

NIGHT BY ELIE WIESEL

Madame Shacter was screaming about the fire, the huge flames and the furnace that she could see. Then she was begging the people on the train to believe her but instead they gagged her and tied her up. In a way, Madame Shacter was prophesying about the crematories at the death camps, the huge flames and the furnaces that turn the Jewish nation into ashes.

"I believe profoundly. During the day I studied the Talmud, and at night I run to the synagogue to weep over the destruction of the Temple." (p. 13)

Elie Wiesel was a child of such high religious values, who at the age of just twelve, before even Bar-Mitzvah, wanted to delve into Jewish mysticism. As he states, he was studying Talmud during the day, and praying during the night. You would think that a man like this would never, ever lose faith in his God, let alone a young child. In his novel it clearly states in many places that the sights he saw caused his belief in God to diminish.

"For the first time I felt a revolt arise 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?" (p. 44)

Although Elie is saying how he should not be blessing God's name because he was silent when the Jewish people needed him most, he still is reluctant to say that no God exists. Afterwards though, he does recite the words of the Kaddish.

"Some talked of God, of his mysterious ways, of the sins of the Jewish people, and of their future development, but I have ceased to pray. How I sympathised with Job! I did not deny God's existence, but I doubted His absolute justice." (p. 57)

Again he talks about the way how he doesn't deny God's existence but he only says at a time like this one, God should be helping.

"...and I heard a voice within me answer him:

'Where is he? Here He is - He is hanging here on this gallows...' (p. 77)

I think what Wiesel is trying to say here is that his last hope for God to redeem the Jews from the Nazi regime just died with the boy on the gallows.

"What are you my God? I thought angrily, 'compared to this afflicted crowd, proclaiming to you their faith, their anger, their revolt? What does Your greatness mean, Lord of the Universe, in the face of all this weakness, this decomposition, and this decay? Why do You still trouble their sick minds, their crippled bodies?'" (p. 78)

Here Wiesel is questioning God and asking him why he is making these people so sick and crippled yet he still makes them pray to Him and bless Him. This shows that Wiesel still feels that it is God that controls the Universe but in his 'revolt' against God he attempts to forget this.

When Wiesel's father was in the bunks with dysentery and Elie had joined him because of his wounded leg, and after the officer smashed Elie's father's head with his truncheon, it was the fear of survival that made Elie lame and not move to help his father. Although this is a rather wretched thing to do, not help your father when he is in distress, Elie knew that if he were to move he would also definitely receive a blow from the truncheon. At this end stage in time, after Elie's sub-conscious mind had already stated that it would be easier if he were to be rid himself of his aging and burdensome father, I think, that maybe on this he too might have made Elie believe that his survival was more important than his fathers.

Throughout the whole novel, everything bad happened at night. At the camps,

although it may not have been night. Also, night brings darkness, waiting for rejuvenation because they are able to sleep.

All three words, symbol, banner and beacon used to describe Elie Wiesel by the Washington post mean sign. It is in this sense that I agree strongly with the Washington Post. Elie Wiesel, put all his feelings aside and attempted, by writing this novel, to portray to us the readers the things he went through in the Holocaust. In a way he is making sure that other people will not have to go through the things that he went through, especially at the young ages that he went through it all. A young mind shouldn't be able to comprehend the Holocaust, and that it is why it is not taught at younger levels, but still at the age of just twelve and above. Elie was able not only to comprehend but also to be able to express the things he saw.

Elie Wiesel started in a small town called Sighet. His father was an important man in the Jewish community and so he was the one who learned first of their deportations. Elie was taken then herded into two ghettos before being moved on cattle trains to Auschwitz - Birkenau. It was here that he saw young kids being put in the crematorium. This was the main turning point in his change of religious beliefs. He was then moved to Buna, another camp where he worked in a warehouse for electrical equipment. Here he saw a little boy get hanged. This is where it is stated that all his hope for God's assistance ended. From here on he was moved to where he worked moving stones. From here he moved to Buchenwald where before Elie's very own eyes, his father was killed. On the tenth of April the resistance movement in Buchenwald decided to act. They rose with weapons and started to fire. The SS fled and later on in that day, the American tanks liberated the camp.

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