A NEW TRANSLATION BY MARION WIESEL

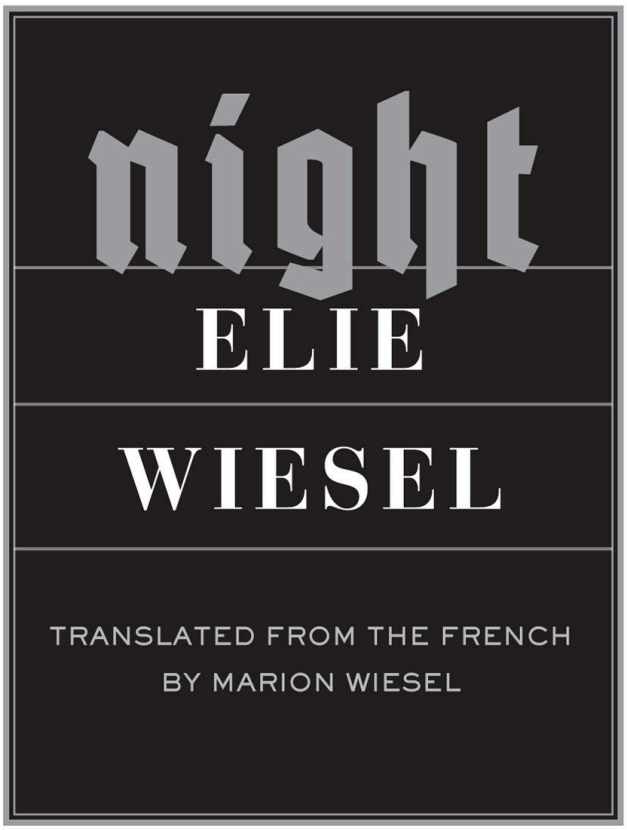
# Night

WITH A NEW PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

## ELIE WIESEL

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

"A slim volume of terrifying power."
—*The New York Times*

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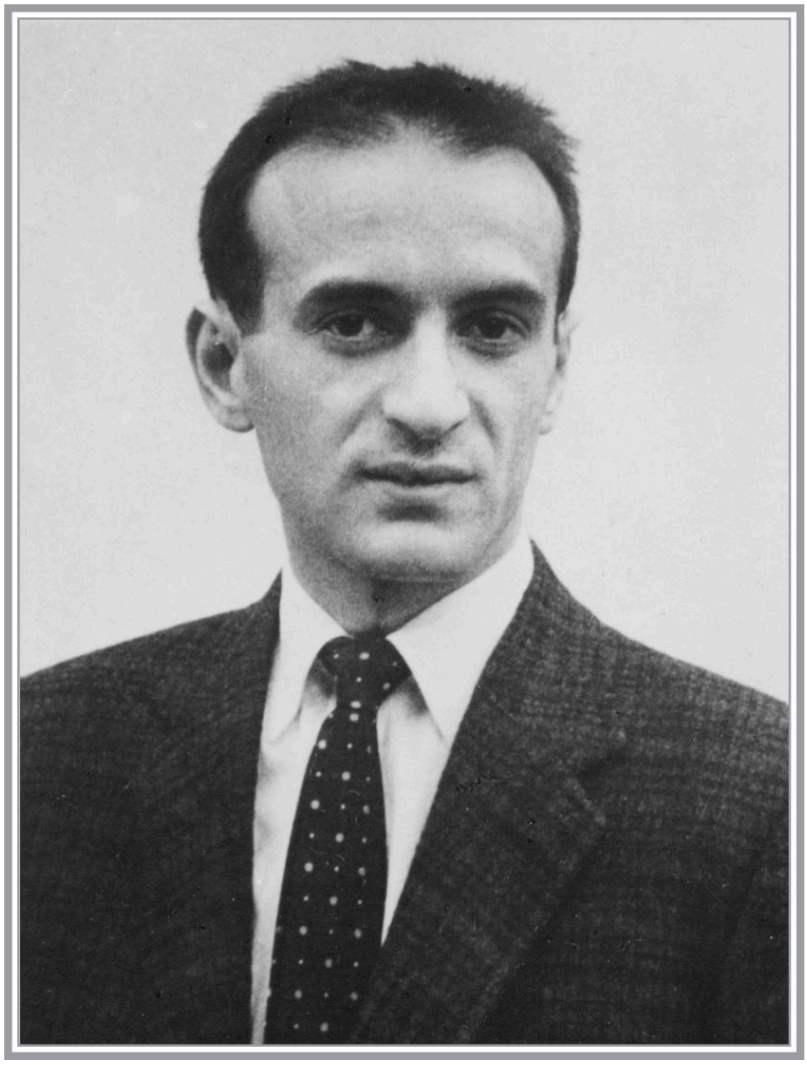

*In memory of*
*my parents and of my little sister, Tzipora*
E.W.

*This new translation*
*in memory of*
*my grandparents Abba, Sarah and Nachman,*
*who also vanished into that night*
M.W.

# MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

**PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA**

JULY 2, 2016

ELIE WIESEL WAS one of the great moral voices of our time, and, in many ways, the conscience of the world. Tonight, Michelle and I join people across the United States, Israel, and around the globe in mourning the loss and celebrating the life of a truly remarkable human being. Like millions of admirers, I first came to know Elie through his account of the horror he endured during the Holocaust simply because he was Jewish. But I was also honored and deeply humbled to call him a dear friend. I'm especially grateful for all the moments we shared and our talks together, which ranged from the meaning of friendship to our shared commitment to the State of Israel.

Elie was not just the world's most prominent Holocaust survivor, he was a living memorial. After we walked together among the barbed wire and guard towers of Buchenwald, where he was held as a teenager and where his father perished, Elie spoke words I've never forgotten—"Memory has become a sacred duty of all people of goodwill." Upholding that sacred duty was the purpose of Elie's life. Along with his beloved wife, Marion, and the foundation that bears his name, he raised his voice, not just against anti-Semitism, but against hatred, bigotry, and intolerance in all its forms. He implored each of us, as nations and as human beings, to do the same, to see ourselves in each other and to make real that pledge of "never again."

At the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum that he helped create, you can see his words—"For the dead and the living, we must bear witness." But Elie did more than just bear witness; he acted. As a writer, a speaker, an activist, and a thinker, he was one of those people who changed the world more as a citizen of the world than those who hold office or traditional positions of power. His life, and the power of his example, urges us to be better. In the face of evil, we must summon our capacity for good. In the face of hate, we must love. In the face of cruelty, we must live with empathy and compassion. We must never be bystanders to injustice or indifferent to suffering. Just imagine the peace and justice that would be possible in our world if we all lived a little more like Elie Wiesel.

At the end of our visit to Buchenwald, Elie said that, after all that he and the other survivors had endured, "we had the right to give up on humanity." But he said, "We rejected that possibility … We said, no, we must continue believing in a future."

Tonight, we give thanks that Elie never gave up on humanity and on the progress that is possible when we treat one another with dignity and respect.

# FOREWORD

# THE INEXORABLE JOYFULNESS OF ELIE WIESEL

**AMBASSADOR SAMANTHA POWER, U.S. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS (2013–2017)**

ADAPTED FROM REMARKS DELIVERED ON NOVEMBER 30, 2016, AT THE U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

WORDS TEND TO FAIL US most in two circumstances—in the face of profound evil and of transcendent decency. When Elie Wiesel first tried to describe his experience in the camps, he later wrote, "I watched helplessly as language became an obstacle." We who have the honor to speak about Elie have the opposite challenge, finding words that capture the fierce and magical essence of this marvelous man.

Elie gave friendship with the intensity of a young man fresh out of college—with innocence and adamant conviction that that friendship would be an eternal bond, which, in Elie's case, it usually was. He used to quote someone who said in French, "*Ma patrie, c'est les amis*." "My friends are my homeland." It was Elie's belief in friendship that relates so powerfully to the miracle of his joyfulness.

Of course, we must consider the context from which that joy somehow emerged. None of us will ever comprehend the depravity of what Elie experienced during the Holocaust. He tried to help us see and feel that pain, but he knew our limits. Nor can most of us fathom the aloneness that Elie experienced after he was liberated from Buchenwald on April 11, 1945. Imagine the sixteen-year-old boy who walked out of those gates. A boy with A-7713 tattooed on his arm.

A boy who, as far as he knew, had lost his entire family, and who—when he gazed at himself in the mirror for the first time since being sent to the concentration camp—saw a corpse staring back at him. "The slightest wind would blow me over," he later said.

Many of us have been struck by the fact that it took Elie ten years to prepare himself to put into words the horrors of what had been done to him and to his family and to his people. A whole ten years before he could begin to write. And when he did so, in the spring of 1955, this wise old man who had been to hell and back was just twenty-six years old. What must it have been like for this man, in his Paris lodgings, to rouse the demons—to hear once again what he called the "silent cries"? "While I had many things to say," he would later write, "I did not have the words to say them … How was one to rehabilitate and transform words betrayed and perverted by the enemy? Hunger—thirst—fear—transport—selection—fire—chimney … I would pause at every sentence, and start over and over again. I would conjure up other verbs, other images, other silent cries. It still was not right."

He reimmersed himself in that period, into the darkness of night. The approach that came most naturally to him was blunt and unsparing. What he bore witness to—and thus relived—were the horrors inflicted upon him, but also his own most searing moments of dehumanization, when he could not bring himself to help the person whose companionship had helped keep him alive in Auschwitz and later, on the death march—his father. As he eventually wrote, "He had called out to me and I had not answered." In the original text, which Elie wrote in Yiddish, he had added, "I shall never forgive myself."

Elie Wiesel carried all of this. Gathered here, in a museum dedicated to educating people about a systematic effort to eradicate the Jewish people—a museum built upon the testimonies of thousands of survivors, and in whose foundation are etched Elie's words, "For the dead and the living, we must bear witness"—sitting here, it can be hard to imagine that there was a time when the prevailing wisdom was not to bear witness. But that is precisely what it was like when Elie was writing. Survivors did not speak about their past—even to their own children. Here in the United States, there were no memorials to the six million Jews who had been killed. The word "Holocaust" did not even appear in *The New York Times* until 1959. Even in Europe—where the mass murder had taken place and entire Jewish communities had been wiped out—the topic was hardly mentioned. It was against this wall of silence that Elie wrote.

And then the man whose life's mission would be to combat indifference laid his heart out to the world, presented his experiences, his story, and they reacted with indifference. Although he had cut the original Yiddish version from more than eight hundred pages to a little more than one hundred, all the major publishing houses turned the book down. The renowned French novelist François Mauriac resolved to help Elie. "No one is interested in the death camps anymore," publishers told Mauriac. "It just won't sell." When Elie went in search of an American publisher, he later recalled, their rejection letters often noted that American readers "seemed to prefer optimistic books."

All who have read *Night* are haunted, perhaps above all, by Moishe the Beadle. Moishe was among the first wave of foreign Jews deported from Elie's town of Sighet, who were transported by train to a forest in Poland, where they were forced to dig their own graves at gunpoint, and then executed en masse by the Gestapo.

Moishe survived, wounded, faking his death, and eventually made his way back to Sighet, where he told his neighbors what he had witnessed. “Jews, listen to me!” he yells outside the synagogue, weeping. “That’s all I ask of you. No money. No pity. Just listen to me!” But no one listens. Moishe is ignored—dismissed as a madman. How cruel was it, then, that young Elie Wiesel, who was taunted by his perpetrators that nobody would ever know or care what had happened to him and his people, how cruel was it that he encountered a world that again seemed indifferent to what he had gone through? When he was trying to place his manuscript, did he feel somehow like Moishe the Beadle, a man who possessed the truth, but was ignored?

And yet none of this appears to have diminished the determination of Elie Wiesel. *Night* of course did eventually find its publishers, and after several years, its readership did begin to grow, at first gradually, and then exponentially. Arguably no single work did so much to lift the silence that had enveloped survivors, and bring what happened in the “Kingdom of Night” out into the light, for all to see. And yet. Injustice was still rampant. Genocide denial against the Armenians, the horrors of his lifetime—Pol Pot, Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, Syria in his later years. He lived to see more and more people bear witness to unspeakable atrocities, but he also saw that indifference remained too widespread.

Amid all the pain and disappointment of Elie’s remarkable life, how is it that the darkness did not envelop him, or shield him from the sun? How is it that the light in Elie Wiesel’s gaze was every bit as defining as his life’s experiences? “What is abnormal,” Elie once told Oprah Winfrey, “is that I am normal. That I survived the Holocaust and went on to love beautiful girls, to talk, to write, to have toast and tea and live my life—that is what is abnormal.”

Elie raged against indifference to injustice, to be sure, but he also savored the gifts of life with ferocious zeal. “We know that every moment is a moment of grace,” he once said, “every hour is an offering; not to share them would mean to betray them.”

Maybe it was because Elie had such a strong sense of purpose on his journey—to help those who could still be helped. A duty to his neighbor. To the stranger, the stranger that he once was. He called it his eleventh commandment: “Thou shalt not stand idly by … You must speak up. You must defend. You must tell the victims,… ‘You are not alone, somebody cares.’”

Through the years, Elie ventured out to the most unlikely, isolated places. There was Elie in a tiny village along the Thai border with Cambodia, meeting with refugees

who had just escaped the Khmer Rouge. There was Elie, crossing the jungle in Nicaragua on foot and in a kayak, to reach the Miskito Indians who had been driven from their land. "I," Elie reflected later, "who have been known to lose my way in my own neighborhood and don't know how to swim," traveled all that way to bear witness to their displacement and see how he could help. Now one might think that in these encounters Elie found only suffering, but he did not. He found meaning. Abe Foxman remembered visiting a school program in Tel Aviv that Elie and Marion had helped set up for undocumented children from Sudan—one of many such initiatives they created—and Abe remembers seeing Elie singing and dancing with the kids, in pure, almost childlike joy.

Elie Wiesel often wrote of the anger within him. But what he projected most effortlessly was his love. Jews, Elie would often say, are a people of unparalleled gratitude—so much so, he pointed out, that they begin the day by thanking God for opening their eyes. Elie's greatest joy came in the time he spent with those closest to him, his wife, Marion, and his son, Elisha.

A few years ago, when he was recovering from heart surgery, Elie was visited by his beloved grandson, Elijah, then just five years old. Here is how Elie describes the encounter: "I hug my grandson and tell him, 'Every time I see you, my life becomes a gift.' Elijah observes me closely as I speak and … responds: 'Grandpa, you know that I love you, and I see you are in pain. Tell me: If I loved you more, would you be in less pain?'" Elie writes, "I am convinced God at that moment is smiling as He contemplates His creation."

I am so very sad that my children will not have the chance to talk metaphysics with the master. But before I close, let me offer another reason that God is smiling today. As our nation goes through difficult days, *Night* is a book that is firmly ingrained in that small canon of literature that kids and young adults read when they are growing up in America. If Atticus Finch and Scout are the fictional narrators who help shape our children's moral universe, sixteen-year-old Elie introduces our young to the hard facts of good, evil, and all that lies between.

So, while the void is enormous—above all, for Marion, Elisha, and the rest of the family—and the void is enormous for our world, I too am filled with profound joy knowing that my seven-year-old boy and my four-year-old girl—like Elie's grandkids, and their children after them—will wade into big questions for the first time with Elie Wiesel as their guide. That they will be less alone for having Elie with them. That

*Night* will be one of the works that lay the scaffolding for their moral architecture. All because Elie Wiesel was optimistic enough to keep going—and to find the strength to shine his light on us all.

# night

THEY CALLED HIM MOISHE THE BEADLE, as if his entire life he had never had a surname. He was the jack-of-all-trades in a Hasidic house of prayer, a *shtibl*. The Jews of Sighet—the little town in Transylvania where I spent my childhood—were fond of him. He was poor and lived in utter penury. As a rule, our townspeople, while they did help the needy, did not particularly like them. Moishe the Beadle was the exception. He stayed out of people's way. His presence bothered no one. He had mastered the art of rendering himself insignificant, invisible.

Physically, he was as awkward as a clown. His waiflike shyness made people smile. As for me, I liked his wide, dreamy eyes, gazing off into the distance. He spoke little. He sang, or rather he chanted, and the few snatches I caught here and there spoke of divine suffering, of the Shekhina in Exile, where, according to Kabbalah, it awaits its redemption linked to that of man.

I met him in 1941. I was almost thirteen and deeply observant. By day I studied Talmud and by night I would run to the synagogue to weep over the destruction of the Temple.

One day I asked my father to find me a master who could guide me in my studies of Kabbalah. "You are too young for that. Maimonides tells us that one must be thirty before venturing into the world of mysticism, a world fraught with peril. First you must study the basic subjects, those you are able to comprehend."

My father was a cultured man, rather unsentimental. He rarely displayed his feelings, not even within his family, and was more involved with the welfare of others than with that of his own kin. The Jewish community of Sighet held him in highest esteem; his advice on public and even private matters was frequently sought. There were four of us children. Hilda, the eldest, then Bea; I was the third and the only son; Tzipora was the youngest.

My parents ran a store. Hilda and Bea helped with the work. As for me, my place was in the house of study, or so they said.

"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 depth 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 semi-darkness, 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.

* * *

AND THEN, ONE DAY, all foreign Jews were expelled from Sighet. And Moishe the Beadle was a foreigner.

Crammed into cattle cars by the Hungarian police, they cried silently. Standing on the station platform, we too were crying. The train disappeared over the horizon; all that was left was thick, dirty smoke.

Behind me, someone said, sighing, "What do you expect? That's war…"

The deportees were quickly forgotten. A few days after they left, it was rumored that they were in Galicia, working, and even that they were content with their fate.

Days went by. Then weeks and months. Life was normal again. A calm, reassuring wind blew through our homes. The shopkeepers were doing good business, the students lived among their books, and the children played in the street.

One day, as I was about to enter the synagogue, I saw Moishe the Beadle sitting on a bench near the entrance.

He told me what had happened to him and his companions. The train with the deportees had crossed the Hungarian border and, once in Polish territory, had been taken over by the Gestapo. The train had stopped. The Jews were ordered to get off and onto waiting trucks. The trucks headed toward a forest. There everybody was ordered to get out. They were ordered to dig huge trenches. When they had finished their work, the men from the Gestapo began theirs. Without passion or haste, they shot their prisoners, who were forced to approach the trench one by one and offer their necks. Infants were tossed into the air and used as targets for the machine guns. This took place in the Galician forest, near Kolomay. How had he, Moishe the Beadle, been able to escape? By a miracle. He was wounded in the leg and taken for dead …

Day after day, night after night, he went from one Jewish house to the next, telling his story and that of Malka, the young girl who lay dying for three days, and that of Tobie, the tailor who begged to die before his sons were killed.

Moishe was not the same. The joy in his eyes was gone. He no longer sang. He no longer mentioned either God or Kabbalah. He spoke only of what he had seen. But people not only refused to believe his tales, they refused to listen. Some even insinuated that he only wanted their pity, that he was imagining things. Others flatly said that he had gone mad.

As for Moishe, he wept and pleaded: