmud, Brachot 35a-b

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel: To enjoy anything of this world without a blessing is like making personal use of things consecrated to Heaven, since it says. 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.' (Ps. 24)

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל כל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה כאילו נהנה מקדשי שמים שנאמר לה' הארץ ומלואה

6) Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, Shiur Komah 206b

The essence of Divinity is found in every single thing—nothing but it exists. Since it causes every thing to be, no thing can live by anything else. It enlivens them; its existence exists in each existent. Do not attribute duality to God. Let God be solely God... If you suppose that Ein Sof emanates until a certain point, and that from that point on is outside of it, you have dualized. God forbid! Realize, rather, that Ein Sof exists in each existent. Do not say, "This is a stone and not God." God forbid! Rather, all existence is God, and the stone is a thing pervaded by divinity.

דף 206ב, 46, כתב יד מודנה אסטנזה

עצם האלהות נמצא בכל בכל הנבראים כולם ולא יהיה שום נמצא חוץ ממנו מפני שאחר שהוא המהוה את כולם אין ראוי שנאמר שיהיה שום בריה חיה על ידי זולתו אלא הוא הוה אותם והוא חיותם ומציאותו נמצא בכל הנמצאים כולם. מר שניות באלוה ולמהוי הוא הוא בלחודוי ירצה אם תאמר בדעתך האין סוף מתפשט עד והטעם העיקרי לזה שלא תא מקום פלוני ומשם ולמטה חוץ ממנו חס ושלום אם נעשה שניות שהרי אינו לבדו אחר שהוא נמצא עד בריה או סבה ומר זו אבן ואינה פלונית ומשם ולמטה שני לו חס ושלום אלא אתה צריך לומר שהוא נמצא בכל הנמצאים ואין לך ל אלוה חס ושלום אלא כל המציאות הוא האלוה והאבן הוא בריה שאלהותו מתפשט בה

7) Talmud, Sanhedrin 94a

The Holy One, blessed be He, wished to appoint Hezekiah as the Messiah, and Sennacherib as Gog and Magog; whereupon the Attribute of Justice said before the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Sovereign of the Universe! If You did not make David the Messiah, who uttered so many hymns and psalms before Thee, wilt Thou appoint Hezekiah as such, who did not hymn Thee in spite of all these miracles which Thou wrought for him?'...Straightway the earth exclaimed: 'Sovereign of the Universe! Let me utter song before Thee instead of this righteous man [Hezekiah], and make him the Messiah.' So it broke into song before Him, as it is written, From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. (Ezek: 24:16)

ביקיש הקדוש ברוך הוא לעשות חזקיהו משיח וסנחריב גוג ומגוג אמרה מדת הדין לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו ו כל הנסים של עולם ומה דוד מלך ישראל שאמר כמה שירות ותשבחות לפניך לא עשיתו משיח חזקיה שעשית ל הללו ולא אמר שירה לפניך תעשהו משיח לכך נסתתם מיד פתחה הארץ ואמרה לפניו רבונו של עולם אני אומרת לפניך שירה תחת צדיק זה ועשהו משיח פתחה ואמרה שירה לפניו שנאמר מכנף הארץ זמירות שמענו צבי לצדיק

8) Rebbe Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, (1889–1943), Bnai Machshava Tova, 33-34

Before [the] ability to see the world as souls and essences and consciousness fully emerges in you, you can still impress upon your rational mind the following thought: The whole world and everything in it is divine in origin and substance. It is not visible to my eyes but God is the source of all reality, even I am full of God. The sand under my feet is an articulation of God. The whole world is utterly comprised of, and dependent on, God...When you constantly impress this idea on your mind, you will begin to internalize it...When you remind yourself repeatedly that all the world is divine, your feelings and consciousness inevitably begin to comply with this point of view, which already corresponds with the perspective of the soul...As you observe the world, remind yourself that everything is completely given over to God. Everything is surrounded by the holiness of His Presence. Everything is, essentially, divine.