

ELI'S PROMISE

Discussion Questions

1. Although it is easy to condemn one's actions when we have the benefit of hindsight, are you critical of Eli's decision to keep his family in Lublin when Esther urged them to leave? Are you critical of any of his other decisions?
2. How was it possible for a scurrilous profiteer like Maximilian to gain the trust and dependency of his community, and especially that of a man like Eli Rosen?
3. Was there one particular character with whom you felt a kinship? Why?
4. The Allies established camps for displaced persons in postwar Germany, and assumed responsibility for their residents. How did the Allies succeed in this, and how did they fail?
5. President Eisenhower observed that "We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations." Then, he famously quoted, "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex." In your judgment, did that expression and the influence of military contractors warrant closer observation in the 1960's? Does it today?
6. Sometimes we don't know how much courage we possess until we are called upon. Which characters displayed surprising courage and in what way? Which characters disappointed you?
7. Conflicting emotions beset the characters throughout the story. Discuss how Eli and Izaak handled their relationship with Adinah.
8. Water seeks its own level. In every era, Maximilian was able to forge alliances with equally despicable but powerful characters. Discuss those relationships and whether they profited him in the end. Was justice served where he was concerned?

