
Discussion Questions with Passages (Pages 16-40, Focus on Capos and Moral Choices)

1. Frankl observes that "the best of us did not return," suggesting that those who survived may have compromised their values in the struggle for existence. (p. 24) How does this statement challenge conventional notions of heroism and morality in extreme situations?
2. Frankl describes the Capos as "chosen only from those prisoners whose characters promised to make them suitable for such procedures." (p. 23) How does this insight into the selection process complicate our understanding of the Capos' actions and motivations?
3. Despite witnessing the Capos' brutality, Frankl refrains from outright condemnation. What might explain his relatively neutral stance towards these figures, especially compared to his criticism of other prisoners who engage in morally questionable behavior?
4. Frankl recounts instances where prisoners make difficult choices to ensure their own survival, even at the expense of others. (p. 22-23) How do these choices reflect the moral dilemmas faced by individuals in the camps, and how might they challenge our understanding of right and wrong in such extreme circumstances?
5. Frankl's colleague warns him that he is most likely to be selected for death, yet Frankl responds with a smile. (p. 38) How does this reaction reflect Frankl's emphasis on inner freedom and the ability to choose one's attitude even in the face of seemingly inevitable fate?
6. Frankl chooses to keep his scientific manuscript hidden, only to be met with the dismissive response, "Shit!" (p. 32) How does this incident highlight the clash between intellectual pursuits and the brutal realities of the camp, and how might it relate to the prisoners' struggle to maintain their humanity?
7. Upon arrival, prisoners are stripped of their possessions and identities, reducing them to mere numbers. (p. 30-31) How does this dehumanization process create an environment where moral compromises and the acceptance of a brutal hierarchy become more likely?
8. Frankl observes that some prisoners, including Capos, seem to thrive in the camp environment, even developing "miniature delusions of grandeur." (p. 83) How does this phenomenon illustrate the potential for individuals to adapt and even find perverse forms of success within a system of oppression?
9. Frankl recounts a story about a prisoner who refuses to let him see his hometown through the train window. (p. 53) How does this incident reflect the psychological impact of the camp experience on human connection and empathy?
10. The text describes the "first selection," where prisoners are arbitrarily sent to either work or death. (p. 30) How does this experience contribute to the prisoners' sense of the world as fundamentally unjust and devoid of inherent meaning, potentially leading to moral compromises in the struggle for survival?