

Reading With a Missing Comma

Let's talk about something really small. A comma is pretty small, but there is a punctuation which is much smaller, smaller even than a period – a comma that isn't there. There is a comma which is present in some Hagadahs and seems to be missing in others. One of the well-known lines of the Hagadah (and which line in the Hagadah is not famous?) in the paragraph preceding V'hi She'amda reads:

**"ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל, ברוך הוא, שהקדוש ברוך הוא חישב את הקץ (,) לעשות
כמה שאמר לאברהם אבינו.."**

"Blessed is He Who keeps His promise to Israel, Blessed is He, for the Holy One Blessed is He, calculated the end to do as He said to Avraham Avinu... "

Many Hagados have a comma between the words *הקץ* ("the end") and *לעשות* ("to do"). Accordingly the line is stating that G-d calculated the "end" of enslavement in Egypt, so that at that time he would do what he had promised Avraham Avinu.

But many other Hagados, including the Arizal, the Maharal and the Chabad Hagadah, don't have a comma there, which makes the sentence read that Hashem "calculated the end to do, as he promised to Avraham.." What does "end to do" mean?

As I was looking around, I found in the edition of R. Yaakov Emden's Siddur, that the text contains the comma, but the commentary, written by R. Shlomo Kluger (who lived about 150-200 years ago), contains the following explanation: Hashem calculated the end of the enslavement in such a way as to make the enslavement shorter. Meaning, that instead of calculating the promised 400 years as starting when the Jews entered Egypt, Hashem started the clock ticking from when Hashem spoke to Avraham in Parshas Lech L'cha or from the birth of Yitzchak. And, *לעשות* ("to do") here, means "to make it good."

In other words, leaving out the comma turns this into a declaration that Hashem did some creative accounting of the years to make it better for us.



Pesach – First Day

The Previous Rebbe, in a Maamar published for Pesach 1948, expands on this reading without the comma:

He questions another famous line in the Hagadah where the other Sages in the Mishna follow up Ben Zoma's teaching that the going out of Egypt needs to be mentioned by day and by night. The Sages say, "in this world and in the days of Moshiach." Why would there be a need to remember the redemption from Egypt in the times of Moshiach? During all of history until the coming of Moshiach there is a reason to remember the going out of Egypt, but why would we need to remember Egypt after we have the much greater miracles of Moshiach taking us out of this Golus?

Actually, he explains, there are two benefits to remembering the going out of Egypt during present times:

The shorter (and second reason) the Rebbe gives is that the memory of Yitzias Mitzraim helps us maintain our hope and trust in Hashem that he will take us out of this Golus. Knowing that it has happened in the past makes the coming redemption that much more real than a promise of something which has never ever happened before.

The first reason is a little more complicated, but very powerful: As we have said countless times, Hashem created the world because He desires a dwelling place in the lowest world. This is to be achieved by the service of Hashem by us, denizens of this lowest world. This service on our part to achieve G-d's desire, gives Him immense pleasure, so much so, that He could conceivably keep Galus going forever and never send Moshiach because he derives so much pleasure from our devotion to His service in the face of all the challenges and obstacles placed in our way by Galus.

I recently heard a story of the second and third Belzer Rebbes, R. Yehoshua, and R. Yissachar Dov, who were father and son. On one occasion they were in Vienna. On Friday night after the Shabbos meal, R. Yissachar Dov went to visit his father. As he was walking to his father's hotel room, he heard the familiar sound of Torah learning, which seemed very out of place in a Viennese hotel. He saw that it was



coming from a hotel room which had the door slightly ajar. Curious, he pushed the door a little more open and saw what appeared to be an Austrian soldier standing with a large Gemara in his hands, deep in study. R. Yissachar Dov remained rooted to the spot looking at this unusual sight. Eventually the man noticed him. R. Yissachar Dov apologized for intruding and explained his bewilderment at this strange sight. The soldier told him that he was in fact a soldier in the Austrian army. He had worked out an arrangement with his superior that he would take on additional tasks during the week and in exchange he would be free from duty on Shabbos. He was so thankful to be able to keep Shabbos that he resolved to spend every Shabbos standing and learning Torah. And that is what he does each week; he works much harder than the other hard-working soldiers all week, and then, on Shabbos, he stands and learns Torah until he drops from exhaustion. R. Yissachar Dov apologized again and continued on his way. When he came to his father's room, he shared this unusual encounter. R. Yehoshua thought a bit and said, "Maybe it is because of Jews such as this that Moshiach's coming is delayed." Seeing R. Yissachar Dov's surprise at such a statement he explained, "Hashem has tremendous pleasure from the devotion shown by people such as this soldier. So much pleasure, that He might even delay Moshiach's coming, because once Moshiach comes this kind of pleasure coming from selfless devotion despite enormous hardships, will simply no longer exist."

And, this is the (first reason) why we remember Yitzias Mitzrayim in Golus. We thank and praise Hashem for calculating and setting a fixed time to end the Galus, and then sticking to that schedule. Hashem forwent that immense pleasure from the service of Yidden in Galus and took us out of enslavement from Egypt right on schedule. He "calculated the end" and then He actually "did it!" Knowing and remembering what happened in the past enables us to know about our present Galus. Although Galus can Chas v'Shalom go on forever, giving Hashem immense pleasure for eternity, instead Hashem has calculated and determined a fixed and calculable end to Galus. This knowledge empowers us to maintain strong confidence and trust in Hashem that Galus will end and Moshiach will come.



All that is stated in the comma that isn't. Without the comma, "calculated the end" and "to do" go together as if to be read "to do the end at the time He had calculated."

This is particularly relevant in the crazy times in which we find ourselves now. Someone wrote to me, asking why Hashem is so angry with the world? What a misreading of the tea leaves. Hashem loves us and delights in us. And, when we show our love and devotion to Him by continuing to serve Him, even in times where it appears to some that He is acting angrily to us, or that He has no use for our communal prayer and our institutions of Torah learning, our Torah classes, our celebrating in other people's Simchas and comforting them in their loss, we give Him incredible pleasure; a pleasure which He cannot otherwise have, as it were. But, not to fear. Despite the great pleasure, Hashem has calculated the end, and as we know from the past, He won't let Galus endure for a second more than it is supposed to. And at that moment we will be able to look back at all the craziness, the sickness and the lives lost, and we will realize that we understood it all wrongly. Like a baby being born, being squeezed from all sides and being forced out of the only home it has ever known, down a narrow birth canal to parts unknown, who comes to realize this is not an end but a beginning. So, too, we will look back and say, Thank you, Hashem, for carrying out Your plan of Galus, and then when the time came, bringing Moshiach immediately!

And, oh, what does the Previous Rebbe answer as to why we will continue to remember Yitzias Mitzraim even after Moshiach comes? Because it is all one long continuum. It is not as if they are two separate events and after the second redemption the first is no longer worth mentioning. Rather, from the day we left Egypt we have been in an ongoing state of going out of Golus, steadily been moving forward towards the coming of Moshiach, and soon Yetzias Mitzraim will culminate with the ending forever even the possibility of Golus, as will be the case with the final Geulah with Moshiach NOW.

