

Michal, King David, and the the Social Laughter Theory of Robert Provine

1. שמואל ב ו' י"א | Shmuel 2, 6, 11

- (יא) וַיָּשֶׁב אֲרוֹן ה' בֵּית עֲבֵד אֲדָם הַגִּתִּי שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים וַיְבָרַךְ ה' אֶת עֲבֵד אֲדָם וְאֶת כָּל בֵּיתוֹ.
 (יב) וַיִּגַּד לְמֶלֶךְ דָּוִד לֵאמֹר בָּרַךְ ה' אֶת בֵּית עֲבֵד אֲדָם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ בְּעִבּוֹר אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּלָּךְ דָּוִד וַיַּעַל אֶת אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים מִבֵּית עֲבֵד אֲדָם עִיר דָּוִד בְּשֹׁמְרֹה. (יג) וַיְהִי כִּי צָעְדוּ נְשָׂאֵי אֲרוֹן ה' שְׁשָׁה צָעָדִים וַיִּזְבַּח שׁוֹר וּמְרִיא.
 (יד) וַדָּוִד מְכַרְכֵּר בְּכָל עַז לִפְנֵי ה' וַדָּוִד חָגַר אֶפֶוד בָּד.
 (טו) וַדָּוִד וְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מַעֲלִים אֶת אֲרוֹן ה' בְּתִרְעָה וּבִקּוֹל שׁוֹפָר.
 (טז) וַיְהִי אֲרוֹן ה' בָּא עִיר דָּוִד וּמִיכַל בַּת שָׂאוּל נֹשְׁקָהּ בְּעַד הַחֲלוֹן וַתִּרְא אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד מִפְּנֵי וּמְכַרְכֵּר לִפְנֵי ה' וַתִּבְזֶה לוֹ בְּלִבָּהּ.
 (יז) וַיִּבְאוּ אֶת אֲרוֹן ה' וַיִּצְגּוּ אֹתוֹ בְּמִקְוָמוֹ בְּתוֹךְ הָהָרָה אֲשֶׁר נָטָה לוֹ דָּוִד וַיַּעַל דָּוִד עֲלוֹת לִפְנֵי ה' וּשְׁלָמִים.
 (יח) וַיִּכַּל דָּוִד מִהָעֲלוֹת הָעוֹלָה וְהַשְּׁלָמִים וַיְבָרַךְ אֶת הָעָם בְּשֵׁם ה' צְבָאוֹת.
 (יט) וַיַּחֲלֶק לְכָל הָעָם לְכָל הַמּוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמֵאִישׁ וְעַד אִשָּׁה לְאִישׁ חֲלַת לֶחֶם אַחַת וְאַשְׁפֹּר אֶחָד וְאַשִּׁישָׁה אַחַת וַיִּלָּךְ כָּל הָעָם אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ.
 (כ) וַיָּשֶׁב דָּוִד לְבָרַךְ אֶת בֵּיתוֹ וַתִּצֵּא מִיכַל בַּת שָׂאוּל לְקִרְיַת דָּוִד וַתֹּאמֶר מַה נִּכְבַּד הַיּוֹם מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר נִגְלָה הַיּוֹם לְעֵינַי אֲמָהוֹת עֲבָדָיו כְּהַגְלוֹת נְגִלוֹת אַחַד הָרִקִּים.
 (כא) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל מִיכַל לִפְנֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בִּי מֵאֲבֹיָי וּמִכָּל בֵּיתוֹ לְצִוּוֹת אֹתִי נִגִּיד עַל עַם ה' עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשִׁחֲקֵי לִפְנֵי ה'.
 (כב) וַנִּקְלַתִּי עוֹד מִזֹּאת וְהֵייתִי שְׂפֵל בְּעֵינַי וְעַם הָאֲמָהוֹת אֲשֶׁר אֲמַרְתָּ עִמָּם אֲכַבְּדָהּ.
 (כג) וּלְמִיכַל בַּת שָׂאוּל לֹא הָיָה לָהּ יָלֵד עַד יוֹם מוֹתָהּ.

(11) And the ark of Hashem remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and Hashem blessed Obed-edom, and his entire house.

(12) And it was told to King David, saying, "The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertains to him, because of the ark of God." And David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with joy.

(13) And it was so, that when those who bore the ark of Hashem had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened calf.

(14) And David danced before Hashem with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.

(15) So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of Hashem with shouting and with the sound of the horn.

(16) And it was so, as the ark of Hashem came into the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before Hashem; and she despised him in her heart.

(17) And they brought in the ark of Hashem, and set it in its place, in the middle of the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before Hashem.

(18) And when David had finished offering the burnt-offering and the peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Hashem of hosts.

(19) And he distributed to all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, both to men and women, to everyone a cake of bread, and a cake made in a pan, and a sweet cake. So all the people departed, everyone to his house.

(20) Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal **the daughter of Saul** came out to meet David, and said, "How honored was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the worthless fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"

(21) And David said to Michal, "Before Hashem, who chose me above your father, and above all his house, to appoint me prince over the people of Hashem, over Israel, **before Hashem I have laughed.**

(22) And I will be yet more lightly esteemed than this, and will be lowly in my own sight; and with the handmaids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be honored."

(23) And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

Francesco Salviati (c. 1553)



2. בראשית ה':כ"ח | Bereshit 5, 28:

(כח) וַיְחִי לִמְךָ שְׁתַּיִם וּשְׁמֹנִים וּשְׁנָה וּמָאֵת שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְּד בּוֹ. (כט) וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ נֹחַ לֵאמֹר זֶה יִנְחַמְנוּ מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוּ וּמִעֲבֹן יְדֵינוּ מִן הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אָרְרָה ה'.

(28) Lemech lived one hundred and eighty-two years and he fathered a son. (29) He named him Noah, saying, "This one will comfort us from our work and the labor of our hands, from the ground which Hashem has cursed."

3. בראשית י"ז:ה' | Bereshit 17 5:

(ה) וְלֹא יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת שְׁמֶךָ אַבְרָם וְהָיָה שְׁמֶךָ אַבְרָהָם כִּי אֵב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם נִתְּתִיךָ.

No longer will you be called by the name Avram, but your name will be Avraham, because I have chose you to be the father of many nations.

4. בראשית ט"ז:י"א | Bereshit 17, 11:

(יא) וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מֵלֶאכֶּה ה' הִנֵּה הָרָה וְיִלְדָתְךָ בֵּן וְקִרְאתָ שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל כִּי שָׁמְעָה ה' אֶל עֲנִיָּךְ.

The messenger of Hashem said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and will bear a son. You shall name him Yishmael, because Hashem (*EI*) has heard (*Shama*) your affliction.

.5 בראשית כ"ה:כ"ו | Bereshit 25, 26:

(כו) וַאֲחֵרִי בֶן יִצְחָק אֶחָיו וַיֵּדוּ אַחְזָת בְּעֵקֶב עֵשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְחָק בֶּן שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּלִדְתוֹ אֹתָם.

Afterwards, his brother emerged, his hand holding on to the heel of Esav, so he called him Yaakov. And Yitzchak was sixty years old when they were born.

.6 שמות ב'י' | Shemot 2,10:

(י) וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַתְּבִאֶהוּ לְבַת פַּרְעֹה וַיְהִי לָהּ לְבֵן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן הַמַּיִם מָשִׂיתָהוּ.

The child grew up, and she brought him to Paroh's daughter, and he was a son to her. She named him Moshe and said, "For I drew him from the water."

.7 בראשית י"ז:ט | Bereshit 17, 19:

(יט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ-לֹהִים אֶבְרָהָהּ אֵתְּךָ יִלְדֵת לְךָ בֵן וַיִּקְרָאתָ אֹתוֹ יִצְחָק וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי אִתּוֹ לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְזָרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו.

God said, "But Sarah, your wife, is to bear you a son. You shall name him Yitzchak and I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

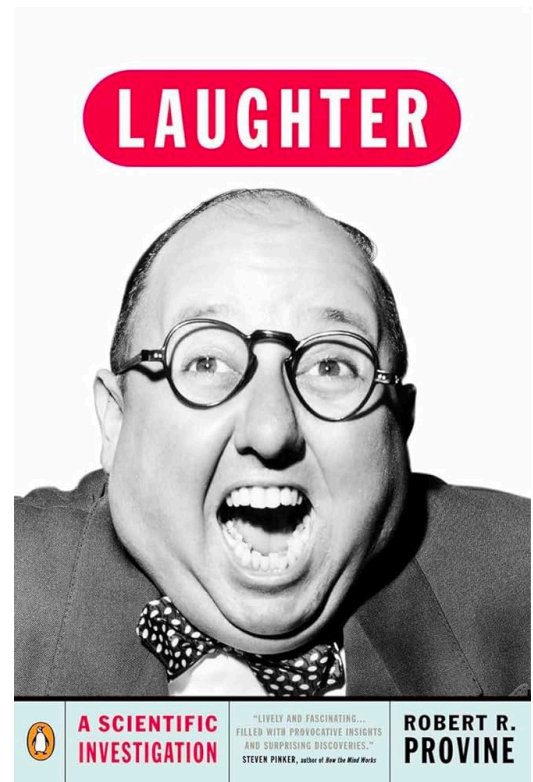


Robert Provine (1942-2019) was a notable American psychologist and neuroscientist, primarily known for his research on laughter. He was a professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Provine's work delved into the evolutionary and neurological underpinnings of laughter, exploring its social functions and physiological mechanisms. He authored several books and numerous scientific papers on the topic, contributing significantly to our understanding of human behavior and communication.

The Social Laughter Theory of Robert Provine

“Laughter is an instinctive, contagious, stereotyped, unconsciously controlled, social play vocalization that is unusual in solitary settings. Laughter punctuates speech and is not typically humor related, speakers often laugh more often than their audience, and male speakers are the best laugh getters. Tickle, an ancient laughter stimulus, is a means of communication (and distinction) between preverbal infants and mothers, and between friends, family, and lovers. Because you cannot tickle yourself, tickle involves a neurological self/nonsel discrimination, providing the most primitive social scenario.” (The reason you can't tickle yourself is that when you move a part of your own body, a part of your brain monitors the movement and anticipates the sensations that it will cause).

“Provine’s research has shown that the quality of the relationship with the tickler influences the laughter response it evokes. The likelihood that tickling caused by a stranger will cause laughter among adults is much lower than the likelihood that those same individuals will laugh from the tickling of a familiar and beloved person. Hence, laughter is an expression of emotional closeness, of intimacy, between the laugher and the tickler. The closer you are to someone, the easier it is for you to laugh.” (Rabbi Ilai Ofra)



8. בראשית י"ז:ט"ו | Bereshit 17:

(טו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל אַבְרָהָם שְׂרִי אֲשֶׁתְּךָ לֹא תִקְרָא אֶת שְׁמָהּ שְׂרִי כִּי שָׂרָה שְׁמָהּ. (טז) וַיְבָרַכְתִּי אֹתָהּ וְגַם נָתַתִּי מִמֶּנָּה לְךָ בֵּן וַיְבָרַכְתִּיהָ וְהָיְתָה לְגוֹיִם מְלֻכֵי עַמִּים מִמֶּנָּה יְהִי. (יז) וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָהָם עַל פָּנָיו וַיִּצְחַק וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלִבּוֹ הֲלִבָּן מֵאָה שָׁנָה יִלְדָּא וְאִם שָׂרָה הִבֵּת תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה תֵּלֵד.

(15) God said to Avraham, "Sarai, your wife, you shall not call her by the name Sarai, because Sarah is her name. (16) I will bless her and I will also give you a son from her. I will bless her, and she will become nations; kings of peoples will come from her." (17) Avraham fell on his face and laughed and said in his heart, "To a one hundred year old, will a child be born? Will Sarah, at ninety years old, give birth?"

9. בראשית י"ח:ט' | Bereshit 18:

(ט) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אֵיךְ שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בָּאֵהָל. (י) וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוּב אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעֵת חַיָּה וְהִנֵּה בֵּן לְשָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ וְשָׂרָה שְׂמַעְתָּ פֶתַח הָאֵהָל וְהוּא אֶחְרָיו. (יא) וַאֲבָרְהָם וְשָׂרָה זָקְנִים בָּאִים בַּיָּמִים חֲדָל לִהְיוֹת לְשָׂרָה אֶרֶחַ כְּנָשִׁים. (יב) וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר אַחֲרֵי בְלַתִּי הָיְתָה לִי עַדְנָה וְאֲדֹנָי זָקֵן. (יג) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָהָם לְמָה זֶה צִחַקְךָ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר הֲאִף אֶמְנָם אֵלֶּד וְאַנִּי זָקְנָתִי. (יד) הֲיִפְלֵא מִה' דָּבָר לְמוֹעֵד אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעֵת חַיָּה וְלִשְׂרָה בֵּן. (טו) וַתִּכְחַשׁ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר לֹא צִחַקְתִּי כִּי יִרְאֶה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא כִּי צִחַקְתִּי.

(9) They said to him, "Where is your wife, Sarah?" He said, "Here, in the tent."
 (10) He said, "I will surely return to you when the season comes again, and, behold, your wife Sarah will have a child!" Sarah was listening from the entrance to the tent which was behind him.
 (11) And Avraham and Sarah were elderly, coming on in years; Sarah had ceased to have a menstrual flow like women.
 (12) **Sarah laughed to herself**, saying, "After I have withered will I have pleasure?! And, my lord is old!"
 (13) Hashem said to Avraham, "Why has Sarah laughed, saying, 'will I really give birth and I am old?'"
 (14) Is anything too wondrous for Hashem? At this set time I will return to you, when the season comes again, and Sarah will have a son."
 (15) Sarah denied it, **saying, "I did not laugh"**, because she was afraid, and He said, "No, but you laughed."

10. רש"י בראשית י"ז:ט"ו | Rashi on Bereshit 14, 17:

(יז) ויצחק – וחדוי, וצחוק של שרה מחוך. למדת שאברהם האמין ושמה, ושרה לא האמינה וליגלגה, וזהו שהקפיד על שרה ולא הקפיד על אברהם.

AND ABRAHAM FELL UPON HIS FACE AND LAUGHED – This word ויצחק Onkelos translates by וחדוי which signifies joy ("and he rejoiced") but the similar verb in the case of Sarah (וַתִּצְחַק Genesis 18:12) he translates as meaning laughter. From this you may understand that Abraham had faith and rejoiced, and that Sarah had no faith and sneered, and that is why God was angry with Sarah (when she laughed) but was not angry with Abraham.

11. בראשית כ"א:י' | Bereshit 21:

(ח) וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּגְמַל וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מִשְׁתֵּה גְדוֹל בַּיּוֹם הַגָּמֵל אֶת יִצְחָק. (ט) וַתֵּרָא שָׂרָה אֶת בֶּן הָהָרֵם הַמִּצְרִית אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְאַבְרָהָם מִצְחָק. (י) וַתֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָהָם גֵּרֶשׁ הָאֵמָה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת בְּנָהּ כִּי לֹא יִירָשׁ בֶּן הָאֵמָה הַזֹּאת עִם בְּנֵי עִם יִצְחָק.

(8) The child grew and was weaned, and Avraham made a big feast on the day **Yitzchak** was weaned. (9) Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she bore to Avraham, **making fun of [Yitzhak?]** (10) She said to Avraham, "Cast out this handmaid and her son, because the son of this handmaid shall not inherit with my son, with **Yitzchak**."