Dawn Essay, Research Paper

The book I read for my book review was Dawn, by Elie Wiesel. This story

represents the post WWII struggle of the Israeli freedom fighters ? one young

man in particular, who has found himself on the other side of the gun. Wiesel

himself severed his time in the death camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald during

the War, and had previously written Night, the memoirs of his experiences. The

purpose of this book, in my mind, was to express the inner most thoughts and the

anguish of Elisha. Elisha is 18 years old. He was recruited by a gentleman named

Gad, who turned him into a fighter. He has killed before for their cause, but

only in groups ? never alone. ?? Our bullets were a flaming wall on which

their lives were shattered? My five comrades and I set out to either kill or

to be killed.? Pg28. But now, Elisha wasn?t in a group. He had been ordered

to execute an English officer, John Dawson, as to compensate for the British

capturing David ben Moshe, one of their own. In tradition, executions always

took place at dawn in their culture; usually around 5AM. Elisha has less than

twelve hours before he will be labeled as a murderer for the rest of his life.

He?s having a difficult time coming to the reality that he is going to have to

kill a man on his own. ?I should forget this night. But the dead never

forget? In their eyes I should be forever branded a killer.? Pg69. Of

course, then again, if anyone were put into that position ? having to kill a

man, who has done nothing wrong except be born of English blood ? I think they

would be having some serious issues with themselves as well. In the Jewish

tradition, there is a lot of focus on and towards nighttime. Night is a very

important in that ?Night is purer than day; it is better for thinking and

loving and dreaming. At night everything is more intense, more true. The echo of

words that have been spoken during the day take on a new and deeper meaning. The

tragedy of man is that he doesn?t know how to distinguish between night and

day. He says things at night that should only be said by day.? Pg4. Also,

according to their realigion, at midnight, the dead rise and go to the synagogue

to pray. At one point, during the night before Dawson?s death, Elisha sees the

ghosts of his parents, and old Master, of his fiend Yerachmiel, and of a little

beggar boy. These ghosts help Elisha cope with what he is about to go through.

Throughout the book, there is a lot of mention of the ?war? between the

Israelis and the British. At one point it?s said that, ?War is like night?

it covers everything.? I very much agree with this statement. War does cover

everything, mentally, physically, and ecologically; war has no care as to who it

hurts, why, or how. As Night is drawing closer to an end, Elisha realizes that

he doesn?t want to go down to the basement, where John Dawson is being held,

and kill a man he has never known. That?s a cowardice thing to do in their

culture. ?I said that I wanted to go down before the time was up, to see the

fellow, and talk, and get to know him. It was cowardly, I said, to kill a

complete stranger. It was like war, where you don?t shoot at men, but into the

night? you never know whether any of the enemy was killed, or which one. To

execute a stranger would be the same thing. If I were to see him as only he

died, I would feel as if I shot at a dead man.? This, I feel is another

powerful quote that makes good food for thought. I, and I?m sure others as

well, can?t even fathom what Elisha is going through. Elisha does go down to

meet John Dawson, about an hour before the dawn. He gets to know him, about his

life, and family. He even promises to mail a letter to Dawson?s son after

he?s killed. When the time comes, Elisha pulls the trigger, and although he

feels the agony that goes along with having to kill a man face to face, he does

feel a little sense honor, not necessarily for the cause, but for himself. This

book, I feel, is a definitely one to read. It shows a ?murderer? from a view

that is rarely seen ? his own. And, it?s a rather quick read; the book

itself is of a decent length and the wording isn?t difficult. It could easily

be read in a day. Dawn made me take a look at my own life, and place myself in

Ellisha?s position. It also takes a good look inside the fighting that went on

between the British, and the Israelis, as to give us a better understanding of

what really happens in a terrorist war.