

וַיְרָא

Vayyera

(and came)

B'reshit [Genesis] 18:1-22:24

Laughter or Mocking

B'reshit (Genesis) 21:9

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Avraham, mocking.

There seems to be a play on words here in this verse when it is compared to verse six. Let us compare these verses to see this play on words.

Verse 6

And Sarah said, "Elohim has made me to laugh. Every one that hears will laugh with me."	וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צָחַק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים כָּל הַשְּׁמֹעַ יִצְחַק לִי
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Verse 9

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking.	וַתִּרְאֶה שָׂרָה אֶת בְּנוֹ הַגֵּר הַמִּצְרַיִת אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְאַבְרָהָם מִצְחָק
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One of the words that has grabbed our attention in these passages is the word צחַק (tzachaq), which means "to laugh." This is the root word of יִצְחָק (Yitzchaq's) name. He was named this because of the response of his mother Sarah when she heard that she would have a child in her old age: she laughed (see B'reshit 18:12).

In verse six we see that Sarah says that those who hear that she has had a child in her old age will laugh with her. We see this in the last two words in verse six - יִצְחַק לִי. Here we see that one is laughing with her in this matter. However, in verse nine we see something altogether different. In verse nine we have מִצְחָק – m'tzacheq, which means "to make fun of" or "to make sport, to mock." This form of the word is in the "piel" form. In verse six we find the imperfect qal stem used meaning that the action of laughing with her is incomplete. In this case it is incomplete because of the future tense of the verb. In verse nine we find the piel stem which is used to express an intensive type of action. In this case Ishmael laughed at or rather mocked Yitzchaq.

Are there any other clues in these verses that will deepen our understanding of the difference between the two usages of this word? Yes; in verse six we find a very revealing clue. We find this word in the Hebrew text, הַשְׁמִיעַ – ha-sho-me-a, which is from the root word שָׁמַע – “shema,” which means “to hear and obey,” “or to listen to and pay attention to.”

What we find in these two verses then is a very distinct contrast between those who follow YHWH and those who follow the way of Babylon. Those who follow YHWH will be filled with the laughter of His joy made full; and those who follow the way of Babylon can only mock and make fun of that which they do not understand.

It is those who שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל – “sh’ma Yisrael,” that will be filled with the blessings and laughter of being a part of His eternal family. When we learn to listen to His Voice and then respond to His Voice in loving obedience, then we can laugh along with Sarah. However, if one is not willing to shema YHWH, then the only thing left to him is to mock His people along with Ishmael.

It is interesting to note that the word צָחַק only appears thirteen times in the Tanak and only once outside of the Torah. Of those twelve times that it appears in the Torah, all of them are in the book of B’reshit except one. We want to carefully and prayerfully consider these two occurrences that are outside of the book of B’reshit, as they can be quite instructive for us in this matter of understanding the difference between being a mocker or being filled with His joy and laughter.

Shemot (Exodus) 32:6

And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

We find this verse in the account of Israel sinning with the golden calf which they had made and sinned before YHWH. The portion underlined in the above verse is the Hebrew word לְצַחֵק – l’tzacheq, which is in the piel form, which means “to mock” as we saw above when Ishmael was mocking Yitzchaq.

In this passage it was a portion of the people of Israel who were mocking, laughing and doing things that were not of His Spirit; nor did they shema (listen and obey His Voice). Rather, what these people were doing was following the lusts of their own hearts. This is the essence of living in Babylon. Even though these people had made the effort to come out of Babylon physically; i.e., they had exited Egypt and the physical bondage of slavery under the leadership of Moshe, what they had not done is to come out of Babylon in their thinking and in their hearts. Before one can successfully get out of Babylon physically, one must come out of Babylon in his thinking. In this case, what we learn is that the fruit of one’s life is a true indication of one’s status towards Babylon.

The mocking that these people were involved in doing was towards YHWH Himself first, and second towards His people. They were pretending to worship YHWH in calling the calf made of gold “YHWH,” and then doing things that were unacceptable in His eyes. This is a sure path to death as we see as a

result of when the call was given through Moshe as to who would stand with YHWH, and only the tribe of Levi responded. These men then were sent throughout the nation, and three thousand died that day because of the lack of repentance and the clinging to the ways of Babylon. There is only death in Babylon, even though those pushers of Babylon promise freedom and liberty. What they actually deliver is bondage.

Kepha Bet (2nd Peter) 2:18-19

18 For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error;

19 promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage.

Let us now examine the only passage in which this word appears outside of the Torah Moshe.

Shophtim (Judges) 16:25

And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, “Call for Shimshon, that we may mock him.” And they called for Shimshon out of the prison-house; and he mocked them. And they set him between the pillars:

Once again we find a play on words in this verse. Let us place this verse before us to see this word play.

<p>And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, “Call for Shimshon, that we may mock him.” And they called for Shimshon out of the prison-house; and he mocked them. And they set him between the pillars:</p>	<p>וַיְהִי כִּי טוֹב לְבָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ קְרָאוּ לְשִׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּשְׁחַק לָנוּ וַיִּקְרָאוּ לְשִׁמְשׁוֹן מִבַּיִת הָאֲסִירִים וַיִּצְחַק לַפְּנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמִידוּ אוֹתוֹ בֵּין הָעַמֻּדִים</p>
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The two words that are of interest to us in this verse is the one which we have already been looking at, וַיִּצְחַק – vaytzacheq, which is once again in the piel form meaning “to mock” or “to laugh at.” Again, let us recall that the root of this word is צחק. The other word is וַיִּשְׁחַק – “vayshacheq” which means “to make sport of” or “to mock.” The root word here is שחַק – “shachaq” which means “to express satisfaction in overcoming difficulties.”

What we see then is that Shimshon (Samson) was a thorn in their sides because he was sent to judge, and as such he brought the judgment of YHWH upon these people in order to deliver Israel from their bondage. He had been a sore spot to these Philistines (Babylonians) for many years. Now they had finally taken Shimshon captive and thus desired for him to be brought out to them that their satisfaction might be made full by mocking him publicly. But, instead of them mocking him (שחַק), he mocked (צחק) them. How did he do this? He brought the house down upon their heads and killed them all.

What we see in this is that when a person does not love his own life, even unto death, then the glory of YHWH may be manifested in and through him. But we will need to shema His Voice in order for this to become a reality in our lives. While this word קנצ does not appear anywhere else in the Tanak, the concept is there in many places, in which we see those who would follow after the lusts of their own hearts mocking YHWH and His people. Furthermore, these same people would desire to take captive and bring into the same bondage that they themselves are in, those who would hear and obey (shema) His Voice.

What we do find in the rest of the Tanak, but never in the Torah, is the word קנש for a total of 36 times. Here is one such place.

Tehillim (Psalm) 35:15-16

- 15** ***But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together:
Those who smite gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not;
They did tear me, and ceased not:***
- 16** ***Like the profane mockers in feasts,
They gnashed upon me with their teeth.***

And so it shall ever be that those who walk according to the desires of their own hearts, lash out against those who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Voice of YHWH.

Yochanan (John) 15:18-19

- 18** ***“If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you.***
- 19** ***If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”***

In much the same way that Ishmael hated and mocked Yitzchak (Isaac), so too will those who are not chosen hate those who have been chosen. The world seeks to destroy and kill those who have heard the call to shema His Voice. Please realize that because those who walk according to the way of Babylon, according to the flesh, hate Yeshua our Mashiach because He has revealed the futility of their deeds; and since they have killed Him, we should expect to receive exactly the same treatment as He did. However, as He also overcame through the power of an indestructible life, when we are filled with His Spirit, then that same indestructible life also fills us, thereby giving us the power to overcome as well.

ABBA YHWH, fill us with the Spirit of Mashiach that we too might overcome Babylon and be adopted into Israel as overcomers; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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