



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Shlomo Dalezman



During the first week of *Pesach* vacation I was lucky enough to travel to Poland with four fellow Orayta students on the Heritage trip. During the trip we visited Treblinka, Auschwitz - Birkenau, Majdanek, Warsaw, Lodz, and Chelmno, to name just a few. The place that impacted me the most was in the woods outside the Polish city of Tarnow.

Prior to the War 25,000 Jews lived in Tarnow. In the Buczyna woods in Zbylitowska Gora, outside of Tarnow, an estimated 10,000 people killed by Germans are buried in mass-graves, including 6,000 Jews, 4,000 Poles and 800 children.

We came upon this mass-grave in the dead of night. We walked by homes, and eventually reached the entrance to the woods where this mass-grave is located. There is a memorial commemorating the death of the 10,000 people. A little further on, down a slope, we came to a fenced off section. The fenced off section is the grave of the 800 children. Right behind the grave, the depths of the forest stares back at you, in the darkness that surrounds the stretch of ground.

As I heard Polish accounts of the children being led to their deaths, I couldn't help but think of children that I feel close to: my little cousins, kids that I have baby-sat since they were born, marching along to their deaths. As we stood around this fence on the edge of the forest, I heard the father of one of the students on the trip sobbing uncontrollably.

I stared into the black depth of the forest, and felt a glimmer of hope. The darkness of the forest would erode; it wouldn't be so dark. A child was going to walk out of the forest. I knew it. The child would be emaciated, wearing a rag, and sucking its thumb. But most importantly, it would be *alive*. I was just waiting for the child. It was only a matter of time.

As I stood around the fence with *Yahrzeit* candles lit, my hope grew. *There is a child who is alive*. The minutes kept moving; yet time stopped mattering. I would just wait, for *there is a child who is alive*.

It was eventually time to leave the forest and head to our nice plush hotel for the night. I stood waiting, and waiting, and waiting, but no child came. I turned my back, and began to walk away; I turned around and stared for a final time into the dark gloominess of the forest. And it hit me.

There are children who are alive. I am that child that survived. My entire family is that child who left the forest, along with every descendent of survivors.

Let us *never forget*, let us *always remember*, and let us be able to say, truthfully, *never again*.