

פרשת בשלח contains many important topics, with the highlight being שירת הים, beginning with the familiar words we recite daily (15:1): אָז יֵשִׁיר מֹשֶׁה. The מפרשים are struck by the fact that משה רבינו starts this שירה with the word אז. The מדרש רבה (23:3), as quoted by the בית הלוי, notes: אמר משה. באז חטאתי שאמרתי וימאז באתי אל פרעה לדבר בשמך הרע לעם הזה, באז אני אומר שירה. This cryptic מדרש demands elucidation. The literal translation is, I, משה, did an עֲבִירָה with the word אז when I said (5:23), וימאז באתי אל פרעה לדבר בשמך הרע לעם הזה, which is at the very end of פרשת שמות. Now when I say שירה, I use the same word again, אז. The question arises: How does using אז here rectify the previous אז? And what did משה רבינו do wrong? רש"י and other מפרשים explain that משה's intent was to defend ישראל, כלל, questioning why their situation worsened after Hashem promised redemption. So his טענה was against הקדוש ברוך הוא, but his כוונה was as a defense of בני ישראל, asking Hashem to please help בני ישראל. The obvious answer to that question is that we can't question Hashem's judgment as to how he sends a ישועה, and therefore, on his level, it was considered that משה רבינו did an עֲבִירָה, and the מדרש is saying that somehow, the אז that משה said in אָז יֵשִׁיר was to rectify the אז he said in פרשת שמות. What's the connection between these two uses of אז?

The בית הלוי explains that when someone experiences צר and then is saved by Hashem, he should respond with give שבח and הודאה to Hashem for the טובה of getting him out of his situation of צר. There are two perspectives of his praise of Hashem. If the עיקר of his שמחה is because Hashem saved him, his שמחה would not be any more than if he never got into trouble in the first place. (Now, we can always say in our באלעבאטיש way, that having never been in trouble, he wouldn't know what to be thanking Hashem for. Human nature tends to take daily miracles, like breathing or walking, for granted, and we only truly appreciate them when they are lost.) However, the שמחה at סוף was different. The עיקר שמחה of משה רבינו and כלל ישראל wasn't just that הקדוש ברוך הוא saved them from the מצרים. Their primary joy was the realization that through their suffering and redemption, they became the כלי חפץ by which Hashem's name was glorified in the world. The כבוד of הקדוש ברוך הוא was realized through their experiences, including the suffering of שיעבוד מצרים and the subsequent redemption. This is reflected in the שירה: אֶשְׁיֶרֶה לְה' כִּי גָאָה גָאָה: שירה. They sang not just for the הצלה, but also for the שיעבוד which came before. The connection is clear: משה previously was complaining about the כובד השיעבוד, now he sang שירה to explain that when he אז then, it was not a complaint, rather, he was thanking Hashem that through the modality of שיעבוד מצרים and גאולת מצרים we became the means by which Hashem's name received greatness in this world. The בית הלוי also explains a phrase we recite in הלל: אֲדָרְךָ כִּי עֲנִיתָנִי. While commonly understood as "Thank You for answering me," actually refers to suffering. אֲדָרְךָ כִּי עֲנִיתָנִי - Hashem, I am praising you for my עינוי, for the suffering that I had, Why? - because I am giving you thanks both on the עינוי which came before, and the ישועה which came afterwards, through which we had the great זכות to be מקדש the name of ברבים הוא הקדוש ברוך הוא.

Are we not such a מדרגה? I don't know about you, but I am not. It takes a tremendous amount of בטחון, and courage to say "Thank you Hashem for all of this pain. I don't know why I have to be going through all of this, and yet there's a reason for it." Rarely do we have the opportunity to appreciate what the purpose of it was, in our own limited vision and lifetime, but we will one day understand that all of it was for good. Everything Hashem does is for good, and we just simply have to have absolute אמונה that that is the truth. Good Shabbos!

