



**zeh
hayom**

this is
the day

זֶה הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה יי

zeh hayom asah Hashem

this is the day
Creator made

Psalm 118

blessings, prayers and
prompts for the Jewish
day, inside and out

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**Matir Asurim: Jewish Care
Network for Incarcerated People**

Awakening to the day

Jo Levien

Each day we awaken. Our mind rises from sleep and we begin to greet a new day. Often our first thoughts may be of worries, to-do lists, or wondering what this day will hold. Prayer can offer us a moment to remember that **no matter where you are, G-d is with you.**

HaShem's presence, also called Shekhinah or "indwelling presence", is with us wherever we are.

Modeh Ani is a prayer said **upon our first awareness waking up.** Some say it before opening their eyes, or while lying in bed for last restful moments.

Modeh Ani reflects belief that **G-d renews creation each day**, and that we too are *beriah hadasha* "a new creation". It is said that the soul leaves our body during sleep for a taste of heaven. In ancient Jewish texts, sleep is described as "1/60th of death." This prayer is voicing **gratitude to G-d for literally returning our soul to us each morning, and our thankfulness to awaken alive for a new day.**

The text of *Modeh Ani* is on the next page. If you prefer to recite with the Hebrew conjugated for a feminine speaker, all you need to do is switch "*Modeh*" to "*Modah*." The rest of the prayer is the same!

**"I give thanks to You,
Source of life and
existence, that You have
restored my soul with
mercy. Great is Your
faithfulness."**

*Modeh ani lefanecha melech
chai vekayam, she-he-chezarta
bi nishmati b'chemla, raba
emunatecha*

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ
חַי וְקַיִם שֶׁחֲזַרְתָּ בִּי
נְשַׁמְתִּי בְחֶמְלָה, רַבָּה
אֱמוּנָתְךָ

**"God is real and my
relationship with God is
real.** God is my life and
what I do in order to keep
the intimacy with God,
that is what keeps me
going every day. I am
blessed to be in direct
communication with the
creator and it manifests
in my life in many ways
giving me a new day...
telling me **"here I am
with you now."**

- Johnny "Mario" Morales

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Dear Matir Asurim community,

This month's edition of Zeh Hayom features teachings from two members of our brand new hybrid correspondence course. The course, called **Torah from the Inside Out**, is being taught in collaboration with **Yeshiva Shel Maala** and facilitates learning for incarcerated people and their pen pals as well as anyone who wants to learn with us. We will continue to share learning and reflections from the cohort in this summer's editions of Zeh Hayom.

If you would like a copy of the text packets from the course, please write to us at the address below and we will send them your way! We hope our learning brings, *chizuk*, strength, to the whole community.

Sincerely,
Rabbi Eli DeWitt and all of Matir Asurim

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Saying the Shema with ADHD

Thursday Bram

I forgot to say the Shema this morning. Sometimes, I think I forget more mornings than I remember. Remembering to say the Shema at night is easier for me, though I still don't always manage it. I have the same problem with brushing my teeth twice a day — remembering to pull out the toothpaste just before bed is somehow more doable than first thing after I wake up.

I've always struggled with these sorts of habits. I even have a couple of diagnoses that explain why building habits is a challenge for me. I haven't found much comfort in knowing why I struggle and standard advice from doctors and therapists and ADHD coaches hasn't helped me create the morning routine I want.

I take comfort in the options we have for finding a way to recite Shema. I don't have to decide for myself if I'm too late (Talmud Brakhot 9a) or using the wrong posture (Mishnah Brakhot 1). I'm obviously not the first person to struggle with this practice. There's even Mishnah Brakhot 4, which offers options for if one is riding a donkey and cannot dismount!

This is the value of studying Torah for me: our texts remind me that I'm in a long lineage of Jews who had to figure out how to say the Shema in a way that works for them — maybe in a new place, maybe without community, maybe in a place where saying the Shema put them in danger. I am connected as much through my struggles as I am by the days when remembering what I want to do is easy.

It was a favorite saying of the Rabbis of Jabneh :
I am a creature of G-d and my neighbor is also G-d's creature; my work is in the city and his in the field ; I rise early to my work and he rises early to his. As he cannot excel in my work, so I cannot excel in his work. But perhaps thou sayest, "I do great things and he small things"! We have learnt that it matters not whether one does much or little, if only he direct his heart to Heaven.

– **Mishna Brakhot 4**