CHAPTER 4

1. What two valuable possessions does Elie have?

2. Why was Elie sent to the dentist?

3. IMPORTANT PASSAGE: Read the following passage, then explain why it’s important.

“A few days after my visit, the dentist’s office was shut down. He had been thrown into prison and was about to be hanged. It appeared that he had been dealing in the prisoners’ gold teeth for his own benefit. I felt no pity for him. In fact, I was pleased with what was happening to him: my gold crown was sage. It could be useful to me one day, to buy something, some bread or even time to live. At that moment in time, all that mattered to me was my daily bowl of soup, my crust of stale bread. The bread, the soup—those were my entire life. I was nothing but a body. Perhaps even less: a famished stomach. The stomach alone was measuring time” (52).

4. Why is Elie flogged?

5. How does the French girl help Elie in this part of the novel?

6. Where did Elie meet the French girl again years later?

7. IMPORTANT PASSAGE: Read the following passage, then explain why it’s important.

“[Idek] began beating [my father] with an iron bar. At first, my father simply doubled over under the blows, but then he seemed to break in two like an old tree struck by lightning. I had watched it all happening without moving. I kept silent. In fact, I thought of stealing away in order not to suffer the blows. What’s more, if I felt anger at that moment, it was not directed at the Kapo but at my father. Why couldn’t he have avoided Idek’s wrath? That’s what life in a concentration camp had made of me…” (54).

8. What does Elie mean when he refers to his father as “his weak point”? Why has he come to view love as a weakness?

9. Why were the prisoners happy during the air raids? How does terror control the Jews even when no guards are around?
10. At the first hanging, why does Elie say he “the soup tasted better than ever”?

11. After the second hanging, why does he say “the soup tasted of corpses”?

CHAPTER 5
1. What is the state of Elie’s faith at this particular time?

2. Why does Elie refer to the New Year’s service as a “mirage”?

3. Why is there a debate over whether to fast or not?

4. Why does Elie decide not to fast?

5. What did one have to do to survive “selection”?

6. Why did Elie’s father give him the spoon and the knife as his inheritance? What is the significance of such a gift at Auschwitz?

7. What examples of kindness do we see amid all the horror?

8. Why is Elie sent to the hospital? Why isn’t it a stroke of good luck?

9. Why are the prisoners being evacuated?

12. IMPORTANT PASSAGE: Read the following passage, then explain why it’s important.
   “I have more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. He alone has kept his promises, all his promises, to the Jewish people” (81).

10. What tough decision does Elie have to make? Why was it the wrong decision?

11. Why was the floor cleaned before evacuation?