

# Night essay

Religion



Night Essay Tupac Shakur, was a famous American rapper and actor that once said, “ Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside while still alive. Never surrender. ” Holocaust survivor and the author of Night, Elie Wiesel, seems to say the same as Mr. Shakur, that life is more miserable when one feels that void while being alive rather than being dead. In his memoir, Elie reveals his story when Hitler came into power with the Nazis and put all the “ undesirables” through their most horrible times ever. When Elie loses his faith in God, faith in his people, and the role of a son, it eventually leads to his metaphorical deaths. Elie Wiesel failed to keep his faith in his religion due to the Holocaust. Without question, before he was sent to the concentration camps he was extremely passionate while praying to God. Previous to when the Nazis came into power, in Sighet, Transylvania, Elie compared being able to live and breathe to praying as a necessity (4). Something as significant and involuntary as breathing was no more important to Elie than praising God day and night. For Elie, praying is a natural act; he does not think about praying, he just does it. Unfortunately, Elie began defying his beliefs and questioning God’s power. When the inmates gathered to pray for Rosh Hashanah on the Appelplatz of Buna, Elie protested, “ Why, but why would I bless Him? Every fiber in me rebelled” (67). He was tired of God’s silence and got frustrated how God had not helped to prevent all the chaos that was happening. Overall, Elie was once a religious boy who gave up on his beliefs. Elie sees his fellow inmates harass each other for the sake of their own survival, which ultimately leads him to lose his faith in humankind. Undeniably, he once believed in the power and unity of the Jewish people. After being sent to the small ghetto in the cattle car to Birkenau, Auschwitz, Mrs. SchÅ¼chter was hallucinating, yet the other

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passengers were sympathetic and tried to soothe her (25). Because the others still had their humanity, they still attempted to reason or reassure with the mad woman. Everyone in the convoy was still a community and acted as one; they knew they still had to help each other, not just themselves. However, the feeling that it was every man for himself suddenly showed. In the wagon, on the way to Buchenwald, Elie referred to a heart-breaking moment in his memoir, “ Stunned by the blows, the old man was crying: ‘ Meir, my little Meir! Don’t you recognize me... You’re killing your father... I have bread... for you too... for you too...’” (101). Because of a plain, yet lifesaving ration of bread, the boy was willing to betray his dad. Elie sees the disgust and dehumanizing that had been caused because of the harsh conditions for survival. Therefore, Elie who had faith in his community lost confidence when he saw what wild animals they had become. Elie could not be a dependent child anymore, for he had lost the role of being a son. Naturally, he relied on Shlomo, his father, before living in the camps. During the first selection in Birkenau, he only thought of holding on to his dad so he would not be left alone with no one else from his family (30). His sisters and mother were all sent to the right, most likely the crematorium, and him and Mr. Wiesel directed to the right; safe, having only each other, they would have to work together. At the time, Elie could not imagine what he would do without Mr. Wiesel and had to cling onto Shlomo for protection from the brutality of the concentration camps. As time went by, Elie started to have responsibility for both his and Mr. Wiesel’s security. Right when the two men arrived at the entrance of Buchenwald, Shlomo moaned, ““ Don’t yell my son... Have pity on your old father... Let me rest here... a little... I beg of you, I’m so tired... no more strength...’ He had become childlike: weak frightened,

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vulnerable. “‘ Father,’ I said, ‘ you cannot stay here’” (105). Shlomo wanted to die in his sleep in the snow, but Elie kept yelling at him to keep living. This proves that Mr. Wiesel did become a child and his son had become a man, trying to convince his father, like a toddler, to listen to him. To conclude, Elie entered manhood from being a helpless child. In other words, Elie lost the commitment to God, proudness in mankind, and reliance. Because he felt that God did not care for his people anymore, he objected to praise Him. The inhumane behavior of the prisoners and guards led Elie to lose faith in them. Since he could not depend on Shlomo anymore, he had to take on the responsibility to survive. As Mr. Shakur said, Elie did feel as if he died through the events of the concentration camps, but did not forfeit to death. Elie Wiesel wrote this memoir to bring awareness of the genocide in the Holocaust and that humans shall never let it happen again.