

Restoring My Soul: A Fresh Look at “Modah/Modeh Ani,” *Eat. Pray. Dare.*

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SUMMARY:	In this interactive start your morning activity, we will unpack the Modah/Modeh Ani prayer word by word both in Hebrew and English translations. Using movement and writing, this program will offer you a fresh, renewed ability to engage with this prayer both for your campers and for yourself. All are welcome; you do not need to have any Hebrew language skills to attend! - <i>Submitted by Caroline Rothstein</i>
TOPIC(S):	Prayer, Writing
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Regardless of a participant’s previous knowledge of and experience with the Modah/Modeh Ani prayer and liturgy, they will gain a fresh and expansive understanding of the words and contents of the prayer. Participants will also gain tools for further exploring other prayers and liturgical texts using this session’s modalities.
AUDIENCE:	Any age group – camper or staff; ideal size is 10 to 20 participants.
TIMING:	45 minutes
APPENDICES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modah Ani – ENGLISH (FOR WALL) • Modah Ani - HEBREW WITH VOWELS (FOR WALL) • Modah Ani - HEBREW TRANSLITERATION (FOR WALL) • Modah Ani - HEBREW & TRANSLITERATION (FOR FLOOR) • Modah Ani - HEBREW & ENGLISH (FOR FLOOR) •
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing utensils • 4 x 6 notecards • Tape
SET-UP DETAILS:	<p>The ideal location/room is one with open space and walls, or places to hang things.</p> <p>There should be space to lay things out in a big circle on the floor whereby participants can still move around the space. There will also need to be at least one wall or area where the session materials can be hung or taped to the wall/space in a line/row.</p>

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

- Preparations before beginning:
 - o Hang the Hebrew words of Modah Ani out in order in a row on a wall from right to left.
 - o Hang the Hebrew transliteration of Modah Ani out in order in a row below each corresponding Hebrew block letter word on a wall from right to left.
 - o Hang the English translation of the prayer on a wall below the Hebrew words.
 - o Place the Hebrew words of Modah Ani and the corresponding Hebrew/English translation in a counterclockwise circle on the floor, so it reads right to left like Hebrew.
- Invite participants to find a spot in the circle and each have a writing utensil.
- Welcome participants and share workshop goal and agenda (3 minutes)
 - o Workshop goal: to unpack the Modah/Modeh Ani prayer both in Hebrew and English translations to gain a fresh and renewed ability to engage with this prayer and others.
 - o Agenda:
 - Introduction
 - Read & discuss Modah/Modeh Ani
 - Movement activity
 - Writing activity
 - Debrief
 - Takeaway activity
 - Closing
 - o Guidelines and group agreements for creating a brave and safe(r) space:
 - Use “I” statements
 - Confidentiality
 - Ask clarifying questions
 - Meet risk with risk
 - It’s ok to be raggedy
- Introductions (3 minutes):
 - o Ask participants to share their name, their pronouns if they feel comfortable, and one thing for which they’re grateful today.
- Read & discuss Modah/Modeh Ani (7 minutes)
 - o Ask participants to share what their experience is of this prayer, Modah Ani?
 - o Have a volunteer read the Hebrew (Hebrew and/or transliteration) of Modah Ani that is pinned up on the wall.
 - o Have a volunteer read the English translation pinned to the wall.
 - o Ask if a volunteer wants to translate the prayer from Hebrew on their own.
- Movement Activity (10 minutes)
 - o Ask participants to move around the circle and choose one of the words of Modah Ani that is in a circle on the floor, and then move next to it and create a movement for it.
 - o Ask participants to share their movement with a group person-by-person, counterclockwise in the circle while saying the word out loud if they are able.
 - o Once everyone has shared, begin to “recite” the prayer through movement only going around the circle several times until the group has reached a comfortable flow.

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- Writing Activity (12 minutes)
 - o Ask participants to now take time moving around the entire circle and – with a pen/writing utensil – spend some time with each of the English translations of the various Hebrew words and add their own translations, phrases, ideas, opinions, or thoughts to each word. Perhaps entire memories come to mind. Perhaps single words. Remind participants that this is a time for them to generate their own language.
 - o Ask participants to arrive in front of one word in the circle, and then have participants read/share the words that were added on the papers around the circle.

- Debrief / Putting it all together (7 minutes)
 - o Relook at the prayer on the wall – and what does this all mean?
 - o Ask a volunteer to reread the original English translation on the wall.
 - How different is it from how the prayer has since been deconstructed?
 - How might you translate it differently now?
 - What is this prayer saying in a larger sense, beyond the literal words?
 - o Recap all of the modalities that were used in this session:
 - Gestures/movement.
 - Call/response.
 - Personal translation/writing.
 - Ask participants to consider: What else in Jewish life or Jewish text have you felt distanced from that you could deconstruct again to help find a renewed connection?

- Takeaway Activity (3 minutes)
 - o Ask participants to take a 4 x 6 notecard and now – using all of the deconstructed translations and cognates of each word – create their own translation of Modah Ani to take away with them.

- Closing (2 minutes)
 - o Thank participants and ask them to share a single word about what they learned and/or are taking away.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

- The methods and modalities used in this session can be used for exploring, unpacking, or learning any prayer or piece of liturgical text.
- Utilizing the final debrief question – “What else in Jewish life or Jewish text have you felt distanced from that you could deconstruct again to help find a renewed connection?” – consider what texts or traditions at camp could be renewed or strengthened by using the methods in this session, and then implement the same program inserting that text, prayer, or tradition into the process of deconstruction via movement and generating language.