

“Modeh/Modah ani lifanekha melekh chai v'kayam shehechezarta bi nishmahti b'chemlah, rabah emunatekha”.

I give thanks before you, King living and eternal, for You have returned within me my soul with compassion; abundant is Your faithfulness!”

Every morning, right after I wake up but while I'm still in bed, I recite this prayer, the Modeh Ani. By saying it, I hope to remind myself that I'm mortal and that I should be thankful to God for granting me another day to live. It's often hard to remember that life is such a miracle and a blessing, but saying this prayer encourages me to be aware of the fact that nothing is guaranteed in life and life is a gift. I believe that if I remind myself of my mortality on a daily basis, I will live my life with a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment.

This prayer also reminds me of a story:

A great Rabbi emerged from the concentration camps after his entire family was killed in the Holocaust. Eventually, the first Yom Kippur after liberation came around. He turned to the others in the displaced-persons camp he was in and asked them, what sin could there possibly be for them to confess?! No one had an answer. He turned to the group and proclaimed that there is one sin of which they were all guilty. Each person knows that there were mornings in the camps when they were jealous of those who did not wake up. Given the preciousness of each moment of God-given life, that is the sin which they must confess.

The story is shocking, and yet demonstrates just how important gratitude is to the Jewish people.

I believe that we should say *Modeh Ani* and try to concentrate on the potential that each day offers. But I also believe that we can and should say *Modeh Ani* for others! For example, if you know someone that was ill and is still alive, you could thank God for giving that person another day. “I thank you Hashem for restoring the soul of _____ in your compassion and great faithfulness.” We can even tell that person “I am happy that you are alive!” Life is meant to be celebrated.

What do you think? Should we say the *Modeh Ani* every morning even if we don't mean it? Is it our place to thank God for granting life to others aside from ourselves? Please share with me your thoughts about this prayer.

Let us all strive for gratitude and connection with God on this Shabbat.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Koas