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Ruined Father and Son Relationships in *Night*

In the holocaust, Jewish people had to fight to survive. They did everything they could just to live another day. The holocaust caused Jewish people to constantly live in fear. They were put into concentration camps and were treated like animals. The camps turned people's mindsets into every man for himself. The holocaust caused many father-son relationships to be destroyed. Examples of ruined father-son relationships in *Night* include the father and son in the cattle car, Rabbi Eliahou and his son, and Elie Wiesel and his father.

The Jews at Gleiwitz were to be deported to the Center of Germany. The Jews were separated into two sections, weak and well. The well were to be deported in cattle wagons in the snow without food. The townspeople started throwing bread crumbs in the cattle cars. Elie saw a man hide a piece of bread to share with his son. His son viciously attacked his father for the pieces of bread. The father tried calling out to the son, but he didn't care, "Don't you recognize me? I'm your father...you're hurting me...you're killing your father!" (Wiesel 89). The desperation to live made the son kill his own father. The son ended up getting killed by other people for the same reason. Starvation made these people go feral just for crumbs. The conditions of the camps changed people forever.

The Jews were being evacuated from Buna and they didn't know where they were going to be taken. They were forced to run 42 miles in the snow with no breaks. Rabbi Eliahou was an

old man and he struggled to keep up. Elie saw that his son purposely ran ahead of him and left his father. When they were finally able to rest, Rabbi Eliahou looked for his son everywhere not knowing his son left him. "His son had seen him losing ground, limping, staggering back to the rear of the column. He had seen him. And he had continued to run in front, letting distance between them grow greater." (Wiesel 82). Rabbi Eliahou's son thought his father was holding him back from survival so he abandoned him in order to try and live longer, "He had felt that his father was growing weak, he had sought this separation in order to get rid of the burden, to free himself from an encumbrance which could risk his own chances of survival." (Wiesel 82). This shows that the concentration camps made people do crazy things and even turn against their family. It turned Rabbi Eliahou's son against him.

Elie and his father went through the holocaust together. When Elie's family first arrived at the concentration camps, his mother and sisters were killed. Elie's father was the only family he had left. Elie and his father stuck together through their time in the concentration camps, but towards the end, Elie started to think of his father as a burden. He prayed to not be like Rabbi Eliahou's son, "My God, Lord of the Universe, give me strength to never do what Rabbi Eliahou's son has done." (Wiesel 82). When Elie and his father arrived at Buchenwald, Elie ended up leaving his father in the snow. The next morning he went looking for his father, but he had hopes of not finding him. "Don't let me find him! If only I could get rid of this dead weight, so that I could use all my strength to struggle for my own survival, and only worry about myself." (Wiesel 93). Elie felt ashamed of himself for thinking of his own father as a burden and having thoughts of abandoning him. What Elie thought of his father before his father died was that he was weighing him down and lessening his chances of survival.

In conclusion, the father and son in the cattle car, Rabbi Eliahou and his son, and Elie Wiesel and his father are all examples of ruined father and son relationships in *Night*. All of these examples show how the holocaust turned what once were loving sons into people willing to turn on their fathers. They were so desperate that they did whatever they could to survive, even if it hurt their own family. The holocaust forever scarred the Jewish people. It tore apart many families and led to great devastation.