Sources on the Environment: Biblical Texts

**Genesis 1:28**
And God blessed them; and God said unto them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth.'

**Genesis 2:15**
G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and protect it.

**Deuteronomy 20:19-20**
(19) When you besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, do not destroy the trees by wielding an axe against them; for you may eat of them, but you shall not cut them down; for is the tree of the field man, that you should besiege it?
(20) Only the trees of which you know that they are not trees for food, you may destroy and cut down, that you may build bulwarks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls.

**Leviticus 25:23**
Since the land is Mine, no land shall be sold permanently. You are foreigners and resident aliens as far as I am concerned.

**Guiding Questions:**
- Genesis 1 gives humans dominion over the world, Genesis 2 commands us to protect it. Is it possible to synchronize these two texts? What do you think is the intention of the Bible?
- Why does Deuteronomy only command preservation of the fruit trees? How might this commandment be applied in our times?
- The context in Leviticus is about property, but how might this text inform our consideration of the environment?
Sources on the Environment: Rabbinic Texts

**Talmud Bavli Taanit 23a**
R. Yohanan said: This righteous man [Honi] was throughout the whole of his life troubled about the meaning of the verse, "A Song of Ascents, When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream. (Psalm 126:1)" Is it possible for a man to dream continuously for seventy years? One day he was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked him, How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit? The man replied: Seventy years. He then further asked him: Are you certain that you will live another seventy years? The man replied: I found [ready grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me so I too plant these for my children.

**Sefer Hahinukh 529**
It is the way of the righteous and of people of action who love peace and are happy in the good of their fellows and who bring them close to Torah, that they should never waste even the seed of the mustard plant. And if they are able to save, they save everything from destruction with all their willpower. This is not the way of their brothers the evildoers who do damage. They are happy with the destruction of the world, and they destroy it.

**Guiding Questions:**
- In our times, we tend to be interested in achieving immediate results, but what are our equivalent of carob trees that we plant for those in the future?
- Why is not wasting even a small seed the way of righteous people. What does this have to do with being close to Torah?
- More broadly speaking, given the lifestyle and development on which many humans depend, how can we take care to both meet our current needs and prepare for the future?