



## THE ROYAL EXAMPLE

The royal dignity seems to be at stake.

How can the Torah say of the king of Egypt, "And he harnessed his chariot, and he took his people with him" (Sh'mot 14:6)? Kings don't harness their own chariots. For such things they have servants.

Maybe Ibn Ezra is right that it is like the verse, "Sh'lomo built the house and finished it" (Melachim Alef 6:14). Others did the menial work but the king received the credit.

The Midrashic sages however use a different approach. The Egyptians, they said, had had more than enough. The Israelites had been a source of trouble for so long and the Egyptian people had suffered so much because of them, even to the extent of losing their first-borns in a plague imposed by the Israelite God, that they wanted nothing more to do with Israel. It went so far as to lead to a mutiny in the palace.

Pharaoh told his servants to harness his chariot but they refused. Maybe he said, using Alice in Wonderland terms, "Off with their heads!" Maybe

they eventually gave in and obeyed the royal master.

The king was so determined to pursue the Israelites that he forced his servants' hands and declared that he would harness his own chariot if he had to. Eventually the people as a whole relented and gave the king the support he wanted.

There is another case in the sidra of a leader tasking personal steps to carry out a policy: Sh'mot 13:19, which says, "And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him".

The sages ask why the Children of Israel did not carry out this pious act on Moshe's behalf.

Maybe the people were so concerned with getting out of Egypt and taking some assets with them that they had no time for spiritual duties.

Another possibility is that the mitzva of tending to Yosef's remains was so important to Moses that he had to do it himself and didn't even ask for help. **OZ**