
Joseph cries

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

—

Vayigash 5782



Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone withdraw from me!" So there was no one else about when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. His sobs were so loud that the Egyptians could hear, and so the news reached Pharaoh's palace. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still well?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dumfounded were they on account of him.

– **Bereshit 45:1-3** The Egyptians who had left the house heard the sound of weeping, and the matter spread like a wildfire until it came to the attention of Pharaoh's servants that Joseph was crying. **Radak on Bereshit 45:2**² We learn from this that when one sets out to do something, they must use their entire body to do it – **Ben Ish Chai Drashot Vayigash 3**³ "Joseph could not control himself," has Rabbi Chama bar Chaninah say that Joseph acted carelessly by instructing everybody to leave the room when he wanted to reveal himself to his brothers; had one of them kicked him he would have died. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman says that Joseph acted prudently. He was well aware of the righteousness of his brothers and did not suspect them of being or becoming guilty of bloodshed. He was certain that the brothers would not even kill an Egyptian who had framed them (they considered him an Egyptian). He certainly did not suspect them of wanting to kill their own brother who was a righteous person, a pillar of the elitist society of the

His sobs were so loud that the Egyptians could hear
וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-קוֹלוֹ בְּבִכּוֹ וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם
Bereshit 45:2

world! – **Shnei Luchot haBrit, Torah Ohr 45**⁴ In humans, emotions are automatically transmitted through visual cues, including non-verbal behaviours such as facial expressions and body language (Kret, 2015). Among all the signals by which emotions can be expressed, visible tears – and more specifically the shedding of tears in response to an emotional state, as opposed to those in response to pain or a physical irritation of the eye – are one of the most ubiquitous displays of human

emotional. – **Alfonso Pico et al in How Our Gaze Reacts to Another Person's Tears? Experimental Insights Into Eye Tracking Technology**⁵ How do our emotional tears affect the way we are treated? We tested whether tears, paired with either a neutral or a sad facial expression, elicited prosocial behaviour among perceivers... these findings suggest that tears increase prosocial behaviour by increasing trustworthiness... – **Lawrence Ian Reed et al in Emotional Tears: An Honest Signal of Trustworthiness Increasing Prosocial Behavior?**⁶

A new page of Talmud - Rabbi Alon Meltzer