

Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Murmuring Deep: "What if Joseph Hates us?"* pp. 320-321

Joseph weeps. Of all the many tears he sheds in the course of his narrative, these are the most mysterious. [referring to 50:17]. Indeed, tears by their nature are mysterious, overdetermined; they cause confusion or embarrassment in the social world, whose language offers no adequate translation.

...the history of Joseph's tears is a history of loneliness. Seven times he weeps alone; only when he weeps over Benjamin does his younger brother respond by weeping, too. During the masquerade, in revealing himself, in reassuring his brothers, his tears are not met by theirs. Even in meeting his father, it seems that he alone weeps. On each occasion, a private world of powerful but inscrutable emotion breaks through. Only with Benjamin, his true brother, his tears act as a language, opening a dialogue.

Genesis 42:24

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו אָכַל אֲשֶׁמֶת | אָנְחָנוּ עַל־אָחִינוּ אֲשֶׁר רָאִינוּ צָרַת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּהִתְחַנְּנוּ אֵלֵינוּ וְלֹא שָׁמְעָנוּ עַל־כֵּן בָּאָה אֵלֵינוּ הַצָּרָה הַזֹּאת:
וַיַּעַן רְאוּבֵן אֲתָם לֵאמֹר הֲלוֹא אָמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם | לֵאמֹר אֶל־תִּטְּאוּ בִּלְדָד וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם וְגַם־דָּמוֹ הִגָּה נִדְרָשׁ:
וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי שָׁמַע יוֹסֵף כִּי הִמְלִיץ בֵּינֵהֶם:
וַיִּסָּב מֵעַלֵיהֶם וַיִּבְכֶּה

And they said, a man to his brother, "But/*aval*, we are guilty for our brother, because we saw the trouble of his soul, when he pleaded with us, and we did not listen. That is why this trouble has come to us."

Then Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'? But you did not listen. And now his blood also is demanded."

They knew not that Joseph was listening, for an interpreter was between them. He turned from them and wept.

Genesis 43:29-31

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת־בְּנֵי־מִינְיֹן אָחִיו בְּרֵאשִׁית וַיֹּאמֶר הֲזֶה אַחֵיכֶם הַקָּטָן אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם אֵלַי וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֵהֶם יְחִנֵּף בְּנֵי:
וַיִּמְהַר יוֹסֵף כִּי־יִנְקְמוּ רַחֲמָיו אֶל־אָחִיו וַיִּבְקֶשׁ לִבְכוֹת וַיָּבֵא הַחֲדָרָה וַיִּבְדֵּךְ שָׁמָּה:
וַיִּרְתֵּץ פָּנָיו וַיִּצְא וַיִּתְאַפֵּק וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשִׂימוּ לָחֶם:

He lifted up his eyes, and he saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and asked, "Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me?"

And he went on, "May God be gracious to you, my boy."

With that, Joseph hurried out, for he was overcome with feeling toward his brother and sought to weep; he went into a room and wept there.

Then he washed his face, reappeared, and he controlled himself, and said "Serve bread."

Genesis 45:1

וְלֹא־יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנִּצְבִּים עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָל־אִישׁ מֵעַלֵי וְלֹא־עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהִתְנַדֵּעַ יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחִיו:
וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת־קוֹלָם בְּבִכּוֹ וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּשְׁמַע בַּיִת פְּרַעֲהַ: וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחִיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הֵעוֹד אֲבִי חַי וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ אָחִיו לַעֲנוֹת אִתּוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ מִפָּנָיו:

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.

He gave his voice in weeping, and the Egyptians could hear, and the House of Pharaoh heard.

And Joseph said to his brothers: "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?"

And his brothers could not answer, because they were terrified before him.

Genesis 45:4-15

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחִיו גִּשְׁוֹגֵנָא אֵלַי וַיִּגְּשׁוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יוֹסֵף אַחֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־מְכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרַיִמָּה:
..... יָד וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צַוְאַרְתֵי בְנֵי־מִינְיֹן אָחִיו וַיִּבְכֶּה וַיִּבְנִימוּן בְּכַה עַל־צַוְאַרְתֵּי:
טו וַיִּנְשָׁק לְכָל־אָחִיו וַיִּבְכֶּה עֲלֵיהֶם וַאֲחֵרֵי כֵן דִּבְרָו אִתּוֹ:

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come forward to me."

And when they came forward, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, he whom you sold into Egypt.

And he fell upon the neck of his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck.

He kissed all his brothers and wept over them; and afterwards his brothers spoke with him.

RaSHI (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, Troyes France 1040-1105)

ואחרי כן. מאחר שראוהו בוכה וְלבו שלם עִמָּהֶם דברו אחיו אתו שְׁמֵתָחֵלָה הָיוּ בוֹשִׁים מִמֶּנּוּ:

And afterwards after they saw him weeping, and that his heart was whole with them
his brothers spoke with him. For at first they were ashamed/embarrassed/abashed from him.

Don Isaac Abarbanel (Portugal, Castille, Naples 1437-1508)

ואחרי שסיים יוסף דבריו התעורר לחבק ולנשק ולהודיעם שלבו שלם עמהם באהבה וחבה רבה ולפי שאהבתו היתה חזקה לבנימין להיותו בן אמו בראשונה נפל על צואריו ויבך לזכור העצבון שסבלו זה על זה כל אותם הכ"ב שנה שהיו נפרשי' כי כן דרך האוהבי' בהיותם נפרדים זה מזה בראות זה את זה הנגה יתעורר צער ההעלמה וההפרדה עם מציאות ההראות לפי שכל הפך יוכר בהפכו ואחרי כן נשק לכל אחיו ובכה עליהם מהסב' שבכה על בנימין. והם לא בכו עליו לפי שהאדם יבכה מהרעה שהגיע לו מזולתו ולא יבכה על הרע שעשה הוא עצמו ולכן היו אז הם נכלמים לא בוכים ואחרי שעבר כל הענין הזה ונתישבו בלבותם דברי יוסף וראו כי מאת י"י היתה זאת דברו אחיו אתו ולא נבהלו מפניו כמו שעשו קודם זה. וזה טעם אמרו ואחרי כן דברו אחיו אתו שהיה ראוי שיאמר ואחרי כן דברי אתו אלא שכינה כאן הכתוב בשם אחיו להגיד שלא דברו עמו כבושים ולא כנכלמים מהענין אלא כאחיו הנאהבים

After Joseph concluded his speech, he was moved to embrace and to kiss them,
and to make them know that his heart was whole with them, in love and great affection.
And because his love for Benjamin was especially strong, because he was the son of his mother,
He fell upon his neck and wept,
Remembering the sadness they had both endured for all those 22 years that they had been separated.
This is the way it is with people who love each other, who have been apart,
When they see each other, then all the pain of not seeing and of separation
is awakened by the experience of seeing each other.
For things become obvious by contrast with their opposite.
And afterwards he kissed each of his brothers, and wept over them, for the reason that he wept upon Benjamin.
But they did not weep upon him,
For a person weeps because of the evil that is caused to him by another.
He will not weep over an evil that he did himself.
Therefore they were then ashamed, not weeping.
And after this entire matter happened, and the words of Joseph became settled in their hearts,
and they saw that "from God did this happen," **then** his brothers spoke with him,
and they were not terrified of him, as they had been before this.
This is why the text says precisely *And afterwards his brothers spoke with him.*
For it could easily have said "afterwards they spoke with him."
But it specifically calls them "his brothers",
to emphasize that they did not speak with him as abashed or humiliated by what had happened,
but rather as beloved brothers

Or HaHayyim (Hayyim ibn Attar 1696-1743, Morocco, Italy, Jerusalem)

ויבך עליהם ואחרי כן דברו וגו'. פירוש אחר שראו שבכה עליהם אז סמך לבם ודברו אתו כי כל הדברים שהיה אומר אפשר שהיה אומר להם כן להסיר מהם הבושה ולעולם לבכו ימר עליהם מצד המעשה. אכן כשראו שחבק אותם ובכה על פרידתם הכירו במדת טובו כי אה נאמן הוא ודברו אתו. והגם שבכה מקודם אין הוכחה מזה כי אפשר זכר צרתו ובכה עליה מה שאין כן בכי זה שבכה עליהם. גם בכי הראשון יש מקום לתלות שבכה על פרידת בנימין מה שאין כן כשבכה עליהם בפרטות זה יגיד אחוה בלב:

He wept over them and afterwards they spoke to him

The interpretation is: after they saw that he wept upon them, then their hearts were reassured.

For everything he had said to them, he could have been saying to remove their shame,

but all the while his heart remaining embittered toward them because of the crime.

Therefore, when they saw that he embraced them, and wept over their long separation,

then they perceived the quality of his goodness, that he was a faithful brother, and they spoke with him.

And even though he had wept earlier, that did not prove anything,

because it is possible that he remembered his suffering, and wept about that.

This weeping is different because it says explicitly *he wept over them*.

Also, the first weeping could have been exclusively over the separation from Benjamin,

which was not the case here, where *he wept over them*...individually,

demonstrating brotherhood in the heart.

Haamek Davar (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin of Volozhin, 1816-1893)

וינשק לכל אחיו ויבך עליהם ואחרי כן וגו'. שראה אותם נבהלים בראותם כי החלומות נתקיימו כדבר נבואה. וא"כ אולי מבין יוסף דפי' החלום אחד עשר כוכבים משתחוים לי היינו בתמידות וכך גזר ה' שיהיו לו לעבדים. וא"כ אין יכולים לדבר עמו פנים אל פנים. אבל הוא הראה להם במה שנשק אותם ובכה עליהם כדרך אח עם אחיו. הבינו מזה שגם הוא מבין שהחלומות כבר נתקיימו ומעתה איננו לאדון עליהם ח"ו. עתה דברו עמו:

For he saw that they were terrified by seeing that the dreams had come true, like prophecy.

And if so, perhaps Joseph believed that the fulfillment of the dream of the 12 stars bowing to him

Was to last forever, and that God had ordained that they be slaves to him.

And so they were not able to speak with him face to face.

But he showed them, by kissing them, and by weeping over them, in the way of a brother with his brothers.

And so they understood from his behaviors that he understood that the dreams had been fulfilled

And that he would no longer be lord over them, God forbid.

So now they spoke with him.

Sefat Emet (Rabbi Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib of Ger, 1847-1905) VaYigash 1876

ונאמר ואח"כ דברו אחיו אתו כלפי מה שנאמר ולא יכלו דברו לשלום. עתה דברו עמו וסרה מהם קנאת יוסף. והאמת כי קנאה לא שייך על אדם השלם בתיקון מדריגתו ומקומו כי כ"א נברא במדריגה המיוחדת לו ומה קנאה שייך בזה. רק עד שלא נתקן הצדיק בכל שלימותו שייך עליו קנאה. לכן נאמר לעתיד שיהיו מתוקנים כל המעשים וכל אחד על מקומו יבוא בשלום וסרה קנאת אפרים כו':

It says afterwards his brothers spoke with him.

This is in contrast with what had been stated at the very beginning of their story:

they were not able to speak with him for peace (Genesis 37:4).

Now they spoke with him, and their jealousy toward Joseph departed from them.

And the truth is that jealousy does not attach to a person who is complete in their rung and their place.

For everyone is created in the rung designated specifically for him/her,

And what place is there for jealousy?

Only when a tzaddik is still incomplete does jealousy take hold.

Therefore it is said that one day in the future, all actions will be repaired,

And each person will come to her/his place in peace, *and the jealousy of Ephraim will cease (Isaiah 11:13)*