



## Torah for Turbulent Times "The Jewish Mantra"

Do you have a personal mantra that helps get you through the day? For some it may be the Serenity Prayer. For others, it may be a song lyric. In our house we're singing lately, "Don't worry...every little thing is going to be alright." These days more than ever it helps to have a mantra or a ritual to frame our days (or simply to get through them). On a good day mine generally includes beginning the day with simple words of gratitude, ritually washing my hands with a blessing, walking the dog while I say a few morning prayers, and then finally, coffee!

While the words of the *Sh'ma* are central to the Jewish morning and evening liturgy, I think about them as a mantra to anchor, frame and remind us to be mindful and to practice active listening. The text of the *Sh'ma* and the accompanying *V'ahavta* "You shall love" is found in last week's Torah portion. "*Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad*/Listen O' Israel, Adonai is our G-d, Adonai is One." (Deuteronomy 6:4-7) It's taught that we are to say these words when we're at home and when we're on our way, when we lie down and when we rise up. Our recent Shabbat discussion centered on the Talmudic debate of whether we needed to say these words literally and physically "lying down and rising up" or simply when we went to bed and when we awoke. Also, if we are to say them at home and when we're on our way the question naturally comes up. Where are we supposed to say them? Is there an "optimal zone" for our posture as well as for our surroundings?

Spending much more time at home lately, it's a comfort to know that these words really are right at home with us, as we teach our children and keep our families connected and healthy. And yes, we are also free to say them as we go along our ways and in our days. Our sources teach that the *Sh'ma* may be recited walking, standing, lying down, sitting, or even riding on an animal (just in case you were wondering). As the teaching goes, "wherever you go, there you are." The ancient words of the *Sh'ma* remind us that wherever we go, there we are - accompanied by the unity and uniqueness of the divine Presence.

Whatever your mantra may be, keep on keeping on.

-Rabbi Mark