

This week's Torah portion is called Bo, which means "come." However, most translations of the first line of the portion read something like this:

"Adonai said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh for I have hardened his heart... "(Ex. 10:1) However, the Hebrew reads: *Bo el Par'oh*, which literally means, "Come to Pharaoh." Effectively, God is commanding Moses to go to Pharaoh, but the Hebrew deliberately uses the word for "come". Why?

Perhaps the word speaks to Moses' reluctance to lead, so the "come" implies "come—**with** me." This may be meant to allay Moses' fear.

Or maybe "come—**to** me" indicating that God is already there, inside of Pharaoh. This understanding is based on our mystical text, the Zohar. It teaches that God is hardening Pharaoh's heart from within; and ultimately that hardening of Pharaoh's heart helps Moses succeed in his mission.

Which is the correct interpretation?

Maybe both.

In this short command to Moses, we learn a message about conquering our fears, and facing challenges that seem to be insurmountable. We need to remember that we are not launching out there on our own, but that, if we allow it, God will come with us when we come with God. Once we get there and confront our fears, we will recognise that God is there too—God is *within* the challenge; if we can come 'to God' then God will help us.

We are taught that we should imitate God's ways. So let us learn from God here: God comforts Moses' fears; God takes him by the hand and says, 'we are partners here. I'll be with you and we will do this together.'

Rabbi Chayim of Tszanz used to tell this parable: A man, wandering lost in the forest for several days, finally encountered another. He called out: Brother, show me the way out of this forest!

The man replied: Brother, I too am lost. I can only tell you this: the ways I have tried lead nowhere; they have only led me astray. Take my hand and let us search for the way together. Rabbi Chayim would add: So it is with us. When we go our separate ways, we may go astray; let us join hands and look for the way together.

Whenever we confront a difficult situation—a new endeavour, a health challenge, a loss—we need to reach out to others to help us through it. And it is incumbent on the rest of the community to continually send the message, "Come with me." Then, together, we will support each other, help each other, comfort each other, and together we can build a strong, open, supportive community.