

## About the Author

Elie Wiesel (1928-2016) was a teenager in 1944 when he and his whole family were taken from their home to the Auschwitz concentration camp and then to Buchenwald. Wiesel wrote his internationally acclaimed memoir *Night* about his experiences in the camps. In addition to writing many other books, Wiesel became an activist who spoke out about injustices in many countries around the world. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986

## Memoir from: *Night* (by Elie Wiesel)

- 1 And then, one day all foreign Jews were expelled from Sighet. And Moishe the Beadle was a foreigner.
- 2 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.
- 3 Behind me, someone said, sighing, "What do you expect? That's war..."
- 4 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.
- 5 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 streets.
- 6 One day, as I was about to enter the **synagogue**, I saw Moishe the Beadle sitting on a bench near the entrance.
- 7 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 forced 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 left for dead...



### Vocabulary:

**deportees**- people forced to leave a country by an authority

**Sighet**- a town in Romania

**Beadle**- a minor church official, a caretaker of a synagogue

**Galicia**- a former province of Austria

**synagogue**-a building that houses Jewish religious services

**Kabbalah**- a Jewish religious tradition that strives to explain how the universe works

8 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.

9 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.

10 As for Moishe, he wept and pleaded:

11 "Jews, listen to me! That's all I ask of you. No money. No pity. Just listen to me!" he kept shouting in synagogue, between the prayer at dusk and the evening prayer.

12 Even I did not believe him. I often sat with him, after services, and listened to his tales, trying to understand his grief. But all I felt was pity.

13 "They think I'm mad," he whispered, and tears, like drops of wax, flowed from his eyes.

14 Once, I asked him the question: "Why do you want people to believe you so much? In your place I would not care whether they believed me or not..."

15 He closed his eyes, as if to escape time.

16 "You don't understand," he said in despair. "You cannot understand. I was saved miraculously. I succeeded in coming back. Where did I get my strength? I wanted to return to Sighet to describe to you my death so that you might ready yourselves while there is still time. Life? I no longer care to live. I am alone. But I wanted to come back to warn you. Only no one is listening to me..."

17 This was toward the end of 1942.

18 Thereafter, life seemed normal once again. London radio, which we listened to every evening, announced encouraging news: the daily bombings of Germany and Stalingrad, the preparation of the Second Front. And so we, the Jews of Sighet, waited for better days that surely were soon to come.

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**Reread the passage and answer these text dependent questions.**

1. Who are the people represented by the pronouns "*they*" and "*we*" in paragraph 2?
2. What is the intended effect of the following lines from paragraph 7: "*Infants were tossed into the air and used as targets for the machine guns?*"
3. How was Moishe able to escape the shooting in the Galician forest?
4. Why did the Jews of Sighet refused "*to believe his tale and refused to listen?*"
5. Two main events of this narrative: *the Holocaust* and *World War II*. Provide evidence from the text that leads to infer each event.

