

**Tefillah Focus Of The Week:**

**אז ישיר**

*Our G-d*

**MEANING:** The simple translation of the prayer

Then Moshe and the Children of Israel chose to sing this song to Hashem, and they said the following: I shall sing to Hashem for He is exalted...G-d is my might and my praise, and He was a salvation for me. **This is my G-d, and I will build Him a sanctuary...**

אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל  
את השירה הזאת לה,  
ויאמרו לאמר, אשירה  
לה' כי גאה גאה... עזי  
וזמרת י-ה, ויהי לי  
לישועה, **זה א-לי**  
**ואנודהו...**

**WORD TO THE WISE:** Meaning within the word

The word שיר does not refer to a melody or tune, which is expressed by voice or a musical instrument. That is referred to by the word "zimrah." The word שיר means the text of a poem, as we find in Shmuel II (22:1) וידבר דוד לה' את דברי 'את דברי' השירה הזאת

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**THEME:**

An essential concept of the prayer

**Our Personal Connection**

The relationship of the Jewish people to Hashem is a personal one. As much as He is "the" King of the Universe, He is "our" King, who is concerned specifically with us.

**INSIGHT:**

Deeper meanings of the theme

**"My" G-d**

So obvious was Hashem's Presence at the Splitting of the Reed Sea, that the Jews could point to it, as it were, and say, זה א-לי "This is my G-d." Rashi (Shemos 15:2) states that a maidservant at the sea saw more than the prophet Yechezkel saw in his heavenly prophecy.

Imagine for a moment the difference between saying "a father" and "my father, or "a child" and "my child." When a father speaks of "my son," the words evoke an entire history of personal connection – the child he held, taught, took to the park, sent to yeshivah, walked to the chuppah. The simple word "my" speaks volumes. To be able to say זה א-לי ונאווהו that Hashem is "my G-d" is a profound statement of personal connection: "Yes, He created and rules the universe, but He and I are very close." This, in fact, is the message conveyed by one of the most pervasive words in tefillah – "Ado-nai – my G-d." Although every mitzvah a person performs strengthens his personal connection with

Hashem, prayer is the preeminent means to forge such a personal relationship, because that is its essence and purpose. Prayer is the act of "standing before Hashem" and focusing heart and mind on His presence (Chiddushei Rebbe Chaim Halevi, Hilchos Tefillah, Chapter 4). As Rabbi Chaskel Levenstein explains, "There should be no other reality at the time of prayer except for Hashem alone."

The Gemara (Berachos 30b) states, "Serve Hashem with awe..." The feeling of awe arises from recognition of G-d as the King, whose absolute rule extends over every aspect of Creation. Yet, another Gemara teaches (Berachos 31a) that one should "approach prayer with a feeling of happiness..." The happiness comes from knowing that this Almighty King, whose absolute rule extends over every aspect of Creation, is also our personal Father in Heaven. He is always there, in every situation, ready to respond the instant His child calls upon Him.

**VISUALIZE:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

**The Siddur Siyum**

A class of 24 five-year-old boys sits at a make-shift dais, each with a finger planted firmly on a line in his brand new siddur. The stiff bindings and clean pages have a special feel. Each boy's heart swells with a sense of accomplishment when he sees his name inscribed on the inside cover of his sefer. The boys have gotten their first siddurim – the culmination of a year of learning to read alef-beis and daven simple tefillos. Now they are reciting the



words of "Ashrei" as everyone watches proudly from the audience.

Each boy rises to recite a line. Invariably, before each one begins, he scans the audience, searching for one particular family. Simultaneously, one family rises from the audience and trains its cameras on the child who is about to recite. When the child is finished, he looks up from his siddur

expectantly and smiles in one direction.

When the ceremony is over and it's time for refreshments, each child plows through the crowd to get to one family, and one alone. They hug and smile and line up for cookies, cake and soda.

Anyone watching this scene would be able to ascertain instantly which child belongs to which family. The connection is unmistakable – their eyes are for each other. That's what it means to belong to each other. And that's what it means for Hashem to be our G-d, and for us to be His people.

**Try This!**

Think of a way in which Hashem has given you a precious personal benefit – perhaps in enabling you to meet and marry your spouse, or to have your children, or to enable you to live in a comfortable home, or to provide you with physical or intellectual gifts. Experience the sense of Hashem's care for you, and think of it when you say זה א-לי.

**Did You Know**

**Stand Up**

The custom of most communities is to stand for Vayevarech Dovid, Shiras HaYam and Yishtabach. (Rama, Siman 51:7; Aruch HaShulchan, Siman 51:8)