



Praying WITH Passion

GIVING MORE MEANING TO OUR TEFILLAH - ONE WEEK AT A TIME **ISSUE NO. 152**

Tefillah Focus Of The Week: **שמנה עשרה** *Forever Grateful*

מודים אנחנו לך, שאתה הוא ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו לעולם ועד... נודה לך ונספר תהלתך על חיינו המסורים בידך, ועל נשמותינו הפקודות לך...

Meaning:

The simple translation of the prayer

We gratefully thank You, for it is You Who are Hashem, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers for all eternity... We shall thank You and relate Your praise for our lives, which are committed to Your power and for our souls that are entrusted to You...

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

Thanks for Everything

We acknowledge our debt of gratitude to Hashem, whose gifts are far beyond anything we could possibly earn.

Insight:

Deeper meanings of the theme

More Than Our Share

מודים represents our expression of gratitude for all the blessings included in the prayer, including the immeasurable blessings of על חיינו, for our lives, ועל נשמותינו, and for our souls. How important is it that we praise Hashem? In *Sefer Daas Chochmah U'Mussar* (Volume

2, page 44 – 45), Rabbi Yeruchom Levovitz comments that “It is not that when we are alive we praise Hashem for giving us life. Rather, the whole purpose of life is to praise Hashem.”

True thanksgiving occurs when people feel they have been given more than they deserve. The first place in the Torah (*Bereishis*, 29:35) where the Hebrew word for “thanks” appears is when Leah gives birth to her fourth son, Yehudah. She says, “This time I will thank Hashem.” Rashi

(ibid) comments that Leah felt grateful to Hashem for each of her children. However, when Leah had Yehudah, she recognized that she had been granted sons beyond her fair share.

In מודים we thank Hashem for a multitude of blessings, thereby acknowledging that there is nothing we have done or could ever do to deserve it all. As *Sefer Chovos Hal'vovos* (*Sha'ar Ha'Bitachon*, Chapter 4) comments:

(cont. P. 2)

Word to the Wise: Meaning within the word

The word מודים contains two meanings: (a) to admit to the truth, and (b) to express to Hashem *todah* – thanks and recognition of the goodness we receive from Him.

(*Sifsei Chaim, Rinas Chaim*, pp. 244). With this understanding we can explain why *Modim* is an exception to the rule that allows a representative—a *Shliach Tzibbur*—to recite the blessings for us, while the congregants merely listen and say *amen* at its conclusion. For example, for the blessing “Heal Us” or “Bless Us with a Good Year”, the *Shliach Tzibbur* can say the blessing for us. Yet, when the *Shliach Tzibbur* says מודים, the congregation must participate by reciting a prayer of thanksgiving known as *Modim D'Rabanan, The Rabbis' Modim*.

The reason for this departure is that מודים means “thank You,” Hashem. And if there is one thing that no else one can do on our behalf, it is to say “thanks.” Thus, it is no wonder that the numerical equivalence of the word מודים is 100 (מ=40, י=10, ד=4, ו=6), which hints at the requirement (*Siman 46:3*) to give thanks to Hashem each day by reciting 100 blessings (*Adapted from Abudraham on “Modim*).



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שמנה עשרה Forever Grateful

(INSIGHT cont.)

If a person's actions would equal the amount of sand by the sea, they would not merit even one gift received from Hashem in this world, and this is certainly so if one sins. And that which one receives as reward for doing mitzvos is really only from the benevolence of Hashem.

When we bow to Hashem at the beginning of מודים, we express our humility at the realization that we are unworthy of all the gifts that Hashem gives us and that in truth we can never thank Him enough (Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah).

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

All for Me?

It was Yitzchak's 70th birthday. Since birthdays were never a big deal in his

family, he assumed that this one would pass rather peacefully as well. He and his wife were going out for a nice dinner to mark the occasion. When they entered the restaurant, the waiter led them to a separate room, where he said the atmosphere would be quieter. As they walked into the room, Yitzchak saw an unbelievable sight. All his children, all their spouses, all his grandchildren, his sisters and brothers and their families were arrayed around the room, which was decorated lavishly with banners and balloons. "All this is for me?" he asked incredulously. As he absorbed the happiness and love that surrounded him, he could barely believe his good fortune.

Life is not always a birthday party, but like Yitzchak, we too can feel the amazement of all Hashem has given us. Peace and relative prosperity, freedom from persecution, thriving communities, shuls

and yeshivos, friends and families, food and shelter – what did we do to deserve it all? We can only bow to Hashem and say "Modim," overwhelmed by His kindness.

Try This!

▶ Every moment of life is ours only because Hashem gives it to us. We normally take our existence for granted. However, with the words of מודים we admit to Hashem that every moment of our lives is a gift that He has granted us. Begin internalizing this joyous feeling that you are alive when you say מודים each morning. Feel the strong sense of gratitude to Hashem for giving you life and all its gifts for yet another day.

Did You Know

▶ Focusing on Kaddish

Talking is strictly forbidden during **Kaddish**, as one must pay full attention so that he can answer amen, etc. properly (Mishnah Berurah 56:1).

The Mateh Moshe (Siman 411) cites a Midrash which relates that a certain Torah scholar appeared to his pupil in a dream and the pupil noticed that the scholar had a stain on his forehead. The pupil asked him why this happened to him and he answered that the mark occurred because he did not

avoid speaking while the chazzan said Kaddish (cited in Mishnah Berurah, Siman 56:1).

This story, while relating consequences suffered in the World to Come, actually speak of the here and now. They illustrate the spiritual disfigurement a person inflicts upon himself every time he speaks when he is prohibited from doing so. He may not see this blemish in the mirror when he arrives home from *shul*, but it is there nonetheless, and in the World of Truth, it becomes apparent.