

# JOB AND ECOLOGY (AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JOB 40:15)

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The book of Job is concerned with one of the oldest problems known to man, the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked; it would seem hardly likely that it would also speak to one of the newest issues confronting the human race, that being the pollution of soil, air and water, and the wholesale destruction of other living creatures in our day. The book of Job is fundamental for theology; this paper suggests that it also has important implications for ecology.

That "The Speeches of the Lord Out of the Whirlwind" (38:1–40:2 and 40:6–41:26) constitute the climax of the book, and thus contain its central message, is clear both from their position at the end of the poetic sections and from the identity of the Speaker to whom they are attributed. While this is generally agreed upon among scholars, a host of major issues remain with regard to a) the authenticity of these chapters, in whole or in part, b) the presence of two distinct speeches by the Lord and two responses by Job, c) the meaning and intent of the message that the "Speeches of the Lord" are seeking to convey, and therefore d) their relevance to the problem of suffering, with which the book as a whole is concerned.<sup>1</sup>

Earlier critics tended to deny the authenticity of the God Speeches, assuming that the work was left unfinished and that another poet or poets added these chapters, which, however beautiful, are irrelevant to the theme of the book.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly, modern scholars accept the authenticity of the God Speeches in whole or in part.

1. For the variety of views held by scholars on these issues, see the characteristically comprehensive and well-organized bibliography by Rowley (1958); also O. Eissfeldt (1965), and the sources cited in Gordis (1965, chapter 10 and 1978, pp. 593–600). Our own views on these issues are there presented in detail.

2. See T. K. Cheyne, "Job and Solomon," in *Encyclopedia Bibl.* 2 (1901) p. 2480f.; P. Volz, in *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*, Vol. III, Pt. 2 (2nd ed. 1921). J. Hempel, *Die althebräische Literatur* (Handbuch der Literaturwiss.) Potsdam, 1930–34; F. Baumgartel *Der Hiobdialog*; L. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, Vol. 1, p. 234; E. G. Kraeling (1939).

There are also problems of lesser moment. Thus many scholars assume that the passage on the ostrich (39:13–18) in the First Speech is an interpolation, because it is lacking in the Septuagint and is apparently not couched in interrogative form.<sup>3</sup>

These arguments are not decisive.<sup>4</sup> The fact is that LXX drastically curtails the text of the book as a whole, probably because of its difficulty. With regard to the absence of the question form in this section, the passage may be governed by *hayāda ʿtā* in 39:1. On our view of the alternation of interrogative and declarative sections in both God Speeches, see below. Moreover, the closing stich in the ostrich section, “She mocks the horse and its rider” (38:9), serves to introduce the horse as the next creature to be described.

Some scholars have sought to delete the sections on Behemot and Leviathan on several grounds: a) the Second Speech is stylistically inferior to the First; b) the description of the Behemot is not couched in the interrogative form characteristic of the First Speech; and c) there is no need for two speeches by the Lord and two responses by Job—one of each would suffice.

Only a brief analysis of these contentions can be presented here. The negative view of the literary qualities of the Second Speech as stylistically inferior to the First is purely subjective judgment. It is, in my opinion, refuted by many vivid touches in the description of these beasts, as e.g., 40:23, 26–29; 41:17, 24 (which has been unappreciated because of faulty exegesis).

Nor is the structure haphazard. That a great poet would shift from the interrogative to the declarative form in order to avoid monotony in a long poem is entirely to be expected. A careful reading of the text discloses a regular pattern, i.e., each speech consists of sections alternating between the question and the statement: First Speech: interrogative (38:1–39:12), declarative—the ostrich—(39:13–18), interrogative—the horse—(39:19–30); Second Speech: interrogative (40:6–14),<sup>5</sup> declarative—Behemot—(40:15–24), interrogative—Leviathan—(40:25–41:26). The indispensability of the descriptions of the two creatures in the Second Speech, and their climactic relationship to the content of the First Speech,

3. See Pfeiffer (1941), Rowley (1958) and Terrien (1963), among others who object to the absence of the interrogative form.

4. See Gordis (1978, pp. 565–572).

5. On this passage, crucial for the understanding of the book as a whole, and the importance of which has often been overlooked, see Kraeling (1939, p. 122), Gordis (1965, p. 118f.) and Gordis (1978, pp. 479f., 566).

will be presented below, as well as the need for two separate speeches and two distinct responses by Job.

While most scholars recognize the authenticity of the two speeches,<sup>6</sup> the basic question as to their meaning and relevance remains: there is no reference either to Job's alleged sin or to his suffering. We may grant that we should not "impose the straight-jacket of Aristotelian logic and consistency on an Oriental poet" (Pfeiffer, 1941, p. 674), but one does not expect that the basic theme of the book should be totally abandoned even by an Oriental poet. A philosophic writer speaks of "the poor logic and weakness of God's arguments (as) truly astonishing. He only makes sport of the little worm, Job."<sup>7</sup> A twentieth century biblical scholar maintains that the Creator has only "contempt for miserable human beings in whom God is no more interested than in wild animals" (Pfeiffer, 1941, p. 689). This hardly seems fair as a description of an author whose life-work was concerned with a passionate protest against human suffering. Another interpreter suggests that the God Speeches were deliberately written ambiguously, with tongue in cheek. Thus the pious believer would find the conventional religious answer being presented through the reaffirmation of God's power and Job's submission, while the skeptical thinker would derive the heterodox conclusion that the world as a whole and man's suffering in it constitute a riddle to which there is no solution (Fullerton, 1924).<sup>8</sup>

Another striking interpretation sees in the God Speeches "the irony of reconciliation": "God finds man guilty and acquits him; that is the fundamental irony of the book of Job and the biblical faith" (Good, 1956,

6. See Driver-Gray (1921, Vol. 1, pp. 351f.) and Eissfeldt (1965, pp. 456-67) for presentations of the atomistic approach, today much less popular than in the recent past.

7. Chaim Zhitlowski (n.d., p. 19).

8. Thus Fullerton writes, "The pious reader who contented himself with the surface meaning of the Speeches, could see in them a rebuke of Job's daring criticism of God, but what the author really meant to suggest to the thoughtful reader who bit beneath the surface was the insolubility of the problem of suffering" (p. 130). . . . "The author is seeking very artfully to cover up his real aim" (p. 131). . . . "The pious reader would see in the Confession of Job a retraction of his former criticisms in view of the divine rebuke. The *thinker* would see in it the confession of the author: he had no further light to give on this ultimately insoluble (*sic*) problem and the indication that this was *the end of the book*". . . . "Thus Prologue, Speeches of Jahweh, and Confession share the peculiarity of having a double sense run through them" (pp. 131f.).

I should like to pay tribute to Fullerton's sensitivity and insight, though I believe the issues he raises and other problems can be met by far less radical and therefore preferable approaches, which I have set forth elsewhere (Gordis, 1965; 1978).

At this late date, sixty years after the publication of his paper, I should like to suggest that there is a printer's error in his closing paragraph. He is clearly referring to chapter 28

p. 239). However, nowhere does God declare Job to be guilty or acquit him of his guilt. On the contrary, God explicitly vindicates Job in the jointure following the poetic dialogue, when He informs the Friends, "You have not spoken the truth about Me, as has my servant Job" (42:7, 8).

Most scholars have not accepted these rather idiosyncratic interpretations and sought less involved ways of relating the God Speeches to the earlier Dialogue of Job and His Friends.<sup>9</sup>

One widespread view maintains that God wins Job over by picturing His limitless might as revealed in creation. But if this be the point of the God Speeches, they are entirely unnecessary, since Job has frequently conceded God's power; in fact this is the heart of Job's complaint—the undue advantage that his Adversary enjoys because of His boundless might (Job 9:4, 19, 34, 35; 12:9, 13; 13:21–22; 23:3, 4, 6). Job himself gives vivid descriptions of God's power (9:1–13; 12:7–25), focussing, to be sure, upon His destructive activity in nature and society.<sup>10</sup> If Job now surrenders before the spectacle of God's power, which he has so passionately challenged in his cries for justice, it would be a stultifying conclusion to a brilliant debate.

Many scholars and readers have therefore suggested another approach. Throughout the debate with the Friends, Job has pleaded for God to respond to his suffering and answer him (9:11, 32; 10:8; 14:14f.; 31:35). The climax is reached in Job's three dramatic calls for meeting with

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(not chapter 38) as "an independent poem by the author of Job"—a view which I have presented independently.

Fullerton's approach resembles the theory of Leo Strauss (1952), who maintains that much of medieval writing in philosophy and theology was "esoteric literature," in which the authors expressed heterodox opinions in disguised form. Thus they would avoid persecution at the hands of secular or ecclesiastical authorities, because only the *cognoscenti* would understand their true meaning. While the theory is highly plausible in the case of Spinoza and other writers, Strauss applied it also to Maimonides. For some evidence that refutes this latter contention, see R. Gordis (1985).

9. Perhaps because of the abundance of conflicting opinions, Pope (1965) seems to reflect some indecision on the authenticity of these sections and the unity of the book. After a brief comment on the meaning and value of the God Speeches, he writes, "The Book of Job in its present form can hardly be regarded as a consistent and unified composition by a single author. Nevertheless, there is a considerable degree of organic unity despite the incongruities" (p. xviii). Elsewhere he writes, "It does not mean that the book is to be discounted as a magnificent misadventure or a conspicuous failure" (p. lxxvii).

10. This negative attitude towards God's activity sets these passages apart from such traditional hymns of praise as those of Eliphaz (5:8–23) and Bildad (25:1–6; 26:5–14). On the compelling reasons for attributing the latter passage to Bildad see Gordis (1978, pp. 277–81, 535f.). Job regards the overthrow of the existing social order as a manifestation of God's *destructive activity* (12:16–25), a position entirely congruent with the upper-class orientation of Wisdom literature. See Gordis (1943; 1978).

God, reflecting his increasing conviction as to his own integrity and his growing faith that God will ultimately vindicate him (9:32–35; 16:18–22; 19:23–27).<sup>11</sup> Job's plea for God's response is thus answered.

Here a brief observation that may appear as a digression is in order. The abstract formulations of medieval and modern theology seem far removed in timbre from the warm, personal sense of God's presence communicated in the Bible. Nevertheless two terms, borrowed from the later theological vocabulary, "immanence" and "transcendence", will be helpful in highlighting the two basic aspects of the biblical concept of God.

The faith that God sympathizes with human suffering and identifies Himself with it is a basic theme in biblical religion, deriving from the concept of the covenant between God and man. It is set forth in the Torah (Lev 26:12), the Prophets (Isa 63:9) and the Psalms (91:15). To cite one instance out of many: "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth" (Ps 145:18).

Job had enjoyed this sense of fellowship with God during the earlier days of his untroubled piety and prosperity, and he yearns for them still:

"O that I were as in the days of old,  
As in the days when God watched over me,  
When His lamp shone upon my head,  
And by His light I walked through darkness." (Job 29:2f.)

It is not, however, this immanent God who speaks out of the whirlwind, but a transcendental Deity far above man. Nowhere in the God Speeches is it indicated, even by implication, that God is near to man and involved in his suffering. On the contrary, it is the vast distance between the infinite power and wisdom of God and the limited wisdom and strength of men that is hammered home in every line. That the God Speeches express God's empathy with man, and that therein Job finds the satisfaction for which he has been pleading, is nowhere borne out by the text.

Moreover, if the functions of the God Speeches were merely to assure Job that God was aware of his presence and responsive to his pain, a few lines to that effect would have sufficed, such as: "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth" (Ps 145:18); "In all their suffering, He too suffers" (Isa 63:9); "I am with Him in His trouble" (Ps 91:15). Instead of a brief response along these lines, we have two elaborate poems extending over four long chapters. Not merely *that God speaks*, but *what He says* must surely carry significance in this context.

11. On the progression of thought in these passages see Gordis (1978), Special Note 15: "Job's Three Levels of Faith, Arbitrator Witness and Redeemer."

The key to the understanding of the God Speeches must be sought in two factors. The first is the recognition of the extensive role that analogy and allusiveness play in biblical as well as in medieval Hebrew poetry.<sup>12</sup> Not denotation but connotation is the essence of poetic expression; indirection and implication are far more eloquent than outright explication. Therein lies the importance of metaphor and simile, which, by their very nature, disclose unsuspected similarities and analogies. In the God Speeches, in particular, which are concerned with issues that transcend the mundane and the experiential, a hint is often far more effective than an assertion in drawing conclusions by analogy from the known to the unknown.

Second, both modern literary theory and psychological research combine to reveal the active role played by the reader in all forms of communication. Unless the reader/listener becomes a creative partner in the dialogue, utilizing his faculty of ratiocination and his powers of imagination, the words written or spoken are in vain.

The Speeches Out of the Whirlwind do not describe the beauties of nature for their own sake; they are concerned with nature's God. By their sweep and majesty, the God Speeches underscore the insight that nature is not merely a mystery but a miracle as well, a cosmos marked by order and beauty.

The poet goes further. Since God is both the Lord of nature and the Governor of history, there is an analogy from the natural world to the human sphere: as there is beauty and harmony in the natural world, though imperfectly grasped by man, so there is order and meaning in the moral sphere, though often incomprehensible to man.

With exultant joy, the Lord has the world that He has created pass in review before Job, and He challenges him to understand, let alone share in the task of creation. In powerful lines, the wonders of inanimate nature are first described. The creation of heaven and earth, stars and seas, morning and night, light and darkness, is pictured. The snow and the hail, the flood and the lightning, rain and dew, the frost and the clouds—all are revelations of God as Creator (38:1-18).

But we do not have here a detached "scientific" catalogue of natural phenomena, such as is to be found in the Egyptian *Onomasticon* of Amenope and similar compilations.<sup>13</sup> What is significant is not the

12. For a detailed discussion of the rhetoric of analogy and allusion, see Gordis (1965, pp. 190-208).

13. See von Rad's important paper (1976, pp. 267-80). Because the author stresses the resemblances between the Amenope and Job, he does not sufficiently note the vast differences in content, tone and purpose between the Egyptian and the Hebrew texts.

explicit listing of the elements in nature, but the implication derived from God's pride and joy in them. They are expressions of God's creative will and have been called into being *without any reference to man's desires or needs, or even his existence*.

In the First Speech this theme is adumbrated only slightly. At the very opening of the Dialogue, Eliphaz had paid tribute to the blessing of rain (5:9ff.), a theme which ever after occupied an important place in Jewish religious consciousness.<sup>14</sup> In God's Speech, too, rain is praised, but without reference to man:

Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain,  
And a path for the thunderbolt,  
To bring rain to a land uninhabited—  
To a desert where no man lives;  
To satisfy the desolate wasteland,  
And make the dry ground bring forth grass? (38:25–27)

The Lord now turns (38:38–39:30) to the world of animate nature and glowingly describes seven creatures: the lion,<sup>15</sup> the mountain goat, the wild ass, the buffalo, the ostrich, the horse and the hawk. What they have in common, apart from being beautiful manifestations of God's creative power, is that they too have not been created for man's use; they have their own independent reason for being, known only to their Creator. Once again, the idea that man is not central to God's purpose and joy in creation is hinted at, in the description of the wild ass:

Who has given the wild ass his freedom?  
Who has loosed the bonds of the swift ass,  
Whose home I have made the wilderness  
And whose dwelling is the salt land?  
He scorns the noise of the city;

14. Cf. the insertion of *geḥūrôt gešāmîm* "the power of rain" in the basic opening section of the daily *Amîdâh* prayer, the special "Petition for Rain" in the Daily Service, and the medieval *piyyut Gešem*, the rain ritual recited at the fall festival of *Šemîni 'ăzeret*.

15. The MT in v. 4 reads *lā'ereb* "to the raven". I originally defended this reading against the objections raised against it (Gordis, 1978, p. 454), but I have since changed my mind. I now prefer to revocalize the noun as *lā'erēb* "at evening", with Budde (1913) and Beer (1895). There are several grounds for eliminating the reference to the raven and having the entire passage (44:38–41) refer to the lion: a) the description of all the other creatures extends over several verses—the raven would be the only instance of a single verse, and the lion would have only two; b) the verb *yit'û* "wander" in v. 41 is appropriate for an animal going on foot, not for a bird in the air (cf. Job 4:11, where young lions are described as wandering about for food); and c) the passage now contains seven examples, in accordance with a widespread rhetorical usage in biblical, Oriental and Rabbinic literature (Gordis, 1943).

He will hear no shouts from the driver,  
 He ranges over the mountain as his pasture,  
 And he searches after every green plant. (39:5–8)

To be sure, in one limited sense, these creatures do impinge upon human consciousness. They possess a beauty which human beings can enjoy, but basically they were not created to serve man, but to fulfill God's purpose.

Job is impressed by the Lord's speech, but not yet completely convinced. He responds briefly and promises that henceforth he will be silent (40:3–5).

In the Second Speech of the Lord, the climax is reached. God now pictures two massive creatures, Behemot, the hippopotamus, and Leviathan, the crocodile.<sup>16</sup> It is not merely that they are not under human control. Unlike the animals already described, they are positively repulsive and even dangerous to man. Yet they too reveal the power of the Creator and His joy in fashioning them. Behemot, the hippopotamus, is "the first of the works of God" (i.e. the best) (40:19).<sup>17</sup>

In other words the Second Speech makes the same point as the first—man is not the center of the universe nor the goal of creation—but it does so much more powerfully through two extraordinary examples. Thus the two Speeches are an example of an *a fortiori* or an *a minori ad majus* argument. This type of reasoning was very popular with the rabbis of the Talmud and may fairly be described as a characteristic of the Jewish mentality.

A vast literature has grown up with regard to the identity of Behemot and Leviathan. Rabbinic Aggadah saw in them supernatural beings whose bodies would supply food for the righteous in the world-to-come. Many modern scholars regard them as mythological creatures, since Leviathan in particular is used elsewhere in biblical literature to refer to such primordial beasts.<sup>18</sup>

With the emphasis on the comparative method in biblical and Oriental studies, it is perhaps not astonishing that the mythological interpretation

16. This identification was first proposed by Bochart, "Hierozoicon" (Book 5, chapter 15) in his *Opera Omnia* (Leiden 1712). This view has retained its popularity over all others, such as the elephant and the whale, as well as the various mythological interpretations.

17. The noun *rēšit* means "best, choicest" cf. *inter alia*, *rēšit teḥū'ūtō* (Jer 2:3; *rēšit š'mānīm* (Am 6:6); see also Deut 33:21; I Sam 2:29, 15:21).

18. The mythological beast Leviathan, symbolic of chaos, is referred to in Isa 27:1, 57:9; Ps 74:13ff; Job 26:12; and it occurs as *ltn* in Ugaritic texts (cf. Gordon, 1965, p. 429). *Tehom* in biblical Hebrew is the thoroughly demythologized form of the Babylonian dragon, Tiamat, whose dismembered body is fashioned into heaven and earth by Marduk. But *Tehôm* is still personified in poetry, like Yam, in Job 28:14.

is described as “clearly established” (Pope, 1965, p. 321).<sup>19</sup> However, I believe that the mythological interpretation is subject to several insuperable objections:

1. We have seen that the First Speech deals with natural creatures. Thus the point that they were not created for man, first advanced there, reaches its climax here. But this is true only if Behemot and Leviathan are actual existent animals of flesh and blood. If they are mythological monsters whom God had subjugated or destroyed aeons ago, they are totally irrelevant to the discussion, since God’s awesome might has been conceded by Job and is not in contention.
2. Behemot is described as being herbivorous, a trait hardly commensurate with being a fearsome dragon.
3. Finally, the clear implications of the text are ignored by the mythological view:

*Hinnēh nā behemôt ʾāšer ʿasîti ʿimmāk  
ḥāšîr kabbāqār yōkēl*

Here is Behemot that I have made with you,  
Eating grass like cattle. (40:15)

Manifestly, the primordial beasts were not created at the same time as Job. They are pictured as existing before God’s creation (cf. *tehōm* in Gen 1:2) and in the widespread Semitic creation-myth in which the battle between the monster and the god marks the beginning of the process of creation. Nor is Job conceivably equal in status to the fearsome beast, either in time or in strength.

The passage is meaningful only if Behemot is a real creature in the natural world fashioned at the same point in time as part of the process of Divine creation and/or similar to Job in terms of status, both being creatures of the Divine will.

Some scholars omit ʾāšer ʿasîti on two grounds: a) it is lacking in LXX; and b) the deletion achieves a 3:3 meter for the verse. The LXX reads:

Ἄλλα δὴ ἰδοὺ θηρία παρὰ σοί,  
κόρτον ἰσα βουσὶν ἐσθίουσιν.

But now look at the wild beasts with thee,  
They eat grass like oxen.

LXX has obviously interpreted *Behemot* as the plural of the common *behēmāh* and rendered it by θηρία. But this is an impossible rendering,

19. For a full analysis of this position and the various views as to the identity of the beasts, see Gordis (1978) Special Notes 36–37, pp. 569–72.

not only because wild beasts eat flesh, not grass, but also because "with thee" is meaningless; neither beasts nor the primordial dragon are "with" Job.

The reason for the omission by LXX is not clear; it may be another instance of the penchant of the Greek translator to contract the text. The Greek translator may have been familiar with the idea, which emerges in later rabbinic Aggadah but is undoubtedly much older in origin, that the beasts conquered by God would be converted into food in the eschatological future.

As for the metrics of the verse, a new subject is being introduced, so that anacrusis is entirely in order. The break in the meter serves to arouse the reader's attention. Thus in Ps 1:1  $\text{ʔašrē hāʔiṣ}$  and Ps 1:4  $\text{lōʔ kēn hārešāʔim}$ , both phrases are outside the meter pattern. In our passage,  $\text{hinnēh nā}$  is another instance of anacrusis; the rest of the verse scans perfectly as 3:3. As for the relative  $\text{ʔašer}$ , it occurs so frequently in Job without receiving a stress (5:5; 6:4; 9:15; 12:10; 19:27; 27:11; 34:19, 27; 38:23; 39:6) that it may fairly be described as a stylistic trait of the poet, with implications for the unity of authorship of the book.<sup>20</sup>

The vocable  $\text{ʔimmāk}$  is crucial and requires attention. The preposition  $\text{ʔim}$  expresses the idea of close similarity or identity, either in status and condition or in time. [Cf.  $\text{haʔap tiṣpe ṣaddiq ʔim rāšāʕ}$ , "Will you destroy the innocent together with the guilty?" (Gen 18:23);  $\text{vehei ʔāhikā ʔimmāk}$ , "Your brother shall live with you" (Lev 25:26); and  $\text{ʔimmō ʔanōkī besārāh}$ , "I am with him in trouble" (Ps 91:15)].

Clearly MT is to be retained as original. But what does the poet mean by declaring: "Here is Behemot that I have made *with you*?" Behemot and Leviathan in this context are not primordial monsters, though poetic hyperbole is at work in the descriptions, with traits probably borrowed from mythological monsters. Man may find these creatures frightening, ugly and dangerous. But God does not share this opinion! For Him they are beautiful, in whom He exults: "He is the first (i.e. the choicest) of the works of God" (40:19). Man and these beasts are equal in time and in status, both having been fashioned at the same time in the process of creation, and occupying the same level of importance as God's handiwork. The message first sent forth in the First Speech is reinforced in the Second. The universe is not anthropocentric, but theocentric, with purposes known only to God, and which man cannot fathom. Man is not the goal of creation and therefore not the master of the cosmos. The joyous description of the world discloses it as both mystery and miracle;

20. The use of  $\text{ʔašer}$  as a metrically unstressed vocable in both the Dialogue and the God Speeches supports, though it obviously does not prove, the unity of authorship of the entire book, a position which I have long advocated. See Gordis (1965 and 1978 *passim*).

the mystery that man cannot understand, he can sustain because of the miracle of its beauty.

The basic theme that the universe is a mystery to man is, of course, explicitly stated in the God Speeches. There are, however, two other significant implications that are left to be inferred by the reader.

The first is theological; since the universe was not created with man as its center, neither the Creator nor the cosmos can be judged from man's vantage point. In his final recantation, Job repents of the presumption involved in his attacking God and by that token sitting in judgment upon Him:

Therefore I abase myself,  
And repent in dust and ashes. (42:6)

But Job does not yield on the question of his innocence and his unjust suffering. Indeed, on that issue God vindicates him against his Friends and twice issues His judgment: "For you did not speak the truth about Me as did My servant Job" (42:9, 10).

The second implication is ecological. Though the poet did not intend to present a religio-ethical basis for ecology, he has in effect done so. Man takes his place among the other living creatures, all of whom are the handiwork of God and have an equal right to live on His earth. Man, therefore, surely has no inherent right to abuse or exploit the living creatures or the natural resources to be found in a world not of his making, nor intended for his exclusive habitation.

To be sure, another view of man's place in nature is presented in Genesis. The Creation narrative seems to give man total dominion over all living things: "God blessed them, and God said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'" (Gen 1:28). But this power is by no means absolute, as Jewish tradition recognizes.<sup>21</sup> In fact the limits of man's power are indicated in the very next verse, which permits man only a vegetarian diet. That dominion carries responsibility is clear in the next chapter: Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden with the injunction to "till it and guard it" (Gen 2:15).

When Maimonides declared that there is a purpose to creation, but man is not privy to it,<sup>22</sup> he was at one with the author of Job in viewing

21. For a brief conspectus of the entire subject by the writer see "The Earth is the Lord's: Ecology in the Jewish Tradition" (*Midstream*, 1985, pp. 19-23).

22. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed* (tr. Shlomo Pines, Chicago, 1963), Book III, p. 49c: "The notion of His providence is not the same as the notion of the governance of that which we govern" (p. 496). See also Book III, p. 497.

the world in theocentric and not anthropocentric terms. In praising God's glory, the poet was implying man's duty. Thus, centuries ago, the poet laid the foundations for a religious theory of ecology, demonstrating that his message is not only timeless but timely.

One of the more beneficent aspects of twentieth century civilization is the growing concern for the humane treatment of animals. This sensitivity expresses itself both practically and theoretically. On the practical side, a far-flung and highly varied network of organizations has arisen in western Europe and America designed to protest the cruel treatment and undue suffering to which animals are often exposed in industry and even in scientific research.<sup>23</sup> Many concrete proposals have been advanced for laws to protect animals against abuse and needless pain. The rising tide of protest against contemporary practices in these areas takes on many forms, some ill-considered and at times even bizarre or violent. On balance, however, the essentially positive character of the movement for animal rights is undeniable.<sup>24</sup>

Aside from a deepening involvement with concrete measures in this area, there has also been an increased interest in a philosophical basis for the rights of animals, with a growing literature on the subject as a branch of secular ethics.<sup>25</sup>

If our understanding of the meaning of the Speeches of the Lord is valid, the Book of Job offers a religious foundation for the inherent rights of animals as co-inhabitants of the earth, adumbrated two millennia earlier than the emergence of secular ethics. By insisting on a God-centered world, to which man's title is conditional, the book of Job presents a basis in religion for opposing and ultimately eliminating the needless destruction of life and the pollution of the natural resources in the world. For as the prophet informs us, the earth was created "not for chaos, but for habitation" (Isa 45:18).

23. For a recent comprehensive survey of the current literature on the subject by a strongly committed advocate, see Peter Singer (1985). His essay (1973), followed by a book with the same title (1975), was one of the earliest presentations of the case for the rights of animals in our society.

24. See e.g. Andrew Rowan (1983).

25. The first treatment of the question of the ethical status of animals by an academic philosopher, according to Singer (1985, p. 47) was Roslind Godlovitch's pioneering article (1971). For a bibliography of subsequent publications on the ethics of animal rights, see Singer (1985, Notes 6 and 7).

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