

Parsha Points to Ponder

by Rabbi Dov Lipman

VA'EIRA

① Why does G-D say I WILL HARDEN PAR'O'S HEART AND I WILL INCREASE MY SIGNS AND WONDERS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT (7:3), and then repeat Himself in the very next verse saying, AND PAR'O WON'T LISTEN TO YOU AND I WILL PUT MY HAND UPON EGYPT (7:4)?

② Why does the Torah relate that PAR'O SAW THAT THERE WAS RELIEF (8:11) leading to the hardening of his heart specifically following the plague of frogs, but not provide that explanation for his heart hardening following any of the other plagues?

③ Why did Pa'ro declare that G-D IS THE RIGHTEOUS ONE (9:27) specially following the plague of hail, and not after any of the other plagues?

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The suggested answers are elsewhere

Ponder the questions first, then see further

Parsha Points to Ponder Suggested answers

① The Or HaChayim teaches that the words AND PAR'O WON'T LISTEN TO YOU in the second verse refer to Par'o telling Moshe that he refuses to hear from him again, which happens after G-D has hardened Par'o's heart through the first nine plagues (see 10:28). G-D then continues and explains that after that declaration from Par'o, G-D will smite Egypt with the final plague - the death of the firstborn - which G-D performed Himself - MY HAND - and not via an angel.

② The Kli Yakar explains that when all the other plagues ended they completely disappeared so it made sense that Par'o immediately went back to his old ways refusing to free the Jews. But after the plague of frogs there were piles of smelly frogs in the streets of Egypt (see 8:10), so it didn't make sense for Par'o to forget the plague and continue to persecute the Jews. Therefore, the Torah had to explain why Par'o returned to this behavior despite the remnant of the plague. The word usually translated as RELIEF is REVACHA which can also mean WIDE. Pa'ro noticed the smelly frogs but SAW THAT IT WAS WIDE - that Egypt was a wide-open land with lots of space, and the smell would not have much of a negative impact. That empowered him to harden his heart and refuse to let the Jews go because he was no longer suffering from the plague.

③ Da'at Zakainim MiBaalei HaTosfot answer that before the plague of hail, G-D had Moshe instruct Par'o to bring in his flocks and other things from the field (see 9:19) to protect them from being hurt by the hail, and Par'o did not heed this warning and left his flocks and other materials out. Thus he declared that G-D was RIGHTEOUS, acknowledging that they were wrong to ignore G-D's caring warning.