



11 Tevet 5784 | December 23, 2023

## **Vayigash: A Cry So Loud** **Karolyn Bengner, Class of 2026**

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Never before has Yaakov's pain resonated with me as it does this year. The anguish of not only losing a son but not knowing whether he is alive, hurt, or being cared for. All the thoughts and images that must be running through Yaakov's mind...

This year, that pain is particularly real. Hundreds of families do not know the fate of their loved ones—Are they alive? Hurt? Cared for? This gut-wrenching torment is a form of torture that Yaakov, and too many people today, endure.

“And he wept so loud all of Egypt heard” (Bereishit 45:2).

Today an entire nation is crying out but not with the relief of being united. Rather, with the distressed despair of not knowing.

Not knowing if their loved ones are safe or hurting. Not knowing if their son or daughter is crying in pain. Not knowing “*Ha-od avi chai?*” “Is my father still alive?” (Bereishit 45:3).

These words, asked by Yosef with such hope and anxiety, today are being asked by thousands of people across the globe. Is my father, mother, brother, sister, son, or daughter still alive? We are asking with a tormented hope, terrified of the answer, but needing some certainty.

In *parshat* Vayigash our people, fleeing a famine, leave the land of Canaan and enter Mitzrayim, which later would become a land of hardship, distress, a narrow place.

Today, 137 of our people are still held captive within a land of distress, literally within a narrow place. They did not choose to go there. They were not fleeing a famine. They were stolen and carted away. 137 individuals...

Before this year I did not understand why *parshat* Vayigash listed the names of Yaakov's male descendents when they entered Egypt. Today I know full well why those names were recorded. They bear witness to the reality of history. It is testimony to the individuals themselves—the singular people who lived a life and transitioned to another place. It is a form of memory. Each name represents a life fundamentally changed.



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Today we have 240 lives who are fundamentally changed, uprooted, and transitioned to another place not by their choice. We must bear witness to their history and their story. And we cannot forget them.

Eden Yerushalmi, 24	Andrey Kozlov, 27	Itay Svirsky, 38
Ilan Weiss, 56	Dror Kaplun, 68	Guy Iluz, 26
Gad Haggai, 73	Segev Kalfon, 26	Yair Yaakov, 59
Judy Weinstein, 70	Maya Goren, 56	Sasha Trupanov, 27
Elia Toledano, 27	Itzhak Gelerenter, 53	Arye Zalmanovich, 86
Doron Steinbrecher, 30	Ori Danino, 24	Amit Buskila, 28
Almog Sarusi, 26	Nimrod Cohen, 19	Romi Leshem Gonen, 23
Dror Or, 48	Sagi Dekel Chen, 35	Ofra Keidar, 70
Eliyahu (Churchill) Margalit, 75	Itai Chen, 19	Orión Hernández Rado, 30
Hamza Alziedana, 22	Tal Chaimi, 42	Kong Salao
Youssef Hamis Alziedana, 53	Rom Braslavski, 19	Ofir Tzarfati, 27
Sujith Nissanka, 48	Ziv Berman, 26	Bipin Joshi, 23
Yosef Chaim Ohana, 23	Gali Berman, 26	Lior Rudaeff, 61
Michel Nisenbaum, 59	Ariel Baruch, 35	Yagev Buchshtab, 34
Tamir Nimrod, 19	Aviv Atzili, 49	Idan Alexander, 19
Omer Neutra, 22	Tomer Ahimas, 20	Yair Horn, 45
Yonatan Mordechai Samerano, 21	Tamir Adar, 38	Eitan Horn, 37
Shlomo Mansour, 85	Jimmy Geliyor Pacheco	Arbel Yahod, 28
Lobanov Alexander, 32	Sahar Baruch, 24	Dolev Yahod, 35
	Ravid Katz, 51	Abraham Munder, 78



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Kaid Farhan Elkadi, 53	Or Levy, 33	Agam Berger, 19
Joshua Loitu Mollel, 21	Guy Gilboa-Dalal, 22	Ohad Ben Ami, 55
Elad Katzir, 47	Gadi Moshe Mosez, 79	Nick Beiser, 19
Oded Lifshitz, 83	Yoram Metzger, 80	Naama Levy, 19
Amiram Cooper, 84	Daniella Gilboa, 19	Almog Meir Jan, 21
Ronen Engel, 55	Evyatar David, 23	Karina Arieiv, 19
Avigail Idan, 3	Omri Miran, 46	Noa Argamani, 26
Channa Peri, 79	Alon Ohel, 22	Or Avinathan, 30
Nadav Popplewell, 51	Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23	Liri Elbag, 18
David Konio, 33	Fernando Marman, 60	Omer Wenkert, 22
Shlomi Ziv, 39	Bar Kuperstein, 21	Carmel Gat, 39
Tal Shoham, 38	Eli Sharabi, 55	Kfir Bibas, 10 months
Itzhak Elgarat, 69	Yossi Sharabi, 51	Ariel Bibas, 4
Alexander Dancyg, 75	Keith Samuel Siegel, 64	Shiri Bibas, 32
Inbar Haiman, 27	Ron Sherman, 19	Yarden Bibas, 34
Omer Shem Tov, 21	Elia Cohen, 27	Ofer Kalderon, 53
Tsachi Idan, 49	Elkana Bohbot, 34	Louis Har, 70

Each of these names, and those already returned, should be recorded, their stories recounted and told for generations to come. Just as Yosef was reunited with his family, may these people be reunited with theirs. And just as our forefathers left Egypt, please God, may it be your will that all of your children leave this narrow place safely.

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*Karolyn Benger has served as the Executive Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council in Phoenix and the Executive Director of the Jewish Interest Free Loan in Atlanta. She is a graduate of Emory University with a degree in Political Science and a specialization in the Middle East. Karolyn has taught at Emory University, Georgia Tech, and Emerson College.*