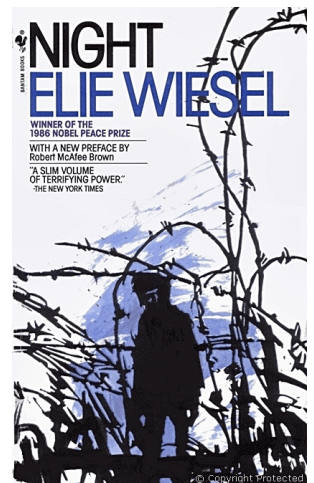


“NIGHT”

Remembering Elie Wiesel

Elie Wiesel was born in 1928 in Sighet, Transylvania, which is now part of Romania. He was fifteen years old when he and his family were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. His mother and younger sister perished, his two older sisters survived. Elie and his father were later transported to Buchenwald, where his father died shortly before the camp was liberated in April 1945. After the war, Elie Wiesel studied in Paris and later became a journalist. During an interview with the distinguished French writer, Francois Mauriac, he was persuaded to write about his experiences in the death camps. The result was his internationally acclaimed memoir, *Night* (*La Nuit*), which has since been translated into more than thirty languages.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter appointed Elie Wiesel as Chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. In 1980, he became the Founding Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. He is President of The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, an organization he and his wife created to fight indifference, intolerance and injustice. Elie Wiesel has received more than 100 honorary degrees from institutions of higher learning. A devoted supporter of Israel, Elie Wiesel has also defended the cause of Soviet Jews, Nicaragua's Miskito Indians, Argentina's Desaparecidos, Cambodian refugees, the Kurds, victims of famine and genocide in Africa, of apartheid in South Africa, and victims of war in the former Yugoslavia. For more than fifteen years, Elie and his wife Marion have been especially devoted to the cause of Ethiopian-born Israeli youth through the Foundation's Beit Tzipora Centers for Study and Enrichment. Teaching has always been central to Elie Wiesel's work. Since 1976, he has been the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University, where he also holds the title of University Professor. He is a member of the Faculty in the Department of Religion as well as the Department of Philosophy. Previously, he served as Distinguished Professor of Judaic Studies at the City University of New York (1972-76) and the first Henry Luce Visiting Scholar in Humanities and Social Thought at Yale University (1982-83). Elie Wiesel is the author of more than sixty books of fiction and non-fiction, including *A Beggar in Jerusalem* (Prix Médicis winner), *The Testament* (Prix Livre Inter winner), *The Fifth Son* (winner of the Grand Prize in Literature from the City of Paris), two volumes of his memoirs, *All Rivers Run to the Sea* and *And the Sea is Never Full*, and most recently *The Sonderberg Case*. For his literary and human rights activities, he has received numerous awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal, the National Humanities Medal, the Medal of Liberty, and the rank of Grand-Croix in the French Legion of Honor. In 1986, Elie Wiesel won the Nobel Prize for Peace, and soon after, Marion and Elie Wiesel established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. Elie Wiesel died on July 2, 2016 in Manhattan.





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Elie Wiesel is dead. He spent his last years inciting hatred, defending apartheid & palling around with fascists.

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Theme One: Why Do We Pray?

1. Passage: Conversation with Moishe the Beadel, page 4-5

"There are no Kabbalists in Sighet," my father would often tell me.

He wanted to drive the idea of studying Kabbalah from my mind. In vain. I succeeded on my own in finding a master for myself in the person of Moishe the Beadle.

He had watched me one day as I prayed at dusk.

"Why do you cry when you pray?" he asked, as though he knew me well.

"I don't know," I answered, troubled.

I had never asked myself that question. I cried because ... because something inside me felt the need to cry. That was all I knew.

"Why do you pray?" he asked after a moment.

Why did I pray? Strange question. Why did I live? Why did I breathe?

"I don't know," I told him, even more troubled and ill at ease. "I don't know."

From that day on, I saw him often. He explained to me, with great emphasis, that every question possessed a power that was lost in the answer ...

Man comes closer to God through the questions he asks Him, he liked to say. Therein lies true dialogue. Man asks and God replies. But we don't understand His replies. We cannot understand them. Because they dwell in the depths of our souls and remain there until we die. The real answers, Eliezer, you will find only within yourself.

"And why do you pray, Moishe?" I asked him.

"I pray to the God within me for the strength to ask Him the real questions."

We spoke that way almost every evening, remaining in the synagogue long after all the faithful had gone, sitting in the semidarkness where only a few half-burnt candles provided a flickering light.

One evening, I told him how unhappy I was not to be able to find in Sighet a master to teach me the Zohar, the Kabbalistic works, the secrets of Jewish mysticism. He smiled indulgently. After a long silence, he said, "There are a thousand and one gates allowing entry into the orchard of mystical truth. Every human being has his own gate. He must not err and wish to enter the orchard through a gate other than his own. That would present a danger not only for the one entering but also for those who are already inside."

And Moishe the Beadle, the poorest of the poor of Sighet, spoke to me for hours on end about the Kabbalah's revelations and its mysteries. Thus began my initiation. Together we would read, over and over again, the same page of the Zohar. Not to learn it by heart but to discover within the very essence of divinity.

And in the course of those evenings I became convinced that Moishe the Beadle would help me enter eternity, into that time when question and answer would become ONE.

2. Bereishis 2:4-7

ד אלה תולדות השמים והארץ, בהבראם: ביום, עשות ה' אלקים--ארץ ושמים.

4 These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.

ה וכל שיח השדה, טרם יהיה בארץ, וכל-עשב השדה, טרם יצמח: כי לא המטיר ה' אלקים, על-הארץ, ואדם אין, לעבד את-האדמה.

5 No shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground;

ו ואד, יעלה מן-הארץ, והשקה, את-כל-פני האדמה.

6 but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

ז וייצר ה' אלקים את-האדם, עפר מן-האדמה, וניפח באפו, נשמת חיים; ויהי האדם, לנפש חיה.

7 Then the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

3. Rashi, Bereishis 2:5

Why did it not rain? Since there was no one to work the land and recognize the goodness of the rain. So when man was created and he realized that rain was necessary, he prayed for rain, and then it rained, and the trees and grass began to grow.

ומה טעם לא המטיר, לפי שאדם אין לעבוד את האדמה ואין מכיר בטובתם של גשמים, וכשנא אדם וידע שהם זורח לעולם התפלל עליהם וירדו, ולמחו האילנות והדשאים:

4. She'arim Bitfillah, Perek 3 [Rabbi Shimshon Pincus]

One of the important principles in the way Hashem interacts with this world is that despite the fact that He sees everything and knows all of existence, He acts as if He does not see what is not shown to Him, and does not know what is not raised before Him

והנה אחד מן הכללים הגדולים בדרכי השגחה הוא, דאע"ג דהקב"ה רואה הכל ויודע כל המציאות, אבל כך סידר הוא יתברך בסדר הנהגת העולם שכביכול אינו רואה מה שאין מראים לפניו ואינו יודע מה שלא מעוררים אליו יתברך.

5. Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 14a

א"ר אליעזר למה נמשלה תפלתן של צדיקים כעתר, לומר לך מה עתר זה מהפך את התבואה בגורן ממקום למקום, אף תפלתן של צדיקים מהפכת דעתו של הקב"ה ממדת אכזריות למדת רחמנות.

6. Shem Mishmuel, Toldos, 5672

ונראה לפרש על פי מאמר כ"ק אבי אדומ"ר זצ"ל"ה שיעקב ועשו הם כדמיון עץ החיים ועץ הדעת טוב ורע, ששניהם יש להם כח החיבור כטבע האמצעי, אלא שעץ החיים מחבר חלקי החיים לבד ועץ הדעת טוב ורע מחבר טוב ורע, כן יעקב חיבר השמים והארץ על ידי שהעלה את הארץ לשמים, ועשו השפיל את השמים לארץ. ויש להוסיף בזה ביאור על פי מה שביאר הוא זצ"ל"ה דברי הש"ס ריש בבא קמא (ג') מבעה זה אדם,

שנאמר אם תבעיון בעיו. כי צורת האדם לחבר את העולם העליון והתחתון, והוא על תפלה, ועל כן נקרא על שם תפלה. אך אם הוא מחבר טוב ורע הרי הוא מזיק. ויש להוסיף בזה דברים, כי אדם מספרו מ"ה, כמספר שם הוי"ה ב"ה במלוי אלפיו, והוא שם הכולל כידוע ליודעים על כן יש בו כח החיבור, והחיבור נעשה על ידי שהוא משתמש בעולם הזה רק לצורך עולם הבא, ומקיים (משלי ג') "בכל דרכיך דעהו", ומורה במעשיו שאין העולם הזה נפרד לעצמו רק הוא משמש לעולם הבא... בזה עצמו הוא מחבר עולם הזה לעולם הבא ועולם התחתון ועולם העליון. וכן בתפלה כשהוא מתפלל אף לצרכי עולם הזה אם הוא מתכוון כדי להשיג על ידו עולם הבא. ואם חס ושלום עושה להיפוך שהעיקר אצלו עולם הזה והוא משתמש בעניני עולם הבא ועולם העליון לצורך תאוות עולם הזה הרי הוא מחבר ומשפיל את העולם העליון לתחתון, וזהו אדם המזיק...

Theme Two: G-d Amidst Evil

7. Passage: Rosh Hashana at Buna

THE SUMMER was coming to an end. The Jewish year was almost over. On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the last day of that cursed year, the entire camp was agitated and every one of us felt the tension. After all, this was a day unlike all others. The last day of the year. The word "last" had an odd ring to it. What if it really were the last day?

The evening meal was distributed, an especially thick soup, but nobody touched it. We wanted to wait until after prayer. On the *Appelplatz*, surrounded by electrified barbed wire, thousands of Jews, anguish on their faces, gathered in silence.

Night was falling rapidly. And more and more prisoners kept coming, from every block, suddenly able to overcome time and space, to will both into submission.

What are You, my God? I thought angrily. How do You compare to this stricken mass gathered to affirm to You their faith, their anger, their defiance? What does Your grandeur mean, Master of the Universe, in the face of all this cowardice, this decay, and this misery? Why do you go on troubling these poor people's wounded minds, their ailing bodies?

SOME TEN THOUSAND MEN had come to participate in a solemn service, including the *Blockälteste*, the Kapos, all bureaucrats in the service of Death.

"Blessed be the Almighty ..."

The voice of the officiating inmate had just become audible. At first I thought it was the wind.

"Blessed be God's name ..."

Thousands of lips repeated the benediction, bent over like trees in a storm.

Blessed be God's name?

Why, but why would I bless Him? Every fiber in me rebelled. Because He caused thousands of children to burn in His mass graves? Because He kept six crematoria working day and night, including Sabbath and the Holy Days? Because in His great might, He had created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna, and so many other factories of death? How could I say to Him: Blessed be Thou, Almighty, Master of the Universe, who chose us among all nations to be tortured day and night, to watch as our fathers, our mothers, our brothers end up in the furnaces?

Praised be Thy Holy Name, for having chosen us to be slaughtered on Thine altar?

I listened as the inmate's voice rose; it was powerful yet broken, amid the weeping, the sobbing, the sighing of the entire "congregation":

"All the earth and universe are God's!"

He kept pausing, as though he lacked the strength to uncover the meaning beneath the text. The melody was stifled in his throat.

And I, the former mystic, was thinking: Yes, man is stronger, greater than God. When Adam and Eve deceived You, You chased them from paradise. When You were displeased by Noah's generation, You brought down the Flood. When Sodom lost Your favor, You caused the heavens to rain down fire and damnation. But look at these men whom You have betrayed, allowing them to be tortured, slaughtered, gassed, and burned, what do they do? They pray before You! They praise Your name!

"All of creation bears witness to the Greatness of God!"

In days gone by, Rosh Hashanah had dominated my life. I knew that my sins grieved the Almighty and so I pleaded for forgiveness. In those days, I fully believed that the salvation of the world depended on every one of my deeds, on every one of my prayers.

But now, I no longer pleaded for anything. I was no longer able to lament. On the contrary, I felt very strong. I was the accuser, God the accused. My eyes had opened and I was alone, terribly alone in a world without God, without man. Without love or mercy. I was nothing but ashes now, but I felt myself to be stronger than this Almighty to whom my life had been bound for so long. In the midst of these men assembled for prayer, I felt like an observer, a stranger.

The service ended with Kaddish. Each of us recited Kaddish for his parents, for his children, and for himself.

8. Elie Wiesel, *Memoirs: All the Rivers Run to the Sea* (New York, 1995) pp. 402–3.



The Rebbe had read some of my works in French, and asked me to explain why I was angry with G-d. 'Because I loved Him too much,' I replied. 'And now?' he asked. 'Now too. And because I love Him, I am angry with Him.' The Rebbe disagreed: 'To love G-d is to accept that you do not understand Him.' I asked whether one could love G-d without having faith. He told me faith had to precede all the rest. 'Rebbe,' I asked, 'how can you believe in G-d after Auschwitz?' He looked at me in silence for a long moment, his hands resting on the table. Then he replied, in a soft, barely audible voice, 'How can you not believe in G-d after Auschwitz?'

9. Rebbe's Yiddish letter dated 24 Nissan 5725 (26 April 1965). It is printed in R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 33 (New York: Kehot, 2001), pp. 255–60.

I agree with you, of course, that the complaint "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justice?" [[Gen. 18:25](#)] can be authentic and can have its proper force only when it breaks forth from the pain-filled heart of a deep believer. Moreover we find that indeed the first one who ever expressed this complaint was Abraham our father, the greatest believer and the father of "believers, sons of believers" [[Shabbat 97a](#)]. We are also told by the sages that the first to have posed the question of "the righteous one who suffers, the wicked one who prospers" was none other than our teacher Moses [[Berachot 7a](#)], the same one who explicated to the Jews, and to the entire world, the idea of "I am the L-rd your G-d" and "you shall have no other gods" [[Exod. 20:2](#)], where the

category of "other gods" includes the human intellect and understanding, when one makes these into idols and supreme authorities.

For this reason I was surprised that you did not see the course of thought through to the end and bring out its conclusion. After all—as you know—the answer to the complaint of Moses our teacher—according to the account of our sages, of blessed memory, when shown how Rabbi Akiva's flesh was ripped off with iron combs, etc., Moses our teacher burst out: "This is Torah, and this is its reward?!"—the answer to this was: "Silence! Thus it arises in the supernal Mind!"

[. . .] Nevertheless, this did not weaken the faith of Moses our teacher, nor that of other authentic questioners and men. On the contrary, this only served to strengthen their faith, something to be found explicitly in the case of Job; likewise in the case of Abraham our father, who not only stood fast by his faith but was also able to withstand every test; and likewise the other "rebels" who maintained a deep faith until the last day of their lives.

I think you will agree with me that it is no mere coincidence that all authentic questioners retained their trust in G-d. Rather, it could in no way be otherwise. So long as the question is asked with integrity, it is logical that such a deep feeling can come only from the conviction that true justice is the justice that stems from a super-human source, that is, from something higher than both human intellect and human feeling. It is for this reason precisely that the question unsettles not only a person's emotion and intellect, but also his interiority and the essence of his being.

But after the initial tempestuous assault, he has to realize that the entire approach on which the question is based, and of wishing to understand with the intellect that which is higher than the intellect, is something that cannot take place. Moreover, he must—after a rattling outrage and a thorough grieving—ultimately come to the conclusion: Nevertheless I believe [ani maamin]. On the contrary—even more strongly.

10. Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 5b

+ירמיהו י"ג+ ואם לא תשמעוהו במסתרים תבכה נפשי מפני גוה אמר רב שמואל בר איניא משמיה דרב: מקום יש לו להקדוש ברוך הוא ומסתרים שמו. מאי מפני גוה? אמר רב שמואל בר יצחק: מפני גאוותן של ישראל שניטלה מהם ונתנה לנכרים. רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר: מפני גאוותה של מלכות שמים. ומי איכא בכיה קמיה הקדוש ברוך הוא? והאמר רב פפא: אין עציבות לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא, שנאמר +דברי הימים א' ט"ז+ הוד והדר לפניו עז וחדוה במקומו! - לא קשיא: הא - בבתי גואי, הא - בבתי בראי.

11. Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 12b

וחשך וענן וערפל מקיפין אותו, שנאמר +תהלים י"ח+ ישת חשך סתרו סביבותיו סכתו חשכת מים עבי שחקים. ומי איכא חשוכא קמי שמיא? והכתיב: +דניאל ב' + הוא (גלי) + מסורת הש"ס: [גלא] + עמיקתא ומסתרתא ידע מה בחשוכא ונהורא עמה שרא! - לא קשיא: הא בבתי גואי, הא - בבתי בראי.

12. Rashi, ad loc.

צנתי גואי – ונהורא עמיה שרא.

13. Talmud Bavli, Yoma 69b

דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי למה נקרא שמן אנשי כנסת הגדולה שהחזירו עטרה ליושנה אתא משה אמר (דברים י) האל הגדול הגבור והנורא אתא ירמיה ואמר נכרים מקרקרין בהיכלו איה נוראותיו לא אמר נורא אתא דניאל אמר נכרים משתעבדים בבניו איה גבורותיו לא אמר גבור אתו אינהו ואמרו אדרבה זו היא גבורת גבורתו שכובש את יצרו שנותן ארך אפים לרשעים ואלו הן נוראותיו שאלמלא מוראו של הקב"ה היאך אומה אחת יכולה להתקיים בין האומות ורבנן היכי עבדי הכי ועקרי תקנתא דתקין משה אמר רבי אלעזר מתוך שיודעין בהקב"ה שאמתיה הוא לפיכך לא כיזבו בו:

14. Wiesel, Memoirs, p. 84.

I have never renounced my faith in G-d. I have risen against His justice, protested His silence and sometimes His absence, but my anger rises up within faith and not outside it. I admit that this is hardly an original position. It is part of Jewish tradition. [. . .] Abraham and Moses, Jeremiah and Rebbe Levi-Yitzhak of Berdichev teach us that it is permissible for man to accuse G-d, provided it be done in the name of faith in G-d. If that hurts, so be it. Sometimes we must accept the pain of faith so as not to lose it.

15. Ani Maamin: A Song Lost and Found Again, Elie Wiesel, Cantata 1973

*I believe in you,
Even against your will.
Even if you punish me
For believing in you.
Blessed are the fools
Who shout their faith.
Blessed are the fools
Who go on laughing.
Who mock the man who mocks the Jew,
Who help their brothers
Singing, over and over and over:
I believe.
I believe in the coming of the Messiah,
And though he tarries,
I wait daily for his coming.
I believe.*

16. Interview with Elie Wiesel, May 2013

What do you tell a young Jewish generation about their indebtedness to history? Six million Jews died al kiddush haShem, to sanctify G-d's name. Therefore what?

EW: Therefore, be Jewish.

17. *Lapid ha-Esh*, Admor: Aharon Surasky, Bnei Brak 5757, p. 184

During the horrors, I was sent to the Warsaw ghetto to perform forced labor with mortar and bricks... One day, as we stood at the top of one of the houses, a strong, driving rain suddenly hit us. The wicked ones pressed us on: "Finish your work; don't stop." It was almost beyond human ability... Then one of the oppressed ones, who knew me, turned to me and screamed: "Are you still going to recite 'You have chosen us' and rejoice as a member of the chosen nation?"

I replied that until that day I had not recited it with the proper intention, but that from then onwards, when I said 'You have chosen us from all the nations,' I would concentrate more and more deeply, and rejoice in my heart with no bounds... When I saw that he was astounded and bemused at my words, I explained further: "It must certainly be so, for if it were not that 'You have chosen us from all the nations,' then I too would become an oppressor. Better that I remain in my present state than become like one of them, heaven forefend, and happy is my lot."

Theme Three: Each Man for Himself

18. Passage: Abandon you Father, Pages 109-111

THE FOLLOWING DAY, he complained that they had taken his ration of bread.

"While you were asleep?"

"No. I wasn't asleep. They threw themselves on me. They snatched it from me, my bread ... And they beat me ... Again ... I can't go on, my son ... Give me some water ..."

I knew that he must not drink. But he pleaded with me so long that I gave in. Water was the worst poison for him, but what else could I do for him? With or without water, it would be over soon anyway ...

"You, at least, have pity on me ..."

Have pity on him! I, his only son ...

A WEEK WENT BY like that.

"Is this your father?" asked the *Blockälteste*.

"Yes."

"He is very sick."

"The doctor won't do anything for him."

He looked me straight in the eye:

"The doctor *cannot* do anything more for him. And neither can you."

He placed his big, hairy hand on my shoulder and added:

"Listen to me, kid. Don't forget that you are in a concentration camp. In this place, it is every man for himself, and you cannot think of others. Not even your father. In this place, there is no such thing as father, brother, friend. Each of us lives and dies alone. Let me give you good advice: stop giving your ration of bread and soup to your old father. You cannot help him anymore. And you are hurting yourself. In fact, you should be getting *his* rations ..."

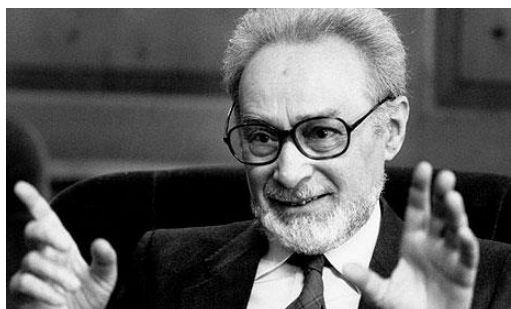
I listened to him without interrupting. He was right, I thought deep down, not daring to admit it to myself. Too late to save your old father ... You could have two rations of bread, two rations of soup ...

It was only a fraction of a second, but it left me feeling guilty. I ran to get some soup and brought it to my father. But he did not want it. All he wanted was water.

19. Hagadah of Pesach

הא לחמא ענינא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמאראים. כל דכפין ייתי ויכל, כל דאריז ייתי ויפסח. השתא הקא, לשנה הבאה בארעא דישראל. השתא עבדי, לשנה הבאה בני חורין.

20. If This is a Man, Primo Levi pg 190



When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to relax in everyone, and at that moment Towarowski (a Franco-Pole of twenty-three, typhus) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to us three who had been working. And so it was agreed.

Only a day before a similar event would have been inconceivable. The law of the Lager said: "eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbour," and left no room for gratitude. It really meant that the Lager was dead.

It was the first human gesture that occurred among us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we who had not died slowly changed from Häftlinge to men again.

21. Times of London, 03/23/2013, "Sharing the Bread of Affliction: Passover and the Hidden Meaning of Freedom", Rabbi Jonathan Sacks,



Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer his bread to others. But one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the seder by inviting others to join us. That is how we turn affliction into freedom.

It sometimes seems to me that, having created the most individualistic society in history, we today risk losing the logic of liberty. Freedom is not simply the ability to choose to do whatever we like so long as we do not harm others. It is born in the sense of solidarity that leads those who have more than they need to share with those who have less. Giving help to the needy and companionship to those who are alone, we bring freedom into the world, and with freedom, God.