

מודה אני לפניך מלך חי וקים שהחזרת בי נשמתִי בחמלה, רבה אמונתך  
*Modeh ani lifanecha melech chai v'kayam shehechezarta bi nishmahti b'chemlah, rabah emunatecha.*

I offer thanks before you, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great.

I imagine that most of us do not often stop to think about the meaning of this morning prayer, and its importance to our faith and our culture. I have heard people say that every cloud has a silver lining, but until very recently, I never really understood what that meant. In the coming week, as we reflect on our personal feelings of gratitude and acknowledge the good things in our lives, we must also remember to be thankful for things that are not always good.

In Judaism we have the concept, from the very beginning of Bereshit, of light existing in tandem with not light, and this can be seen too in our philosophy that good and not good also exist in tandem. However we must be careful not to assume that not good is always bad, because making that assumption would be as illogical as saying that anything not water is always fire. In the throngs of negative emotions that have the power to become the central focus of our days, that silver lining is often ignored, or forgotten, or outright denied. And yet so often, it is still there, even if it takes us years to find it.

When we wake up each morning, wishing that we had more time to sleep, fewer days to Shabbat, or even a different job, please help us, HaShem, to recognize that our tradition has the Modeh Ani as a morning prayer, and others like it, constantly reminding us to acknowledge what is good.

When we are afraid, please help us, HaShem, to be thankful for those who make our fears into things that we can conquer.

When we cry, please help us, HaShem, to be thankful for those who dry our tears and bring us comfort.

When we are sad, please help us, HaShem, to be thankful for those who make us laugh, even when we don't really know why.

When we are weak, please help us, HaShem, to be thankful for those who are dependent on our strengths, especially when we have forgotten that we have them.

When we are lonely, please help us, HaShem, to be thankful for those who welcome us into their community and who help us to make it our own.

When we feel overwhelmed by our studies, please help us, HaShem, to be thankful for our teachers, who make even the most complex things seem so very simple.

When we struggle with the challenges of aging friends and relatives, and especially when we say our final goodbyes, please help us, HaShem, to remember the good, and to focus on the good, in order that when they are no longer with us, their memories may always be full of blessings.

In this time of our thanksgiving, may we not only acknowledge that silver lining, but more importantly may we seek it out, wherever we may find it. May we remember the words from not too many weeks ago: HaShem, hosha na. Please help us.

Amen

Submitted by            Alyssa Finkelstein  
Blessing theme:        Gratitude