WELCOME
Ask each person to introduce themselves and to share with the group a part of their day or week they would like to bring with them as they begin this conversation, and/or a part of their day or week they would like to leave behind.

As we gather in our Sh’ma group, may we honor the values of our Jewish tradition. May we bring compassion, insight, and wisdom to our learning and conversation. May we recognize the Divine Image in one another, and let that awareness be reflected in our words and actions.

Baruch atah Adonai chonein ha’daat.
Blessed are You, Adonai, who grants us wisdom and awareness.

Before we begin, let’s review the brit—the covenant—that animates our time together:

• Accountability: I’ll show up to our agreed upon times. I’ll let the guide(s) know the (good) reason I will be absent. I will also be punctual and respect everyone’s time.

• Presence: When we’re together, I’ll be present and mindful. I will listen and share. Life (and our mobile devices) offers many distractions, but I will stay present and engaged.

• Double Confidentiality: I’ll maintain complete confidentiality. What I hear and say stays here. It means that even when I see group members in another context, such as at Temple or in the neighborhood, I will not initiate a conversation on what has been shared.

• Vulnerability: I’ll stretch myself to be as open and honest as possible with my perspectives and experiences in order to create a safe environment that might encourage others to take risks as well.

• Respect: I will remember that all of us are here for a common purpose and I will respect and acknowledge everyone in my group.

• No Fixing, Advising, Saving or Setting Straight: I will give everybody the gift of true attention without trying to “solve their problem.” No advice unless it’s asked.

• Listening: I understand that some of us are talkers, while some of us are quieter. I’ll be aware not to dominate discussions and to balance how much I’m talking with how much I’m listening.

• Curiosity: Judaism is a religion of exploration; of big questions more than answers. I will get the most out of my group by being open to our discussions and the people around me.

• Ownership: This is our Sh’ma Group. This is our community to create. While we have guidelines and suggestions, it is ours to shape and form. We will get out of it what we put into it.

ABOUT OUR LEARNING MATERIALS: NISH’MA
On the following page you will find three takes on a passage of Mishnah that teaches we are all descended from the same person, the original Adam. This page is constructed like the Talmud—the central text in the center and various commentary surrounding it. We have chosen this learning material (NiSh’m’a) because it explores relevant topics, and because we hope it will generate meaningful dialogue where the different perspectives within your Sh’ma group can be heard and appreciated. Nis’h’ma is a project of The Forward magazine. If you have any feedback or questions about NiSh’m’a, please let us know at AHorn@tedallas.org.

As we make our way from Purim to Passover and then on to Shavuot we will experience joy, in all its complexity, in a variety of ways. This month’s material helps us pay attention to this trajectory of the season and our emotions. (Rabbi David Jaffe was with us for Selichot weekend this year and if you didn’t get to learn with him then and his insights inspire you, his sermon is available on the Temple website.)

Here’s a link if you’d like to learn more
https://forward.com/shma-now/simcha-joy/?attribution=articles-article-listing-25-headline

Everything you need to celebrate Passover is at www.tedallas.org/passover and mark your calendar for Shavuot on June 8-9.
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Reflective Questions

1. What was your initial understanding of the central text? What did you understand differently after reading/discussing the commentaries?

2. Which passage in the commentaries resonated with you—and why? Which passage was most challenging to you, and why?

3. What experiences have you encountered that illustrate OR amplify OR contradict something taught on the page?