



## Rabbi Steinsaltz Video Class 2016

### "The Earth is Full of Your Creations": Exploring our World and Nature"

#### Discussion Questions

1. What ideas raised in the video did you find most surprising or challenging or inspiring?
2. What are the challenges for human beings in their relationship with the natural world?
3. Have you ever related to a certain animal? Which one? How?
  - a. Did the awareness of this similarity change how you relate to that animal?
  - b. What do you think of the idea of man being a combination of all the animals?
4. What is man's duty in the world?
  - a. Rabbi Steinsaltz says, "So man is really the assembly of the whole world in one person. Which is, in many ways, our understanding of the duty of man in the world." What does it mean to be an "assembly"? How does that affect our obligations to the world around us?
  - b. Rabbi Steinsaltz illustrates this duty as a conflict: "But we are all the time trying on the one hand trying to control, and on the other hand to allow things to go free." In your opinion, how do we determine when to try to control and when to allow things to go free? What factors should we take into account?
5. Psalm 104 is considered one of the most beautiful poems in the Bible. Let's read verses 20-25.  

**20.** You bring on darkness and it is night,  
when all the beasts of the forests stir.  
**21.** The lions roar for prey,  
seeking their food from God.  
**22.** When the sun rises, they come home  
and couch in their dens.  
**23.** Man then goes to his work,  
to his labor until the evening.  
**24.** How many are the things You have made, O LORD;  
You have made them all with wisdom;  
the earth is full of Your creations.  
**25.** There is the sea, vast and wide,  
with its creatures beyond number,  
living things, small and great.

  - a. Which of the images in this text resonates most with you? What does this passage make you feel?
  - b. What are some cycles you can observe in this passage? What are some ecosystems you can identify?
  - c. According to this poem, how would you describe man's place in the world?
6. "Harmony is not made of sugar and sweets. Harmony is also made with all kinds of noise...disagreement can be the beginning of the world." How do examples of this manifest in the natural world, or in your own life?
  - a. In what ways can we strive to achieve both harmony and disagreement, or controlling and setting free?
  - b. Rabbi Steinsaltz describes ecology as being about "the wholeness of the world" and asserts that, "there are always parts clashing and the question is when we should interfere." Do you think we should or should not "interfere" in nature? How would you define "interference" in this context?
  - c. Rabbi Steinsaltz says that we may interfere in the world, yet must not "destroy too much." What do you think of this standard? How is that even possible to do?