חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

KARLIN · VAYERA, BEIT AHARON

Why did Sarah laugh at the promise of a child?

Beit Aharon

Rejecting Rashi's view that God altered Sarah's words for the sake of peace, the author reads her laugh as a fear, not a doubt: that the yichud (unification) above might be incomplete, which would keep the tzaddikim (righteous ones) from bearing children, so that her "I am old" refers to the attribute of Ani. Drawing on the Ramban, as the author heard it from his teacher, God's testing of Avraham is for Avraham's sake, since Avraham is the attribute of love (aver mah), so the test reveals that love rather than increasing it in God. AI SUMMARY

"Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am old?'" Rashi says: From here we learn that He changed the words for the sake of peace. And were I not afraid to say so, it could be that there was no change here at all. For it is truly astonishing how Sarah could fail to believe that she would give birth, when she had already menstruated. Rather, it could be that the meaning is as follows.

It is written, "And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, 'After I have withered, shall I have pleasure (edna)?'" This is not said in a tone of astonishment. Rather, she said: I see that on my side there is no obstacle, for I have had edna. But I am afraid that "my lord is old."

That is, lest, God forbid, the yichud (unification) above is not complete, and because of this the tzaddikim (righteous ones) also do not beget. This, God forbid, was the sin of Adam HaRishon (the first man) and Chavah. It is known that there is an attribute called Adoni. Likewise this attribute is called Ani, and it is also called Davar.

And this is what HaKadosh Baruch Hu (the Holy One, blessed be He) said to Avraham: "Why did Sarah laugh, 'Shall I indeed bear (Eled)?'" As is known, this is the Name that is included in its source. And from this Name she said: I know, but I am only afraid lest, God forbid, "and I (Ani) am old," in the aspect of zekenah (old age), and there is no receiving of influence from above. "Is anything too wondrous for Hashem (mi-YY Davar)?" Is there, God forbid, any separation between those who cleave to one another? Rather, there is complete yichud of Davar with the Hei.

"At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." And this is enough for the discerning.

"And God tested Avraham." The Ramban asked about this: How can it be that God would test a person? Does God not know whether he will do it or not? He answered that the test is not for the sake of the one who tests but for the sake of the one who is tested.

And I heard from my teacher an explanation of the Ramban's words above. Consider, for example, a father's love for his son, which is very great, and "love covers all transgressions." But when the son is wise and wants to examine his own deeds, then the love is even greater. This applies to a human being. But with God it is not appropriate to say "greater"; rather, the love is revealed more.

This is the meaning of the verse "And God tested Avraham": the test is for the sake of Avraham, who is called love. For Avraham is aver mah. Aver is an expression of attachment, and also of wings, and mah is an expression of glorying. As is known, a bird flies because the element of wind is dominant in it. And this is enough for the wise.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)

