

*TIJS Graduate Research & Travel Grants
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Purpose: Present a paper with the title *Cult and Intact Ecosystems: Nature's Grip on Israel's Relationship with God* at the international conference *Greening the Gods: Ecology and Theology in the Ancient World* in Cambridge, United Kingdom, from March 18-19, 2014

Presenting my paper "Cult and Intact Ecosystems: Nature's Grip on Israel's Relationship with God" at the international conference *Greening the Gods: Ecology and Theology in the Ancient World* hosted by Cambridge University's Department of Classics and the Faraday Institute, gave me the opportunity to discuss my ideas regarding nature's role in the first two chapters of the book of Joel with a broad audience. This was my first professional presentation and the venue could not have been better: about 60 scholars from the Classics, Theology, and Biblical Studies were gathered and discussed the role of nature in ancient texts and ways in which insights from those texts and the texts themselves might relate to our current ecological crises. In the course of these discussions, I was introduced to platonic and stoic frameworks of interpreting nature and nature's significance, as well as some new ideas about the Hebrew Bible and climate change, advocacy, and interpretation.

Most importantly I could network with some of the most preeminent scholars in the field of Religion/Hebrew Bible and the environment: Michael Northcott and Holmes Rolston III. Both are interested in incorporating biblical texts into their larger ethical approach to combat climate change and natural degradation and to foster certain positive attitudes toward nature. Both scholars come from a strong Christian background, as did the majority of participants in the conference.

This highlights the need for further inquiry into a decidedly Jewish approach to climate change and other environmental crises. While the conference provided me with helpful methodological hints how to go about this scavenger hunt in an ancient (religious) tradition, much of the research in this field still needs to be done. I look forward to interact with Manfred Gerstenfeld's *Judaism, Environmentalism and the Environment: Mapping and Analysis* (1998), as well as the many contributors to Hava Tirosh-Samuelson's edited volume *Judaism and Ecology* (2002) in Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim's series *Religions of the World and Ecology*.

The TAM Institutes Travel Grant enabled me to refine my research questions, network effectively, and enhance my presentations skills. I am thankful for the opportunities the Institute opened up for me—both in Cambridge and growing out from the discussions there.