



## Poland Diary 2011

### Day 6 – Tuesday, part 1

Dear parents,

This morning we went to Treblinka. It was a very different concentration camp to the others we had already experienced as, unlike Auschwitz and Majdanek, there was nothing left of the camp itself. In its place, there are a number of memorials to the victims who died there, including stone railway sleepers that stretch on into the distance. More significantly, there are a series of four fields with 17,000 stones of varying sizes which represent the 17,000 different Jewish communities in Poland alone that fell victim to the Holocaust. It was shocking to see a physical representation of such devastation - more so when you consider the amount of people within each of those 17,000 communities. We each spread out and had a session of deep thought by one of the stones, where we had the opportunity to mull over the horrific sites we had seen over the duration of the trip, and appreciate the sense of loss of such a culturally rich Jewish community throughout Poland and the rest of Europe.

We then gathered at the central monument where Rabbi Riffkin told us of the late Chief Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits's interpretation of the phrase "never again" in relation to the Holocaust. As Jews, we must not only appreciate our religion and culture in the face of the near destruction we faced as a people, but in addition, we must appreciate it because of the wonderful religion it is on its own. I think this is an important concept to remember.

After Rabbi Zobin recited *Kaddish*, Jonathan Gaon recited a very moving poem, which he had written, followed by blowing the shofar. I personally found the sound of the shofar in such a desolate place, quite an emotional experience. The sound of the shofar is meant to awaken you to the spiritual levels of the world, and I felt further awakened to the importance of remembering the victims of the Holocaust. This extra dimension to the experience really helped make a very special ceremony for those who had died.

As the last concentration camp on the trip, I felt that it was a fitting conclusion to that aspect of the trip, and an experience which I think I will never forget. In that way, we too should never forget our brethren who died during the Holocaust.

Love,  
Josh Cainer