

Exposure

Source Sheet by Dahlia Bernstein

בראשית מ"ה:א-ב
וְלֹא יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנֹּצְבִים עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָל-אִישׁ מֵעָלָי וְלֹא-עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהִתְדוּעַ יוֹסֵף אֶל-אָחָיו:
וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-קִלְוֹ בְּבִכְי וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּשְׁמַע בַּיִת פְּרַעֲהַ:

Genesis 45:1-2

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.

Rashi on Genesis 45:1:1

וְלֹא יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנֹּצְבִים AND JOSEPH COULD NOT REFRAIN HIMSELF BEFORE ALL THEM THAT STOOD — He could not bear that the Egyptians should stand by him witnessing how his brothers would be put to shame when he made himself known to them.

Rashi on Genesis 45:2:1

וַיִּשְׁמַע בַּיִת פְּרַעֲהַ AND THE HOUSE OF PHARAOH HEARD IT — The house of Pharaoh means his servants and the members of his household. בית here does not mean an actual house (so that the words would mean “and one heard it in the house of Pharaoh; cf. 5:16), but it is similar to (1 Kings 12:21) בית ישראל “the house of Israel”, or בית יהודה the house of Judah”, meaning the people of Judah. old French maisniede English all the inmates of a house.

Sforno on Genesis 45:1:1

וְלֹא יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנֹּצְבִים עָלָיו, he did not have the patience at this stage to deal with the private concerns of all the people who were awaiting to receive an audience and were already lining up in that house.

Or HaChaim on Genesis 45:1:1

ולא יכול יוסף להתאפק, Joseph could no longer contain himself, etc. He could not wait until all those present would leave of their own accord, but he called out loudly that everyone other than the brothers be removed from his presence immediately. The Torah adds the words **ולא עמד איש אתו**, that no one remained with him, to underline the speed with which his servants left his presence.

Rabbeinu Bahya, Bereshit 45:1:1-2

ולא יכול יוסף להתאפק לכל הנצבים עליו, “Joseph could no longer control his emotions from all those who stood around him.” It appears from this wording that the courtiers around Joseph became gradually more inclined to side with Yehudah in that argument, something that Joseph was not prepared to tolerate. This is why he ordered them out of his presence, calling out: “remove everyone from my presence!” Subsequently, the Torah reports: **ויתן בכי**, “he raised his voice by weeping.” He broke out crying after he was left alone with the brothers, **וישמעו מצרים וישמע בית פרעה**, “The Egyptians heard; then this was heard in Pharaoh’s palace.” According to Tanchuma Vayigash 5 things happened somewhat differently. The words “Joseph could no longer control himself” reflect a tremendous inner conflict raging within Joseph. If the brothers were to kill him, he had no next of kin who would demand to avenge his blood. He finally decided to take a chance on the brothers killing him rather than his exposing the fact that he had been kidnapped and sold into slavery by these men. This was the consideration which prompted him to order everybody out of the room.

Radak on Genesis 45:1:1

ולא יכול, the repeated references by Yehudah to the mental anguish experienced by his aged father proved too much for Joseph to maintain his composure. It kindled his sense of compassion also towards his brothers so that he could not restrain himself from weeping. In order not to make a public

spectacle of himself in front of people whom it did not directly concern, he ordered הוציאו כל איש מעלי, “remove everybody from my presence! The ones present not only left themselves but made sure that no one entered until invited. Joseph had said after all, כל איש, “everybody!”

Or HaChaim on Genesis 45:1:2

בהתודע יוסף, when Joseph revealed himself. The letter ב before התודע means "on account of" (his revealing himself). In order for the brothers to accept Joseph's claim that he was their brother, the matter of his sale had to be aired. Joseph wanted to spare his brothers the embarrassment of becoming known as people who had sold their brother, hence he had to clear everyone out of the room. When the Torah mentions immediately afterwards that Joseph wept loudly when he revealed himself and all of Egypt heard about it, this is a clear indication that Joseph was not concerned that he could be overheard. He was only concerned that his brothers' part in all this should not be overheard.

Rashbam on Genesis 45:1:1

(1) **YOSEF COULD NOT CONTROL HIMSELF.** Any longer, for until now, he did all that he did by mental self-control, as it is written above (Gen. 43:31), "He controlled himself and gave the order, 'Serve the meal.'"

Radak on Genesis 45:2:1

וישמעו מצרים, 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.

Siftei Chakhamim, Genesis 45:1:1

He could not bear that the Egyptians standing by him... The verse means that Yoseif could not bear his brothers' humiliation in front of all the people, so he said the people must leave. [Rashi knows this] because otherwise, why

did he have them leave?

Siftei Chakhamim, Genesis 45:2:1

Here, the reference is not to a literal house... Otherwise, it would not be vocalized *וַיִּשְׁמַע*, but rather *וַיִּשְׁמַע*, [so it would mean, “It was heard in the house of Pharaoh”]. (*Maharshal*)

Tur HaAroch, Genesis 45:1:1

וְלֹא יָכוֹל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנְּצִבִים, “and Joseph could no longer restrain himself in the presence of all the courtiers around him.” According to *Rashi* what bothered Joseph was that all the Egyptians would become privy to matters which were private between him and his brothers. He did not want to shame his brothers publicly when he would reveal himself to them, and unavoidably their part in his having been brought to Egypt in the first place would come to light. Nachmanides makes the point that whenever the expression *הִתְאַפְּקוֹת* occurs it denotes the strength of character of the person so described. The people surrounding Joseph had been so moved by Yehudah’s words that they appealed to Joseph to respond by releasing him. The pressure became so great that even steadfast Joseph could no longer withstand it. He therefore ordered everybody out of the hall in order to continue the dialogue with the brothers (Yehudah) in private. As soon as the Egyptians who had been present left the hall, Joseph broke out in tears, and weeping, something which the Egyptians now outside could not help overhearing. The meaning of the word *וַיִּקְרָא* in our verse is not a simple “reading” or instruction, without the subject raising his voice especially, but Joseph raised his voice angrily in ordering all the Egyptians surrounding him out into the courtyard.

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Vayigash 3:1

Another interpretation (of Gen. 44:18): THEN JUDAH DREW NEAR UNTO HIM. This text is related (to Job 41:8 [16]): ONE IS SO NEAR TO THE OTHER THAT NO AIR CAN COME BETWEEN THEM. This refers

to Judah and Joseph, for in whatever Joseph prided himself, Judah came and vanquished, as stated (in Gen. 45:1): JOSEPH COULD NOT RESTRAIN HIMSELF. To what were they comparable?⁹*Tanh., Gen. 11:3*. To a bull that went out; and, when all the beasts fled from him, he kicked (rt.: *B'T*) at one and gored at another. Then came the lion, but he did not stand up to him. Rather, when the lion appeared and sought out the bull, he was not to be found. So Joseph is likened to the bull, as stated (in Deut. 33:17): LIKE A FIRSTLING BULL HE HAS MAJESTY. The tribes also have been likened to beasts, and Joseph was priding himself as being over them and despising (rt.: *B'T*) them. (According to Gen. 42:7) HE BECAME A STRANGER TO THEM. Then goring at a particular one, (according to Gen. 42:24) HE TOOK SIMON FROM THEM. He acted so only until the lion came, < for > (according to Gen. 49:24) JUDAH IS A LION'S WHELP. He sought him out as the bull, but he was not to be found. Rather (according to Gen. 45:1): JOSEPH COULD NOT RESTRAIN HIMSELF. Why? (Prov. 30:30:) THE LION IS THE MIGHTIEST AMONG THE BEASTS, AND RETREATS BEFORE NONE, even because it is written of him (in Gen. 47:12): AND < JOSEPH > SUSTAINED < HIS FATHER AND HIS BROTHERS >.¹⁰*One would expect some saying about Judah. Buber's note here suggests that SUSTAINED be read as two words, apart from the biblical context, and interpreted as "All in all," i.e., the lion is "all in all" in the world of beasts. Cf. Tanh., Gen. 11:3: "Who has stood facing a bull? The lion, as stated (Gen. 44:18): THEN JUDAH DREW NEAR UNTO HIM."* Also in the world to come a fighting Messiah is going to arise from Joseph, but a Messiah who is to arise from Judah will be stronger than he, as stated (in Zech. 10:6): I WILL STRENGTHEN THE HOUSE OF JUDAH, < BUT THE HOUSE OF JOSEPH I WILL SAVE >.

Sefer HaYashar (midrash), Book of Genesis, Vayigash 7

And Joseph answered and said: Thou art speaking the truth and there is no false hood in thy mouth, for it hath been told unto us that the Hebrews are possessed of great strength, and that the Lord their God hath great pleasure in them, and that no one can stand against them. And on this I will agree to release your brother, if thou wilt agree to bring into my presence his brother

the son of his mother of whom ye have said he went away from you into Egypt. And if you bring unto me his brother, I will take him as a substitute for not one among you has pledged himself for him unto your father. And when he shall be brought before me I will send away with you thy brother for whom thou art pledged. And when Joseph spoke these words Judah's wrath was kindled against him, and his eyes filled with blood for anger, and he said unto his brothers: Behold this man seeketh this day his own destruction and the destruction of all Egypt. And Simeon answered unto Joseph saying: And did we not tell unto thee at the outset that we know not the place whither he went, nor do we know whether he be dead or alive, and wherefore does my lord demand of us such a thing? And when Joseph looked at Judah's countenance he saw that his wrath began once more to kindle within him. And Joseph said unto his brothers: Verily you have said that your brother was dead or lost, now therefore, if I should call him and he should appear in our presence would you give him unto me as a ransom for his brother? And Joseph called out with a loud voice: Joseph 1 oh, Joseph! come this day into my presence and appear before thy brethren and sit before them, and when Joseph had spoken these words his brothers looked around themselves each one in a different direction to see whither Joseph was to come before them. And when Joseph saw their actions he said unto them: Why do ye look around here and there, I am your brother Joseph whom you have sold into Egypt? Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to pre serve life. And his brothers were greatly afraid of him on hearing his words, and Judah especially was exceedingly terrified. And Benjamin, who was in a chamber when he heard the words of Joseph, he ran at Joseph and embraced him, and he fell upon his neck and they wept. And when the brothers of Joseph saw that Benjamin hath fallen upon the neck of his brother and wept with him, they also fell upon Joseph and they embraced him and they wept a great weeping with Joseph. And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying: Those men are Joseph's brothers, and it pleased Pharaoh greatly, for he was afraid of them, lest they turn Egypt into ruin. And Pharaoh sent his servant unto Joseph, to wish him joy on account of his brothers. And all the princes of the army and of the hosts that were in Egypt, came to rejoice with Joseph, and all Egypt rejoiced exceedingly about the brothers of Joseph. And Pharaoh sent his servant unto Joseph saying: Tell unto thy brothers and bring down all that

they have and let them come unto me and I will allow them to dwell in the best part of Egypt. And they did so.

Sefer HaYashar (midrash), Book of Genesis, Vayigash 8

- And Joseph commanded his steward to bring unto his brothers offerings and gifts and garments. And he brought unto them many regal garments and great many gifts. And Joseph divided it amongst them. And to each of them Joseph gave changes of golden and silver raiments and three hundred pieces of silver. And Joseph commanded them to put on those garments. And he brought them before Pharaoh, and when Pharaoh saw all the brothers of Joseph, all of them powerful men and of comely appearance, he rejoiced exceedingly. And after this they went away from the presence of Pharaoh to go into the land of Canaan, unto their father, and Benjamin their brother with them. And Joseph took eleven chariots of Pharaoh and gave unto them. And Joseph gave unto them likewise his own chariot in which he rode on the day he was made king of Egypt, to bring their father in it unto Egypt. And Joseph sent garments to all the children of his brothers and a hundred pieces of silver to every one of them, and he sent also garments for the wives of his brothers from the garments of the king's wives according to their numbers, and various perfumeries he sent likewise unto them. And he gave to every one of his brothers ten men to go with them into the land of Canaan to attend upon them and their children and all belonging to them in coming into Egypt. And Joseph sent by the hand of his brother Benjamin, ten garments for his ten sons, an additional gift above the gifts sent to the other children of Jacob's sons. And he sent to each of them fifty pieces of silver and ten of Pharaoh's chariots. And to his father he sent ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father, and all those that were with him, for provision on the road. And unto his sister Dinah he sent garments of silver and of gold and frankincense and myrrh and aloes, and all sorts of toilet articles in abundance. And he sent likewise such things to the wives of Benjamin from Pharaoh's wives. And he gave unto all his brothers and also to their wives, from all sorts of onyx stones and bdellium, rubies and emeralds, and from all luxuries worn by the nobility of the Egyptians. There was nothing left, of all precious things that

Joseph did not send unto his father's house. And he sent away his brothers and they went, and his brother Benjamin he sent with them, to go into the land of Canaan. And Joseph went out, to accompany them on the road on to the boundaries of Egypt, and he instructed them concerning his father and his household and their coming down into Egypt. And he said unto them: See that you fall not out by the way, for this thing was from the Lord in order to save the multitude of people from the famine, for five years yet will the famine be in the earth. And he commanded them saying: When you come into the land of Canaan do not bring that matter suddenly upon my father, but act prudently.

Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Tetzaveh, Torah Ohr 23

The reason for the bells on the rim of the robe of the High Priest is specifically spelled out in the Torah. His voice (approach) should be heard when he entered the Sanctuary. This was in the nature of securing permission before entering the Sanctuary. Anyone entering suddenly, i.e. unannounced, was guilty of death. We know of something similar in the palace of Ahasverus (Esther 4,11). I shall explain this in greater detail when I deal with Leviticus 16,17: "No one is to be in the Tent of Meeting when Aaron enters to obtain atonement in the Sanctuary." This is why the Torah commanded that he had to announce his arrival. It is not unlike the time Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. He had instructed that everyone present in the palace had to be removed first, except for himself and his brothers (Genesis 45,1). Service to the King has to be performed with no one else present. When one leaves the king one must also be granted permission so that the king's servants will know when to re-enter the king's presence. An additional dimension which is important when dealing with the presence before the King of Kings is that unless permission has been obtained both before entering and before leaving, G-d's angels are apt to kill the person who acts without permission. The Torah warns Aaron so that we may appreciate that if even a person of the exalted stature of Aaron is subject to such restrictions, anyone on a lower level does not even have to be warned specifically. When the Torah adds the words 'לפני ה', in 28,39, it adds stature to Aaron who is compared to an angel of the Lord of Hosts. According to our sages the reason

there must not be a tear in the robe (28,31), i.e. that it should be constructed in such a way that it is not liable to be torn, is because Satan is jealous of the High Priests's stature and tries to pull him by his robe as warriors do.

**Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Vayeshev, Miketz, Vayigash, Torah Ohr
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Bereshit Rabbah 93, 9 commenting on Genesis 45,1 "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 **קִדְיָן**, a pillar of the elitist society of the world!