

Tears and laughter/Joy and Sorrow 2020

הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה יִקְצְרוּ: They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy.—psalm 126-5

1. The High Holidays are saturated with stories of tears and laughter. On first day RH we read about the birth of Isaac, whose name suggests laughter:

Genesis Ch. 18:**10** YHVH said, “I will surely return to you this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. **11** Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. **12** So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?” **13** YHVH said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ **14** Is anything too hard for YHVH? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” **15** But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, you did laugh.”

2. Laughter turns to tears with the banishing of Hagar and Yishmael after Yishmael’s laughter is (mis)understood as “mocking.”

Genesis Ch 21: **1** And YHVH answered Sarah as spoken & did for her as promised. **2** And Sarah became pregnant with child, and gave Abraham a son when he was old, at the very time named by YHVH. **3** And Abraham gave to his son, to whom Sarah had given birth, the name Isaac. **4** And when his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham made him undergo circumcision, as God had said to him. **5** Now Abraham was a hundred years old when the birth of Isaac took place. **6** And Sarah said, Elohim has given me cause for laughing, and everyone who has news of it will laugh with me. **7** And she said, Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would have a child at her breast? for I have given him a son now when he is old. **8** And when the child was old enough to be taken from the breast, Abraham made a great feast. **9** And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian playing with Isaac. **10** So she said to Abraham, Send away that woman and her son: for the son of that woman is not to have a part in the heritage with my son Isaac. **11** And this was a great grief to Abraham because of his son. **12** But Hashem said, Be not grieved about the lad and Hagar his mother; listen to whatever Sarah says to you, because it is from Isaac that your seed will take its name. **13** And I will make a nation of the son of your servant-woman, because he is your seed. **14** And early in the morning Abraham got up, and gave Hagar some bread and a water-skin, and put the boy on her back, and sent her away: and she went, wandering in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. **15** And when all the water in the skin was used up, she put the child down under a tree. **16** And she went some distance away, about an arrow flight, and seating herself on the earth, she gave way to bitter weeping, saying, Let me not see the death of my child. **17** And the boy's cry came to the ears of YHVH; and the angel of YHVH said to Hagar from heaven, Hagar, why are you weeping? have no fear, for the child's cry has come to the ears of YHVH. **18** Come, take your child in your arms, for I will make of him a great nation. **19** Then YHVH made her eyes open, and she saw a water-spring, and she got water in the skin and gave the boy a drink. **20** And Elohim was with the boy, and he became tall and strong...

3. Samuel I Chapter 1 אַ שְׂמוּאֵל There was a man from Ramatayim-Tzofim, in the hills of Efrayim, whose name was Elkanah the son of Yerocham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tochu, the son of Tzuf, from Efrat. ²He had two wives, one named Hannah and the other P'ninah. P'ninah had children, but Hannah had no children. ³This man went up from his city every year to worship and sacrifice to *ADONAI-Tzva'ot* in Shiloh. The two sons of 'Eli, Hofni and Pinchas, were *cohanim* of *ADONAI* there. ⁴One day, when Elkanah was sacrificing, he gave a portion of the sacrifice to his wife P'ninah and portions to each of her sons and daughters; ⁵but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved Hannah, even though *ADONAI* had kept her from having children. ⁶Her rival taunted her and made her feel bad, because *ADONAI* had kept her from having children. ⁷He did the same every year; and each time she went up to the house of *ADONAI*, she taunted her so much that **she would cry and not eat.** ⁸Her husband Elkanah said to her, "**Hannah, why are you crying**, and why aren't you eating? Why be so sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" ⁹So Hannah got up after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. 'Eli the *cohen* was sitting on his seat by the doorpost of the temple of *ADONAI*. ¹⁰In deep depression she prayed to *ADONAI* and cried. ¹¹Then she took a vow; she said, "*ADONAI-Tzva'ot*, if you will notice how humiliated your servant is, if you will remember me and not forget your servant but will give your servant a male child, then I will give him to *ADONAI* for as long as he lives; and no razor will ever come on his head." ¹²She prayed for a long time before *Adonai*; and as she did so, 'Eli was watching her mouth. ¹³Hannah was speaking in her heart — her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard — so 'Eli thought she was drunk. ¹⁴'Eli said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Stop drinking your wine!" ¹⁵But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a very unhappy woman. I have not drunk either wine or other strong liquor; rather, I've been pouring out my soul before *Adonai*. ¹⁶Don't think of your servant as a worthless woman; because I have been speaking from the depth of my distress and anger." ¹⁷Then 'Eli replied, "Go in peace. May the God of Isra'el grant what you have asked of him." ¹⁸She replied, "May your servant find favor in your sight." So the woman went on her way, and she ate, and her face was no longer sad. ¹⁹They got up early in the morning and worshipped before *Adonai*, then returned and came to their house in Ramah. Elkanah had sexual relations with Hannah his wife, and *Adonai* remembered her. ²⁰She conceived; and in due time she gave birth to a son, whom she named Sh'mu'el, "because I asked *Adonai* for him."

4. SHOFAR & TEARS:

ROSH HASHANA is called Yom Teruah in Torah—a day for sounding the Shofar, for crying out...Each year on RH we are reborn into life, into the new year, like a newborn baby who enters the world w/a gezuntevdicke shrei/cry.

1. Then Abraham came from Mt Moriah, the *satan* was furious that he had failed to realize the sacrifice of Isaac. What did he do? he went off and found Sarah. "Ah, Sarah, have you not heard what's been happening in the world?" She

replied, "no." He said, "your old husband has taken the boy and sacrificed him as a burnt offering, while the boy cried and wailed in his helplessness." Immediately, she began to cry and wail. She ...wailed three times, corresponding to the broken notes of the Shofar. Then she died, and Abraham came home and found her dead. [\[Midrash quoted in Genesis, Beginning of Desire, Aviva Zornberg\]](#)

5. In another version of the midrash: Isaac was concerned about his mother's welfare, and when he was tied to the altar and thought that he was about to die, he asked of his father:

"Father, do not tell my mother [of my death] when she is standing by a pit or when she is standing on the roof, lest she cast herself down and die." That moment a heavenly voice went forth and said to Abraham (Gen. 22:12): "Do not raise your hand against the boy." Satan went to Sarah and appeared to her in the countenance of Isaac. When she saw him, she said to him: "My son, what has your father done to you?" He answered her: "Father took me and raised me up to the mountains and brought me down into the valleys. He took me up to the top of one mountain, built an altar, arranged the woodpile, and placed the logs. He bound me on the altar and took a knife to slaughter me. If God had not told him: 'Do not raise your hand against the boy,' I would already be slaughtered." Satan did not finish speaking, and Sarah passed away (Tanhuma, Vayera 23). It therefore is said (Gen. 23:2): "And Abraham 'came' [va-yavo, literally, and he came] to mourn for Sarah"—where did he come from? from Mount Moriah (Gen. Rabbah 58:5). (This early aggadic tradition is depicted in a synagogue mural in Dura-Europus (an ancient city on the Euphrates), with a portrayal of Isaac, and at a distance, Sarah gazing upon the scene from within her tent.)

6. Shofar & the Tears of Sisra's mother: "Abaye expounded: The disagreement regarding how to sound the teruah revolves around the following: The Biblical verse in Numbers 29 instructs 'It should be a day of sounding the teruah,' and the Aramaic translation for 'teruah' is , 'yevavah.' Now regarding the mother of Sisera, the Bible remarks that when she heard of her son's death, "the mother of Sisera stood at the window 'vatiyabev.'" One opinion is that the meaning is that she sighed and sighed and therefore the teruah should sound like shevarim a gasping sound, and one opinion is that she cried and cried and therefore the sound of the teruah should be constantly broken like uncontrollable crying." (B.T. Rosh Hashanah 33b)

7. WHOLE—BROKEN—SHATTERED--WHOLE

8. "Listen to the story told by the reed, Of being separated.

'Since I was cut from the reedbed, I have made this crying sound.

Anyone apart from someone he loves Understands what I say.

Anyone pulled from a source longs to go back.

At any gathering I am there, mingling in the laughing and grieving.

A friend to each, but few will hear the secrets hidden

Within the notes. No ears for that. Body flowing out of spirit,

Spirit up from body: no concealing that mixing. But it's not given us

To see the soul. The reed flute is fire, not wind. Be that empty.' "-Rumi

9. Shofar, Awakening and Staying WOKE

"Wake up you sleepers from your sleep! Consider your deeds...do not be like those who miss the truth in pursuit of shadows, and waste their years seeking after that which is empty."
(MT *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:4)

What are we supposed to hear when we listen to the shofar? Rav Saadia Gaon suggests 10 associations that Shofar is designed to evoke, including: Creation, revelation, redemption...

These 10 interpretations of the sounds of the shofar were written by Saadia Gaon, one of the foremost Jewish spiritual leaders of the Middle Ages:

- 1. Reminiscent of the Coronation of a King**
- 2. Stirs Our Conscience**
- 3. Reminds Us of Sinai Revelation**
- 4. Like the Exhortations of the Prophets**
- 5. Reminder of the Temple's Destruction**
- 6. Symbol of the Ram That Abraham Sacrificed**
- 7. Summons Us to Feeling Humility**
- 8. Reminder of Judgment Day**
- 9. Foreshadows Return from Exile**
- 10. Foreshadows Coming of the Messiah**

ADVERTISING

10. Excerpt from The Prophet by [Kahlil Gibran](#) - 1883-1931

Then a woman said, Speak to us of Joy and Sorrow.

And he answered:

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.

And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.

And how else can it be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.

Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?

And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?

When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."

But I say unto you, they are inseparable.

Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.

Verily you are suspended like scales between your sorrow and your joy.

Only when you are empty are you at standstill and balanced.

When the treasure-keeper lifts you to weigh his gold and his silver, needs must your joy or your sorrow rise or fall.

11. A Man Doesn't Have Time In His Life

A man doesn't have time in his life

to have time for everything.

He doesn't have seasons enough to have

a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes

Was wrong about that.

A man needs to love and to hate at the same moment,

to laugh and cry with the same eyes,

with the same hands to throw stones and to gather them,

to make love in war and war in love.

And to hate and forgive and remember and forget,

to arrange and confuse, to eat and to digest

what history

takes years and years to do.

A man doesn't have time.
When he loses he seeks, when he finds
he forgets, when he forgets he loves, when he loves
he begins to forget.

And his soul is seasoned, his soul
is very professional.
Only his body remains forever
an amateur. It tries and it misses,
gets muddled, doesn't learn a thing,
drunk and blind in its pleasures
and its pains.

He will die as figs die in autumn,
Shriveled and full of himself and sweet,
the leaves growing dry on the ground,
the bare branches pointing to the place
where there's time for everything.

12. YOM KIPPUR—Atoning for the Sin of the Golden Calf vs the Sin of the Selling of Joseph by his Brothers (Sin and the Hebrew word Sin'ah)

Book of Jubilees 34: 11-15

*“And in the seventh year of this week he sent Yosef to learn about the welfare of his brothers from his house to the land of Shechem, and he found them in the land of Dothan. And they dealt treacherously with him, and formed a plot against him to slay him, but changing their minds, they sold him to Ishmaelite merchants, and they brought him down into Egypt, and they sold him to Potiphar, the eunuch of Pharaoh, the chief of the cooks, priest of On. And the sons of Yaakov slaughtered a kid, and dipped the coat of Yosef in the blood, and sent (it) to Yaakov their father on **the tenth of the seventh month.**”*

13. Book of Jubilees 34: 23-25

*“For this reason it is ordained for the children of Israel that they should afflict themselves on the tenth of the seventh month **-on the day that the news which made him weep for Yosef came to Yaakov his father-** that they should make atonement for themselves thereon with a young goat on the tenth of the seventh month, once a year, for their sins; for they had grieved the affection of their father regarding Yosef his son. And this day has been ordained that they should grieve thereon for their sins, and for all their transgressions and for all their errors, so that they might cleanse themselves on that day once a year.”*

14. (from Chabad.org) However, according to Eleh Ezkerah, and thus according to most opinions, the story of the Ten Martyrs has its roots in an incident involving the Roman prefect of Jerusalem, the wicked Turnusrufus,⁹ who was well-versed in Jewish literature.

He had been learning the passage in Exodus that states, “He who kidnaps a man and sells him, and [the victim] is found in his possession, he shall surely be put to death.”¹⁰ Turnusrufus immediately realized that his interpretation of this law offered him a golden opportunity to humiliate the Jewish faith and murder its chief exponents.

Turnusrufus summoned Rabbi Shimon Ben Gamliel and his colleagues and presented a question before them: What is the law with regards to he who kidnaps a man from the Jewish nation and sells him [into slavery]?” The rabbis replied that Torah mandates that such a man be put to death. “If so,” continued Turnusrufus, “where are your forbearers who sold their brother into slavery? Had they been here, I would have prosecuted them before your eyes. As for you, accept the decree of heaven, for since the times [of the 12 tribes] there have never been 10 sages of your stature [alive at one time]. Take upon yourself to die in accordance with your law; for Joseph the son of Jacob was kidnapped and sold by his 10 brothers, and their punishment has never been exacted.

The holy men listened, and rather than dismissing this claim as a mere pretext for murder, rather than pleading for their lives, they asked the wicked prefect to grant them three days to verify whether their martyrdom had indeed been sanctioned by the heavenly court.

Rabbi Yishmael the High Priest invoked the Holy Name of G-d, which it is prohibited to utter or write (under normal circumstances), and ascended to heaven to ascertain the verity of the decree.

Rabbi Yishmael was greeted by the angel Gavriel, who said to him, “Yishmael, my son, I swear by your life that I have heard from behind the veil¹¹ that 10 sages have been delivered to be killed by the wicked kingdom.”

“But why so?” Rabbi Yishmael asked. And the angel confirmed what Turnusrufus had said—that they were to stand in place of the 10 brothers who sold Joseph into slavery and suffer their punishment.

Upon his return to his colleagues, Rabbi Yishmael related what he had heard from Gavriel the angel and urged his fellow sages to accept that this was a heavenly decree. Even after the decree had been issued, the martyrs remained steadfast in their adherence to the Torah, which only enraged Turnusrufus further.

Eleh Ezkerah describes in detail how each of the sages was killed while he was in the middle of performing a mitzvah, and thus returned his soul to her Maker in purity and holiness. Elijah the Prophet came to collect their souls when they departed their bodies, and divine proclamations announced their individual merits to the world.

The Midrash relates that as heaven and earth stormed with the sacrifice of these lofty souls, the angels wept and protested before G-d against such brutality. G-d responded by telling the angels to be silent, making this story one of the most powerful paradigms describing the incomprehensible mystery of G-d's ways.

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2751091/jewish/The-10-Martyrs.htm

Talmudic sources: Sanhedrin 14a, Avodah Zarah 18a, Berachot 61b,

15. Genesis ch 42: Joseph tests his brothers

כא וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אָחִיו, אֲבָל אֲשָׁמִים
אֲנַחְנוּ עַל-אָחִינוּ, אֲשֶׁר רָאִינוּ צָרַת נַפְשׁוֹ
בְּהִתְחַנְּנוֹ אֵלֵינוּ, וְלֹא שָׁמְעָנוּ; עַל-כֵּן בָּאָה
אֵלֵינוּ, הַצָּרָה הַזֹּאת.

כב וַיַּעַן רְאוּבֵן אֹתָם לֵאמֹר, הֲלוֹא אָמַרְתִּי
אֵלֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר אַל-תִּחְטְאוּ בְּיָלֵד--וְלֹא
שָׁמַעְתֶּם; וְגַם-דָּמוֹ, הִנֵּה נִדְרָשׁ.

כג וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ, כִּי שָׁמַע יוֹסֵף: כִּי
הַמְלִיץ, בֵּינָתָם.

כד וַיִּסֹּב מֵעֲלֵיהֶם, וַיִּבֶךְ; וַיָּשָׁב אֲלֵהֶם,
וַיְדַבֵּר אֲלֵהֶם, וַיִּשְׂחַח מֵאִתָּם אֶת-שְׁמֵעוֹן,
וַיֹּאסֵר אֹתוֹ לְעֵינֵיהֶם.

21 And they said one to another: 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.'

22 And Reuben answered them, saying: 'Spoke I not unto you, saying: Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore also, behold, his blood is required.'

23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for the interpreter was between them.

24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and he returned to them, and spoke to them, and took

Simeon from among them, and bound him before their eyes.

Genesis Ch. 45: Joseph Reveals himself to his brothers

א ולא-יכל יוסף להתאפק, לכל הנצבים עליו, ויקרא, הוציאו כל-איש מעלי; ולא-עמד איש אתו, בהתנדוע יוסף אל-אחיו.

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried: 'Cause every man to go out from me.' And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

ב ויתן את-קלו, בבכי; וישמעו מצרים, וישמע בית פרעה.

2 And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard.

ד ויפל על-צוארי בנימן-אחיו, ויבך; ובנימן--בכה, על-צואריו.

14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

ט וינשק לכל-אחיו, ויבך עליהם; ואחרי כן, דברו אחיו אתו.

15 And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them; and after that his brethren talked with him.

16.

גם כי אזעק ואשוע שתם תפלתי ואע"פ (איכה ג, ח) א"ר אלעזר מיום שנחרב בית המקדש ננעלו שערי תפלה שנאמר שמעה תפלתי ה' ושועתי האזינה אל דמעתי אל (תהלים לט, יג) ששערי תפלה ננעלו שערי דמעות לא ננעלו שנאמר תחריש. **Rabbi Elazar says: Since the day the Temple was destroyed the gates of prayer were locked, and prayer is not accepted as it once was, as it is stated in lament of the Temple's destruction: "Though I plead and call out, He shuts out my prayer"** (Lamentations 3:8). Yet, **despite the fact that the gates of prayer were locked with the destruction of the Temple, the gates of tears were not locked, and one who cries before God may rest assured that his prayers will be answered, as it is stated: "Hear my prayer, Lord, and give ear to my pleading, keep not silence at my tears"** (Psalms 39:13).

17. מדרכי התשובה להיות השב צועק תמיד לפני השם בבכי ובמתחננים ועושה צדקה כפי פחו ומתרחק הרבה מן הדבר שחטא בו ומשנה שמו כלומר אני אחר ואיני אותו האיש שעשה אותן המעשים ומשנה מעשיו פלן לטובה ולדרך: **Some of the modes of manifesting repentance are that the penitent cries continuously before the Lord with tears and supplications; gives charity according to his means; keeps far away from that wherein he sinned; changes his name, as much as to say: "I am another individual and not the one who committed those deeds"; changes all his activities for a better course, for the righteous way; and exiles himself from his former place of residence, since exile atones for iniquity, inducing, as it does, humility, meekness and lowliness of spirit.**—Maimonides Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah

18. Rabbi Akiva's Laughter (Talmud Makot 24a-24b): "Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Yehoshua and **Rabbi Akiva** were walking in the vicinity of Rome. From far away, they heard the sounds of a thriving metropolis, and three of them began to cry, but Rabbi Akiva laughed." "They said to him, 'Why are you laughing?' " " 'And you, why are you crying?' " " 'These barbarians, who bow to idols and burn incense for false gods, are living in peace and security, while we, the footstool of whose G-d is burnt with fire – should we not cry?' " "He said to them, 'That is exactly why I am laughing. If people who violate the will of G-d have it so good, how much better will those who act according to His Will, have it?' " "

"Another time, the same group of scholars were walking towards Yerushalayim. When they reached Mt. Scopus (from which it is possible to see the **Temple Mount**), they tore their clothing. When they arrived at the Temple Mount, they saw a fox running out of the area where the Holy of Holies had been. They began to cry, while Rabbi Akiva laughed."

"They said to him, 'Why are you laughing?' " He responded, 'Why are you crying?' " " 'If from the place about which it is written, 'And the stranger who enters there, shall die,' we see a fox coming out, should we not cry?' " " 'For that very reason, I am laughing. Yeshayahu the Prophet said, 'I will bring two reliable witnesses regarding my People, Uriah the Priest and Zecharya ben Yevarech'yahu. '(Yeshayahu 8:2) Now what do Uriah and Zecharya have to do with each other? Uriah prophesied in the time of the First Temple, and Zecharya in the time of the Second Temple! But the verse in Yeshayahu makes Zecharya's prophecy dependent on Uriah's.' " "

" 'In Uriah's case, it is written, 'Therefore, because of you, Zion will be plowed under like a field.' (Michah/Uriah 3:12) In the case of Zecharya, we find, 'Yet again, elderly men and elderly women will sit in the streets of Yerushalayim, (and each will have a staff in his or her hand from great age. And the streets of the city will be full of children, playing in her streets.' – extension of quote) (Zecharya 8:4-(5)) Until I saw the fulfillment of Uriah's prophecy, I had some doubt as to whether Zecharya's prophecy would come true. Now that I have seen Uriah's prophecy fulfilled in full detail, I know that Zecharya's prophecy will also be fulfilled.' " "

"Hearing that, Rabbi Akiva's colleagues said to him, 'Akiva, you have comforted us. Akiva, you have comforted us.' " "