

# Night by Elie Wiesel

## Vocabulary

**Abstraction**—a generality; an idea or thought separated from concrete reality

**Achtung**—German for attention

**Aden**—Former Middle Eastern British colony, now part of Yemen.

**Aryan**—In Nazi ideology, the pure, superior Germanic race.

**annihilate**—destroy completely, exterminate

**apathy**—lack of interest or emotion, indifference

**appeasing**—satisfying; relieving

**Austerlitz**—Parisian railroad station for eastbound trains. Austerlitz was the name of a Czech city.

**Babylonian captivity**—Babylonians destroyed the first temple in Jerusalem in 86 B.C.E. and exiled the Jews to Babylonia.

**barometer**—literally, an instrument for measuring atmospheric pressure; an indicator of change

**bestial**—like a beast; cruel and savage

**billeted**—lodged; used to refer to temporary lodging of military personnel in private homes or other private establishments

**base**—ignoble, inferior, undignified

**benediction**—a formal blessing; act of calling upon God during a religious service

**blandishment**—flattering remarks that are meant to be persuasive

**boche or bosche**—WWI derogatory French slang for a German, usually a soldier.

**Cabbala**—Jewish mysticism, including numerology.

**the captivity of Babylon**—the period from 597 B.C. to 538 B.C. during which Jerusalem was conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar and the Jewish people were sent into captivity in Babylon

**Cavalry**—literally, the place near Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified; here, used metaphorically to mean an experience of intense agony or grief

**charnel house**—A building used to house corpses and bones.

**compulsory**—required; that which must be done

**compatriots**—fellow countrymen

**concentration camp**—Camps that were primarily used for slave labor, holding camps or transit camps.

**constraint**—restriction, especially of feelings and behaviors

**countenance**—face or features of the face

**crucible**—container or vessel made of a substance that can withstand extreme heat; a severe trial or test

**death camp**—Camps dedicated to the efficient murder of Jews and other victims; e.g. Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmo, Madjanek, Sobibor, Treblinka. The term was also used for concentration camps where thousands died of starvation and disease.

**Death's head**—Skull insignia for S.S. brigades working in concentration camps.

**derision**—scorn, ridicule

**the destruction of the temple**—King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured the Jewish city of Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in 587 B.C.

**dysentery**—intestinal inflammation causing abdominal pain and severe diarrhea; often fatal if left untreated in the very young or old or in those who are weakened by hunger or other disease

**edict**—an official public proclamation or order issued by an authority, such as a governmental or military authority.

**emigration**—the act of leaving one country or region to settle in another

**expounding**—stating in detail; explaining

**expulsion**—driving out, especially by force

**fascism**—A system of government with centralized authority under a dictator, stringent socioeconomic controls, suppression of the opposition through terror and censorship and usually a policy of belligerent nationalism and racism.

**functionaries**—people who perform certain expected duties, especially official functions

**Gestapo**—German acronym for the German Secret State Police, part of the SS notorious for terrorism against enemies of the state.

**Guerrillas**—small groups of soldiers, often volunteers, who make surprise attacks and raids behind enemy lines

**ghetto**—The confinement of Jews in a set-apart area of a city. The first exclusively Jewish ghetto was in Venice in 1516.

**gypsy**—Pejorative term for Roma or Romany, an ethnic group with roots in India which suffered large losses in the Holocaust

**harangued**—scolded, especially in a noisy and bullying way

**Hasidism (Hasidic)**—Movement of Orthodox Judaism with strong mystical and emotional elements.

**hermetically**—in an airtight way

**Himmler, Heinrich (1900—1945)**—Head of SS and principal planner of Jews' total extermination.

**Hitler, Adolf (1889—1945)**—Dictator of Germany, 1933—194.

**Horthy, Admiral Miklos (1868—1957)**—Regent of Hungary, 1920—1944, who was forced by the Nazis to relinquish power to the Nylas Hungarian Fascist party after Nazi invasion.

**implored**—begged; pleaded sincerely

**incite**—to urge to act; to provoke

**inconsiderable**—unimportant, small

**indeterminate**—indefinite; vague; subtle

**inert**—motionless; lacking the ability to move or act

**interminable**—endless or seeming to be endless

**Job**—Biblical figure who has come to symbolize suffering.

**Kaddish**—A prayer in Aramaic praising God. The mourner's Kaddish is said for the dead.

**kapos**—Nazi concentration camp prisoners who were given special privileges in return for supervising other prisoners on work crews; often common criminals who were notorious for their brutality toward fellow inmates

**knell**—the sound of a bell, especially of a bell rung slowly at a funeral; often used metaphorically to mean a bad omen

**lamentation**—an expression of grief and sadness

**Lazarus**—A man described in the Books of John and Luke as having been raised from the dead by Jesus.

**lorries**—trucks

**lucidity**—clear-headedness; clarity; rational understanding

**los**—German for "Go on!"

**Maimonides (1135—1204)**—Jewish rabbi, physician and philosopher.

**meager**—of small quantity; not adequate

**Mengele, Dr. Josef (1911—1978)**—Auschwitz physician notorious for so-called medical experiments performed on inmates, especially twins and dwarves.

**Messiah**—Greek translation of Hebrew Mashiach, the anointed one.

**mountebanks**—fakes; charlatans or tricksters

**Musulman**—German for Muslim. Camp slang for a prisoner who is too weak to walk, work, or stand, and therefore marked for death. Believed to derive from prisoner's resemblance to a Muslim in prayer.

**nocturnal**—of or happening during the night

**numerology**—an occult system, built around numbers, of foretelling the future and exploring the unknown

**Nyilas party**—Hungarian for Arrow Cross, a fascist anti-semitic party which assumed power in late 1944 and assisted the SS in deportations of Jews.

**oblivion**—state of being completely forgotten

**Passover**—In Hebrew, Pesach. Greek word for the celebration of the exodus of Jewish people from slavery in Egypt.

**Pentecost**—In Hebrew, Shavuot, the celebration of the giving of the Torah.

**phylacteries**—In Hebrew, tefillin. Greek word for two black leather cubes, worn during daily morning prayer which contain verses from the Torah.

**pillage**—to loot; to rob of property

**premonition**—a feeling that something is about to happen, especially something bad.

**privations**—hardships; lack of necessities of everyday life

**rabbi**—a scholar and teacher of Jewish law; the spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation.

**raucous**—loud and rough sounding; hoarse

**Red Army**—the regular army of the former Soviet Union

**reprieve**—a postponement of punishment; a temporary relief

**Rosh Hashana**—Jewish New Year.

**SS**—Abbreviation of Schutzstaffel (Defense Protective Units). Notorious for implementing European Jews' extermination.

**sage**—a person who is very wise, especially one whose great wisdom is the result of age and experience

**sanctity**—holiness; sacredness

**semblance**—appearance, resemblance

**Spanish Inquisition**—Brutal campaign by Roman Catholic church to punish nonbelievers including Jews and Muslims.

**stupefied**—stunned; amazed

**summarily**—promptly and without formality

**Synagogue**—A Jewish house of worship and study.

**Talmud**—The most important compilation of Jewish oral tradition.

**Temple**—Holiest place in Judaism, located in Jerusalem. Biblically ordained sacrifices were performed here. Built and destroyed twice.

**treatise**—a formal article or book on a particular subject

**truncheons**—short, thick cudgels or clubs

**unremittingly**—constantly; without interruption

**vigilance**—the state of watchfulness; alertness, especially to danger

**visionary**—having the nature of a vision; unreal

**wizened**—shriveled, dried up

**yellow star**—Nazis forced Jews to wear a cloth badge with Jew written in the center of a yellow 6 pointed star.

**Yom Kippur**—Day of Atonement. Holiest day of Jewish year when Jews fast and pray for forgiveness of their sins.

**Zionism**—Political movement advocating the establishment of a Jewish state.

**Zohar**—From the Hebrew meaning light or splendor. One of the major works of the Cabbala.