

Send in your buttons

ONE-AND-A-HALF million. How can one fathom such a number? How can one grasp the fact that this amount of children perished in the Holocaust?

If anybody could possibly come close to appreciating the magnitude of this horror, perhaps it is the Bialik College students who have spent the last several years trying to collect 1.5 million buttons – one for each child who died. It was a group of year 4 students back in 2007 who had the idea. They had watched the documentary film *Paper Clips*, which follows students in Tennessee collecting six million paper clips to represent the six million Jews killed in the Shoah. The youngsters were inspired by these non-Jewish students on the other side of the world, and felt that as Jewish students, they must do something themselves to remember.

One suggested collecting erasers, to represent the way Jewish communities were completely erased; another suggested dominoes, noting children fell like dominoes under the Nazis. But in the end, buttons were chosen. Just as buttons hold clothes together, children hold their families together.

This year 4 class may have now graduated from year 12, but the project they hatched is far from abandoned. After experiencing somewhat of a plateau, a fresh group of Bialik students, from primary to high school, are vying to finish it. Once they've gathered 1.5 million buttons, the plan is to erect a memorial sculpture at the school. They've got 600,000 more to go, and are wanting to reach that target by the end of the school year. Perhaps it seems like a big ask.

But with all the campaigns and causes out there, this one is asking next to nothing of you. Not for your money, or your skills, and for hardly any of your time. If you can simply take a minute to dig up a few loose buttons, you are not only helping out these school kids – you are contributing to the memory of children who died in the Holocaust.

Today, the passing of the survivors presents a unique challenge. We are on the inevitable cusp of having no-one left to tell these vital stories firsthand.

The second, third, and even fourth generations are doing an admirable job in many respects as we move forward with fewer survivors in our midst. This project is a prime example. Please support these Bialik students with a couple of buttons, and let's hope that as a community, we can see this project to its worthwhile completion.