

LBT's From Light to Liberation: *Gratitude*

Week of January 31, 2021 / 4 Shevat 5781

These texts are designed to be engaged in chevruta (with a partner), with a larger group, or on your own as part of your journey from Light to Liberation. As you approach these texts, you are invited to let the discussions and thoughts they foster live with you and be part of you. If you are reading these on your own or with others, we encourage you to read aloud.

Framing: The word Jew comes to us from the word Judah or *Yehuda* in Hebrew. Jews are, quite literally, descendants of the tribe of Judah and from the people that lived in the province of Judea. But when we unpack the word “Judah” we can find a hidden meaning at the heart of who we are as Jews. The first text below comes from the moment where Leah gives birth to Judah and the reason she gives for naming him through the connection between the name Judah and the word “giving thanks.” The second text, *Modeh Ani*, is traditionally said upon waking up each morning and is the way that we express our connection to gratitude in our daily lives and prayers.

בראשית כ"ט:ל"ה

(לה) וַתֵּהָרֵי עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אֹדְהָ אֶת־יְיָ עַל־כֵּן קָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמֹד מִלְּדוֹת:

Genesis 29:35

(35) She [Leah] conceived again and bore a son, and said, “This time I will give thanks (*odeh*) the Eternal.” Therefore she named him Judah (*yehudah*). Then she stopped bearing.

(א) מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם שֶׁהַחַיּוּת בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחַמְלָה, רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ:

Morning Prayers, Modeh Ani

I give thanks (*modeh ani*) before you, living and everlasting Sovereign, for You have restored my soul with mercy and great is your faithfulness.

Modeh Ani L'fanekha, Melekh Chai v'kayam, sh'hekhezarta bi nishmati b'khemla, rabah emunatekha.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How do you practice expressing and receiving gratitude in your life? When is it easy, when is it a struggle?
2. Why do you think the language of gratitude is so central to Jewish identity and prayer practice? Is gratitude central to your identity?
3. **Practice invitation:** This week, each morning upon waking up consider saying the words of “*Modeh Ani*.” At the end of the week, reflect on your own or with your partner/s on this experience, and how beginning each morning with words of gratitude impacted your day.