

Dealing with Tragedy

The Holocaust was a terrible time for our planet. It is possibly the greatest tragedy of all time. Many innocent people were murdered and those that weren't were changed forever. Families were separated and would most likely never see each other again. People were stripped of their dignity and their will to live. They were isolated from every possible good thing that could happen to them. There were many different ways of dealing with that isolation. In his memoir *Night* Elie Wiesel describes his horrific experience. Sixteen other brave souls have revealed some of their deepest and most haunting memories to share with the world and these memories can be compared to Elie's. One more man, Hy Horowitz, exposes his disturbing memories of liberating a camp as a member of the United States Army. The names of these brave survivors are:

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| 1. Annie Blieberg | 9. Herbert Launer |
| 2. Boris Chartan | 10. Fred Marguiles |
| 3. David Gewirtzman | 11. Werner Reich |
| 4. Lillian Gewirtzman | 12. Helga Shepard |
| 5. Charlotte Gillman | 13. Peter Stone |
| 6. Gloria Glanz | 14. Eddie Weinstein |
| 7. Inge Gurevich | 15. Anita Weisbord |
| 8. Ethel Katz | 16. Walter Wolff |

Elie Wiesel

Elie was face with many forms of isolation during his time in the death camps. In *Night*, Elie is isolated from his family and from the rest of the world and this gives him many reasons to give up and not go on with his life. Elie is isolated in different ways, as

a group, from his family, and within himself. The widest ranging isolation that he faces is the isolation that the Jewish people face as they "...become a hermetically sealed cattle car" (Wiesel 24). The isolation shocks Elie because of the silence of the world. It is hard to keep going on when nobody will lend a helping hand in a time of need. It is hard not to lose faith in humanity when people just sit there and do not try to fix what is wrong. This causes part of Elie to want to give up. Separating the Jewish people from the rest of the world it demoralizes them and makes them feel less important. "I have more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. He alone has kept his promises, all his promises, to the Jewish people" (Wiesel 81). It is hard to keep pushing on when the only person that has kept their promises is the person that wants to kill you. It is demoralizing when people do not keep their promises and lend a helping hand except for the one person that you do not want to. This is why many of the people gave up on living. The next level of isolation for Elie is personal isolation from his family. "All [Elie] could think of was not to lose [my father]. Not to remain alone" (Wiesel 30). He has already lost his mother and sister, and by losing his father he would lose the only remaining force that was keeping him alive. It is the last piece of the world that he knew and he wants to hold on to that piece forever. By having something you care about still alive and well it gives you a reason to keep going. Many people were going on okay, until they lost their loved ones and that isolation just destroyed their will for living. The third and most personal level of isolation for Elie is the isolation within himself. "My eyes had opened and I was alone. Terribly alone in a world without God, without man" (Wiesel 68). When someone loses something that they have believed in their entire life it changes them. Elie isolates himself from religion, and that is a very hard thing to do and still keep moving on. When

you isolate something from what it is based on, it takes a miracle for that thing not to crumble and fall. It can be described as a miracle that Elie was able to move through this, when it caused so many people to crumble and fall.

DVD Holocaust Survivors

For the sixteen survivors early childhood was nothing out of the ordinary. Many of the survivors, such as Anita Weisbord, remember “The white tablecloths” used during the Jewish Holidays. For David Gewirtzman one of his happiest moments was when he went to a zoo for the first time, in Warsaw. However as Fred Marguiles states he was always a little scared, growing up in Berlin.

Once Hitler came into power things started to change. The Jews were starting to be isolated from the rest of the civilians. Peter Stone was kicked out of Cub Scouts at the age of eight for being Jewish. Annie Blieberg recalls witnessing protests in front of Jewish stores. Boris Chartan remembers being beat up on his way home from school. The beatings were the worst on Easter because the Nazi's felt that it was the Jews who killed Jesus and wanted to get revenge for that recollects Lillian Gewirtzman. Inge Gurevich's father's business went bankrupt because of the protests made in front of his store. Helga Shepard recalls that even with this going on there was still a sense of denial that it would get any worse.

On the night of November 9th 1938 the Holocaust was made real for so many of the victims. Kristallnacht is considered the first event of the Holocaust because it is the first event that caused physical destruction to the Jewish people as a whole at one time. This is the time when many Jews began to be isolated from their families. Inge Gurevich's father was taken the next morning to a concentration camp. The S.S. officers

just walked into Herbert Launer's house and for no reason beat up him and his parents. That same morning Walter Wolff remembers walking past the synagogue and seeing it on fire. He also remembers seeing the fireman just standing there, watching it burn, and making sure that it did not catch any of the surrounding buildings on fire. When Walter got home the Nazi's came to his house and took him to Dachau Concentration camp. For Gloria Glanz this period became especially rough because she grew up only fourteen miles from Treblinka Concentration Camp.

The next event that isolated the Jewish People was registering. Charlotte Gillman remembers that everybody had to register and when you registered you were given a gold Star of David and were forced to wear it. Warner Reich brings to mind that when a person registered they were given a new middle name. All of the men were given the middle name of Israel and women were given the name Sarah. With great sorrow Ethel Katz recalls that her brother was on his way to register but was a little late. She never saw him again.

At this point the Jewish people were being put into ghettos and as David Gewirtzman remembers there was not enough room, no heating materials in the winter, and barely any food. The Jews were now completely isolated from the rest of the population but were able to push through because they were not being murdered yet. One event that saved thousands lives was the kindertransport. Gloria Glanz feels that her mother gave birth to her a second time when she put her on the kindertransport because it saved her from the Nazi's. Anita Weisbord also feels that she was saved because she was on the kindertransport.

The next step for the Nazi's was to put all of the Jews in concentration camps.

Eddie Weinstein that while on the train going to the camp it felt like cattle in a cattle car, just like Elie felt. In the camps everybody had to wear a triangle. There were different triangles depending on whether you were Jewish, a gypsy, homosexual, a Jehovah's Witness, an ordinary criminal, a political prisoner, a prisoner of war, and many others. The amount of killing that went on in the camps is astounding. As Fred Marguiles shares the camps had a certain quota of Jews that had to be killed in a certain amount of time. That is one of the reasons for the numbers on the arms, so that it was known how many Jews were being killed.

Many of the inmates felt as if they were alone in the world because they had to go through this horrible experience just because their beliefs were different. They did not truly understand why this was happening and why nobody would save them. It was demoralizing knowing that many people did not attempt to save them because they did not want to believe that this was actually happening.

As this was going on many of the survivors were trying to live out in the wilderness or in farms so that they would not be captured by the Nazi's. Ethel Katz went with her family back to the farm that she grew up on. When the Nazi's came she tried to run, but was knocked out. When she woke up she found the rest of her family dead. This aloneness did not make her sad at first, it just made her angry but the Nazi's were coming back to the farm so she had to live in a secret opening in the attic for several months before the Nazi's left the house for good. David Gewirtzman and his sister lived beneath a trap door that was built beneath the pig sty of a friendly farmer for two to three years.

Hy Horowitz was an American soldier that went over to Europe to help liberate the camps and was shocked when he got there. The thing that disturbs him most was

when he rescued two brothers that had been living in a dirt cellar beneath the house for a couple of years. The farmer and his wife had been dead for almost two days when Hy found the boys. He also remembers when they went to Hitler's secret lair, Ohrdruf, and found piles of bodies everywhere. The same was true for Hy at Bergen-Belson, where the ground was "carpeted with skeletal remains". Hy even felt a little isolated because he was seeing these terrible image firsthand and very few other Americans would ever know how it truly looked.

All seventeen survivors and one American Soldier showed extreme bravery, perseverance, and fortitude to get through these horrific times. To be able to persevere through the isolation that was caused from being separated from not only their family but from the rest of the world is something that not everybody can or even did do. These are seventeen of the strongest people in the world.