



Poland Diary 2011

Day 2 - Friday

Dear Parents,

After an extremely early wake up (4:45)!! We boarded the coach filled with a mixture of different emotions. Today, we were going to Auschwitz. The atmosphere on the bus was indescribable, some of us were anxious, whereas others appeared calm. After a sleepy journey to the much anticipated destination, we had arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau. All we could see was the iconic image of the gates, of what some would describe as the gates of hell. We stood in a circle, boys complete with their *Tefillin* and girls dressed in Israeli flags. As a year group, we sang *Adon Olam* from the bottom of our hearts.

This challenging moment was unlike anything that we had ever experienced before. We then proceeded through the steel gates, the scenery suddenly hit us. How many of our ancestors had been murdered here? How many Jews were prosecuted for the sole purpose of our existence? These were just a few of the pressing and difficult questions pouring into all of our minds as we stood as Jews next to the bunkers where thousands of our fellow Jews we kept like animals. Just 70 years ago, this felt almost unreal, as if the holocaust was a distant nightmare being brought to life. Yet, as we stood in the freezing cold, wrapped in our layers the Holocaust became a reality, the Holocaust became real. As our prayers echoed down the empty bunker, our intrinsic pride of being a free Jew came to light and we all came together as one.

Our thoughts were with those who perished so tragically. Our entire year was merely a fraction of the vast amount of Jews cramped into one bunker. As we walked around the camp, the image of the cattle carts struck a cord inside of us, and reminded us of the innocent people murdered in cold blood. This truly made us appreciate our freedom and the newly found security that comes with the state of Israel.

We then surrounded the gas chambers and listened to our inspiring guide, Sara, tell us true stories of how they were deceived into believing that they were simply having a shower, but the harsh reality was far from this. The image of Jewish mothers and fathers helplessly clinging onto their children played with our minds and we were overcome with emotion. We then said a prayer for those who perished in Auschwitz and once again we came as one and sang *Acheinu* followed by *Am Yisroel Chai*. Then, as proud Jews we left the camp with our heads held high and our hearts filled with pride.

Miss you and love you

From Sarah and Hannah H.

X