



A Beggar in Jerusalem

Elie Wiesel, Lily Edelman (Translator)

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When the Six-Day War began, Elie Wiesel rushed to Israel. "I went to Jerusalem because I had to go somewhere, I had to leave the present and bring it back to the past. You see, the man who came to Jerusalem then came as a beggar, a madman, not believing his eyes and ears, and above all, his memory."

This haunting novel takes place in the days following the Six-Day War. A Holocaust survivor visits the newly reunited city of Jerusalem. At the Western Wall he encounters the beggars and madmen who congregate there every evening, and who force him to confront the ghosts of his past and his ties to the present. Weaving together myth and mystery, parable and paradox, Wiesel bids the reader to join him on a spiritual journey back and forth in time, always returning to Jerusalem.

A Beggar in Jerusalem Details

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Author : Elie Wiesel , Lily Edelman (Translator)

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From Reader Review A Beggar in Jerusalem for online ebook

Big H says

A startling and lovely read.

Reid says

I really enjoyed this book. At the start it was a bit difficult to adjust myself to the almost hallucinatory unreality of the setting and characters. The narrator, while not entirely unreliable, is at sometimes one thing, sometimes another. But once the internal logic of the book is absorbed, it comes clear as both a metaphorical and literal story of the struggle of the Jews in Israel at the beginning of their nation. It is easy to forget the almost primal nature of their struggle for statehood, the outright state of war in which they had to operate for many years (and which in some ways they have never escaped).

Elie Wiesel is perhaps the best author describing the Jewish experience writing today and one of the best ever. I would recommend reading as much of him as you can.

Mélanie says

Mi ha incuriosito sulla storia della Palestina e Israele, il Judaismo, la Guerra dei 6 giorni 1967, etc. L'ho lasciato alla pagina 70 e poi ho ripreso un mese dopo, per finirlo entro un giorno. Non è un libro che puoi leggere se non lo segui visto che lo stile dello scrittore è abbastanza frammentato; sembra si precipiti dalla realtà ai sogni, invece è tutto racconti e ricordi.

Interessante leggere di come la questione della Terra promessa e le guerre hanno marcato la memoria di un'intera diaspora, e direttamente la mente dei sopravvissuti, che avvolte, come in questo caso, vivono anche solo per raccontare.

Kendra says

Maybe this book would have been better if I read it. I did the audio book and it was very hard to follow. I am also not Jewish, so didn't understand a lot of the references. So being lost in the book was more likely due to my own ignorance (still would have been nice to have more explanations though).

I had no idea what war the main character was in until the very end. Couldn't tell if the main story took place in the Battle for Jerusalem 1947-48 or the Six-Day War in 1967 (I think it was this one?). And I only know about these wars and dates because I looked them up during/towards the end of the book. So I'm glad the book prompted me to learn more. The novel also skips around back and forth in time and I have no idea when the other times occurred; could only vaguely place the times before the war, during the war, and after the war.

Very confusing book. But there were several side stories and tales within the novel that made me grin

(mainly because of the sarcasm of the characters or the way the story was told). And like I said earlier, I learned a lot more about the more “modern” battles for Jerusalem. I think it is always good to learn about and from the past, so a book that makes me do that has some merit.

Randi says

Couldn't understand it and had to stop about 1/4 way through. I did want to read it, I simply couldn't follow it

Shelley Alongi says

This is a pretty dark book. Now I understand what he's writing about and since it has been a long time since I read one of his books I have read more of my history and I understand it more. I have always found his books to be confusing in some regard because it seems as if he writes in the past and present the same time. This is probably intentional. He definitely does it here and everything gets subsumed into his quest for the erasing I have memories. Something that I found really interesting was when he described a massacre in a small town of the local juice. I have read descriptions of them and I knew about the mass shootings of Jews back in high school that's about 30 to 40 years ago. He was writing about them in the 60s or the 80s. Sometimes I think some history or television channels think this is all new information. But it isn't. Maybe the quest to document the mass graves is new. Anyway just a sidenote. My comment about the description of the mass shooting so choose is was he describing one that actually occurred or did he take some artistic license especially when he describes one of the rabbis lecturing his flock on the fact that it was God's will that they should die. I know this is a theory so it may be that he is incorporating that information into the novel itself. Maybe it really happened that way. This book is a mixture of the past and present in the way it ends always leaves me hanging. Eli Wiesel doesn't ever give a book that I know of a concrete ending and this also may be intentional. Don't read this book and I think you are going to pick up another one by him. I find his writing fascinating but I don't think I would read two books in a row by him. Once for a holocaust class we had to read night and done together. But I wouldn't go any further than that. But definitely do read his writing is dark, hunting, and fascinating. Whether the events he describes are in the present, the past, or somewhere in between, I always feel like I am observing a tip them personally.

Maggie says

excellent parable-like story telling. some bitterness in characters is apparent but that shouldn't stop anyone who believes Elie Wiesel has something to offer us. i think so and stayed with the book finding some passages that soared (e.g. chapters eight and ten on silence ... or the phrase "the woman who uses words like a whip" in chapter 11).

Linda says

This takes place after the Six Day War ends when a holocaust survivor visits Israel and goes to Jerusalem where he meets others at the Wailing Wall. They tell him of their hopes and dreams for the future. A haunting emotional novel.

Sara Snarr says

Meh. Couldn't finish it. Too esoteric for me. And I'm usually super open minded. Just couldn't get into it. Even though I really really really wanted to. I mean, it's Elie Wiesel! I'll have to try it again in a decade or two.

Gerald Curtis says

I was quite interested in the description of this book, my first read of Elie Wiesel.

I didn't finish it because I just didn't like the style or writing. It was more frustrating than entertaining. Just a personal dislike.

Jill says

This was a really difficult read in a few ways. First, it was very hard to follow. It reads like a bit of a dream landscape. Everything just bleeds into everything else. It's more a painting than a read. I also didn't know if I was reading an abstract memoir or something meant to be purely surreal. So, half-way through, I stopped and read up about the book. That gave me some solid foundation upon which I could piece things together. There is some pretty heavy and sordid blasphemy in here. It's devastating, but the point of it is to convey to the reader the despair of the Jewish people. Wiesel does a good job with that. You definitely feel extremely downtrodden after reading this. He accomplishes his purpose.

Anne Hamilton says

I've been impressed by *Twilight* and also by *Souls on Fire* (despite giving the latter a low rating). The fragmentary, dream-like structure of this book never quite gelled for me. The actual battle scenes, snippets as they are, recording the events of the Six Day War were cohesive, lucid and tersely poignant. For just a few pages, clarity would overtake the narrative - before confusion set in once more.

The whole roundtable discussion/argument/storytelling of the beggars of Jerusalem (with the unresolved question of how mad they are, still hanging) which dominates most of the book feels like wisps of mist. Nothing substantial exists as an anchor to be sure about what's real and what's imaginary. This is a huge pity, since the Holocaust forms a backdrop to the story's event and, to a degree, the question mark over what's illusion and what's not also hangs over the memories painted of it.

It wasn't too long before I was wondering about the reality of Katriel, the hero extolled by the beggar. The introduction of Malka - initially as a shadow on the Wall - did her great disservice, assuming she was not fictive. No guarantees there, though.

This book uses one of my least favourite fictional styles: that of the never-resolved mess-with-your-mind

edge-of-madness float-in-and-out-of-sanity/reality forms. The fact I gave it three stars indicates how very well written it is.

Darcy Gregg says

This is really a 3.5, harder to read than night or day, as the story does follow a time line and jumps into other stories and comes back to the main one. His often poetic narrative and honesty about how callous man can be, also his understanding of mans brutality is heartbreaking. Having the opportunity to hear stories from someone who has seen how low man can stoop and survive it, is a honor. Elie Wiesel has passed since I first started reading his books but I'm so glad a man with his intelligence and ability to write so well was able to leave us with such an insight.

Jenny says

This is really 4.5 stars. I've never read anything by Wiesel other than Night, but I really enjoy his writing. This book reminds me of Paulo Coelho but with depth. I love Coelho, but there are no hidden messages--whatever he's intending comes clearly across to the reader. But this story, which is spiritual as well as very visceral, has depth. There are layers and metaphors that aren't mere allegory. It's a beautifully written novel. The parts that contain reflections and memories are poetic and the parts that contain descriptions of battles and of the Holocaust survivors' nightmare evoke the terror and the sorrow of the real warriors and survivors. The descriptions of Jerusalem's power to Jewish people and what it meant for them to reclaim the Old City are evocative and sometimes even painful to read.

The characters are fairly well developed. The story really isn't about characters, though; it's about people and specifically a People and what they experienced before, during, and after World War II.

The reason it's not five stars for me is that some of the depth of meaning was a little too deep. Some things I would have liked more concretely explained and put forth. But that's a minor complaint. This book made me a fan of Wiesel, not just a fan of Night.

Highly recommended.

Melanti says

This isn't the best book to listen to in audio format. The shifting timeline and perspective makes it rather hard to keep track of, and one scene tends to blend into the next. I think it would have been a bit easier to follow in print, where you could go back and double check exactly when/where you were.
