

Good Shabbos Everyone . In our weekly portion Vayigash, the Torah tells us that *"All the people of the house of Yakov who came to Mitzraim - Egypt were seventy."* (Bereishis - Genesis 46:27) The Torah then goes on to list the people who came down to Mitzraim - Egypt. However, the Torah only lists 69 people. Why then does the verse say that 70 members of the house of Yakov Avinu (our patriarch) descended into Mitzraim?

Some commentators count Yocheved, who was born at the entrance of Mitzraim, as the 70th descendant. (Rashi and the Midrash cited by Stone Chumash, p.261) Other commentators tell us that Yakov Avinu himself is counted among the 70.

A third interpretation is perhaps the most inspiring: The 70th member of the house of Yakov Avinu was the shechina - the divine presence of Hashem. When the Bnai Yisroel - the children of Yisroel went down into Mitzraim, the holy shechina descended with them. (Ibid)

The lessons of the Torah are eternal. The Egyptian Exile was the first of a series of Exiles which the Jews have experienced over the millennium. It is possible to say that the Egyptian Exile is the paradigm of all other Exiles. Therefore the Torah is teaching us that just as the shechina accompanied the Bnai Yisroel in the Egyptian exile, so too does the shechina - the divine presence of Hashem accompany us in our current exile.

Even though Jews may go through difficult times in exile, Hashem is always with us, as the Prophet tells us: *"But fear not, O Yakov My servant, neither be dismayed, O Yisroel, because I shall redeem you from afar, and your children from the land of their captivity; and Yakov will again be quiet and at ease and none shall make him afraid."* (Jeremiah 46:27:28)

The following is truly one of the most amazing stories ever told. It shows that wherever a Jew is in exile, and no matter how far a Jew is away from Torah, the shechina - the divine presence of Hashem is always with a Jew.

David (his real name) grew up in a totally secular American Jewish family. As a young boy and later a teenager, Dave had little idea of what it meant to be a Jew. All of this changed however, when Dave decided to take a tour of Europe and Israel with some friends.

When the group eventually made their way to the Eretz Yisroel, Dave was immediately struck by the strong emotional pull that he had for the Holy Land, even though Dave had never had any real connection with Judaism or the Torah. Dave found his way to the holy city of Jerusalem, where the spiritual draw is the most powerful.

While in Jerusalem, Dave was inspired to sit in on some classes at a Yeshiva - a school of Torah learning for Jewish men. Dave enjoyed his learning very much and decided to stay in Eretz Yisroel after his friends returned home to the states. Little by little, Dave took upon himself more and more mitzvahs such as tefillin, kosher eating, and Shabbos.

By the end of a year, Dave's parents in Florida were begging for Dave to return home. Dave wanted to honor his parents, but he was concerned about keeping up with his observance in a secular environment. In the end, Dave's parents were adamant that Dave return home. Finally, against his better judgment, Dave gave-in and returned home.

At first, Dave was able to keep up with his mitzvah observance in Florida. It was difficult, but he was still able to manage with kosher food and Shabbos. He was forced to pray alone, however, because in his town, there were not ten for a minyan (traditional quorum required for communal prayers.)

Unfortunately though, the strain became very difficult on Dave. He was the only one who kept kosher in the home; this made it hard to keep separate dishes. He was the only one who kept Shabbos at home; this made it hard to feel the Shabbos spirit with televisions and phone calls blaring. Prayer also became difficult, praying alone was arduous on Dave.

Little by little, Dave lost the vestiges of his Torah observance. Kosher went out the window along with Tefillin and the yarmulke. One mitzvah that Dave did hold onto was Shabbos. Eventually, however, even Shabbos was to fall...

One Friday night, Dave was sitting at home trying desperately to feel the light of the holy Shabbos. There were no Shabbos candles, kiddush wine, chalah, songs or words of Torah. Dave felt alone in the spiritual backwaters of his parents' Florida home. Dave was about to give up on Shabbos and Torah observance altogether.

Thinking for awhile, Dave turned his eyes upwards towards heaven and said "G-d, Show me a sign that you are there." Dave waited and waited, but he did not see a sign. That was it, he was giving up. He was finished with G-d and with Torah.

He reached over and turned on the television. Just as the tube turned on, there was a view of a person's mouth saying "Shabbat Shalom Dave!" Dave sat in front of the television and was flabbergasted. He could not believe his ears. He nearly fainted. He stepped back away from the television set.

Needless to say, this was his sign. Dave immediately began his return to mitzvah observance and Boruch Hashem (Thank G-d) today he is leading a Torah true lifestyle!

Now, for the rest of the story... When Dave turned on the television, he joined the "David Letterman Show" (a variety show with guest stars) already in progress. On that particular night, there was a guest on the show who told the story of her travels around the world.

The host of the show David "Dave" Letterman asked his guest what the best part of the trip was. The guest said that her trip to Jerusalem was most impressive. The guest said that it was amazing how everyone in Jerusalem on Friday afternoon wished each other "Shabbat Shalom." *"These people did not even know me, yet they were so warm, you would have loved it... Shabbat Shalom Dave."* **Good Shabbos Everyone.**