Zionist-Eco Dilemmas
by Noam Dolgin and Becca Weaver

It is helpful to put each dilemma on a card. Break the participants into groups of 3-5 and hand each group a card. They should:

1) Read and discuss the dilemma.
2) Figure out what ecological and Jewish issues are involved.
3) Come up with a solution, or choose an answer to the dilemma. (the group does not have to agree)
4) After 10 minutes have each group present their dilemma and explain their decisions.

Dilemma:
The Israeli Council on the Environment has published a report which sets a population limit for Israel; the number of people the land can support without losing critical wildlife habitat and irreparably damaging soil, water and air. Once the limit has been reached, (only five years away) only Jews fleeing persecution could apply for refugee status and make aliyah. What is your opinion on the proposed limit? Do you have an alternative solution?

Dilemma:
In the past, the Israel Defense Force (IDF), responding to sniper fire from Palestinian farmland that has killed or injured numerous passing Israeli motorists, has systematically razed (destroyed) olive farms owned by Palestinians. Olives are the primary source of income for many Palestinian people, as well as primary habitat for many birds and rodents, plus an injunction in Torah forbids the cutting of fruit trees in a time of war. More recently the IDF has been relocating most trees instead of destroying them.

What is your opinion on these operations? Do you have an alternative solution?

Dilemma:
The Ministry of Tourism and the City of Eilat, whose primary income is based on tourism, has begun an international advertising campaign to promote Scuba diving on the coral reefs in an attempt to **double** the current number of Scuba tourists. Eilat currently has the highest density of Scuba diving in the world, and under this pressure the reefs have begun to show major signs of degradation. You are aware that Coral reefs worldwide are highly endangered from over-fishing, development, over-diving and climate change, and that they are the second most diverse ecosystem on earth.

How do you feel about this proposal? Do you have an alternative solution?

An alternative group has proposed limiting the number of divers at a number considered sustainable, **1/5 of current levels.** How do you feel about this proposal? Do you have an alternative solution?

Dilemma:
You are a resident of a small Moshav in the center of Israel. The separation barrier, a large barrier separating the West Bank from Israel Proper, is being constructed right outside your village, making many of the residents of your village feel much safer. However, the specified location goes right through a state nature reserve that you often travel to on the weekends. The nature reserve offers plants and animals a much needed habitat, free of cars and development. The separation barrier would divide the reserve in half, making animal and plant crossings almost impossible.

Do you speak out in your village against the path of the proposed separation barrier?

Dilemma:
You are planning a Tu B'shvat Seder with your community. Being the birthday of the trees in the Hebrew Calendar, your mom wants to celebrate and support Israel's economy by buying many fruits that were grown in Israel, including dates, figs, carob, olives, persimmons, and oranges. However you recently learned that transporting food is a major contributor to CO_2 emissions and global climate change. These same fruits are also available from closer sources such as California and Florida. There are also local fruits that could fulfill the same role as the Israeli fruits.

Which fruits do you buy? Why? Do you have an alternative solution?

Dilemma:
You are a new Oleh (immigrant) to Israel. You are looking for a place to settle when you learn of a newly built "sustainable village" in the Negev desert. The houses in the village take include state of the art technology, including solar hot water heaters, and photovoltaic roofing, heat and water reclamation, and more.

Within the village you do not need to drive, though in order to get to the closest town, where most of the job opportunities are, is 45 minutes, and the center of the country where most people you currently know are, is at least 90 minutes. You are also aware that the Negev is some of the last undeveloped land in Israel.

Do you think moving to the village is a good decision for the environment?

Dilemma:
You are an Israeli citizen, living in a village in the north. Your sister lives outside Tel Aviv (in the center). You visit each other twice a month, and the drive often takes up to four hours. There is a plan to build a large highway, which will reduce your commute by an hour, saving you and your sister time and lowering the amount of gas required for the trip.

However, you are aware building a new highway involves a tremendous use of resources and energy; that open and agricultural land is already being lost at a rapid pace; and highways are known to prevent wildlife from crossing. You are also fairly certain that given the choice of a fast highway, even fewer people will be encouraged to use the existing train system.

Do you support the construction of a new highway? Do you have an alternative solution?

Dilemma:
You are a Sabra (native born Israeli) who has witnessed the shrinking of the Dead Sea over the many years of your families' visits. The Dead Sea is shrinking for two reasons:
1) Most of the water from its sole source, the Jordan River, has been diverted to provide drinking and agricultural water to much of Israel,
2) Industrial use of the Southern Dead Sea as a source of chemicals and minerals, through large evaporation ponds in order to extract valuable minerals from the water.

Would you consider measures such as:
   a) Water rationing, to allow more to flow down the Jordan
   b) Closing of Dead Sea Industrial production
   c) A large scale development project to build a canal from the Red Sea to fill it in the Dead Sea

Do you have an alternative solution?