

## **Displaying the precious jewel (*Ha'azinu/Yom Kippur*)**

Among the many special customs of Yom Kippur relates to the manner in which we recite '*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto LeOlam VaEd*' (Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever), and following the proclamation of the first line of the *Shema*, and despite our general custom to recite this line quietly, we recite it out loud (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 619:2).

To explain the reason for this custom, we must turn to the *Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 2:36)* where we are taught that, '*when Moshe ascended on high to receive the Torah, he heard the Ministering Angels saying to the Holy One, Blessed be He: 'Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto LeOlam VaEd', and he then brought this formula of praise down to Bnei Yisrael.*'

The *Midrash* then asks: '*So why do we not recite this formula of praise out loud?*' It answers by quoting a parable taught by Rabbi Assi: '*To what is the quiet recitation of this verse comparable? To someone who stole a piece of jewelry from inside the king's palace. When he gave it to his wife, he said to her: "Don't wear this piece of jewelry in public! Only wear it when you are inside the house."*'

There is something rather beautiful about this image, whereby '*Baruch Shem...*' is like a precious jewel that we received from the Ministering Angels, but one that we normally feel we cannot openly display.

The *Midrash* then adds, '*Given this, on Yom Kippur, when the Jewish nation is spiritually pure like the Ministering Angels, we say this verse out loud.*'

In other words, on this special day of the year, when our behaviour is a little closer to that of the angels, and when we are more conscious of God's presence and kingship, we are given permission to bring this precious phrase out into the open.

This itself is of significance.

Yet what is even more significant is the fact that Rashi makes direct reference to this expression in his commentary to *Parshat Ha'azinu*.

We are taught (*Devarim 32:3*): '*Ki Shem Hashem Ekra Havu Godel L'Elokeinu*' (As I call out the Name of the Lord, come praise the greatness of our God), to which Rashi responds by quoting the *Gemara (Ta'anit 16b)*, stating that instead of responding '*Amen*' to a bracha, the practice in the Temple was to respond to a bracha with '*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto LeOlam VaEd*'.

But why was there this difference? Why was '*Amen*' the response to a blessing outside the Temple, while '*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto LeOlam VaEd*' was the response inside the Temple?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (see *Kol Ram* on *Devarim* 32:3) offers a beautiful explanation. ‘*Amen*’ has two dimensions. It is both an affirmation that what has just been said is true, and a prayer that the declaration will be realised.

But when we were in the *Beit HaMikdash*, there was no need to affirm the truth of God’s presence, because the Temple itself was a place of *Gilui Shechinah*, meaning, it was where God’s presence was palpable.

At the same time, the service of the Kohanim already expressed our hopes and prayers that these declarations would be realised.

Consequently, the response to a blessing in the Beit HaMikdash was ‘*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto LeOlam VaEd*’.

This now brings us back to Yom Kippur, when we immerse ourselves in the holiness of the day and feel as if we are experiencing some of that awareness of the *Shechinah* which once filled the Beit HaMikdash.

And so, on Yom Kippur, we say ‘*Baruch Shem...*’ out loud, and by doing so, we take that precious jewel, which we normally keep hidden, and allow ourselves - just for this one day - to hold it up and proclaim it publicly.

There are times when God’s presence can feel hidden, while there are times when we are able to sense it more clearly.

Yom Kippur is when God is ‘close by’ (see *Yeshaya* 55:6), and so, in recognition of God’s presence and kingship, we say ‘*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto LeOlam VaEd*’ out loud on Yom Kippur.

*Shabbat Shalom & Gmar Chatima Tova!*

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