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ECOLOGY AND THE JEWISH SPIRIT: WHERE NATURE AND THE SACRED MEET. Edited, and with Introductions by Ellen Bernstein. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998. Pp. 277. $23.95.

It's a real shame, but all political and social movements, at some point, break up into factions. The factions debate their relative necessity, claim authority over areas of discourse and action, and generally vie for power. They stop coordinating and communicating with each other. There are occasional acts of sabotage. The competition of the market economy (including the grant-funded non-profit sector) and the expanse of human vanity demand this distinction. Everyone needs to find their niche. An ecologist understands this as well as an economist, an activist as well as a lobbyist, a rabbi as well as a lawyer.

In her Introduction to the thirty seven essays collected in *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit: Where Nature and the Sacred Meet*, Ellen Bernstein, founder of Shomrei Adomah, an institution dedicated to illuminating Jewish ecological perspectives and renewing Jewish spirituality, identifies the environmental crisis as "at heart, a crisis of values." This identification, a response to the piecemeal, problem-solving approach prevalent in the mainstream legislative, legal, scientific, technological, and academic communities, informs Bernstein's purposes in editing this book: to further the work of Shomrei Adomah, to reinject a sense of mystery and reverence into the debates about the environment, and to endorse the inherent value of Nature.

Already red flags are waving, and banners are boasting opposition: "Impractical!" "Impossible!" "Clean Air Takes Work, Not Prayer!" But the environmental movement necessarily encompasses individuals, groups, and perspectives both religious and secular, political and not. *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit* avoids polemics— the project is not to foster conflict or alienate factions— and Bernstein limits her introductory critique to labeling the mainstream approach reductionist and overly utilitarian. She does, after all, see God in Nature. In place of argument, the book provides an alternative orientation towards the relationship between humanity and the environment in the contemporary world, without forcing the reader to choose sides, or convert.

Bernstein divides the book into three interrelated sections:

Sacred Place, Sacred Time, and Sacred Community. The first two sections consist of two categories of essays: historical analyses and scriptural interpretations, and personal narratives that evoke the possibilities and practices joining Jewish spirituality to Nature. The third section addresses, first, the place of humanity in the cosmos and, second, the relationships and responsibilities amongst people and between humanity and the environment. Though the book's division offers a useful, if somewhat haphazard, framework, the diverse essays lack a formidable coherence. Given the enormity of the essays' subject and the breadth of the issues they raise, their relatively short lengths preclude rigorous analysis.

While reading the book I often drifted into memory. It is autumn. The High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur cycle around, and my family shuffles over to synagogue for our annual prayers of supplication and praise. Why does my father, each and every year, at each and every service, fall so obviously asleep during the rabbi's sermon? Moreover, why does my father always feel the need to discuss the issues raised while he so serenely slept? Allow me to answer both questions at once: the situation arises because, while the rabbi's words import the weight of learning, they are for the most part dull. Or more accurately, perhaps the rabbi, full of lively ideas and relevant considerations, phrases his words in such a way as to make them *sound* dull. His voice is nasally, and his syntax drones. Many of the essayists in this collection suffer the same difficulties.

Yet, there are tasty vittles for the mind and soul tucked into the book's pages. Factoids, interpretations, and stories to inspire the creative spirit and motivate the novitiate mind. In the section Sacred Place, one author explains that in Genesis God acts directly on humanity, while in Deuteronomy the land becomes the intermediary between people and God. If we follow the agreement of the covenant, we will receive not only the land of Canaan itself, but also the rains to nourish the land and our bodies. If we fail to live up to our end of the bargain, then the land will go dry and collect pollution. The pollution corresponds to the ethical and moral failings, the spiritual pollution, of humanity. In this contractual arrangement, our actions introduce the cause. Nature and God respond.

Another author introduces the concept of panpsychism, the omnipresence of mind. She claims that the legal element of reciprocity in the covenant suggests an awareness and intention present in Nature. She supports her argument with readings of Psalm 148, the Song of the Three Jews (an Apocryphal addition

to the Book of Daniel), and *Perek Shira*, a mystical hymn from sometime between the fifth and seventh centuries. Each of these works portrays the characters of the natural world— the animals, plants, wind, rain and stars— praising God in song, word, and proclamation, blurring the distinction between metaphor and literality.

An historical essay illustrates the influential conception of divine property which arose during the Babylonian exile. Driven from their ransacked Temple, their sacred center, and their blessed holy homeland, the Jews needed to find ways to maintain their identity, support their community, and foster their spirituality. The Babylonian rabbinate, and other exiled Jews, responded by imbuing the land on which they lived with religious significance through the observance of Jewish law. This act recognized the holiness inhering in all land, defined the observance of Jewish law as the principle of Jewish identity, and thus perpetuated the survival of Diaspora communities.

The narratives examining Judaism's sense of Sacred Place include: a re-telling of the story of Job that emphasizes his connection to, and the aura of, the desert; a personal exposition of how the experience of walking and wilderness forms one author's identity as a wandering Jew; and a short story by Robert Sand revealing the relationship between person, history, and place on a rainy morning in Newark, New Jersey (another sacred center for a different generation of Diaspora Jews).

The section Sacred Time introduces the distinction between cyclical and linear time. Linear time represents the assertion of God as an actor in history, which is how many American Jews understand God's Presence in the Bible. Cyclical time represents the timeless and eternal aspects of divinity, the God of Paradox, and moves in the rhythm of the festival year.

One author recounts the history of the development of the Jewish calendar. During the years in Egypt and Exodus, the Jewish people relied on the sun to determine the seasons and the moon to determine the dates of festivals. The seasons and festivals were inextricably linked in the celebrations of harvest and liberation. In the time of the Monarchies, when Israel split into Ephraim in the north and Judah in the south, the calendar became a political tool used for social and bureaucratic unification. Living in different climates, the people of Ephraim experienced different seasons in different times than the people of Judah and so lived by a different festival cycle. In Babylonian times, the rabbis inserted the leap month of Adar, seven times every nineteen years, into the calendar, and re-named the

months with ordinal numbers to represent their growing monotheism. During the Rabbinic age, the ritual of declaring the new moon took place in a courtyard in Jerusalem where individuals would claim witness to the new moon, and the rabbinate court would declare it, and there would be great dancing and merrymaking throughout the city. This history exhibits the vitality and flexibility of the relationship between place, time, and community.

Another author discusses the potentially ecological orientation of the Sabbath. He points out that one is not meant to use energy excessively, nor purchase any material goods on the Sabbath. It is a day of living simply. Several analytical essays throughout the book address this issue of consumption. One notes that the Halachah, the body of Jewish law, promotes balance between work and rest, between transformation and preservation, and emphasizes modesty and restraint. Another points to Judaism's focus on the details of day-to-day living as a possible medium in which to consider what we eat, what we wear, what we buy and from whom.

In an attempt to reinvigorate the festival cycle with contemporary relevance, a series of personal accounts tell of religious renewal through ritual reconstruction. Here the values and practices of individuals, whether planting barley or canoeing down a river, supplant the large-picture emphases of legislative and political change.

The final section, Sacred Community, examines the place of humanity in the cosmos and our moral relationships in this world. One essay examines the relationship of chaos and order in the two creation stories of Genesis: cosmic and anthropological. Other essays look more closely at the Jewish laws of agriculture and charity and the requirements imposed upon polluting businesses. Unfortunately, the particular details of these laws are more than a bit dated, and they do not prove particularly illuminating in thinking about sustainability, economic inequality, or environmental justice.

Ecology and the Jewish Spirit, in its attempt to reinvigorate Judaism with relevance and significance, succeeds in providing a general sense of the sorts of things that progressive, reconstructionist, environmentalist Jews are thinking about. In introducing a variety of alternative approaches to Nature, it adds its own disparate voice to the discourse considering the relationship between humanity and the environment. Yet, while it warms my heart to know that there are others out there who revere the great mystery, and the words in these pages tickle my intellect,

the essays generally fail to excite my own sense of the Sacred in Nature.

Mike Burger

THE FORGIVING AIR: UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE by Richard C.J. Somerville. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996, Paperback 1998. Pp. 195. $ 13.95.

The Forgiving Air by Richard Somerville is a remarkably readable and enjoyable text that provides lay readers with a basic understanding of complex global environmental issues. Recently updated and released in paperback, the book translates technical atmospheric and climate science into a form well suited for the non-scientist. Somerville emphasizes the importance of an educated public versed in basic atmospheric science that will be better able to participate in ongoing environmental dialogues. As a researcher and educator, Somerville believes that "the most appropriate contribution [he] can make . . . is to provide an account of the relevant science that is accurate, balanced, concise, up-to-date, and reader-friendly." *The Forgiving Air* fulfills that responsibility.

The book is a multi-faceted educational tool that provides not only a primer on basic atmospheric science, but also a broad understanding of the history and challenges faced by atmospheric scientists in examining complex global environmental problems. The book is organized into nine chapters, each designed to stand largely on its own. Three of the chapters are dedicated to specific atmospheric phenomena— depletion of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, and acid rain— and provide brief overviews of the chemical and physical science of each. The additional chapters are a more general introduction to atmospheric research and outline scientific, political, and social solutions to atmospheric environmental problems. In the last chapter, Somerville emphasizes the practicalities of doing scientific research and the importance of funding both big and little science in a field where discovery is often unpredictable.

Although *The Forgiving Air* is not a comprehensive text, the work is well-written and scholarly. While those already well-versed in global change issues and atmospheric science will find this book fairly basic, lay readers will embrace its interdisciplinary, non-threatening approach to the translation of hard atmospheric science. The author approaches the subject by using

real-world analogies and tales of pioneer scientists and historically significant research to facilitate and enrich the reader's understanding of complex information. For example, to explain the atmosphere's sensitive dependence on initial conditions, the author makes analogies to such accessible scenarios as: a leaf that may end up on either bank of a stream depending on its timing and placement in the current, a pinball shot in which the spring and ball trajectory are difficult to repeat, and a golf shot where a small variance in swing may make a large difference in where the ball lands. All of these analogies augment and illuminate the concept that the atmosphere is an unstable system, one that may be disturbed "poetically by the simple flap of a butterfly's wings." Just as golfing and pinball analogies provide a comfort buffer and means of relating to technical information, Somerville's historical descriptions of scientific discoveries also demystify the research process. His methodology is clear. By humanizing the science underlying global change issues, he allows those without technical backgrounds to reach a level of scientific literacy.

Although the storytelling format of Somerville's science lessons occasionally approaches spoon-feeding, there is nothing soft about the actual science. In fact, chemical interactions at the molecular level are discussed in great detail. Instead of just presenting the science, the author has a gift for simplifying and providing real-world applications, as well as for identifying those points at which a lay reader may become lost. Although Somerville breaks his initial promise of "no mathematics . . . at all" by using some numbers necessary for ozone measurement, even the most timid student should be able to follow his general discussion of atmospheric molecular interactions. Moreover, to aid in this refresher course in chemistry and physics, Somerville provides a bibliography and relatively jargon-free glossary as reference tools.

Somerville uses colorful stories to illustrate the process of conducting atmospheric science research; these stories lend themselves to a more serious educational and political agenda. For example, in a bold pitch for support of little as well as big science, Somerville describes some of the pioneer Davids that have out-performed more celebrated and publicly supported Goliaths in atmospheric research. He points out that the origins of climatic modeling came from the hurried scribblings of an ambulance driving physicist named Lewis Fry Richardson. While serving in World War I France, Richardson tried to calculate a mathematical system for accurately predicting weather with a

pencil and paper. Although his forecast failed, by completing and publishing his inaccurate results, Richardson created the basis for today's weather forecasting system.

Somerville repeatedly emphasizes the important role of individual persistence (and perhaps some blind luck) in field science. For example, the Antarctic ozone hole was discovered by Joseph Farman, a British scientist who was measuring ozone in a long-term general study of environmental processes within the Antarctic environment, using only surface equipment. NASA failed to discover the ozone hole because its satellite measurements disregarded data below a certain threshold, and it subsequently tossed out the first satellite measurements of decreasing ozone. By illustrating the possibility of error even with great technological sophistication, this example shows the danger of preconceptions in scientific research.

Somerville uses these examples of historical figures to pursue a secondary purpose of the book— to examine the manner in which research and scientific discovery actually takes place. The author implicitly suggests the proper allocation of resources within the research field by noting that sophistication of equipment, prestige of the research institution, financial investment, or even the original focus of a given project may have little to do with its success or eventual contribution to science.

The Forgiving Air is not a mere textbook. Throughout this science lesson, the author retains a strong authorial voice, framing the subject matter within his own interpretation. In fact, Somerville's interpretation is clear from the book's title, which is taken from an Elizabeth Bishop poem. *Song for the Rainy Season* draws a picture of a vibrant but dramatically changing environment. The stanza Somerville focuses most directly on reads as follows:

the great rock will stare
unmagnetized, bare
no longer wearing
rainbows or rain,
the forgiving air
and the high fog gone;
the owls will move on
and the several
waterfalls shrivel
in the steady sun.

For Somerville, this poem is a metaphor for global changes that may result from human interaction with the environment and

reflects one of the central themes of the book— the fragile mutability of the environment and climate in particular.

Somerville suggests that the forgiving air may be able to forgive just so much. In the book, he clearly outlines the known human contributions to atmospheric degradation, through population growth, technology-driven catalysts, or the basic carelessness of modern civilization. For example, he illustrates the correlation between the depletion of ozone in the stratosphere and the release of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) into the atmosphere. Invented by Thomas Midgley Jr. in the late 1920s as a new and improved refrigerant, today CFCs are known to be the primary destroyers of stratospheric ozone. The greenhouse effect is tied to carbon dioxide, methane, and other trace gases released into the atmosphere largely by human activity. These greenhouse gases absorb long-wave thermal radiation and thereby warm the atmosphere. Acid rain stems directly from sulfur dioxide released by burning coal for electrical generation. These human-induced atmospheric changes pose grave risks to both humanity and the Earth, as the author illustrates in grim detail.

In acknowledging humans as culprits in these alarming environmental phenomena, Somerville also discusses the potential for human cooperation in solving the problems. In the United States, for example, CFCs were banned in the late 1970s when research demonstrated their potential to destroy ozone in the stratosphere. On a global scale, the Montreal Protocol for the Protection of the Ozone Layer ratified in the late 1980s requires parties to the agreement to phase out production and consumption of CFCs. Although significant ozone loss has been confirmed, the rate of increase of ozone-depleting chemicals in the stratosphere has dramatically slowed. This change, Somerville argues, confirms the success of international agreements like the Montreal Protocol. It is an optimistic sign suggesting that cooperative action can correct environmental problems. In his new preface, Somerville provides an update on efforts to address global environmental problems.

While human intervention is essential, Somerville's optimism is shaded by economic, political, and scientific realities. He notes that the economic and political obstacles to taking action may be greater than the technical obstacles— "When we discuss how best to arrive at a sustainable future, we should distinguish carefully between what we do not know how to do and what we cannot bring ourselves to do." In pursuing the abolition of harmful, commercially-used chemicals, industrial countries of-

ten request a great deal of their developing country neighbors. Third world countries may well ask why they must limit their burning of fossil fuels and thereby forego the benefits of industrial development currently enjoyed by more advanced countries. These countries undoubtedly will need financial assistance to develop alternative resources; where will that money come from?

While Somerville largely focuses on the science at hand, he does not shy away from the practical realities facing policymakers. Even if a consensus is reached on a particular problem, what steps can and should be taken to intervene in natural processes? Evaluating new scientific proposals to solve environmental problems often requires information that is simply unavailable. For example, one potential response to the greenhouse effect is a planetary engineering scheme called "iron fertilization," which involves putting iron into the oceans to produce healthier and more numerous phytoplankton. These phytoplankton in turn absorb large quantities of carbon dioxide, thus reducing the greenhouse effect. But how do we determine whether this plan would be effective? How do we implement it on a large scale? What amount of iron should we use? What other repercussions might such a jump in the phytoplankton population or ocean iron levels have? By immersing readers in questions like these, as well as the science that underlies them, Somerville empowers readers to participate in global environmental issues and to ask some hard questions of their own that will shape their future environment.

Ultimately, *The Forgiving Air* is an outgrowth of the author's own value system. He argues in his introduction that "an informed citizen of the Earth can and should be scientifically literate . . . [and therefore] equipped to deal intelligently with a world in which the role of science is increasingly critical." Created out of a self-imposed responsibility as a scientist and educator, *The Forgiving Air* is a vehicle for creating scientific literacy. Without being condescending to his readers, Somerville has written a remarkably readable and enjoyable text that does more than educate. By interweaving scientific analysis with less traditional story-telling devices and a historical overview, the author builds not only understanding but the interest of his reader in the subject matter. Those who have read *The Forgiving Air* will be more equipped to enter environmental dialogues and more likely to do so. In the final analysis, Somerville's "most appropriate contribution" is a powerful one indeed.

C.E. Martens

PLANNING A NEW WEST: THE COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA by Carl Abbott, Sy Adler, and Margery Post Abbott. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press 1997. Pp. 210. $26.95

Planning a New West describes the decisionmaking process that led to the establishment of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. This case study examines the politics of planning in the American West by exploring the conflict between the resource-dependent economy and culture of the Old West and the high technology economy and culture of the New West. This conflict is most visible in the clashes between the local governments who represent the rural populations of the gorge and state and federal agencies who actually control much of the land. By discussing a framework for planning and compromise that addresses the needs and concerns of the Old West and the New, this study contributes to thoughtful natural resource development and regulation in the West.

The Columbia River Gorge, stretching seventy-five miles and creating the border between Washington and Oregon, is a major transportation corridor through the Cascade Range and has historically been a passageway to the Pacific Ocean. The gorge also has important social, environmental, recreation, and economic value to the region. Preserving the gorge was not a contested issue; the conflict arose over the means of preservation. *Planning a New West* shows how conflicting visions of the gorge, and of appropriate uses for its resources, drove the creation of the scenic area. Designation of the scenic area was a carefully constructed compromise between two very different ideologies—one representing the values of the Old West and the other representing the values of the New West. The authors insightfully explore the perspectives of both sides.

They begin by describing the factual background behind the gorge's designation as a scenic area, identifying the roots of the conflicting ideologies that necessitated a compromise. The Old West economy is characterized by a dependence on natural resources, most of which are owned or controlled by the federal government. While federal regulation is unpopular, the economy relies on federal subsidies for irrigation, electricity, grazing, and other extractive industries. Communities in the Old West are generally conservative, rural, tight knit, and often exclusionary.

The New West, on the other hand, is a relatively recent phe-

nomenon, rooted in the powerful information-based economies of Western metropolises like Denver, Salt Lake City, and Seattle. The economy of the New West also tends to promote tourism and other recreation and service based industries. The authors characterize the cities of the New West as a series of urban archipelagos, exerting expanding spheres of influence into outlying districts. These cities, no longer having to rely on an inherently unstable natural resource-based economy, have become centers for a strong regional environmentalism.

The authors rely exclusively on this framework, juxtaposing the New West and the Old West, but their analysis is richer than a simple categorization of polarized groups. *Planning a New West* focuses on the ideas and beliefs of the actors (individuals, environmental groups, and industries) involved in establishing the scenic area, and it explores a range of perspectives on how best to preserve the gorge. By showing how the differing ideologies of the New West and the Old West operate in the Columbia River Gorge region, the authors explain why the preservation of the gorge became such a controversial issue. Thus the Old West/New West model serves as a vehicle for exploring economic and cultural change on many levels, and the authors apply it masterfully to the Columbia River Gorge situation.

The regional economy has long focused on harvesting the rich natural resources of the Gorge. Logging, agriculture, and grazing dominated local economies. Later, factories attracted by cheap hydroelectric power located near the gorge. The region's residents combined a strong resentment toward federal regulation of the region's natural resource base with a dependence on federal timber sales, grazing leases, and other forms of subsidies for their livelihoods. The region's slow economic growth led to a correspondingly slow population growth. However, as Portland developed, the region changed. The gorge became a popular tourist destination— accessible first by steamboat and later by car— attracting swarms of urbanites. Portland extended its influence over the Columbia River Gorge by promoting it as one of the city's key attractions and by viewing itself as the most important user of the gorge. Recreation has always been a major factor, but tourist dollars have become increasingly important, leading to a new tourism boom. For example, the Columbia River Gorge is one of the most popular windsurfing locations in the world. The increase in leisure-related activities led to a development boom which now threatens the visual, recreational, and environmental qualities of the gorge.

The early movement for the creation of the scenic area began

in the late 1970s, when environmental groups and concerned citizens recognized a local reluctance to plan future development and a lack of county and municipal resources necessary to control growth. Friends of the Columbia River Gorge (a Portland-based group) formed to preserve the gorge for recreation and tourism. Friends of the Gorge worked closely with members of Congress from Washington and Oregon to introduce federal legislation protecting the gorge. Other state and national environmental organizations also favored federal protection. Gorge residents and local governments, however, were stung by the implication that they could not manage their own land and feared the potential economic costs associated with designating the region as a scenic area.

Forming a commission to protect the gorge was a complex political process that received input from local, state, and federal governments. The book chronicles the contentious decision-making process that eventually led to the compromise that allowed the designation of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and the subsequent establishment of the Columbia River Gorge Commission. The history of the legislation includes competing bills, joint action by the governors of Oregon and Washington, political protests, reluctance by lead federal agencies to endorse the plan, and a reluctance by President Reagan to sign the bill.

The 1986 scenic area legislation created the commission to specify the exact terms for administration of the newly established Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area. The commission's first task was to enact a management plan and to regulate the development that occurred under the plan. The commission was comprised of individuals representing the interests of all concerned parties, and it stressed the importance of public involvement in the planning and management processes.

By showing what was at stake and the passion of the participants, the authors illuminate the importance of the planning process. They conclude that Portland interests, which had more influence in state and federal forums, forced the gorge counties to the negotiating table. The resulting compromise prompted the gorge residents to alter their position on growth and restricted local government autonomy in return for the right to a minimum level of development in certain areas. The authors also argue that New West proponents had an advantage, as compared to their Old West counterparts, in the use of sophisticated planning tools, technical expertise, and complex regulations because the urbanized, information driven nature of the New West economy

is simply more familiar with these factors then its resource driven, rural counterpart. These are valuable insights, and they suggest grounds for predicting outcomes in future conflicts. The authors, however, only focus on the Columbia River Gorge. An exploration of the ramifications of their conclusions for other planning disputes in the New West would have been useful.

In the establishment of the Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area, fierce contention, springing from deep divisions between the two ideologies, surrounded many of the issues. The local communities feared an environmental conspiracy that would result in their loss of control over the land, while environmentalists and Portlanders feared that irresponsible, greedy development would spoil the gorge. Given these two extremes, planning for both economic development and environmental preservation was difficult to achieve. Even the organizational structure of the decisionmaking process itself was an issue. The Portland side favored a top-down approach to maximize the amount of preservation and maintain uniformity in the application of management decisions. The local gorge communities preferred a bottom-up approach where the process could make use of local knowledge and expertise. Reviewing these controversies, the authors conclude that the creation of a management plan was a process of bitter disagreement and grudging compromise as opposed to consensus building.

While conceding that the legacy of the planning process disappoints both local residents and environmentalists, *Planning a New West* offers a sense of optimism about the Scenic Area process. As the New West replaces the Old, changes are inevitable, and this book shows how planning can create a dialogue that addresses important issues. The authors support the process that led to the creation of the scenic area because some planning, even if it is messy, is much better than no planning. The authors predict that this framework will eventually benefit both the gorge residents and their metropolitan neighbors.

Planning a New West is a superb case study about the process of planning in the Columbia River Gorge that Western planners, environmentalists, and proponents of the New West and Old West alike should read. The authors are content to limit their generalizations about future applications of such planning processes, but they do suggest the most important aspect of future planning in similar situations: planning can only partially compensate for a true spirit of compromise. When the current antithesis between the Old West and the New West changes to synthesis and becomes a search for accord, the real work will be

done and resolution can begin.

Mike Voss