

**Program Title:** Intro Environmental Program  
**Category:** Social Action  
**Author(s):** Ashleigh Parkhurst

**Touchstone Text:**

Job, 12:7-9 basically states that nature, its creatures, and the Earth (including trees!) know and remember that G-d created them.

**Goals:** To increase PP's awareness of environmental issues from a variety of perspectives.

**Objectives:** PP's will participate in a simulated town hall meeting and deal with the various issues that they would face if confronted with a similar situation. (The development of a piece of land)



**Timeline:**

0:00-0:03	----- 3 Minutes -----	Introduction Skit
0:03-0:05	----- 2 Minutes -----	Break into Groups
0:05-0:13	----- 8 Minutes -----	Introduce Lobbying Groups/Platforms
0:13-0:33	----- 20 Minutes -----	Formulate Arguments
0:33-0:35	----- 2 Minutes -----	Regroup
0:35-1:05	----- 30 Minutes -----	Each Group Presents
1:05-1:08	----- 3 Minutes -----	Board Deliberation and Winners
1:08-1:10	----- 2 Minutes -----	Break into Discussion Groups
1:10-1:30	----- 20 Minutes -----	Discussion
1:30-1:33	----- 3 Minutes -----	Regroup and Wrap-up

Start Time \_\_\_\_\_

End Time \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:**

- Poster-sized map of "Anytown"
- Handouts of Key Jewish Texts and Interest Group Positions (approx. 1per PP)

**People:**

- 9 Group Leaders
- 1 Rover

**Locations and Group Leaders:**

- Recycling Plant Committee \_\_\_\_\_
- Loggers \_\_\_\_\_
- Housing Development Committee \_\_\_\_\_
- Landfill Construction Committee \_\_\_\_\_
- Sierra Club \_\_\_\_\_
- Wetlands Preservation \_\_\_\_\_
- Parks and Recreation Committee \_\_\_\_\_
- Farmers \_\_\_\_\_

**Detailed Procedure:**

**0:00-0:03 -----3 Minutes----- Introduction Skit**

Introduction: *We will be breaking up into eight different interest groups who are vying for the piece of land. It will be your job as a group to form an argument supporting your position with both logical arguments as well as support from Jewish Texts. You will have three minutes to present your position to the Town Board and will have to answer any questions that they may have for you. It is your job to convince the Town Board that your plan is best for the community and be prepared to answer some tough questions to defend your position!*

**0:03-0:05-----2 Minutes----- Break into Groups**

Divide PP's into the 8 interest groups (Recycling Plant Committee, Loggers, Housing Development Committee, Landfill Construction Committee, Sierra Club, Wetlands Preservation, Parks and Recreation Committee, and Farmers)

**0:05-0:13-----8 Minutes----- Introduce Lobbying Groups and their Platforms**

1. -----Go over the platform of your group with the PP's (See attached topic information sheets on each group)
2. -----Discuss the motivations of your group--are they mainly economic, political, environmental, or social in nature?
3. -----What will your main arguments be? Why would people support your group?

**0:13-0:33-----20 Minutes----- Formulate Arguments**

- Strategize your arguments with the group, and have them choose one or two spokespeople to present to the Town Board.
- Be sure to address the issues highlighted on your topic information sheets and be able to refute the arguments of other interest groups.
- (SEE TOPIC INFO SHEETS for guided discussion questions)

**0:33-0:35-----2 Minutes----- Regroup**

**0:35-1:05-----30 Minutes----- Each Group Presents**

Each group will have about 3-4 minutes to present their argument and answer questions posed to them from the Town Board.

**1:05-1:08-----3 Minutes----- Board Deliberation and Winners**

The Town Board will deliberate and vote on which group will receive the land once they have heard eachgroup's case and have reviewed the Jewish text quotes. They will then announce their decision to the whole group.

**1:08-1:10-----2 Minutes----- Break into Discussion Groups**

**1:10-1:30-----20 Minutes----- Discussion**

- -----How similar do you think this situation was to situations that happen in real life?
- -----How are decisions like this usually reached? How do organizations make use of lobbying?
- -----Do you think towns usually side with development or the environment? Why do you think that is?
- -----Why do you think the Town Board made the decision that they did? Do you think this is the same outcome that would have occurred in a real town?

- -----Do you think that the arguments each interest group made was similar to the arguments they would make in real life? In other words, were the arguments authentic?
- -----What are some of the environmental problems caused by over-development? Were they sufficiently addressed in the debate?
- -----What about waste management--the recycling plant committee and the landfill construction committee both wanted to address the issue of waste within the town; how is waste dealt with in your area, and within Michigan? What steps can we all take in order to reduce this problem?  
*\*Recycling still isn't usually a widespread practice and waste is a big problem. In Michigan, we also accept trash from Canada in exchange for money which puts an even bigger strain on our landfills.*

1:30-1:33-----3 Minutes-----Regroup and Wrap-up

*I hope all of you enjoyed this debate, it highlights many issues that we are dealing with now related to the environment such as development, waste management, logging, wild habitats, and destruction of wetlands. It is important for us as Jews to defend the environment and to stand up against those who would destroy it. Debates like this one over land use are actually very common, and hopefully you all will be able to take part in local efforts in your communities to preserve the environment around you! ☺*

### Recycling Plant Committee

You see this land proposal as a perfect opportunity to build a recycling plant. You are currently shipping your town's recyclable out of town at high costs and once the plant is build, it will save you those costs. You also view the proposal as a way to encourage the recycling program and reduce Anytown's waste.

#### Questions you should consider:

- How would you pay for the building of the plant?
- Once operable, will it be cost effective for the town?
- How can you encourage the town to recycle more in order for the plant to be worthwhile?
- What products would you recycle?
- What effects will the plant have on the land, water, and air of Anytown?
- What are other benefits and drawbacks of this plan for the town?
- How do the Jewish texts support your proposal?

#### Other Proposals that are being presented:

- |   |                       |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| • | Loggers               | • | Landfill Construction |
| • | Farmers               | • | Committee             |
| • | Housing Development   | • | Parks and Recreation  |
| • | Committee             | • | Committee             |
| • | Sierra Club           |   |                       |
| • | Wetlands Preservation |   |                       |

#### Selected Jewish Texts on the Environment:

- "When in your war against a city you have to besiege it for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its fruit trees, wielding an ax against them. You may eat of them, but you may not cut them down." (Deuteronomy, 20: 19-20)
- You must not raise goats or sheep in the land of Israel because their grazing spoils the land. (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kama 79b)  
*[Sheep and goats graze so low to the ground that the plants are unable to regenerate. This law may be extended to mean that anything that spoils the land should not be grown in Israel.]*
- All cities must have a migrahs [open space] that surrounds them. The first 1000 cubits shall be for open space and the next 1000 cubits for grazing animals. (Numbers, 35:2-5)  
*[1000 cubits equals about 500 meters]*
- It is forbidden to live in a city that does not have a garden or greenery. (Mishna, Kiddushin 4:12)
- Carcasses, cemeteries and tanneries must be kept at fifty cubit's distance from a town. A tannery can only be set on the east side of town because the east wind is gentle and will not carry the fumes to town. (Mishna, Baba Batra 24b)  
*["carcasses" refers to decaying flesh. In this case, it probably refers to a dumpsite. This law may be extended to include modern industries that emit a variety of pollutants when it refers to tanneries]*
- [G-d] ...did not create it [the earth] a wasteland, but formed it for habitation. (Isaiah 45:18)
- There will be an area beyond the military camp where you can relieve yourself. You will have a spade among your weapons; and after you have squatted, you will dig a hole and bury your excrement. (Deuteronomy, 23:13-15)

- And the Lord G-d took Adam, and put him in the garden of Eden, to work it and to tend (guard, watch) it. (Genesis 2:15)
- Feed the poor and hungry weighs as heavily as all the other commandments of the Torah combined. (Baba Batra 9a)

## Loggers

Your group sees this land proposal as the perfect opportunity to produce timber. Environmental laws are making it more and more difficult to cut down trees for commercial use, but this land is available without going through any "red tape." With the current market, you could get very good prices for this timber and bring a lot of extra income to Anytown.

### Questions you should consider:

- How will the town benefit from this enterprise?
- Will you preserve any of the trees, or cut all of them?
- What thought will you give to the displacement of animals and their homes?
- What will become of the land when you are done logging? Will you replant?
- How do the Jewish texts support your proposal?

### Other Proposals that are being presented:

- |           |                      |           |                       |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| •         | Recycling Plant Com- | •         | Wetlands Preservation |
| mittee    |                      | •         | Landfill Construction |
| •         | Farmers              | Committee |                       |
| •         | Housing Development  | •         | Parks and Recreation  |
| Committee |                      | Committee |                       |
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### Farmers

As farmers, you see the proposed land development as a perfect opportunity to "work the land." The valley is fertile and has two excellent water sources, and the hillsides could be used for animal grazing. You would be able to provide produce for the town and bring in some extra income, though it won't be too substantial.

#### Questions you should consider:

- What type of farming will you do? **A)** Organic-no chemicals, but much more work and fewer products **B)** Commercial, cattle, or sheep farming with some chemical use that will allow you to work a larger portion of the land and maybe feed more people while making more money
- Will you need to clear away any of the trees in order to farm?
- Will you need to fill in the lake?
- Will you utilize all of the land, or will you preserve any of it?
- How do the Jewish texts support your proposal?
- Will you abide by Jewish laws with regard to farming?

#### Other Proposals that are being presented:

- |           |                      |           |                       |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| •         | Loggers              | •         | Wetlands Preservation |
| •         | Recycling Plant Com- | •         | Landfill Construction |
| mittee    |                      | Committee |                       |
| •         | Housing Development  | •         | Parks and Recreation  |
| Committee |                      | Committee |                       |
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**Housing Development Committee**

Your group sees this land proposal as the perfect opportunity to build a housing development. The tax income would greatly help the town's economic standing and the land is in a prime location. The proposed houses would bring in middle to upper-middle class families.

**Questions you should consider:**

- What effects will this development have on the roads and traffic patterns?
- Will the schools have the necessary space to house more children without compromising the quality of their education?
- Do we risk over-developing the land by not leaving enough open space?
- Will you be using all of the available land?
- Is the land good for building? (Could the houses sink due to the presence of pond or lake streambeds? Would it be necessary to work on filling in the water bodies, and how would this effect the environment?)
- How do the Jewish texts support your proposal?

**Other Proposals that are being presented:**

- |        |                       |   |                       |
|--------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| •      | Loggers               | • | Landfill Construction |
| •      | Farmers               | • | Committee             |
| •      | Recycling Plant Com-  | • | Parks and Recreation  |
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**Sierra Club**

Your group sees this as a perfect opportunity to preserve a vital piece of land and demonstrate the importance of land preservation to the community. There are many rare species of plants and birds that occupy this tract of land that would be without a home should any building occur. This would propel them closer to becoming endangered. There are insects and fish that are on the "threatened species" list that occupy the pond and stream on this land. If their habitats were threatened, it would contradict the laws that protect them.

**Questions you should consider:**

- How could you ensure that these species would thrive if the land were left alone?
- Would building on this land really matter to their survival?
- Where else could the proposed land development projects go if this land were to remain undeveloped?
- Why should the needs of insects and "lesser species" be considered over the needs of humans?
- How could the land be used for progress and at the same time protect and preserve its natural presence?
- Whose job is it to decide what the land should be used for? Do you think this is what most of the people really want done with the land?
- How do the Jewish texts support your proposal?

**Other Proposals that are being presented:**

- |   |                                |   |                       |
|---|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| • | Loggers                        | • | Wetlands Preservation |
| • | Farmers                        | • | Landfill Construction |
| • | Housing Development            | • | Committee             |
| • | Committee                      | • | Parks and Recreation  |
| • | Recycling Plant Com-<br>mittee | • | Committee             |

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### Wetlands Preservation

Your group sees the possible development of this land as a complete disaster. Wetlands are being destroyed at an alarming rate, and you do not want to see that happen here in Anytown. Wetlands are important and improve things such as natural water quality, flood protection, erosion control, as well as opportunities for recreation. You would oppose any plan that would potentially fill in or disturb the water bodies of this land including the loggers, farmers, housing development, recycling plant, and landfill construction.

#### Questions you should consider:

- Will the cost to the economy of refraining from development be worth it?
- What could you propose to do with the land instead?
- Would you be willing to negotiate on any proposals?
- What would the effects of filling in the water bodies be on the town?
- Do you think that this plan is actually feasible? Since your plan doesn't offer economic incentives, how will you get people to join you?
- How do the Jewish texts support your proposal?

#### Other Proposals that are being presented:

- |           |                     |        |                      |
|-----------|---------------------|--------|----------------------|
| •         | Loggers             | •      | Sierra Club          |
| •         | Farmers             | •      | Recycling Plant Com- |
| •         | Housing Development | mittee |                      |
| Committee |                     |        |                      |

• Landfill Construction Committee

• Parks and Recreation Committee

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**Landfill Construction Committee**

Your group sees this land proposal as the perfect opportunity to build a landfill. Your town is currently shipping its garbage out of state at enormous costs. More landfills are necessary to keep up with the demand for space for all the garbage. New landfill regulations insure that there is little cause for concern regarding health implications to the surrounding community

**Questions you should consider:**

1. Who will pay for the landfill?
2. What added costs will the town incur to run the landfill?
3. How much land will be needed? Will you or can you preserve any of it?
4. How can you assure the town that the landfill will not leak into the groundwater and soil?
5. What effect will it have on air quality?
6. What effect will it have on property value?
7. Would there be ways to increase your income from the landfill--such as being willing to take trash from other cities for a price?
8. How do Jewish texts support your proposal?

**Other Proposals that are being presented:**

- |           |                       |           |                      |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| •         | Loggers               | •         | Recycling Plant Com- |
| •         | Farmers               | mittee    |                      |
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**Parks and Recreation Committee**

You see this land proposal as a perfect opportunity to preserve this area in its natural setting for a town park. A park would preserve the land's natural beauty while providing a positive environment for families and small children. You believe that this is something that could bring the community together and work on improving it.

**Questions you should consider:**

- How would you pay for the building of the park?
- Is creating a park economically feasible? (Is it worth the cost?)
- What types of activities or equipment will you have available?
- How much will it cost to maintain the park?
- Will you be able to preserve all of the trees and wildlife?
- Is this really the best use of the land?
- How do the Jewish texts support your proposal?

**Other Proposals that are being presented:**

- |   |                       |   |                           |
|---|-----------------------|---|---------------------------|
| • | Loggers               | • | Landfill Construction     |
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*["carcasses" refers to decaying flesh. In this case, it probably refers to a dumpsite. This law may be extended to include modern industries that emit a variety of pollutants when it refers to tanneries]*

- [G-d] ...did not create it [the earth] a wasteland, but formed it for habitation. (Isaiah 45:18)
- There will be an area beyond the military camp where you can relieve yourself. You will have a spade among your weapons; and after you have squatted, you will dig a hole and bury your excrement. (Deuteronomy, 23:13-15)
- And the Lord G-d took Adam, and put him in the garden of Eden, to work it and to tend (guard, watch) it. (Genesis 2:15)

Feed the poor and hungry weighs as heavily as all the other commandments of the Torah combined. (Baba Batra 9a)

### **Town Board**

It is your job to evaluate all of the proposals presented to you today. In making your final decision as to who will get the land in the end, you must consider what is best for the community in general including: the economy and environment, you must also consider the application of Jewish Texts to each proposal. You will be given a short amount of time to ask questions of each interest group's representatives after they have given their prepared comments. Be prepared with questions ahead of time, below is a list of sample questions that the groups have been given to think about while they present. (Try not to use these questions directly, but they can be a good guide!) ☺ After all groups have presented, you will have 3 Minutes to make your decision!

### **Recycling Plant Committee**

- How would you pay for the building of the plant? Once operable, will it be cost effective for the town?
- What effects will the plant have on the land, water, and air of Anytown?
- What are other benefits and drawbacks of this plan for the town?

### **Loggers**

- How will the town benefit from this commercial logging?
- Will you preserve any of the trees, or cut all of them?
- What thought will you give to the displacement of animals and their homes?
- What will become of the land when you are done logging? Will you replant?

### **Farmers**

- What type of farming will you do? (Organic or Commercial?)
- Will you need to clear away any of the trees in order to farm? Will you need to fill in the lake?
- Will you utilize all of the land, or will you preserve any of it?
- Will you abide by Jewish laws with regard to farming?

### **Housing Development Committee**

- Do we risk over-developing the land by not leaving enough open space?
- Will you be using all of the available land?
- Is the land good for building? (Could the houses sink due to the presence of pond or lake streambeds? Would it be necessary to work on filling in the water bodies, and how would this effect the environment?)

### **Sierra Club**

*Your group wants to preserve a vital piece of land and demonstrate the importance of land preservation.*

- How could you ensure that these species would thrive if the land were left alone?
- Would building on this land really matter to their survival?
- Where else could the proposed land development projects go if this land were to remain undeveloped?

- Why should the needs of insects and "lesser species" be considered over the needs of humans?

#### **Wetlands Preservation**

*Your group sees the possible development of this land as a complete disaster--you want to preserve wetlands.*

- What could you propose to do with the land instead? Would you be willing to negotiate on any proposals?
- Do you think that this plan is actually feasible? Since your plan doesn't offer economic incentives, how will you get people to join you? Will the cost to the economy of refraining from development be worth it?

#### **Landfill Construction Committee**

- Who will pay for the landfill? What added costs will the town incur to run the landfill?
- How much land will be needed? Will you or can you preserve any of it?
- How can you assure the town that the landfill will not leak into the groundwater and soil?
- What effect will it have on air quality? What effect will it have on property value?

#### **Parks and Recreation Committee**

*You see this land proposal as a perfect opportunity to preserve this area in its natural setting for a town park*

- How would you pay for building the park? Is creating a park economically feasible? (Is it worth the cost?)
- What types of activities or equipment will you have available?
- How much will it cost to maintain the park?
- Will you be able to preserve all of the trees and wildlife? Is this really the best use of the land?

### Town Board's Copy of Jewish Texts

- "When in your war against a city you have to besiege it for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its fruit trees, wielding an ax against them. You may eat of them, but you may not cut them down." (Deuteronomy, 20: 19-20)
- You must not raise goats or sheep in the land of Israel because their grazing spoils the land. (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kama 79b)  
*[Sheep and goats graze so low to the ground that the plants are unable to regenerate. This law may be extended to mean that anything that spoils the land should not be grown in Israel.]*
- All cities must have a migrahs [open space] that surrounds them. The first 1000 cubits shall be for open space and the next 1000 cubits for grazing animals. (Numbers, 35:2-5)  
*[1000 cubits equals about 500 meters]*
- It is forbidden to live in a city that does not have a garden or greenery. (Mishna, Kiddushin 4:12)
- Carcasses, cemeteries and tanneries must be kept at fifty cubit's distance from a town. A tannery can only be set on the east side of town because the east wind is gentle and will not carry the fumes to town. (Mishna, Baba Batra 24b)  
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