

- What can we learn from this exercise regarding our own decision making process?
- What should the process be when we wish to make a serious, considered, Progressive-Zionist decision regarding any given topic?



### Example of Sources for Topic in "Timelines in Jewish Thought" peulah.

The Topic: Our relationship to Nature

Sources:

The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it. (*Genesis 2:15*)

When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. (*Deuteronomy 20:19*)

When God created the first human beings, God led them around the garden of Eden and said: "Look at my works! See how beautiful they are, how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it". (*Midrash Ecclesiastics Rabbah, 9<sup>th</sup> century*)

Not only one who cuts down food trees, but also one who smashes household goods, tears clothes, demolishes a building, stops up a spring, or destroys food on purpose violates the command: "You must not destroy!" Such a person is administered a disciplinary beating. (*Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, 12<sup>th</sup> century*)

If a person kills a tree before its time, it is like having murdered a soul.

(*Rebbe Nahman of Bratslav, late 18<sup>th</sup> century*)

This prohibition of purposeless destruction of food trees around a besieged city is only to be taken as an example of general wastefulness. Under the concept of bal tashchit (You must not destroy) the purposeless destruction of anything at all is taken to be forbidden, so that our text becomes the most comprehensive warning to human beings not to misuse the position that God has given them as masters of the world and its matter to capricious, passionate, or merely thoughtless wasteful destruction of anything on earth. Only for wise use has God laid the world at our feet when God said to humankind, in Genesis, "fill the earth and master it; and rule!" (*Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, late 19<sup>th</sup> century*)

## "BACK TO THE HEART OF A PRAYER"

**Aim:**

- To try to deepen and enrich the meaning that prayers have for our chanichim by attempting to recapture the original meaning of the prayers.

**Method:**

1. Give each chanich/a or pair of chanichim one prayer, or part of a prayer. Ask the chanichim to create a story around the origin of the prayer.

2. Ask the chanichim to answer the following questions:

What is the prayer saying?

What kind of a person might have said these words?

What was the author of the prayer feeling right before saying these words?

*Remember.* prayers are often the product of intense feelings and experiences; they are the result of a strong, sometimes overwhelming need to express a given feeling.

The following are a sampling of prayers that could be used, although any prayer would be appropriate.

*Wondrous Fashioner and Sustainer of life, Source of our health and our strength, we give you thanks and praise. Blessed is our Eternal God, Creator of the Universe, who has made our bodies with wisdom, combining veins, arteries, and vital organs into a finely balanced network .*

*Blessed is the Eternal, our God who brings freedom to the captive.*

*May our darker passions not rule us, nor evil companions lead us astray. Help us to keep far from sin, to master temptation, and to avoid falling under its spell .*

*We thank you, O God, for this new day, for morning sun and evening star, for flowering tree and flowing tide, for life-giving rains and cooling breezes, for the earth's patient turning, the seasons' alterations, the cycle of growth and decay, of life and death.*

*Bring unto us a life of blessing and peace, and gather our exiles from the four corners of the earth and bring them in to our land.*

*Blessed are You God, Master of the Universe, Who has sustained us and enabled us to reach this day.*

*Praise God with the blowing of the shofar...Praise God with a harp and a violin. Praise God with the beating of the drum Praise God with dance. [Regarding this prayer, specify the different experiences: when would someone feel the wish to speak to God with a drum, with a violin, etc.. An extension of this which could actually be turned into a separate peulah could be to play a segment of drum music, a segment of violin music, etc and ask chanichim to imagine the pray-er behind each instrument's "prayer".*