


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*

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 Shekhinah 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 depths 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.

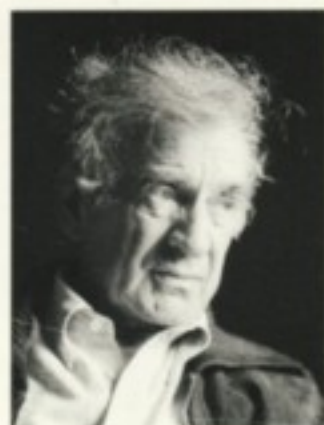
Born in the town of Sighet, Transylvania, Elie Wiesel was a teenager when he and his family were taken from their home in 1944 to the Auschwitz concentration camp, and then to Buchenwald. *Night* is the terrifying record of Elie Wiesel's memories of the death of his family, the death of his own innocence, and his despair as a deeply observant Jew confronting the absolute evil of man. This new translation by his wife and most frequent translator, Marion Wiesel, corrects important details and presents the most accurate rendering in English of Elie Wiesel's testimony to what happened in the camps and of his unforgettable message that this horror must never be allowed to happen again.

"Wiesel has taken his own anguish and imaginatively metamorphosed it into art."

—CURT LEVIANT, *Saturday Review*

"As a human document, *Night* is almost unbearably painful, and certainly beyond criticism."

—A. ALVAREZ, *Commentary*




ELIE WIESEL is the author of more than forty internationally acclaimed works of fiction and nonfiction. He has been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States of America Congressional Gold Medal, the French Legion of Honor, and, in 1986, the Nobel Peace Prize. He is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities and University Professor at Boston University.

A reading group guide for *Night* is available at www.fsgbooks.com.

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