



COMING & GOING

The sidra begins with the word BO, which literally means "Come" (Sh'mot 10:1). It seems to have the same meaning as "Go", which is how most translators understand it.

The Baal HaTurim thinks it is an assurance by God that He will be with the Israelite leaders if they approach Pharaoh for leave for the Israelites to depart. He is telling the Israelites not to be too scared to approach Pharaoh since He will be with them wherever they are.

There is a midrashic suggestion that Moshe and Aharon had special permission to enter the royal throne room whenever they desired, but this hardly fits in with the more likely impression the narrative gives that Pharaoh was a harsh ruler and not given to making friendly gestures.

Nor does it fit in with the view of Rashi, who says the leaders' purpose in appearing before Pharaoh was to warn him.

TURNING ON THE LIGHTS

Despite the plague of darkness which came upon Egypt, the Israelites had light in their dwellings (Sh'mot 10:21-23).

The statement is meant literally but throughout history there has also been a metaphorical dimension. The world was often dark and gloomy and it tried to drag the Jews into the general bleakness.

Churchill, on the other hand, said that some people liked Jews and some didn't, but no-one could ignore the Jews or deny that they had given intellectual and spiritual light to mankind.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l granted that many Jewish ideas were part of general culture but Jews remained special because no-one else took the great ideas as seriously as Judaism did. **OZ**