

In addition, in response to the "Three Days of Rage" being initiated by our enemies, let us create "Three Days of Tefilah" where we increase our *kavanah*, especially when we recite the *berachot* of *ve-li-Yerushalayim Ircha* and *Retzei*.

May we merit the fulfillment of the prophetic vision of Zechariya haNavi:

כֹּה אָמַר ה' שְׁבִתִי אֶל צִיּוֹן וְשִׁכְנִתִּי בְּתוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם וְנִקְרָאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר הַאֱמֻת וְהָרַ' צְ-בָאוֹת הָרַ  
הַקֹּדֶשׁ כֹּה אָמַר ה' צְ-בָאוֹת עַד יָשׁוּבוּ זְקֵנִים וְזִקְנוֹת בְּרַחְבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאִישׁ מִשְׁעֲנֵתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ מֵרֵב יָמִים  
וּבְרַחְבוֹת הָעִיר יִמְלְאוּ יְלָדִים וְיִלְדוֹת מִשְׁחָקִים בְּרַחְבֹּתֶיהָ

## The Ladder, Chanuka, and Israeli Independence

Harav Yosef Carmel

Are the miracles of Chanuka relevant in our generation? The answer is: more than ever. Let us start with this week's parasha. Yosef's sale into slavery, taking him from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt, could be described as the beginning of a period of exile – a long, painful path stemming from a loss of independence.

The Rambam (Chanuka 3:1) explains that the thanks we offer Hashem about the events of Chanuka are on two successes: 1. The undoing of the decrees that prevented our nation's full Torah observance and a life of purity and sanctity. 2. The return of autonomous rule to Am Yisrael. As the Rambam famously ends off: "Kingdom returned to Israel for more than 200 years, until the second destruction."

If we look back, we will see that our nation has enjoyed only very short periods of political independence in our history. Vayikra Rabba (Emor 29:2) deals with this sad phenomenon at length. Rav Nachman connected between the pasuk "You, my servant Yaakov, do not fear" (Yirmiya 30:10) and "He dreamed, and indeed there was a ladder that was resting on the ground" (Bereishit 28:12). Rav Shmuel bar Nachman said that the angels going up and down on the ladder were the officers of the nations of the world. Yaakov saw the officer of Bavel climb seventy rungs and that of Persia climb 52 (corresponding to the number of years they ruled over Israel. Greece's officer climbed 180 rungs (apparently the time between Alexander the Great and the Hasmonean victory). The officer of Edom (which Chazal equated with Rome) went up, and it was not clear when he stopped, as the exile this prompted is the longest of all. This sight caused Yaakov to fear, but Hashem said "You, my servant Yaakov, do not fear." Hashem assured him that even if Edom will go so high as to sit next to Me, "If he will rise up like an eagle and between stars place his nest, from there I will lower him" (Ovadia 1:4). Then Yaakov was fearful – if these nations fall, then maybe the nation that comes from me will also fall. Hashem assured him that if he will go up, he will never come down. Yaakov did not believe and did not go up. Hashem told him that had he gone up, there would be no exile, but since he did not believe and go up, his children would be subjugated to exile and oppression, physically and financially, by four kingdoms. Then Yaakov was afraid that this would never cease (i.e., his children would never have national independence). Hashem responded: "You, my servant Yaakov, do not fear ... I will save you from a distant place and return your children from the land of their bondage, and Yaakov will return and have quiet and be tranquil without fear" (Yirmiya 30:10).

In our generations, we have, baruch Hashem, seen a broad and significant ingathering of the exiles. We have merited having independence for already more than 70 years. We have seen an unparalleled flourishing of Torah study. Let us thank Hashem for these too during this upcoming holiday of Chanuka. Let us pray that we will soon merit the continuation of the promise, "Yaakov will return and have quiet and be tranquil without fear," both physically and spiritually.



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