



STUDY QUESTIONS TO ACCOMPANY RABBI ADIN STEINSALTZ'S CLASSES ON THE SHEMA

Lesson One: Let My Children Know (or: Teach it to your Children)

- How can the Shema fit in with your child's bedtime rituals? What other family rituals does your family have?
- How did you think of God as a child? How do you want your child to think of God?
- Rabbi Steinsaltz argues that the doing of an act can precede the understanding of it. In what other areas of life do we "do" before we "understand." How does the doing of the act itself – saying the Shema – lead to understanding?
 - *This idea is beautifully expressed also in the Global Day video which should be watched in conjunction with this lesson*
- "Do as I do – it doesn't matter what I say." Educators tell us that the most powerful messages we send to our children are transmitted through our deeds and our attitudes, not necessarily through our words. What values would you want to transmit through this and other family rituals?

Lesson Two: Who Knows One?

- How do you understand Rabbi Steinsaltz's statement that God is both "the only One" and that God "is everything"? How can there be nothing but God – and yet understand that God is everything – at the same time?
- If God is One, there is no room to worship anything else. How do you feel about Rabbi Steinsaltz's statement that people often worship TV sets, money or even relationships – placing them instead of God?
- Rabbi Steinsaltz mentions that the statement "God is One" is the most important part of the Shema. Yet, the Shema also tells us that God is our God. How do you see the balance between the particular and the universal messages of the Shema?

Lesson Three: Listen to the Sounds of Silence

- Rabbi Steinsaltz says that when we say, "Hear O Israel," we are "partially" speaking to ourselves. To whom else are we speaking, do you think? And why must we speak to them?
- Is the Shema an affirmation or a prayer? If it is a prayer, what is its purpose? If it is an affirmation, why would that be important?
- Rabbi Steinsaltz explains that in the silence we encounter God – not as Judge or as Provider – but as Existence. What do you think he means by that?