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Ms. Smith ✓

Elie's Struggle to Maintain Faith ✓

When one's ultimate fate is death, it is inevitable that reliance on the comforts of faith and tradition disappears. In his memoir *Night*, Elie Wiesel recalls the horrific cruelty at the hands of the Nazi Regime that cause him question his identity. His relationships with family, community members, and most importantly, with God, degrade. As his days ^{of} suffering and scraping for survival pass, Elie's deep connection with God and religious tradition diminishes. ✓

At the beginning of his memoir, Elie describes his passionate interest in religion. He recalls spending hours studying the scriptures and finding joy in his Jewish upbringing. Elie was trying to understand his complex relationship with God, and when an elder asks him why he prays, he wonders, "Why did I pray? Strange question. Why did I live? Why did I breathe?" (Wiesel 4). By equating the act of praying with breathing, Elie explains how significant his beliefs were even though he still didn't quite understand why he prayed, or even existed. Elie then sought guidance to learn about the Zohar. Moishe, an elder at Elie's synagogue, stayed late to teach him and Elie remembers, "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." (Wiesel 5). Elie's daily life was characterized with an eagerness and dedication to understanding his religion and relationship with God. As strong as Elie's faith became, his exposure to the inhumanity and chaos of concentration camps causes it to falter. ✓

With his world progressively shattering around him, Elie questions God and His role in the devastation. Elie witnesses horrors in the concentration camps that his God would never allow; infants are burned alive in pits of fire and row after row of innocent people are herded into the crematoriums.

He questions how God could possibly allow these atrocities and holds Him responsible. Elie says, "Never shall I ever forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes. Never shall I forget those things, even were I condemned to live as long as God. Never." (Wiesel 34). He feels abandoned by the God that he once honoured and knows he will never be able to forget what God has done. As the days and weeks pass, Elie's will to survive is challenged by starvation, brutality and physical deterioration. Initially, Elie debates God's role, but his questions soon turn to fury. Faced with the hopelessness of his situation, Elie calls out to God, "What does grandeur mean, Master of the Universe, in the face of all this cowardice, this decay, and this misery? Why do you go on troubling these poor people's wounded minds, their ailing bodies?" (Wiesel 66). Still questioning God, Elie receives no answers and is outraged. God has forsaken him and left him to die, so Elie turns his back on God like God did to him.

Elie begins to find the strength within himself without God on his side. When the Jewish New Year's occurs, Elie feels no need to celebrate. He remembers what Rosh Hashanah once meant to him, but he cannot bring himself to even pray anymore. Rather than feeling guilty, Elie says, "I felt very strong. I was alone, terribly alone in a world without God, without man. Without love or mercy. I was nothing but ashes now, but I felt myself to be stronger than this Almighty to whom my life had been bound for so long." (Wiesel 68). Elie now understands that without God, he needs to find power within himself to fight for life. When Elie is supposed to be fasting on The Day of Atonement, he instead eats his rations and states, "I no longer accepted God's silence. As I swallowed my ration of soup, I turned that act into a symbol of rebellion, of protest against Him." (Wiesel 69). Elie realizes that if he continues to dedicate his life to God, the result will be death by starvation. He would rather eat than serve God anymore; he would rather survive than wait for God to bring him comfort.

Faced with unspeakable horrors during his years of suffering, Elie struggles to maintain his faith in God. As a young boy, Elie is keen to learn about his Jewish background, but when he is introduced to

the true horrors of the Nazi concentration camps, he begins to lose faith in God. By the end of his memoir, Elie rebels against his God and traditions out of anger. To live through the systematic execution of his family, friends and community and question God's plan in that is natural and expected. The God who Elie once honoured and cherished could not have allowed the murder of six million of His children. God's plan for humanity certainly cannot include the civil wars, famines, blatant racism and rampant poverty present around the world today.

Works Cited

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. Hill and Wang, 2006.

Sample: Reflecting on Your Writing Task



Day 3 or 4

Reflecting on Your Writing Task

Using specific reference(s) to your writing variables and/or your draft, explain one or more of the following prompts:

5 marks

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- The information I included in my text is effective for my purpose because . . .
- The advantages of my choice of form are . . .
- My style of writing is effective in capturing and maintaining my audience's attention by . . .
- The context in which my audience will experience the text is important because . . .
- The central idea of my text is important for my chosen audience because . . .

The context in which my audience will experience the text is important because the audience will see the true devastation that the Nazi regime caused not only in bodily harm and death but in the damage that was done to people's faith, such as Elie. They will also see similar writing pieces in a Holocaust exhibit and learn even more about the Holocaust ^{other} than just what my essay has to offer. The central idea of my text is important for my chosen audience because most people who would read the essay would be interested in learning about someone's ^{personal} struggles in the concentration camps.

→ It is important that people read about Elie's struggle with God's plan because not many people had to deal with what Elie had to in their everyday lives.

→ Learning about personal stories from the past keeps history alive.