

THE PRAYER OF MODEH ANI

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

"I admit before You [Hashem] the living and everlasting King, that you returned my soul with mercy, great is Your Faithfulness!" The first thing a Jew is meant to do when he opens his eyes in the morning is to admit that Hashem has returned his soul back to him.

Our Sages tell us that the experience of sleep is one-sixtieth of death (Berachos). For this reason, King David was careful to minimize his sleep, so he should not "taste the flavor of death" (Shulchan Aruch 4,16 citing Zohar Vayigash 207a). At the end of his life, the Vilna Gaon acted in a similar fashion, never sleeping for the amount of time that is considered one sixteenth of dath (more than half an hour at a time).

Every morning that we wake up and are given life again, we are resurrected from the semi-death experience of sleep. By referring to Hashem as "the Everlasting King", we remind ourselves of the fundamental principle of Jewish faith. We affirm that just as we have been given our life anew in this world, so, too, at the End of Days all of the dead will be resurrected by the Everlasting King.

Most prayers may not be recited unless one's hands have not touched parts of the body that are generally covered. In a case where one is unsure, such as after a night's sleep, the hands must be washed first. Nevertheless, we may recite Modeh Ani immediately upon waking, since it does not contain any direct reference to Hashem's names (Mishna Berura 1,8).

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