

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 46:27) The Torah then goes on to list the people who came down to Mitzraim. 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 holy Shechina escorts us all in our current exile, the following true inspirational story illustrates this concept.

A woman from the Chabad-Lubavitch Community in Brooklyn was once pulled over by a N.Y.C. traffic cop for some traffic violation. Standing outside her open car window and watching her search for her license and registration papers, the police officer caught sight of a picture of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in her open purse.

"Excuse me, maam," he asked, "are you one of the followers of this Rabbi?" "Yes," she replied. "Well, in that case I'm not giving you a ticket." He closed his ticket book and continued, "Do you know why? Because this Rabbi," he pointed to the picture she was now holding in her hand, "Did a very big miracle for me."

"Well," said the grateful woman, "since you aren't giving me the ticket, I have time to hear the story." The policeman smiled and said, "It's my favorite story, but I haven't told it to many Jewish people, in fact I think that you are the first."

The cars were whizzing by behind him and he had to raise his voice slightly. "The story goes like this: I used to be in the police escort that once a week escorted the Rabbi to the Montefiore Cemetery (where the Rebbe's father-in-law and predecessor, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, is interred). I got to know some of the young men who accompanied the Rebbe, and I learned a lot of things. They are very friendly people, which you probably already know, and we talked a lot while the Rabbi was inside praying.

"Well, one day I saw that all the fellows there were really talking excitedly to each other so I asked them what happened. So they told me that the Rabbi has blessed a lot of people, but today one of his blessings seemed to have accomplished something special. I didn't even ask what was the miracle that they were talking about, I just asked them if the Rabbi helps non-Jews also. "Sure," they said, "The Rebbe helps anyone who asks. Why? Do you need something?" they asked me.

So I told him, this young fellow, that me and my wife had been married nine years with no children, and a week ago the doctors told us that we had no chance. We had spent a lot of money on treatments, seen all sorts of big professors, we were running around like crazy for the last six or seven years, and now they told us that they tried everything and there is no chance. You can't imagine how broken we were. My wife cried all the time and I started crying myself.

"So this young man tells me, 'Listen, the next time that you escort the Rebbe to the cemetery stand near the door of his car and when he gets out ask him for a blessing.' So that is just what I did.

The next time I was in the escort I stood by his door and when he got out I said to him: 'Excuse me, Rabbi, do you only bless Jewish people or non-Jews too?' "So the Rabbi looked at me like a good friend, it was really amazing, and said that he tries to help anyone he can. So I told him what the doctors said, and he said I should write down on a piece of paper my name and my father's name together with my wife's and her father's names and that he would pray for us.

So I did it, my hands were shaking so much I almost couldn't write, but I did it and you know what? My wife became pregnant and nine months later she gave birth to a baby boy! The doctors went crazy, they couldn't figure it out, and when I told them that it was all the Rabbi's blessing they just scratched their heads and -- Wow! I felt like the champion of the world! "But here comes the good part. Do you know what we called him? What name we gave our baby boy? Just guess! We called him Mendel after the Rabbi. At first my wife didn't like the name because its not an American name, but I said, No! We're calling him Mendel! Each time we say his name we'll remember that if it weren't for the Rabbi this boy would not be here.

"But when our parents heard the name they really objected. They said, 'With a name like that, all the kids will think he's a Jew or something and they will call him names and be cruel to him. Why make the kid suffer for no reason?' 'That's just what I want,' I said to them. 'When he comes home and says that the other kids called him names and beat him up because he has a Jewish name, I'll tell him that I want him to learn from those other kids how not to behave. They hate the Jews for no reason, but you should love the Jews, you should help the Jews. You just tell them that without that Jewish Rabbi called Mendel you wouldn't be here at all, and then maybe they'll start thinking differently too!' **Good Shabbos Everyone**

In memory of Shusha Malka bas R' Avrohom ob'm

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