

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



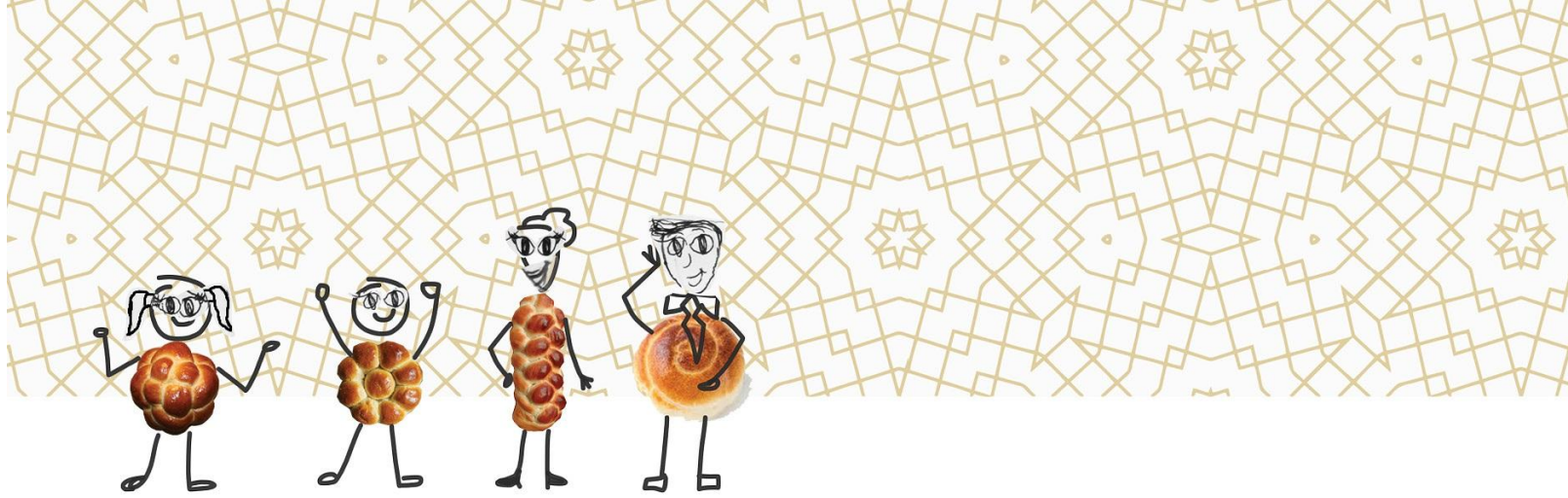
Parsha: Vayera

Title: Feeling Our Laughter

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The Parsha at First Glance

In *Parshat Vayera*, Avraham and Sarah are old and past when they think they will be able to have children. Suddenly, as Avraham is sitting at the opening of his tent, he looks up and sees three men appear. He rushes to make sure they feel welcomed and well cared for. We then find out that these men are angels sent from God. One of them tells Avraham that next year they will return and Sarah will have a son. Sarah hears this news and laughs to herself because she thinks



that she is too old to hope for that to happen. In fact, the *parsha* explains three moments when Sarah laughs around the topic of having her son. She even names her son “Yitzhak” which comes from the word *tz-h-k* (צ-ח-ק), meaning ‘laughter.’

Just as Avraham began this *parsha* with his eyes downward - needing to look upwards and outwards to be able to spread goodness to others and see the guests he wanted to welcome - Sarah too goes through a similar journey. At first she begins with an inner doubting laughter, but later spreads the laughter outwards, sharing it with others joyfully.

Zooming In:

Read and discuss the following pieces of the *parsha* which mention Sarah’s laughter.

Sarah laughs within herself.

Vayera 18:12

וַיִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר אַחֲרַי בְּלִיתִי הֲיִתֵּה לִי עֵדֶנָּה וְאֵדִנִי זָקֵן.

12. And Sarah **laughed within herself**, saying, “After I have become worn out, will I have smooth flesh? And also, my master is old.”

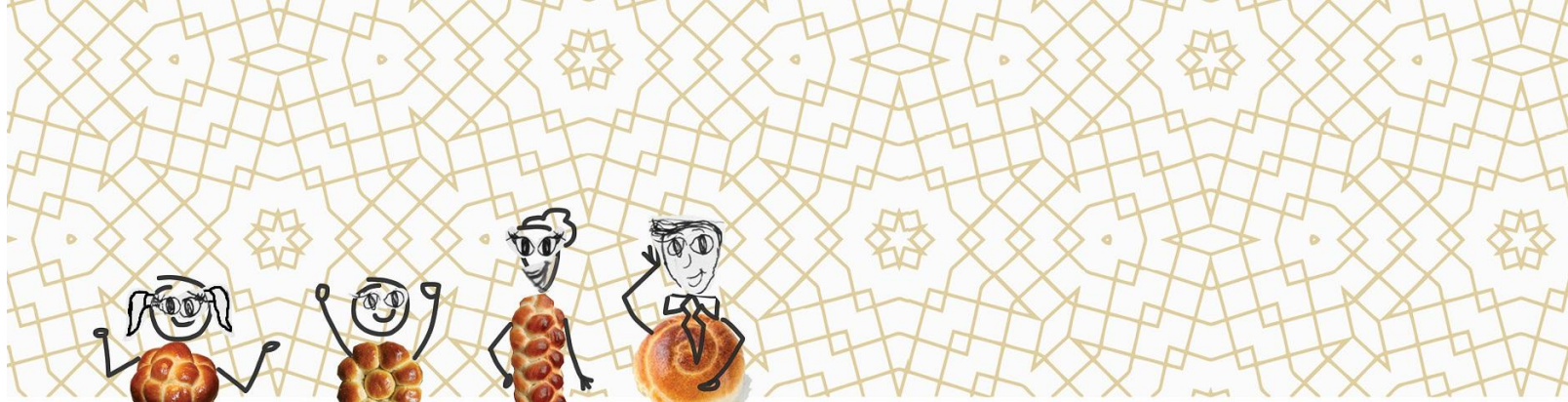
- Why do you think Sarah laughs at this moment?
- Can you relate to this kind of laughter?
- Why do we sometimes think or feel things just inside ourselves first before talking about them or sharing them with others?

God creates joy for Sarah.

Vayera 21:6

וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צָחַק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹקִים

6. And Sarah said, “**God has made laughter for me...**”



- Why do you think Sarah now says aloud that God has made this laughter for her?
- What usually makes you laugh?
- How does it feel when someone makes you laugh?

Everyone who hears will laugh for me.

Vayera 21:6

ו...כל השמע יצחק לי

6...Everyone who hears will laugh for me.

- Once Sarah has accepted the gift of the laughter or joy from God she thinks about how everyone else will feel when they hear about it. She uses the same word **יצחק** (laugh) to describe what they will do when they hear about it. Do you think she is worried about *being laughed at* or that *she is excited* to spread the happiness about what God has given her?
- How do you feel when you make others laugh?

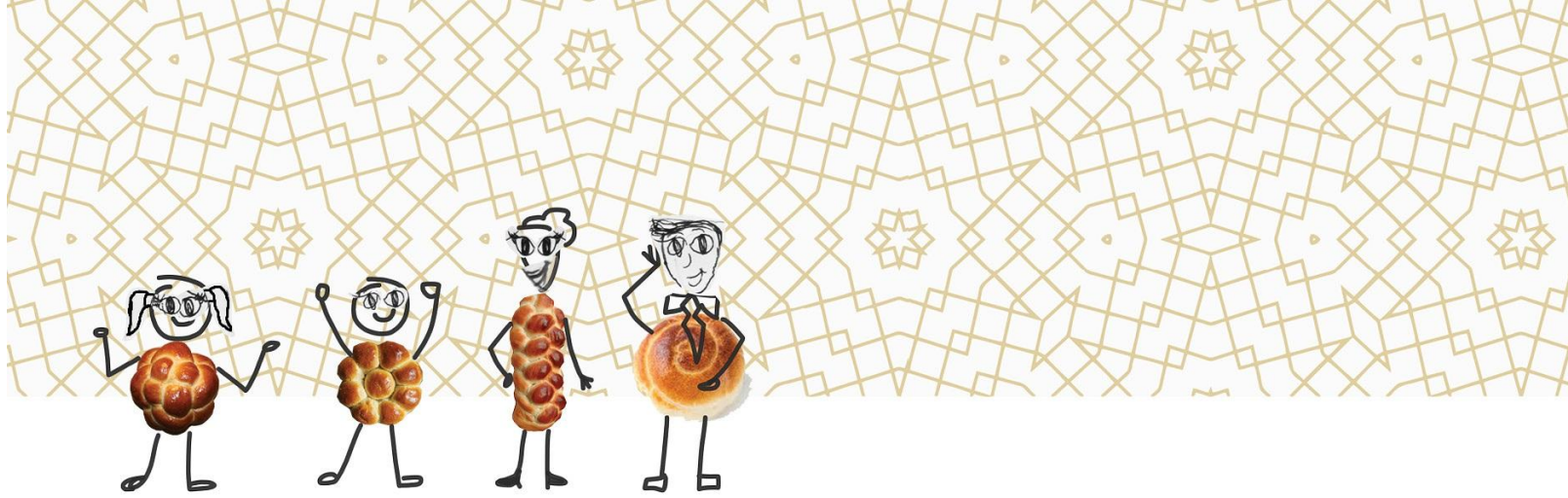


The Parsha in Practice:

Let's practice this important lesson modeled by Avraham and Sarah in *Parshat Vayera* with a laughter meditation around your table!

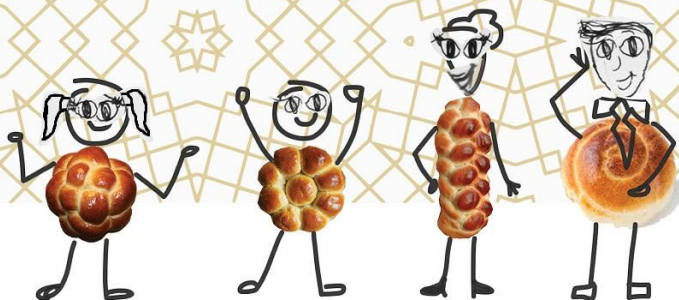
Laughter meditation:

1. Begin with loosening the body and getting comfortable in your space. Roll your shoulders, wiggle your legs, shake your head, etc.
2. With your eyes closed, sit and just laugh! It will feel odd at first and even very forced. If you stick with it you will eventually forget that it started this



way and real laughter will emerge. Place your hand on your body where you feel the root of where your laughter is bubbling from. Hear your laughter within you, just like Sarah did (וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ = And Sarah laughed within herself).

3. Open your eyes and turn to your side. Look right into the eyes of the person next to you as you continue laughing. Feel the intensity build as you receive their energy and they share yours. Receive each other's energies like a gift, like Sarah received the joyful news from God that she would have Yitzhak (צָחַק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים = God has made laughter for me).
4. Look around at everyone. Hear EVERYONE'S different laugh. Feel how the laughter has grown from just that point within you and is now shared and mixed with everyone else's (כָּל הַשְּׁמַע יִצְחַק לִי = everyone who hears will laugh for me).
5. Motion for everyone to quiet down. Allow quiet to rest around the table. Instruct everyone to keep their hand on their body in the spot where they felt the laughter come from. Pose some questions to float in the room as the silence sets in:
 - How does your body feel now?
 - How did your experience change once you opened your eyes and shared your laughter with everyone?
 - How will you carry this feeling with you?
 - How did Sarah feel when she received such unbelievable information that she would have a child?
 - Why did she laugh? Out of happiness? Relief?
 - How did her laughter make her feel? How did it affect those around her once she let it out?



Challenge to bring into your week:

1. Try to notice if you are holding something inside that can be shared with others. Maybe you think your idea is too silly or out of the box. After you have thought about it in your head, let it out and share it with others so they can benefit from your idea and maybe even help it grow!
2. Make someone laugh! Laughter has the power to make your whole body and mind feel better, so find something that will bring someone else happiness and share it!

**You can keep track of how many people you made laugh this week and compete with your family!*

Shabbat Shalom!