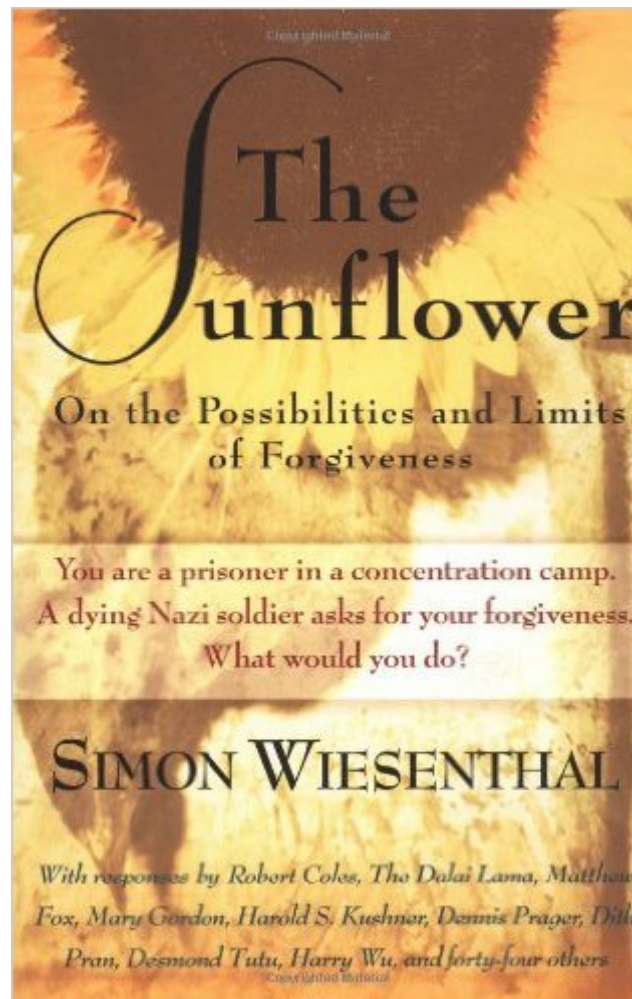


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The Sunflower: On The Possibilities And Limits Of Forgiveness (Newly Expanded Paperback Edition)



Synopsis

While imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp, Simon Wiesenthal was taken one day from his work detail to the bedside of a dying member of the SS. Haunted by the crimes in which he had participated, the soldier wanted to confess to--and obtain absolution from--a Jew. Faced with the choice between compassion and justice, silence and truth, Wiesenthal said nothing.Â Â But even years after the war had ended, he wondered: Had he done the right thing? What would you have done in his place? In this important book, fifty-three distinguished men and women respond to Wiesenthal's questions. They are theologians, political leaders, writers, jurists, psychiatrists, human rights activists, Holocaust survivors, and victims of attempted genocides in Bosnia, Cambodia, China and Tibet. Their responses, as varied as their experiences of the world, remind us that Wiesenthal's questions are not limited to events of the past.Â Â Often surprising and always thought provoking, *The Sunflower* will challenge you to define your beliefs about justice, compassion, and human responsibility.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am writing this review the day after Shimon Wiesenthal died. He was ninety- six years old. Thousands of words have been written about him and his life- task. Certainly one of the major contributions he made was to make people aware of the enormity of the crime which was the Holocaust. After the war many wished to forget, but he out of a strong sense of duty to those who had died, to those who had been murdered and suffered so much , made it his business to make the world remember. And he too made his business to bring to justice those who committed the

crime. And as he said many times he did this not only for the victims, but for the future generations of mankind so that such an evil would never come again not only to Jews but to all of humanity. He personally made a major contribution to bringing to justice more than one thousand war criminals, including Eichmann, Stangl, and the Nazi who took Anne Frank from her home and sent her to her death. In this work he ponders the question of forgiveness. He is asked by a Nazi who repents of his crimes for forgiveness. And the question the book asks is whether such forgiveness should be given. It seems to me the answer to this question is given by something which Wiesenthal himself wrote. He wrote that while it might be possible to forgive someone for an injury done to oneself, one has no right to forgive for others. It is those who have been murdered who need to be requested forgiveness of. But one and one half - million Jewish children were not given the chance to answer. I think that no one has the right to answer in their name. Wiesenthal was after the war urged by his wife to take up his profession as architect. He could not. He dedicated himself to the memory of the victims, and to having justice done. He explained this as follows. He said that when the day would come and he would die he would go upstairs. And there he would meet those who had not survived the Shoah. They would crowd around him, and say, "You were lucky, you had life all those years. What did you do with them" And Wiesenthal said, "I would say to them. I did not forget you." May the memory of this great Jew and human being be a blessing for all of us.

Faced with the choice between compassion and justice, silence and truth, Wiesenthal said nothing. But even years after the war had ended, he wondered: Had he done the right thing? What would you have done in his place? The first time I read this book I struggled with the questions of what I would do in Wiesenthal's situation. Reading all of the views of the contributors did not resolve this matter in my mind. Subsequently to reading this book, I purchased a copy of the book *An Encounter With A Prophet* which favors forgiveness and gives a unique prayer to achieve forgiveness even when you do not want to forgive. This author made sense but I still could not answer the questions in Wiesenthal's book. Then one night walking home from work, I was attacked by a mugger. Coming up from behind me, out of the shadows, the mugger managed to hit me twice on the back of my head before I knew what was happening. Due to space limitations I will skip the details of what followed suffice it to say when the ambulance picked me up off the street, I was drenched in my own blood. On the way to the hospital my mind started to race. Having grown up as a fighter, I vowed to find this man and evoke some Charles Bronson style justice. As I engaged in this type of thinking, in my mind's eye I could feel and see the mugger sneaking up behind me getting ready to hit me - something they call a flashback a frightening experience to say the least. As this flash back

phenomena continued, it occurred to me to pray the unique prayer suggested in that book *An Encounter With A Prophet*, I started saying this prayer repeatedly. The flashback dissolved. However, every time I stopped praying, my mind immediately started planning more Bronson style justice and the flashback phenomena would return. This phenomena gave me the continued motivation to pray for the S O B all that night and for the next few days. (This strange prayer let's you call the person an S O B while you are praying) When I returned to work I was surprised that I could, against all advice to the contrary, walk home down the very same street at night without experiencing any fear whatsoever. The only feeling I had for the mugger was compassion and all fear was gone. Now I have no question of how to resolve the issue which still plagues Wiesenthal. Forgiveness is the answer.

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