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10th Grade
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First Place High School Essay

In Times of sorrow, take heart,
Though you stand at death's door: the
Candle flares up before it dies, and
Wounded Lions roar.

(Take Heart, Samuel Hanagid)

Day of Sorrow and Hope

When I was ten years old, I read a story which had a great impact on me. This story was about a Jewish family — a father, a mother, and their little daughter. During World War II, righteous gentiles hid this family in a tiny underground hole. The hot summer turned into a rainy autumn; then the cold and snowy winter began; then once again the rainy spring started... This did not last for a day, a week, nor a month, but a couple of years. Sometimes the family thought that death was better than this type of life.

All children dream of something and this little girl had a dream too. She dreamed... of crying. However, she could not start to cry because every time she began to do so, her parents begged her to stop and told her that the Nazis would hear her, and kill them and the people who were hiding them. I often thought about this girl, and every time I did so, I wanted to cry with her. However, I always calmed myself by telling myself that this story was fictional.

When I moved to the United States six years ago, I began attending Tarbut V'Torah Community Day school, which I am still attending. There, I saw a real person who lived through the same situation as the little girl and her family. The founder of this school, Irving Gelman, his family, and a girl whose mother and father were murdered by the Nazis and who later became his wife, were hidden underground by a Polish family. I think that they also often wanted to cry.

In Israel, there is a day when for one minute everything pauses. Everyone, wherever they may be, stop and remember the millions of innocents who perished because of someone's madness, hate and anger, and because of someone else's indifference. I think that there should be a day like this in the United States and in every other country, a day when for a least one minute people will stop, remember the perished innocents, and think about what should be done so that this will never happen again. When the war ended and the almost blind mother, father and daughter came out of the hole, the first thing the girl asked was "Can I cry now?".

I would name this day — DAY OF SORROW AND HOPE, sorrow for those whose life was taken and hope that this will never happen again. I would make the little girl whose dream was to cry the symbol of this day.