*Night* Glossary

**DO NOT CONFUSE THIS LIST WITH YOUR VOCABULARY WORDS. This is a helpful list of definitions for any Jewish/Yiddish/German words Elie Wiesel uses in *Night.***

**Achtung!** (ach **toong**) German for "Attention!"

**Aden** a seaport of Yemen on the Arabian peninsula.

**Aryan** (**ayr** ee uhn) Hitler believed that there was an Aryan race, which included Germans — and all other races, including the Jews, were inferior. According to Hitler, "Aryans" were statuesque, blond, and blue-eyed. Ironically, Hitler had none of these traits.

**Auschwitz** (**owsh** vihtz) the death camp complex built in May 1940, south of the Vistula River a mile from the town of Oswiecim, Poland. Auschwitz I, the original concentration camp, annihilated two million victims with Zyklon B, a hydrocyanic vapor spread through shower heads on unsuspecting victims, then disposed of their remains in crematories. Added to the original buildings was Birkenau, or Auschwitz II, a selection and disposal center at the Auschwitz depot, and the Monowitz labor camp, or Auschwitz III, which lay south of the I. G. Farben synthetic oil and rubber factory, called Buna.

**Austerlitz** (**ow** stuhr lihtz) currently Brno, the Czech Republic, in the south-central portion of the country.

**beadle** a minor parish official or caretaker.

**Beethoven** Ludwig von Beethoven; a native of Bonn, Germany, produced dramatic romantic music for piano, strings, orchestra, and ballet. Because of the immediacy and emotional intensity of his works, Nazi laws ban Jewish instrumentalists from playing Beethoven's music. Even more identifiable with the myth of the "master race" were the works of Wagner, which devout Jews are still reluctant to perform.

***Blockaelteste***(**blah** kyl **tehs** tuh) German for "block official."

**boches** (**bohsh** uz) a derogatory name for Germans. The word is a shortened form of *caboche,*or hardhead.

**Buchenwald** Germany's model concentration camp, which was built outside Weimar in July 1937 to house homosexuals, political dissidents, Russian prisoners of war, Gypsies, and criminals, and to supply armaments factories with twelve-hour shifts of camp laborers, who died at the rate of 6,000 per month. Between January and April 1945, the inmate population more than doubled from 40,000 to 81,000. Fifty thousand died from overwork, starvation, and fatal medical experimentation designed to study patient response to bacteria, burns, and lethal injection. The prison staff earned the world's abhorrence for saving tattooed skins.

**Kabbalah** (kuh **bah** luh) a medieval system of interpreting scripture by the application of meditation, emotion, mysticism, insight, intuition, communion with God, and numerology.

**Calvary** a hill in Jerusalem where Christ was crucified. Metaphorically, the term applies to any torture, ordeal, or test of faith.

**captivity of Babylon** In 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar put down a Jewish revolt and placed the most prominent Jews in captivity in Babylon, leaving behind the poorest and least troublesome. Although Cyrus of Persia freed the captives in 516 B.C., most chose to remain in their new homeland.

**charnel houses** mortuaries, or makeshift repositories of the dead.

**dysentery** (**dihs** ihn **teh** ree) a life-threatening intestinal disease causing internal hemorrhaging, diarrhea, and vomiting that dehydrates as it depletes the body of electrolytes.

**Fascist party** a political party supporting brutally oppressive, dictatorial control of public speech and civil rights and enforcing uncompromising adherence to inhumane laws. There were German Fascists under Hitler and Italian Fascists under Mussolini.

**François Mauriac** (frahn **swah** moh ree **ak**) French Catholic ethicist who assisted the French Resistance by writing anti-Nazi articles. In 1952, Mauriac won the Nobel Prize for literature.

**Galicia, near Kolomaye** a Slavic territory in the northern Carpathian Mountains which lies partly in Poland and the Ukraine. Kolomaye (modern Kolomyya) is north of Sighet in Russia.

**Gestapo** (gee **stahp** oh) the *Geheime Staatspolizei,*or secret state police, an arm of the *Schutzstaffel,*called the SS or Black Shirts, a hand-picked corps of 50,000 secret police who functioned as security officers and as Hitler's body guard. For their fanaticism and devotion to Hitler's dictates, the Gestapo became the most hated and feared of German terrorists.

**ghetto** a section of a city into which an ethnic or religious minority, lepers, or outcasts are restricted. Jews were required to live in ghettos from medieval times unto the French revolution of 1789, which ended this oppressive practice.

**the god of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob** three patriarchs of the book of Genesis. Abraham, son of an idol-maker, was the founder of monotheism in the Western world, the father of Isaac, and the grandfather of Jacob, who later changed his name to Israel and sired its twelve tribes.

**grace** the Christian concept of a gift that the receiver does not have to deserve; a blessing from God or from a generous donor.

**Haifa** (**hy** fuh) the major port and rail center of Israel. Haifa lies sixty-five miles north of Tel Aviv.

**Hasidic** (ha **sih** dihk) an eighteenth-century group of Jews who stressed the joyous, ecstatic, elements in their faith. The term also describes fiercely orthodox Jews who bind themselves to strict observance of Jewish laws.

**Himmler** head of the SS. An ambitious power-monger, Heinrich Himmler served as *Reichsführer,*or second in command, to Hitler and expanded the secret police into a fearful network. The "final solution," or total annihilation of all Jews, was Himmler's prime task. Ousted by Martin Bormann in April 1945, he poisoned himself May 23, 1945.

**Horthy** Nikolaus Horthy de Nagybanya, ruler of Hungary, supported Hitler's invasion of Yugoslavia and Russia. In October 1944, he realized that Germany intended to overrun Hungary and defied Hitler. The SS placed him under house arrest in Bavaria, from which American troops released him in 1945.

**Hungarian police** After Germany forced Romania to cede Transylvania to Hungary on August 30, 1940, the Hungarian police ruled millions of Romanians and, under compulsion of the SS, launched anti-Semitic terrorism against Jews.

**Kapo** (**kah** poh) German term for trustees or guards chosen from the prisoners themselves. The kapos often preserved their special status by being more cruel than the SS officers.

**Lagerkapo** (**lah** guhr **kah** poh) German for "head of camp."

**lavatory** a toilet.

**Lazarus** (**la** zuh ruhs) according to John 11, a biblical character whom Christ raised from the dead. The name is a Romanized variant of Elie's first name, *Eliezer.*

**London radio** After the Nazi takeover of much of Europe, people depended on the BBC (British Broadcasting Company), a state-owned communication system that kept listeners informed of developments in the war.

***Los!***German for "Hurry up!" or "Do it now!"

**Maimonides** (may **mah** nih deez) Moses ben Maimon (1135-1204), a Spanish physician and philosopher who fled Muslim persecution by moving his family from Cordoba to Israel, then to Egypt, where he rose to the rank of royal physician. He codified Jewish law, formulated a Jewish creed, wrote scriptural commentary, and compiled a religious guide book.

***meister***(**my** stuhr) German for "master."

**Metro** (**may** troh) the Paris subway system.

**the morning star** the planet Venus, which is visible on the eastern horizon shortly before dawn.

**mountebanks** a phony, or fraud.

***musulman***(**muh** suhl m'n) Arabic for "one who surrenders." A synonym for Muslim or follower of Mohammedanism or Islam, the word becomes a prison term for a weak, despondent internee whom the selection committee is certain to relegate to the crematory.

**Nazi** (**naht** see) shortened form for a member of NSDAP (*Nationalsozialische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*), the German National Socialist party, which Anton Drexler, Dietrich Eckart, Karl Harrer, and Adolf Hitler inaugurated in 1920 as a racist, totalitarian oppressor of human rights. The shortened form of the party's title remained in use from 1930-1945 as a pejorative expressing the world's distaste for Hitler's thugs.

**Nietzsche** (**nee** chuh) Friedrich Nietzsche, a late nineteenth-century German philosopher who proclaimed "God is dead" and proposed the concept of the "superman," an idea that was misappropriated by the Nazis in order to justify their obsession with Aryan superiority.

**Nyilas** Hungary's fascist party.

**Oberkapo** (**oh** buhr **kah** poh) German for "overseer."

**the Occupation** June 22, 1940-October 23, 1944, the period during which Nazis overran France and set up a totalitarian government.

**Passover** a Jewish holiday that commemorates the departure of Jews from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses, who defied Pharoah following an onslaught of ten plagues that concluded in the death of the firstborn in each household. The Jews avoided the Angel of Death by daubing their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificial lamb.

**Pentecost** a Jewish harvest festival, called *Sukkot*in Hebrew.

**phylacteries** (fuh **lak** tuh reez) a set of leather cubes containing parchment slips inscribed with biblical passages and bound to the head and left forearm or middle finger during ritual weekday prayers. Phylacteries, also known as tefillin, are a sign of orthodox devotion to Deuteronomy 9:18, a scriptural passage that requires an outward demonstration of piety.

***pipel***(**pee** p'l) German for a "young apprentice" or "assistant."

**Rosh Hashanah** (rash hah **shah** nuh) Hebrew for "New Year," a Jewish holiday observed on the first day of the Jewish month of Tishri (usually in September).

**Sighet** (sih **geht**) a provincial Transylvanian town in the Carpathian Mountains in the far north of Romania near the Russian border, an area which was part of Hungary from 1941-1945, thus contributing to the confusion over Elie Wiesel's nationality. He is alternately identified as Romanian, Hungarian, and Transylvanian.

**Shavuot** is the Hebrew word for “weeks” and refers to the Jewish festival marking the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which occurs seven weeks after Passover.

**Shekhinah** (she **ki** nah) a Talmudic concept representing God's dwelling and immanence in the created world. It was equated with the " Keneset Yisrael ," the personified spirit of the People of Israel. According to a Rabbinic tradition, the Shekhinah shares in the exiles of the Jewish people.

***Sonder-Kommando***German for "special command," Jews assigned to remove gassed corpses. They had to remove gold teeth and drag the bodies to carts which transported the dead to the crematorium to be burned. The Nazis promised the *Sonder-Kommando*their lives but this was a deception. Eventually, the *Sonder-Kommando*were themselves gassed.

**Spanish Inquisition** Founded in 1478 by Ferdinand V and Isabella, under Father Tomás de Torquemada, it began torturing "new Christians," Jews who had converted to Christianity but were suspected of having lapsed back into an observance of Judaism, in order to eradicate blasphemy, immorality, infanticide, and homosexuality, and to assure that the souls of all of the "heretics" would enter heaven after death. Some suspects were strangled or burned at the stake in public ceremonies; others fled to Turkey. The church enriched itself by confiscating their property.

***Stubenaelteste***(**shtyoo** buh nyl **tehs** tuh) German for "room official."

**Synagogue** (sin a gog) a Jewish temple of worship.

**Talmud** (**tahl** muhd) a 45-volume compendium of scriptural interpretation, commentary, and traditions, edited in 500 A.D. and used as a source book of Jewish wisdom to solve problems and settle disputes.

**that other Jew, his brother** Jesus, who was born to Jewish parents and reared in the Hebraic tradition, including dedication at the Temple and training in oral disputation with learned men.

**tommy gun** slang name for the Thompson machine gun, a .45-caliber submachine gun invented by John Taliaferro Thompson in the 1920s and issued by the FBI as a standard weapon.

**Transylvania** a plateau in northwest Romania.

**the yellow star** a palm-sized patch centered with a hexagram, the yellow Mogen David, or Magen David, called the Shield of David, or the Star of David, a regular six-pointed shape composed of two triangles superimposed — one point up and the other point down. Today, the same figure adorns the flag of Israel.

***Yitgadal veyitkadach shmé raba***Hebrew for "May His Name be blessed and magnified."

**Yom Kippur** (yahm kih **poor**) the Jewish day of atonement, a holiday observed with fasting and prayer.

**Zion** here, the term refers to the Jewish nation; Zionism is a general term applying to the movement to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.

**Zionism** an international drive or political movement that resulted in the development and establishment of a Jewish state.

**Zohar** (zoh **hahr**) literally, the "Book of Brightness," a symbolic or allegorical interpretation of Jewish law. Moses de Leon compiled the Zohar, the main text of the Kabbalah, in Spain near the end of the thirteenth century.