



**Modeh Ani –  
A fundamental recognition of God**  
19 Sivan, 5750-1990

In this past week's Torah portion we read the verse, "When you kindle the lamps," with Rashi's explanation: "until the flame goes up by itself."

As discussed in the previous gathering this alludes to, and is a clear indication of, a Jew's day-to-day service of God.

Just as we were commanded to light the menorah in the Holy Temple each day anew, and light it, in Rashi's words, "until the flame goes up by itself," so, too, at the **start** of each day it is customary among Jews – and even small children are taught from the age that they can speak – to begin their day with the words: "I offer thanks before You...for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; I have great faith in You."

This underscores the fact that we are not thanking some person, or God, or an angel who is somewhere in the **heavens**; rather, He is "**before You**" – He is right *here* near each of us.

It is clear, therefore, why we give thanks to Him: He is **in front of us**.

It is also understood why we say, "I have **great** faith" – not merely "faith," but a faith that constantly grows stronger, quantitatively and qualitatively.

With this we **begin** the day, and it affects the **entire** day. For when a "**great** faith" starts the day it will extend to every subsequent detail.

This is a primary tenet in educating **every** Jewish child: When we begin directly with the concept of "offering thanks before God," then afterward – when they drink, or eat, or see something – they immediately thank God, for "their faith is great."

It is a constant faith, growing stronger and stronger, higher and higher, until "it rises by itself," as mentioned before. The child will no longer need to ask his teacher for answers and explanations in matters of faith, for it will become his own "flame," his own soul, and "rise by itself."

Not only does the child's "flame" illuminate the surroundings, but also it "**rises**," going from "strength to strength" until it "beholds God in Zion."

And though one would naturally expect – given our existence in the material world, and – within the material world – in a manner of **exile**, and within exile – in the final days before



## פרשת בהעלותך

Moshiach, even more distant from the time of the Holy Temple — that our faith would weaken; yet, for a Jew, it is just the opposite:

Since he sees that his soul is **complete**, and that the soul has a “**flame**,” and the flame is **ascending** — this inevitably affects him to “rise by himself,” a true ascent.

And a flame of *kedushah* [like the burning bush,] “is not consumed”: it cannot weaken the body's strength. On the contrary, it strengthens one's physical health.

And not only does this not disturb or weaken one's faith in God, the Essence of spirituality, and in His Torah and *mitzvos* — connected, indeed, with the physical, but the ultimate spirituality: **God's Torah** and **God's mitzvos** — as the Alter Rebbe translates the word, *mitzvah*: “connection” — connecting everyone who fulfills a *mitzvah* — men, women and even children — to God.

And when even a small child performs any *mitzvah*, he reminds himself of this, and **no one else** needs to tell him. For he is a Jewish child, taught from the start to know that God is “before him”: he is always together with God.

It is understood, then, why we “offer thanks”: the child experiences true gratitude. And he does so with “**great faith**,” spreading throughout the entire day, and “rising” higher and higher.

