

# Example by StudyDriver

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## Elie's Faith in God Example

The Holocaust. A genocide that occurred during World War II. This catastrophic event led to the death of around 6 million Jews. And the mental, emotional, and physical damage of 17 million Jews. One of those Jews is Elie Wiesel. Eliezer Wiesel, Romanian-born American Jew, and author of the book *Night*. Which is a vividly detailed memoir, about his experience in the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. Elie was taken at age 15, along with his father, his mother, and his three sisters. In this memoir, Elie's struggle with his faith is a dominant conflict in *Night*. Elie's faith takes a drastic revolution from being fully devoted to his faith, to rebelling against God, and to coming to terms with his broken faith.

In the beginning of *Night*, Elie's faith was very strict and focused on his religious studies and his view of God. Eliezer has grown up believing that everything on Earth reflects God's holiness and power. Elie was heavily studying Talmud and Kabbalah. Talmud is an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible. And Kabbalah is an esoteric method, discipline, and school of thought of Judaism. Eliezer's faith is a product of his studies in Jewish mysticism, which teach him that God is everywhere in the world, that nothing exists without God. He speaks of his routine in the

book when he writes, By day I studied Talmud and by night I would run to the synagogue to weep over the temple (Wiesel 3). Even though his father believed he was too young explore the studies involved in Kabbalah, Eliezer remained committed to his quest to study Kabbalah and found himself a master who could guide him. And throughout chapter one of Night, Elie's belief in a good and pure God is so unconditional, that he himself does not understand how. This is brought up by Moishe the Beadle, when he begins to question Elie while he is praying. Elie mentioned this when he wrote, 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 (Wiesel 4). This shows that Elie doesn't fully understand his faith, but his need for God as well as his commitment to his faith.

Elie's faith is completely broken by his tragic experience in the Holocaust. Because of all he has had to endure in these camps, his faith is slowly but surely diminishing. The suffering Elie sees and experiences during the Holocaust transforms his entire worldview. Before the war, he cannot imagine having to ever question his God. Observance and belief were unquestioned parts of his core sense of identity, so once his faith is irreparably shaken, he becomes a completely different person. Elie's innocence is cruelly stripped from him. This is made known when Elie wrote, Behind me, I heard the same man asking: Where is God now? And I heard a voice within me answer him: Where is He? Here He is! He is hanging here on this gallows. . . . (Wiesel 62). The hanging of the young boy symbolizes the murder of God for Elie. The boy's death also represents the death of Elie's innocence. Once having his faith completely lost, Elie begins to rebel against anything involving God. At the end of summer in 1944, the Jews of Buna come together to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, despite the cruelty that has been afflicted on them. Elie's religious rebellion intensifies, and he cannot find a reason to bless God in the middle of so much suffering. Elie even mocks the idea that the Jews are God's chosen people, deciding that they have only been chosen to be massacred. His exact words were, How could I say to Him: Blessed be Thou, Almighty, Master of the Universe, who chose us among all nations to be tortured day and night, to watch as our fathers, our mothers, our brothers end up in the furnaces? Praised be Thy Holy Name, for having chosen us to be slaughtered on Thine altar? (Wiesel 67). He feels as though praising God, in that moment was just foolish.

Elie's faith has undergone an irrevocable journey. From one having a firm devotion to God, his faith, and his studies. To completely abandoning his faith and his view of God. But this does not completely erase God from his conscious. When Elie is finally liberated, he ends up getting food poisoning, and has to in hospital for a few weeks in order to recover. It is then that he comes to a new found realization. In *Night*, this is revealed by Elie when he says, From the depths of the mirror, a corpse gazed back at me. The look in his eyes, as they stared into mine, has never left me (Wiesel 109). As he is looking in the mirror, he looks at the void within himself. The empty space which God no longer occupies. Even though Elie abandons his faith completely, he still continues to use biblical allusions throughout this book. An example of this is when Elie and his father are being being marched towards the a pit in the concentration camp. Elie says, My heart was about to burst. There. I was face-to-face with the Angel of Death.. Even though he is speaking of the Nazi soldiers, his Angel of Death alludes to the angel Azrael in the Old Testament.

The evolution of Elie's faith is a very intricate and grave piece needed in order to fully understand his experience. Because Elie's faith took a drastic revolution from being fully devoted to his faith, to rebelling against God, and to coming to means with his broken faith.