

~LAUGHTER (569)

[Hebrew, *tsechoq'*]

- When Inappropriate
- Laughter Changed To Mourning
- To Express Derision

- The Hebrew words for laughter *tsechoq'* and the parallel form *sechoq'* are, according to Gesenius, onomatopoeic, that is, they are imitative of the sound of laughter, as are the written English interjections *ho-ho* and *ha-ha*. Isaac's name, *Yits-chaq'*, also meaning **Laughter**, has this same mimetic quality.
- Both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the angelic announcements that they would have a son in their old age. Abraham was not reproved for laughing but Sarah was, and she even tried to deny her laughter.
- It therefore appears that Abraham's laughter was the result of joy at the amazing prospect of having a son by Sarah in his old age.
- But Sarah's laughter evidently was because the same amazing prospect struck her as somewhat humorous, the thought of a woman of her age, till now sterile, having a child apparently brought a somewhat incongruous picture to her mind.
- At this Abraham fell upon his face and began to laugh and to say in his heart; Will a man a hundred years old have a child born, and will Sarah, yes, will a woman ninety years old give birth? (**Genesis 17:17**)
- They now said to him; Where is Sarah your wife? To this he said; Here in the tent! (**Genesis 18:9**)
- So he continued; I am surely going to return to you next year at this time, and, look! Sarah your wife will have a son. Now Sarah was listening at the tent entrance, and it was behind the man. (**Genesis 18:10**)
- And Abraham and Sarah were old, being advanced in years. Sarah had stopped having menstruation. (**Genesis 18:11**)
- Hence Sarah began to laugh **inside herself**, saying; After I am worn out, shall I really have pleasure, my lord being old besides?

(Genesis 18:12)

- Then Yehowah said to Abraham; Why was it that Sarah laughed, saying; Shall I really and truly give birth although I have become old? **(Genesis 18:13)**
- Is anything too extraordinary for Yehowah? At the appointed time I shall return to you, next year at this time, and Sarah will have a son. **(Genesis 18:14)**
- But Sarah began to deny it, saying; I did not **laugh!** For she was afraid. At this he said; No! but you did laugh. **(Genesis 18:15)**
- In neither case, however, did the **laughter** represent scorn or deliberate mocking, and both are recorded as demonstrating faith in God's promise.
- Although beyond hope, yet based on hope he had faith, that he might become the father of many nations in accord with what had been said; So your seed will be. **(Romans 4:18)**
- And, although he did not grow weak in faith, he considered his own body, now already deadened, as he was about one hundred years old, also the deadness of the womb of Sarah. **(Romans 4:19)**
- But because of the promise of God he did not waver in a lack of faith, but became powerful by his faith, giving God glory. **(Romans 4:20)**
- And being fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to do. **(Romans 4:21)**
- Hence, it was counted to him as righteousness. **(Romans 4:22)**
- Faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld. **(Hebrews 11:1)**
- By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed in going out into a place he was destined to receive as an inheritance, and he went out, although not knowing where he was going. **(Hebrews 11:8)**
- By faith he resided as an alien in the land of the promise as in a foreign land, and dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs

- with him of the very same promise. (**Hebrews 11:9**)
- For he was awaiting the city having real foundations, the builder and maker of which city is God. (**Hebrews 11:10**)
 - By faith also Sarah herself received power to conceive seed, even when she was past the age limit, since she esteemed him faithful who had promised. (**Hebrews 11:11**)
 - Hence also from one man, and him as good as dead, there were born children just as the stars of heaven for multitude and as the sands that are by the seaside, innumerable. (**Hebrews 11:12**)
 - When this son was born, the parents were no doubt delighted, for this had been their hearts desire for years. Abraham named their son, after which Sarah said; God has prepared **laughter** for me, everybody hearing of it will **laugh** at me.
 - And Yehowah turned his attention to Sarah just as he had said; and Yehowah now did to Sarah just as he had spoken. (**Genesis 21:1**)
 - And Sarah became pregnant and then bore a son to Abraham in his old age at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. (**Genesis 21:2**)
 - Accordingly Abraham called the name of his son who had been born to him, whom Sarah had borne to him, Isaac. (**Genesis 21:3**)
 - And Abraham proceeded to circumcise Isaac his son when eight days old, just as God had commanded him. (**Genesis 21:4**)
 - And Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac his son was born to him.
(**Genesis 21:5**)
 - Then Sarah said; God has prepared **laughter** for me: everybody hearing of it will **laugh** at me. (**Genesis 21:6**)
 - And she added; Who would have uttered to Abraham, Sarah will certainly suckle children, whereas I have given birth to a son in his old age? (**Genesis 21:7**)

- Others were undoubtedly amazed and delighted on hearing of the Good News of Abraham and Sarah's blessing at the hand of Yehowah.
- When Appropriate. Yehowah is the happy God and wants his servants to be happy.
- According to the glorious Good News of the **happy** God, with which I was entrusted. (**1 Timothy 1:11**)
- However, the Scriptures show that **laughter** is fitting only at certain times. There is a time to weep and a time to **laugh**.
- For everything there is an appointed time, even a time for every affair under the heavens. (**Ecclesiastes 3:1**)
- A time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to wail and a time to skip about. (**Ecclesiastes 3:4**)
- The wise man, King Solomon, counsels us;
- Go, eat your food with rejoicing and drink your wine with a good heart, because already the true God has found pleasure in your works. (**Ecclesiastes 9:7**)

•• When Inappropriate

- The thing of importance is to live so that one achieves a good name with Yehowah. Therefore, in this system of things, **laughter** may at times be most inappropriate, even harmful.
- Solomon, in his experiment, to lay hold on folly until I could see what good there was to the sons of mankind in what they did, said in his heart; Do come now, let me try you out with rejoicing. Also, see good. But he discovered that this was a vain pursuit.
- He found that mirth and laughter in themselves are not truly satisfying, for they fail to produce real and lasting happiness. There must be a true foundation for enduring, upbuilding joy. Solomon voiced his feelings;
- I said, even I, in my heart; Do come now, let me try you out with rejoicing. Also, see good. And, look! That too was vanity. (**Ecclesiastes 2:1**)

- I said to **laughter**; Insanity! And to rejoicing; What is this doing? (**Ecclesiastes 2:2**)
- I explored with my heart by cheering my flesh even with wine, while I was leading my heart with wisdom, even to lay hold on folly until I could see what good there was to the sons of mankind in what they did under the heavens for the number of the days of their life. (**Ecclesiastes 2:3**)
- Solomon illustrates the wisdom of not merely living for the pursuit of enjoyment. He says; Better is it to go to the house of mourning than to go to the banquet house, because that is the end of all mankind, and the one alive should take it to his heart.
- This is no recommendation for sadness as superior to rejoicing. It refers to a specific time, to the time when a person has died and the house is in mourning.
- Go there to console the sad survivors rather than callously forget them and feast and revel. Visiting the mourners would not only comfort the bereaved but also induce the visitor to remember life's brevity, to know that the death that has come to this house will come to all soon enough and that those living should keep it in mind.
- It is while a person is still living that he can make a good name, not when he is dying. And a good name with God is the only thing of real value to the dying.
- Better is it to go to the house of mourning than to go to the banquet house, because that is the end of all mankind, and the one alive should take it to his heart. (**Ecclesiastes 7:2**)
- Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is in the region of the Jordan, and there they carried on a very great and heavy wailing and he kept up the mourning rites for his father seven days. (**Genesis 50:10**)
- Therefore the Jews that were with her in the house and that were consoling her, on seeing Mary rise quickly and go out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the memorial tomb to weep there. (**John 11:31**)
- Solomon goes on to say;

- Better is vexation than **laughter**, for by the crossness of the face the heart becomes better. (**Ecclesiastes 7:3**)
- **Laughter** is good medicine, but there are times when we must soberly view our life and the way we are living it. If we see we are wasting too much time in frivolous feasting and not making a good name by doing good works, we have reason to be vexed with ourselves, to be sorry, and to change, it will make our heart better.
- It will help us make a good name so that the day of our death or the time of our final inspection by God and Christ will be better for us than the day of our birth.
- A name is better than good oil, and the day of death than the day of ones being born. (**Ecclesiastes 7:1**)
- The heart of the wise ones is in the house of mourning, but the heart of the stupid ones is in the house of rejoicing. (**Ecclesiastes 7:4**)
- Better is it to hear the rebuke of someone wise than to be the man hearing the song of the stupid ones. (**Ecclesiastes 7:5**)
- The wise heart in a house where one has died is attuned to the seriousness that is natural in a house of bereavement, and it influences the wise heart to watch how one's life is lived, but the careless mood in a place of revelry appeals to the foolish heart and causes life to be faced with a shallow, reckless spirit.
- If a person is straying from right paths, the rebuke of a wise man will put him back in the way of life by correcting him and enabling him to make a good name for himself.
- But how can hearing a fools song or empty flattery that conceals faults and hardens us in a wrong course be helpful? It would induce us to keep on making a bad name, not correcting us into ways leading to a good name with Yehowah.
- For as the sound of thorns under the pot, so is the **laughter** of the stupid one, and this too is vanity.
- For as the sound of thorns under the pot, so is the **laughter** of the stupid one, and this too is vanity. (**Ecclesiastes 7:6**)

- Thorns flame up quickly but are just as quickly burned to ashes. They may not last long enough to finish cooking what is in the pot, in such a case not accomplishing the task for which the fire is lit.
- Their showy, noisy, blazing crackling thus proves futile and vain. And so are the frivolous gigglings and follies of the fool. Also, the very sound of a fools **laughter** grates on the ears, being inappropriate for the time or the occasion, and tends to discourage rather than encourage.
- It helps no one to advance in the serious task of making a good name that God will remember and thereby to ensure that the day of death will be better than the day of birth.

•• **Laughter Changed To Mourning**

- In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ said; Happy are you who weep now, because you will laugh, and, Woe, you who are laughing now, because you will mourn and weep.
- Happy are you who hunger now, because you will be filled. Happy are you who weep now, because you will **laugh**. (Luke 6:21)
- Woe to you who are filled up now, because you will go hungry. Woe, you who are **laughing** now, because you will mourn and weep. (Luke 6:25)
- Jesus was evidently pointing out that those who were sad because of bad religious conditions then prevailing in Israel could have their weeping changed to **laughter** by faith in Him, whereas those enjoying laughter and life with no concern for the future would find their laughter changed to mourning.
- But a certain man was rich, and he used to deck himself with purple and linen, enjoying himself from day to day with magnificence. (Luke 16:19)
- But a certain beggar named Lazarus used to be put at his gate, full of ulcers (Luke 16:20)
- And desiring to be filled with the things dropping from the table of the rich man. Yes, too, the dogs would come and lick his

ulcers. (**Luke 16:21**)

- Now in course of time the beggar died and he was carried off by the angels to the bosom position of Abraham. Also, the rich man died and was buried. (**Luke 16:22**)
- And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, he existing in torments, and he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in the bosom position with him. (**Luke 16:23**)
- So he called and said; Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in anguish in this blazing fire. (**Luke 16:24**)
- But Abraham said; Child, remember that you received in full your good things in your lifetime, but Lazarus correspondingly the injurious things. Now, however, he is having comfort here but you are in anguish. (**Luke 16:25**)
- And besides all these things, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you people, so that those wanting to go over from here to you people cannot, neither may people cross over from there to us. (**Luke 16:26**)
- Then he said; In that event I ask you, father, to send him to the house of my father. (**Luke 16:27**)
- For I have five brothers, in order, that he may give them a thorough witness, that they also should not get into this place of torment. (**Luke 16:28**)
- But Abraham said; They have Moses and the Prophets, let them listen to these. (**Luke 16:29**)
- Then he said; No, indeed, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them they will repent. (**Luke 16:30**)
- But he said to him, If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead. (**Luke 16:31**)
- In writing to Christians, Jesus half brother James urged worldly-minded Christians:

- Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God. (**James 4:4**)
- Give way to misery and mourn and weep. Let your **laughter** be turned into mourning, and your joy into dejection. (**James 4:9**)
- Humble yourselves in the eyes of Yehowah, and he will exalt you. (**James 4:10**)
- Such exaltation would bring genuine happiness.

.. To Express Derision

- **Laughter** figures prominently in the Scriptures as an expression of derision. The **Hebrew** verb *tsa-chaq'*, **laugh**, also has the meaning **poke fun, make a laughingstock**.
- And Sarah kept noticing the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, poking fun. (**Genesis 21:9**)
- She began to cry out to the men of her house and to say to them; Look! He brought to us a man, a Hebrew, to make us a laughingstock. He came to me to lie down with me, but I began to cry out at the top of my voice. (**Genesis 39:14**)
- Even members of the animal creation are depicted as laughing in scorn. The female ostrich is represented as laughing at the pursuing horse and its rider, because of her speed, and the horse as laughing at dread when going into battle, because of his strength and fearlessness.
- Has the wing of the female ostrich flapped joyously, or has she the pinions of a stork and the plumage? (**Job 39:13**)
- At the time she flaps her wings on high, she laughs at the horse and at its rider. (**Job 39:18**)
- Can you give to the horse mightiness? Can you clothe its neck with a rustling mane? (**Job 39:19**)
- It laughs at dread, and is not terrified, nor does it turn back on account of a sword. (**Job 39:22**)

- Leviathan, the crocodile, is said to laugh at the rattling of a javelin, because of his heavy armor.
- Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or with a rope can you hold down its tongue? (**Job 41:1**)
- A club has been regarded by it as mere stubble, and it laughs at the rattling of a javelin. (**Job 41:29**)
- Servants of God have had to endure much derisive **laughter** against them. Job said; One who is a **laughingstock** to his fellowman I become.
- One who is a **laughingstock** to his fellowman I become, one calling to God that he should answer him. A **laughingstock** is the righteous, unblamable one. (**Job 12:4**)
- And now they have laughed at me, those younger in days than I am, whose fathers I would have refused to place with the dogs of my flock. (**Job 30:1**)
- Jeremiah was an object of **laughter** all day long among his contemporaries.
- You have fooled me, O Yehowah, so that I was fooled. You used your strength against me, so that you prevailed. I became an object of **laughter** all day long, everyone is holding me in derision. (**Jeremiah 20:7**)
- Jesus Christ himself was **laughed** at scornfully before raising the daughter of Jairus from death.
- Jesus began to say; Leave the place, for the little girl did not die, but she is sleeping. At this they began to **laugh** at him scornfully. (**Matthew 9:24**)
- At this they began to **laugh** scornfully at him. But, having put them all out, he took along the young child's father and mother and those with him, and he went in where the young child was. (**Mark 5:40**)
- But, look! A man named Jairus came, and this man was a presiding officer of the synagogue. And he fell at the feet of Jesus and began to entreat him to enter into his house. (**Luke**

8:41)

- **Because he had an only-begotten daughter about twelve years old and she was dying. As he was going the crowds thronged him. (Luke 8:42)**
- **And a woman, subject to a flow of blood for twelve years, who had not been able to get a cure from anyone. (Luke 8:43)**
- **Approached from behind and touched the fringe of his outer garment, and instantly her flow of blood stopped. (Luke 8:44)**
- **So Jesus said; Who was it that touched me? When they were all denying it, Peter said; Instructor, the crowds are hemming you in and closely pressing you. (Luke 8:45)**
- **Yet Jesus said; Someone touched me, for I perceived that power went out of me. (Luke 8:46)**
- **Seeing that she had not escaped notice, the woman came trembling and fell down before him and disclosed before all the people the cause for which she touched him and how she was healed instantly. (Luke 8:47)**
- **But he said to her; Daughter, your faith has made you well, go your way in peace. (Luke 8:48)**
- **While he was yet speaking, a certain representative of the presiding officer of the synagogue came, saying; Your daughter has died, do not bother the teacher any longer. (Luke 8:49)**
- **On hearing this, Jesus answered him; Have no fear, only put forth faith, and she will be saved. (Luke 8:50)**
- **When he reached the house he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter and John and James and the girl's father and mother. (Luke 8:51)**
- **But people were all weeping and beating themselves in grief for her. So he said; Stop weeping, for she did not die but is sleeping. (Luke 8:52)**
- **At this they began to laugh at him scornfully, because they knew she had died. (Luke 8:53)**

- **Yet, all who knew the strength and wisdom of God and were obedient to him had good reason to be happy.**
- **Happy are you when people reproach you and persecute you and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake. (Matthew 5:11)**
- **Rejoice and leap for joy, since your reward is great in the heavens. For in that way they persecuted the prophets prior to you. (Matthew 5:12)**
- **Yehowah God is described as laughing in derision at the nations, at their boastful words, which come to nothing, and at the confusion their foolish course against him brings.**
- **But you yourself, O Yehowah, will laugh at them; You will hold all the nations in derision. (Psalms 59:8)**
- **He knows his own power and purposes, and he laughs at the puny, futile opposition they bring against him and his people.**
- **Why have the nations been in tumult and the national groups themselves kept muttering an empty thing? (Psalms 2:1)**
- **The kings of earth take their stand and high officials themselves have massed together as one against Yehowah and against his anointed one. (Psalms 2:2)**
- **Saying; Let us tear their bands apart and cast their cords away from us! (Psalms 2:3)**
- **The very One sitting in the heavens will laugh. Yehowah himself will hold them in derision. (Psalms 2:4)**
- **A wise person surely wants to avoid having Yehowah laugh at him.**
- **I also, for my part, shall laugh at your own disaster, I shall mock when what you dread comes. (Proverbs 1:26)**
- **While Yehowah has no pleasure in the death of the wicked**
- **Do I take any delight at all in the death of someone wicked, is**

the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Yehowah, and not in that he should turn back from his ways and actually keep living? ([Ezekiel 18:23](#))

- **For I do not take any delight in the death of someone dying, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Yehowah. So cause a turning back and keep living, O you people. ([Ezekiel 18:32](#))**
- **He is unworried over their plots against his people and laughs because he sees the day of deliverance for the righteous, in which the schemes of the wicked will fail and wickedness will be ended forever.**
- **The wicked one is plotting against the righteous one, and at him he is grinding his teeth. ([Psalms 37:12](#))**
- **Yehowah himself will **laugh** at him, for he certainly sees that his day will come. ([Psalms 37:13](#))**
- **For the wicked themselves will perish, and the enemies of Yehowah will be like the preciousness of pastures, they must come to their end. In smoke they must come to their end. ([Psalms 37:20](#))**