

# Eliezer's relationship with god in night

[Religion](#), [God](#)



Hanging On: The Description of Eliezer's Relationship with God in Night World War II breaks out in Europe during the conclusion of the 1930s. Adolph Hitler plunges Germany into darkness while quickly moving to take over bordering countries with his army of Nazis. Eliezer, a boy no more than 15 years old, lives in Hungary, which is dangerously close to Germany. Along with many other Jews, Eliezer is deported from his home and into a world of unimaginable terror. Night is a memoir of those experiences and, more importantly, a stark reminder that these events should never be allowed to repeat themselves.

The Holocaust presents one of the most disturbing theological dilemmas of the twentieth century. As a survivor of the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel has to reevaluate God in his world. He does so through his writings, in which he questions God and tells us of the answers, or lack of answers, that he receives. In Night, author Elie Wiesel writes about his devotion as a child, religious observances, and anger towards God to reveal how he is still a believer in the Jewish faith despite all that happen to him. Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Treblinka are just a few of the names which evoke nightmares of the Holocaust.

The suffering and death at these and other concentration camps were greater than any before endured. Before the Holocaust he had been one of the most devout Jewish children. The Holocaust created a void in the souls of many of those who survived. Elie Wiesel was one of those people. Before the Holocaust he had been one of the most devout Jewish children. Up until the end he waited for God to intervene in Biblical fashion. When that intervention

was not forthcoming, he began to doubt in God and in His mercy. He began to accuse God of cruelty against his people.

After the torture was over, he had to reevaluate the role of God in his life. He could be forgiving of God and allow Him another chance, as many he had seen had done. Or he could take on the role of God to himself and try to define his own destiny. To deal with this, Wiesel has to question God and himself. He does so through his writing. Elie Wiesel tells his heart-wrenching story of his imprisonment in Nazi Germany. He overcame the odds with his strength and will to live. Elie was told by his father to never lose his faith of his religion it would help him through everything, and keep him strong.

One should never lose faith or whatever guiding force that may keep them going. This faith was the only force that helped Elie to survive, and without this faith Elie would have surely succumbed to dying. The question now is how far does Elie's belief in God and in his own faith helps him to go on. He receives many answers, though none are satisfactory. Wiesel thought of God before and during the Holocaust as both the protector and punisher of the Jewish people. Whatever had happened before, he had faith that it was for their good, or one of God's greater plans.

Either way, he would accept God's will without questioning. When rumors of the Nazis' crimes first reached some of the outlying Jewish towns, like Wiesel's Sighet, no one believed them. The town felt that God was with them and would protect them from anything as horrible as what these rumors suggested. They felt safe and secure in their faith. " And we, the Jews of Sighet, were waiting for better days, which would not be long in coming now"(17). Others who did not feel guilty believed that God at least had a

good reason for punishing the Jews. They thought it must be a test. God is testing us. He wants to find out whether we can dominate our base instincts and kill the Satan within us. We have no right to despair. And if he punishes us relentlessly, it's a sign that he loves us all the more"(53). Faith delayed the revolution that might have erupted in the camps. The younger people felt it would be better to die fighting than to go like lambs to the slaughter. They had knives and a strong will. But their elders reminded them, " You must never lose faith, even when the sword hangs over your head. That's the teaching of our sages... "(40).

As long as the elders were willing to accept God's will, the younger people were willing to respect their faith. They still had faith that God had a greater purpose in mind, and though they opposed the idea of suffering, they would suffer with pride that they are part of God's plan. And so Wiesel and his town were indoctrinated without incident into the camps, believing that if their faith endured, they would be saved. Soon the delusions faded and Wiesel began to doubt God. It was not easy for Wiesel to doubt in God, or he would not have held on to his faith with such tenacity.

But sooner or later, the seeming meaninglessness of the suffering his people endured had to burst into the consciousness of his seemingly indomitable Jewish faith. In the face of the crematory pit, Elie Wiesel noted, " For the first time I felt revolt rise up in me. Why should I bless His name? The Eternal, Lord of the Universe, the All-Powerful and Terrible, was silent. What had I to thank Him for? "(42). He awoke to the idea that he was " alone-terribly alone in a world without God... "(75). Lack of faith turned quickly to despair. If God

wouldn't save His children, who would? No one believed the rumors of peace and safety.

In the hospital at Auschwitz, Wiesel met a man consumed with this kind of despair. He said, " I've got more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. He's the only one who's kept his promises, all his promises, to the Jewish people. "(87). All around Wiesel, the number of faithful were dropping. As hard as they tried to hold on, Wiesel's people were finding it hard to believe in God and what He was allowing to happen. Others, like Wiesel, were given the burden of carrying the questions with them, never to be answered. At the hanging of the angel-faced pipel, Wiesel had an answer, when someone asked, " 'Where is God now? And I heard a voice within me answer him: 'Where is He? Here He is-He is hanging here on this gallows... ' "(72). God died for the child Wiesel then. The destruction of his faith in the God of his childhood was complete. No longer did his name bring cries of praise from Wiesel. God seemed unworthy in the face of His worshipers to accept their worship. Wiesel cannot deny God His due. If anything he can question it and feel angry about it. He can even try to change it, by reevaluating God's role in the world. That is what many of those he encountered did once they got over the initial anger.

Any answer cannot come from man, but from God himself. This is what Moshe the Beadle had tried to tell Wiesel when he was a young boy in Sighet, before the terrors of the Holocaust destroyed his life. Moshe said, " Man raises himself toward God by the questions he asks Him... That is the true dialogue. Man questions God and God answers. But we don't understand His answers. We can't understand them. Because they come from the depths

of the soul, and they stay there until death. You will find the true answers, Eliezer, only within yourself! "(15). There can be no end to the questioning, even if there are no answers.

In reading the works of Elie Wiesel, I had to ask God some of the same questions that he did. The storm of emotion followed the paths of anger and despair, and finally ended with the acceptance that Elie Wiesel finds. God is not easy to figure out, and he never will be. With all our knowledge, we cannot guess at his reasons for doing anything. I will never stop wondering what happened, and, more importantly, why, but I will sleep quietly, as long as when I wake I watch to see that there is not another Holocaust, and I pray to God that whatever the reasons for the first one, there never will be a second.

The Holocaust presented a call to people everywhere to reevaluate the role of God in their lives. The pain and suffering that we know took place is in dark contrast to what we would have thought possible in the presence of our God, and anyone who comes in contact with these horrors will be forever shaken in his present faith. Some have reacted with anger toward God, others with denial. Still others reacted with mistrust of all that God had meant before. But by asking questions, some have grown to learn that God never did things the way people expect Him to, and that fact becomes the cornerstone of the new start to their theology.

God does not answer questions unless they suit His purposes. This is what we have learned from Auschwitz and from the writings of Elie Wiesel. We must continue to ask questions, continue to challenge God, until, one day, He Himself will give us the answers. And until then we should never feel so

secure in faith as to think that Auschwitz could never happen again. We must make certain, through our actions, that it will never happen again and to never lose the faith that has been devoted to God.