

# The changing nature of the relationship between elie and his father in night



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In the novel 'Night', it is clear to see there is a changing relationship between Elie and his father. On first impression, 'he called out to me and I had not answered', seems to indicate that the relationship has ceased. However, the change in the nature of their relationship is far more complex than it appears. This complexity is shown from the days before the arrival of the Nazis, to the initial experiences in the camp, to the final moments they share together. Throughout this novel we see there is an ever-changing and developing relationship between Elie and his father. At the start of the text, Elie's father is very distant from his family and seems to be 'more involved with the welfare of others than with that of his own kin.' At this stage of the story Elie and his father's relationship is very distant and disconnected. This is further underlined by his father's lack of interest in Elie's faith - 'he wanted to drive the idea of studying kabbalah from my mind' - causing Elie to seek fatherly guidance and support from Moishe the Beadle. Their relationship begins to change when the Nazis first arrive in town, as Elie's father starts to show emotion towards Elie, their relationship begins to draw closer: 'My father was crying. It was the first time I saw him cry. I had never thought it possible.' Elie is very shocked to see his father weeping as he had never seen his father express his emotions before. This moment proves to Elie that his father is human. Their relationship further develops when Elie and his father are separated from his mother and sister: 'I already felt my father's hand press against mine: we were alone'. Elie's father begins to show more emotion and starts to take on a fatherly role as he looks out for Elie to ensure his survival, and begins to show concern for Elie's safety and wellbeing: 'What a shame you didn't go with your mother, I saw many children your age go with their mothers.' Throughout their initial encounters

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in the camp, Elie's father is slowly becoming more father-like and showing the wisdom and guidance that was once used towards the community towards Elie. Through the tougher times they begin to rely on one another, and realise they have to stick together to ensure their survival. Elie begins to take risks on his own life to ensure his father's survival, rather than worry about his own wellbeing: ' Being in the infirmary was not bad at all; we were entitled to good bread, a thicker soup... From time to time I was able to send my father a piece of bread'. This shows that even though Elie is better off, he is still looking out for his father and putting himself at risk at the chance that if he got caught feeding his father, he could be killed, and yet he does this to make sure his father survives. Elie starts to take on more of the fatherly role as his father gets weaker and depends on Elie even more. Their bond is growing as the experiences they're going through get harsher. As Elie's father gets weaker, Elie becomes frustrated and feels that his father is weighing him down, that he is a dead weight: ' My father's presence was the only thing that stopped me. He was next to me out of breath, out of strength, desperate.' Although Elie is angry with his father for holding him back, he doesn't desert him, and continues to stick by him as he doesn't want to be separated from him: ' I was thinking not about death, I did not want to be separated from my father.' As they are running away from the Russians through the snow, Elie sees sons abandoning their fathers, and realises how easy it would be to just leave him behind and free himself from the burden of his father, but he still doesn't leave him. He still has great concern for his father's survival. Elie starts to realise that it's every man for himself, and he can't worry about his father anymore: ' That is when I remembered I had a father. I had followed the mob, not taking care of him. I knew he was running

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out of strength, close to death and yet I abandoned him'. He becomes so frustrated with having to look after his father, and be the father figure towards him, that he can't control his anger, and starts to wish his father was dead: 'A thought crept into my mind, if only I didn't find him, if only I was relieved of this responsibility. I could use all my strength to take care of only myself.' Instantly Elie begins to feel guilty for having such thoughts: 'instantly I felt ashamed, ashamed of myself forever,' he says, and realises he can't leave his father in such a state, and it is his responsibility to look after him. 'For a ration of bread I was able to exchange a cot to be next to my father', he says. At this stage their relationship is slowly drifting apart, the love for one another is still there, but hate and frustration soon overcomes this. Elie can't stand it anymore, no matter how much Elie does for his father, he still wants to die; he has given up and no longer wants to live. 'I can't anymore, it's over,' he says, 'I shall die right here.' During their last moments together, when presented with the opportunity to save his father from beatings from the Kapos, Elie sits back and does nothing. He is too afraid to take action, as he could be the next one to be beaten: 'I was afraid, my body was afraid of another blow, this time to my head'. When Elie's father dies, Elie feels guilty as 'his last word had been my name. He called out to me and I had not answered'. But soon the feeling of guilt passes and he feels relief, 'free at last!' It is shown throughout the text that there is an ever changing nature of the relationship between Elie and his father; from the days before the arrival of the Nazis, to the initial experiences in the camp, to the final moments they share together. We can see the different stages of their relationship and how it develops, as well as how the situation they're in reflects their relationship and how close they become. It is a <https://assignbuster.com/the-changing-nature-of-the-relationship-between-elie-and-his-father-in-night/>

complex situation that undoubtedly resonated with Elie throughout the rest of his life.