

# A Guide to Jewish References in *Night*

Elie Wiesel grew up in a traditional Jewish community. Throughout *Night*, there are references to ideas, practices, and events important to that community. Brief definitions of those terms are provided. The page numbers refer to pages in the Bantam paperback edition of *Night*.

**Beadle**—a caretaker or “man of all work” in a synagogue. (page 1)

**Cabbala**—Jewish mysticism. Followers believe that every aspect of the Torah has hidden meanings that link the spiritual world to everyday life. The teachings of the cabbala can be found in the *Zohar*, which was compiled in the thirteenth century. (page 1)

**Hasidism**—a Jewish reform movement inspired by the cabbala that spread through Eastern Europe in the 1700s. For Hasidic Jews, the divine presence is everywhere, in everything. They therefore try to live a life of total dedication to God. The word *hasidic* is an adjective used to describe followers of Hasidism or some aspect of their practices and beliefs. (page 1)

**Job**—a biblical figure who questioned why the just must suffer while the wicked flourish. (page 42)

**Kaddish** —a prayer Jews recite in memory of a loved one. The prayer praises and reaffirms a belief in one God. (page 31)

**Maimonides**—a great Jewish scholar who lived in the twelfth century. (page 1)

**Messiah**—the savior and deliverer of the Jewish people. Jews believe the Messiah is yet to come; Christians believe that Jesus was the Messiah. (page 42)

**Palestine**—territory assigned to the British in 1920 by the terms of the post-World War I treaty with Turkey, the former ruler of the area. British control ended in 1948 when the territory was divided into the State of Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan. Palestine is the ancient homeland of the Jewish people. (page 6)

**Passover**—a Jewish holiday that is celebrated for eight days each spring to recall the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt where they were held in slavery. (page 8)

**Pentecost**—the Jewish holiday that commemorates the revelation of the Law on Mount Sinai. Called *Shavuot* in Hebrew, it is celebrated about seven weeks after Passover. (page 10)

**Phylacteries (tefilin)**—two small leather boxes containing four excerpts from the Bible. One box is strapped to an arm and the other to the forehead during weekday morning prayers. Tefilin help religious Jews focus their entire being on God as they recite their weekday morning prayers. (page 13)

**Rosh Hashanah**—the Jewish New Year. The holiday, which falls in September or October, marks the beginning of a ten-day period of divine judgment—a time when Jews believe God calls them to account for their actions. These days are marked by repentance, regret, and resolutions to make amends to one another as well to God. The period ends on Yom Kippur. (page 63)

**Synagogue**—a Jewish house of prayer. (page 1)

**Talmud**—from a word that means study or learning. A collection of rabbinical teachings and commentaries on the Torah, the Five Books of Moses. (page 1)

**Temple, The**—a reference to the Temple in Jerusalem, which the Romans destroyed in 70 A.D. It was the center of Jewish worship in ancient times. Today Jews recall its destruction in their daily prayers. (page 1)

**Yom Kippur**—the Jewish Day of Atonement, a fast day devoted to prayer. It marks the end of the ten most solemn days in the Jewish calendar, which begins with Rosh

Hashanah. (page 65)

**Zohar**—the Book of Splendor; a commentary on the Five Books of Moses and the major work of the cabbala. (page 3)

**Zionism**—the belief that Jews must once more become a nation with a land of their own in Palestine. A commitment to Zionism led a number of European Jews to settle in Palestine in the early 1900s. (page 6)