

The Chosen Book Notes

The Chosen by Chaim Potok

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Author/Context

Dr. Chaim Potok was born February 17, 1929 and raised in New York City by an Orthodox Jewish family. He was an exceptional student and a young writer, beginning his writing career at the age of sixteen. He received his B.A. from Yeshiva University in 1950, graduating *summa cum laude* with a degree in English literature. He went on to receive a rabbinic ordination in 1954 from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. For sixteen months, between 1955-1957, Potok served as an army chaplain in Korea, with a front-line medical battalion and an engineer combat battalion. In 1957, he became a member of the faculty of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles then went on to spend a year in Israel completing his doctoral dissertation on philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania in 1965.

The Chosen was Potok's first novel, published in 1967. The book was nominated for a National Book Award and received the Edward Lewis Wallant Award. *The Chosen*, as well most of Potok's other writing, concerns itself with the relationship between Jewish-American culture and the secular world which it inhabits, as well as the differences of beliefs within the Jewish community.

In 1969, Potok released *The Promise*, a sequel to *The Chosen*, which won the Athenaeum Prize. He has also written *My Name Is Asher Lev* (1972), *In the Beginning* (1975), *The Book of Lights* (1981), *Davita's Harp* (1985), *The Gift of Asher Lev* (1990), and *I Am the Clay* (1992), as well as numerous books of essays, plays, and religious writings.

In 1981, *The Chosen* was made into a movie by director Jeremy Paul Kagan, in which Potok had a cameo role as a professor. Dr. Chaim Potok died in 2002.

Bibliography

Potok, Chaim. *The Chosen*. New York: Ballantine, 1967.

Chaim Potok: Novelist, Philosopher, Historian, Theologian, Playwright, Artist, Editor. 13 June 2002.



Plot Summary

Reuven Malter, a fifteen-year-old religious Jewish boy meets Danny Saunders, an Orthodox Hasidic Jew, in a climactic baseball game on a summer day in the early 1940s. Although the two have grown up only blocks away from one another and were born several days apart, they have never met, never hung out in the same crowds, and never prayed in shul (synagogue) together. During a holy war of a baseball game between the secular modern orthodox baseball team lead by Reuven and the Hasidic baseball team led by rabbis and Danny Saunders, Danny hits a baseball straight at Reuven, forcing him to block the ball with his face. Reuven is rushed to the hospital where he must remain for a week and undergo surgery to remove the piece of glass from his eyeglasses stuck in his eye. While in the hospital, Reuven undergoes a transformation on how he sees life, meets two special patients and friends, Tony Savo and Billy, and begins his life altering friendship with Danny Saunders.

From his first hospital visit, Danny apologizes and tells Reuven that he wants to become friends with Reuven. They see each other almost every day and on the first Shabbat that Reuven is discharged from the hospital, he visits Danny at his house and shul. He is shocked by the Hasidic customs, a Jewish world seemingly frozen in time from centuries past, and even more surprised by the habitual public testing that Danny endures each Shabbat. His revered father, Reb Saunders, the tzaddik and leader of their Hasidic community, only speaks with Danny during the study of Talmud, and furthermore tests him in front of the congregation during Shabbat sermons. A mathematical genius, Reuven is even brought into the game as Reb Saunders tests Danny's new friend in front of the congregation, as well. Later that day, Danny explains his bizarre relationship with his father to Reuven. He is raised in silence. He and his father do not speak, and he is to inherit the rabbinical position from his father one day, despite his desires to become a psychologist.

Mr. David Malter, Reuven's professor father, has been secretly feeding Danny with books in the library, consequently advising Reuven to befriend him. Danny has a brilliant mind and is unfortunately imprisoned by his family's customs and restrictions. While Danny and Reuven's friendship blossoms over the course of the year, with weekly Talmudic learning sessions, honesty, and sharing, both Mr. Malter's health suffers and the war in Europe escalates. When he suffers a heart attack, Reuven moves into the Saunders' house for several weeks.

President Roosevelt dies and the war in Europe ends. Danny and Reuven enter Hirsch Seminary for college, as they study their respective fields of interest: Psychology and mathematics/Talmud. Mr. Malter's health continues to suffer as he becomes more obsessed with the idea of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. With the end of the war comes the news of the six million Jews slaughtered by Hitler's rage. This change brings about two opposing viewpoints: Mr. Malter and the secular Jewish world rally for a Jewish homeland so that such atrocities can never happen again. The American Jewry must rebuild Judaism, for it is all that remains. However, Reb Saunders and the Hasidic community are vehemently opposed to such an establishment, for they



believe a Jewish homeland can only be created upon the arrival of the messiah. Due to this split, Reb Saunders issues a ban upon Reuven, Mr. Malter, the library, and all secular Jews. For two years, Danny and Reuven do not speak and therefore must communicate in silence, just as Danny does with his father. Reuven is heartbroken, for he needs his friend desperately during this time when his father suffers yet another heart attack.

When several Jews are murdered by Arabs in Palestine, including one from Hirsch, the ban is lifted and Danny and Reuven are reunited. Reuven expressed his pain, but ultimately rejoices at the sight and sound of his longtime friend. Reuven continues to study Talmud with his father on Saturdays instead of with Reb Saunders and Danny. Mr. Malter helps Reuven realize that Reb Saunders is ready to speak to Danny, but *through* Reuven. Reuven visits Reb Saunders on Passover. Reb Saunders explains the method of raising a child in silence and his fears for his child. He understands that Danny has a brilliant mind, and now he knows he has a brilliant soul. He knows he is ready to leave the fold and become a psychologist. He only hopes that Danny will continue his observance of the commandments.

Danny visits Reuven before he leaves for Columbia Graduate School of Psychology. He has shaved his beard and cut off his ear locks, now looking like an attractive secular Jew. They part their separate ways, knowing that they will always have each other's friendship and love.



Major Characters

Reuven Malter: Reuven Malter is a fifteen year-old boy when he is hit in the eye with a baseball by Danny Saunders. From that day, his life is forever changed by the friendship he begins with Danny. An orthodox, secular Jew, Reuven has a close friendship with his father, is a hard-working student, loyal friend, and popular kid at school. Despite his mathematic skills, he plans to become a rabbi.

Danny Saunders: Danny Saunders, the son of a tzaddik and Hasidic Jew, hits Reuven in the eye with a baseball, initiating their longtime friendship. He possesses a brilliant mind that is not held back by European persecution, but rather by a silence between his soul and his father. He is to take over the inheritance as rabbi from his father, but prefers to become a psychologist. Obsessed with Freud, Danny obeys and respects his father, a man who raises him in silence and leads a people with power and honor. He cares for Reuven as his closest friend and eventually shaves his beard and cuts his ear locks to enter the secular world at Columbia University.

Rabbi Isaac Saunders: Reb Saunders is Danny's father and the leader of a Hasidic community in Brooklyn. A religious and powerful man, he is considered next to God by his followers and chooses to raise his son in silence. Constantly studying Talmud and quizzing his son in public, Reb Saunders speaks to Danny through Reuven. Although he believes Israel should not exist as a state without the messiah, he ultimately praises Reuven and his father for having come into Danny's life. He is an older man with a long beard and ear locks who practices the laws of Judaism as if time were frozen, suffering for all humanity.

David Malter: David Malter is Reuven's father and a staunch academic. His life is devoted to teaching and bettering the world as a whole. He obsesses over the war in Europe and leads several rallies in support of the new state of Israel. A caring and devoted father, Mr. Malter discusses all matters with Reuven, from personal life to current events, and acts as a teacher to Danny. He is the man who gives Danny books to read in the library and supports him in his personal pursuit of knowledge. Because of his obsession with current events and teaching, Mr. Malter suffers two heart attacks, frightening Reuven and forcing him to live with Danny for several weeks.

Minor Characters

Mr. Galanter: Mr. Galanter is Reuven's baseball coach and the person who brings him to the hospital immediately following his injury. He visits Reuven regularly in the hospital and becomes unhappy when he sees Billy. Mr. Galanter was unable to participate in the US army due to an unknown disability.

Davey Cantor: Davey is one of Reuven's high school friends on the baseball team who shares the fear of the orthodox Hasidic Jews. He questions Reuven's friendship with Danny.



Tony Savo : Tony Savo is the middle-aged fighter with an eye patch who sleeps on the left side of Reuven during his hospital stay. He is vivacious, enigmatic, and constantly in everyone's business.

Billy: Billy is a young ten-year-old blonde boy who lies to the right of Reuven in the hospital. He is blind, but plans to undergo surgery to reverse his condition. Reuven befriends this young boy, who hopes to remain friends with Reuven following their hospital stay.

Mrs. Carpenter: Mrs. Carpenter is the nurse in charge of the ward in which Reuven stays during his hospital days. She is strict, but has a heart of gold as she watches over her patients.

Mickey: Mickey is a young boy with chronic stomach problems who is staying in a nearby ward of the hospital. He comes to visit the optometric ward to ask Tony to throw around a ball with him.

Manya: Manya is the Malter's Ukrainian housekeeper who blesses them with large meals and treats them with love, as if they were her own family.

Dr. Snyderman: Dr. Snyderman takes care of Reuven at the hospital and operates on his eye. He tells Reuven that there is a possibility of loss of sight in his left eye, but ultimately heals Reuven's eyesight completely.

Professor Nathan Appleman: Appleman is Danny's psychology professor at Hirsch who is a stark experimental psychologist. He dislikes Freud's writings immensely and causes strife for Danny. Danny eventually speaks with him and they come to a mutual admiration and respect for experimental and psychoanalytic psychology together.

Rav Gershenson: Rav Gershenson is a professor of Talmud at Hirsch, in whose class Danny resides and Reuven eventually reaches. He teaches the highest level of Talmud and allows both Reuven and Danny to show their high intellect in class.

Jack Rose: Jack Rose is a secular, nonreligious Jew who contributes a large sum of money to the Jewish National Fund. It is this type of Jew that will now populate the synagogues of America, causing mixed emotions in both Reuven and his father.

Levi Saunders: Levi is Danny's younger, sickly brother, whom he hopes will take Reb Saunders' place as tzaddik in the Hasidic community. He suffers from a blood disease and grows up during the course of the book.



Objects/Places

Yeshiva: A Yeshiva is a Jewish school where young children study both Jewish learning and English. Danny attends a Hassidic yeshiva, a school devoted entirely to Judaism.

Brooklyn: Danny and Reuven grow up in Brooklyn, a borough outside of New York City. Their community is fairly close-knit, and despite their different religious observance, they had never met before the baseball game. Since the baseball game, they become close friends and are able to walk to each other's homes and synagogues in Brooklyn.

Hasidic Jews: A Hasid is an extremely religious and observant Jew. Reb Saunders is the leader of the Hasidic community in which Danny resides. They live in a world frozen of Jewish customs that haven't seemed to have been changed for centuries.

Tzitzit: Tzitzit are the fringes that Hasids wear on their clothing.

Tzaddik: A tzaddik is a leader for the Hassidic community, but an innate leader of humanity. He possesses a deep and meaningful soul and has the ability to lead people. Reb Saunders is the tzaddik for his people and Danny is to follow in his footsteps.

Apikorsim: Apikorsim are what Hasidim refer to as Jewish goyim, or secular Jews. They seem to be the worst opposition for Hasidic Jewry and are cause for Reb Saunders and his followers to hate Reuven and his father. They believe in establishing a Jewish homeland without the coming of the messiah, in direct resistance to the Hasids.

Hirsch Seminary: Hirsch is the college to which both Danny and Reuven attend. It is the only institution of higher learning that gives both secular and religious education. It is here that Danny discovers experimental psychology as another positive outlet in which to study psychology and where Reuven excels in Talmud. Both boys graduate Summa Cum Laude from this university.

The library: Danny frequents the library, reading various books banned by his father. Mr. Malter recommends literature to Danny and allows him to develop his brilliant mind through personal exploration.

Peekskill Cottage: Mr. Malter and Reuven rest in their Peekskill cottage each August. They use this month to relax and catch up on sleep from their tumultuous years of studying and rallying in Brooklyn and Manhattan.



Quotes

Quote 1: "For the first fifteen years of our lives, Danny and I lived within five blocks of each other and neither of us knew of the other's existence." Chapter 1, p.11

Quote 2: "There were fifteen of them, and they were dressed alike in white shirts, dark pants, white sweaters, and small black skullcaps. In the fashion of the very Orthodox, their hair was closely cropped, except for the areas near their ears from which mushroomed the untouched hair that tumbled down into the long side curls. Some of them had the beginnings of beards, straggly tufts of hair that stood in isolated clumps on their chins, jawbones, and upper lips. They all wore the traditional undergarments beneath their shirts, and the tzitzit, the long fringes appended to the four corners of the garment, came out above their belts and swung against their pants as they walked. These were the very Orthodox, and they obeyed literally the Biblical commandment[s]." Chapter 1, p. 16

Quote 3: "Burn in hell, you apikorsim!" Chapter 1, p. 31

Quote 4: "I moved my wrist slowly. It still hurt. That Danny Saunders was a smart one, and I hated him. I wondered what he was thinking now. Probably gloating and bragging about the ball game to his friends. That miserable Hasid!" Chapter 2, p. 46

Quote 5: "I lay still and thought about my eyes. I had always taken them for granted, the way I took for granted all the rest of my body and also my mind. My father had told me many times that health was a gift, but I never really paid much attention to the fact that I was rarely sick or almost never had to go to a doctor." Chapter 1, p.57

Quote 6: "'You must remember what the Talmud says. If a person comes to apologize for having hurt you, you must listen and forgive him...What I tried to tell you, Reuven, is that when a person comes to talk to you, you should be patient and listen.'" Chapter 3, p. 68

Quote 7: "I looked at him [Danny], and suddenly I had the feeling that everything around me was out of focus...And here was Danny Saunders talking English, and what he was saying and the way he was saying it just didn't seem to fit in with the way he was dressed, with the side curls on his face and the fringes hanging down below his dark jacket." Chapter 3, p. 72

Quote 8: "He told me once he wishes everyone could talk in silence." Chapter 3, p. 76

Quote 9: "'No one knows he is fortunate until he becomes unfortunate,' my father said quietly. 'That's the way the world is.'" Chapter 4, p.78

Quote 10: "I'm all mixed up about you. I'm not trying to be funny or anything. I really am mixed up about you. You look like a Hasid, but you don't sound like one. You don't



sound like what my father says Hasidim are supposed to sound like. You sound almost as if you don't believe in God." Chapter 4, p.86

Quote 11: "The Hassidim believed that the tzaddik was a superhuman link between themselves and God." Chapter 6, p. 111

Quote 12: "Now, Reuven, listen very carefully to what I am going to tell you. Reb Saunders' son is a terribly torn and lonely boy. There is literally no one in the world he can talk to. He needs a friend. The accident with the baseball has bound him to you, and he has already sensed in you someone he can talk to without fear." Chapter 6, p. 113

Quote 13: "We were almost halfway through the crowd now, walking slowly together, Danny's fingers on the part of my arm just over the elbow. I felt myself naked and fragile, an intruder, and my eyes, searching for anything but the bearded faces to look at, settled, finally, upon the sidewalk at my feet." Chapter 7, p. 124

Quote 14: "The silence that followed had a strange quality to it: expectation, eagerness, love, awe." Chapter 7, p. 128

Quote 15: "'Later we will talk more. I want to know my son's friend. Especially the son of David Malter.'" Chapter 7, p.130

Quote 16: "I just couldn't get it through my head that Danny had to go through something like that every week, and that I myself had gone through it tonight...I had clearly passed the test. What a ridiculous way to gain admiration and friendship!" Chapter 7, p. 143

Quote 17: "If a person has a contribution to make, he must make it in public. If learning is not made in public, it is a waste. But the business about the mistakes I never heard before." Chapter 7, p. 149

Quote 18: "He was reading with phenomenal speed. I could almost see him read. He would start at the head of a page, his head tilted slightly upward, and then his head would move downward in a straight line until he got to the foot of the page." Chapter 8, p. 153

Quote 19: "I saw frozen and felt a long moment of blind panic. What my father had anticipated was now actually happening. But he hadn't anticipated it happening to me. He had thought Reb Saunders would confront him, not me. My father and I had acted behind Reb Saunders' back; now Reb Saunders was asking me to act behind Danny's back. I didn't know what to say." Chapter 8, p.167

Quote 20: "I found myself crying too, and felt a gnawing emptiness, as though I had been scraped clean inside and there was nothing in me now but a terrible darkness. I was feeling as though it had been my father who had died." Chapter 11, p. 187



Quote 21: "'Six million of our people have been slaughtered,' he went on quietly. 'It is inconceivable. It will have meaning only if we give it meaning. We cannot wait for God...There is only one Jewry left now in the world...It is here in America. We have a terribly responsibility. We must replace the treasures we have lost...A madman has destroyed our treasures. If we do not rebuild Jewry in America, we will die as a people.'" Chapter 11, p. 192

Quote 22: "God will build the land, not Ben Gurion and his goyim! When the Messiah comes, we will have Eretz Yisroel, a Holy Land, not a land contaminated by Jewish goyim!" Chapter 12, p. 198

Quote 23: "He had always prepared for his classes, but there was a kind of heaviness to the way he went about preparing now, writing everything down, rehearsing his notes aloud - as if he were trying to make certain that nothing of significance would remain unsaid, as if he felt the future hung on every idea he taught." Chapter 13, p. 213

Quote 24: "Poor Danny, I thought. Professor Appleman, with his experimental psychology, is torturing your mind. And your father, with his bizarre silence - which I still couldn't understand, no matter how often I thought about it - is torturing your soul." Chapter 13, p. 222

Quote 25: "It seemed so incredible to me, so outrageously absurd. Not Freud but Zionism had finally shattered our friendship." Chapter 13, p.231

Quote 26: "The look on Danny's face, though, when I saw him for the first time, helped a little. He passed me in the hallway, his face a suffering mask of pain and compassion. I thought for a moment he would speak to me, but he didn't. Instead, he brushed against me and managed to touch my hand for a second. His touch and his eyes spoke the words that his lips couldn't. I told myself it was bitter and ironic that my father needed to have a heart attack in order for some contact to be established once again between myself and Danny." Chapter 14, p. 241

Quote 27: "That was all he said. Not a word about Zionism. Not a word about the silence he had imposed upon Danny and me. Nothing. I found I disliked him more when I left than when I had entered. I did not see him again that July." Chapter 16, p. 261

Quote 28: "'You can listen to silence, Reuven. I've begun to realize that you can listen to silence and learn from it. It has a quality and a dimension all its own. It talks to me sometimes. I feel myself alive in it. It talks. And I can hear it.'" Chapter 17, p. 262

Quote 29: "Reuven, the Master of the Universe blessed me with a brilliant son. And he cursed me with all the problems of raising him. Ah, what it is to have a brilliant son! Not a smart son, Reuven, but a brilliant son, a Daniel, a boy with a mind like a jewel...There was no soul in my four-year-old Daniel, there was only his mind. He was a mind in a body without a soul." Chapter 18, p. 276-7

Quote 30: "For years his silence bewildered and frightened me, though I always trusted him, I never hated him. And when I was hold enough to understand, he told me that of



all people a tzaddik especially must know of pain. A tzaddik must know how to suffer for his people, he said. He must take their pain from them and carry it on his own shoulders. He must carry it always." Chapter 18, p.278



Topic Tracking: Friendship

Friendship 1: Reuven first recognizes his relationship with Danny as mocking. He believes the apologies to be false and insincere, especially coming on the phone from Reb Saunders.

Friendship 2: Reuven easily befriends his roommates in the hospital ward, Billy and Tony. They are also suffering from ocular injuries in different ways. Billy is blind, while Tony loses one eye during an operation. Reuven compares himself to them and feels fortunate for having both of his eyes heal properly. Billy cares about Reuven as a friend, while Tony cannot understand Reuven's budding friendship with the boy who hit him in the face with a baseball, Danny.

Friendship 3: Danny and Reuven let their guards down and simply talk for the first time in the hospital. They instantly become friends, as they discuss their activities, desires, and fears. Reuven is excited about seeing Danny the following day at his house and Danny rushes home to tell his father about his new friend.

Friendship 4: Mr. Malter tells Reuven to befriend Danny Saunders because he is in desperate need of a good friend. He reminds Reuven that the Talmud teaches people to find two things: a good teacher and a good friend.

Friendship 5: As Reuven meets Danny's family and community, he learns that Reb Saunders must meet and approve of all of Danny's friends - especially those outside the fold. If a friend is not Hasidic, then he believes he or she may have a negative influence on Danny's lifestyle. Reuven cannot believe such a tyrannical method of parenting exists and believes he would not be able to thrive in such a strict world.

Friendship 6: Reb Saunders speaks privately with Reuven, revealing his pride in Danny and his friendship with Reuven. He knows that Reuven needs a good friend and that a friend is not an easy thing to be. Reuven understands these words and accepts the responsibility of friendship with Danny Saunders.

Friendship 7: Reuven is excommunicated from the Hasidic community and Danny's life. He is heartbroken over the ban and is shocked that Zionism is the thing that destroys their friendship, not Freud or the library.

Friendship 8: Reuven sees the sympathetic and painful looks on Danny's face and understands that they now are communicating in silence. Their friendship still lives, yet completely without words.

Friendship 9: When Danny sits down next to Reuven after the two year silence and begins a conversation, he re-opens their friendship. Reuven is hurt over the loss and admits that he needed Danny while his father was ill.



Friendship 10: Reuven recalls meeting Reb Saunders and hearing the significance and importance of being a true friend. It is not an easy job. Reb Saunders welcomes Reuven again as Danny's friend and wonders why he does not study with them anymore.

Friendship 11: Danny and Reuven embrace, weeping over the breakthrough with Reb Saunders, their future lives apart, and their years of friendship together.



Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia

Intelligentsia 1: The yeshiva to which Danny belongs enters the baseball game so that they can prove their physical fitness, along with their high intelligence. It is common knowledge that Hasidic Jews value academics and the study of Talmud over everything else and spend the majority of their time in study and deep learning.

Intelligentsia 2: Because Reuven does not attend a Hasidic yeshiva and studies English subjects in his academic world, the yeshiva boys consider him and his classmates lesser Jews and lesser people.

Intelligentsia 3: For two weeks Reuven is not allowed to use his eyes and read to study. His academic father, therefore, brings in a radio for him to listen to and reads newspapers on current events to him. Reuven is used to reading and studying voraciously and must adapt to this world without direct contact with intelligentsia.

Intelligentsia 4: Danny reveals his secret pastimes and desires. He reads all sorts of literature in the library, from fiction to Freud, during his free time. He wants to become a psychologist, but knows that it is against his family's desires and culture. He is constantly studying to improve his mind and intellect.

Intelligentsia 5: Mr. Malter explains the idea behind public learning to Reuven. Although he disagrees with Reb Saunders specific placement of errors in the sermons, he understands why he tests Danny aloud in front of the conversation. If learning is not made in public, it is a waste, for it is not useful if people do not hear or see the contribution of intellect to the world.

Intelligentsia 6: Danny's intellect soars? as he reads Freud more in depth and teaches himself German so that he can read Freud in its original language. Reuven is not only in shock of Danny's motivation and drive, but also that he would spend so much time learning the language of the Nazis.

Intelligentsia 7: Danny is excited because he discovers how to learn Freud's teachings. He must study it as he studies Talmud, instead of just reading it. He realizes this as he studies Talmud with his father. Again, the only time they communicate is during study - while they use their intellect.

Intelligentsia 8: Although Danny excels in his studies of Talmud, he finds difficulty in his studies of psychology with Professor Appleman. He disagrees with the experimental methods and wants to study Freud. He is only thinking with one side of his brain and eventually learns to use his entire intellect to study psychology in all realms and mediums.

Intelligentsia 9: While Mr. Malter is recovering in the hospital from his second heart attack, Reuven devotes all of his free time to studying Talmud. He uses his mind each night to learn several difficult passages, so that when he is called upon in class, he will

provide the professor with intelligent answers. He does so, sparking interest from his fellow classmates and Rav Gershenson.

Intelligentsia 10: Reb Saunders finally accepts Danny's decision to become a psychologist. He asks if he will continue to be an observant Jew as he becomes an intellectual man of prestige. The father and son and friend share a moment together in which they care for one another and the brilliant minds they possess.



Topic Tracking: Silence

Silence 1: Danny explains his father's idea of living in silence for the first time. Reuven cannot understand how such a practice of communication can exist between a father and son. Danny and his father exchange no words except during the study of Talmud.

Silence 2: During Reuven's first visit to Reb Saunders' shul, he is confronted by Reb Saunders, asking him to talk about Danny's experiences in the library. Danny is upset that his father won't simply talk to and ask him instead of speaking through his friend. The silence between father and son is upheld, as Reuven becomes the communication between the two.

Silence 3: During the month of August, Reb Saunders and Danny go on a trip to Lakewood, where they spend an excruciating amount of time together on a bus in complete silence. Even while traveling they do not speak.

Silence 4: Reuven realizes the amount of torture that Danny goes through when he sees him reading in the library. He believes the silence between Danny and his father to be torturing his soul and does not know how to help.

Silence 5: For two years, Danny and Reuven have been living in silence, for Reb Saunders has placed a ban on speaking to any apikorsim, or non-Hasidic Jews. Now that the ban is lifted, Danny sits down next to Reuven and begins to speak to him. The silence between friends no longer exists, but it still lives deep within the Saunders family.

Silence 6: When Reuven visits the Saunders after the long period of silence, Reb Saunders shakes Reuven's hand and continues to invite him over to study Talmud on Saturdays. He never once mentions the horrible silence he forced upon the two friends.

Silence 7: When Reuven jokes about the silence living in Hasidic Jewry, Danny becomes hurt and angry. The silence is real to him and not simply a fact read in a textbook on Judaism. Reuven expresses his pain, anger, and sympathy towards Danny over the silence.

Silence 8: Reb Saunders explains to Reuven that he forced the silence upon his son so that he would learn to have the soul of a tzaddik. He already possesses a brilliant mind and wanted Danny to possess a brilliant spirit, as well. He believed the only method to do so was to raise Danny in silence. His father also raised him in silence, and it is from his own experience that he wanted to create a blessed soul for Danny.

Silence 9: Reuven and Danny hold one another, weeping over the years of hurt and silence. Although they are silent in their cries, no words need be exchanged. They are communicating in silence themselves.

Silence 10: Reuven asks Danny, as he leaves for Columbia University, if he will raise a son one day in silence. Danny says he will do so if he can find no other way.



Topic Tracking: Zionism

Zionism 1: Both baseball teams know that Mr. Malter, Reuven's father, is a stark Zionist and writer. Zionism is the love, passion, and devotion to allowing Palestine to become the Jewish state of Israel. During the World War II period, Jews were divided between Zionists and anti-Zionists.

Zionism 2: Mr. Malter lectures Reuven on the history of the Hasidic Jews and their belief in the coming of the Messiah. They believe a Jewish homeland can only be formed when the Messiah comes, and therefore are opposed to the post-war rallies in favor of the state of Israel.

Zionism 3: Mr. Malter explodes on the importance of establishing Palestine as a Jewish homeland. He begins to rally loudly for Palestine, especially after the Holocaust. With most European Jews slaughtered, he believes America is the place to rebuild Judaism.

Zionism 4: While Reuven eats breakfast with the Saunders, he brings up the idea of creating Palestine. Reb Saunders explodes at the table, screaming about the necessity of the messiah to arrive for a Jewish homeland to be established.

Zionism 5: Mr. Malter prepares for his Zionistic rally in Madison Square Garden. Although he is a devoted professor, he has never before prepared so sufficiently as he does for this rally, for it is part of his heart and soul. He believes in Zionism more than anything and is giving all his energy to the cause, forgetting his suffering health and curious son.

Zionism 6: Reb Saunders forces silence upon Reuven and will not allow Danny to speak with him. He places a ban on their friendship, shattering Reuven's heart and confusing his mind. He cannot believe that Zionism has destroyed his friendship with Danny.

Zionism 7: Reb Saunders forms a staunch anti-Zionist rally that finds support, but is not as effective as the Zionist rally led by Mr. Malter. Reb Saunders also issues a ban against all Zionist businesses, and distributes anti-Palestinian pamphlets.

Zionism 8: The state of Israel is finally formed, bringing joy to the Zionists and pain to the anti-Zionists. Reb Saunders dismantles his group and discontinues the distribution of his pamphlets, finally allowing Reuven and Danny to speak again.

Zionism 9: When Reuven finally visits Danny's home, he shakes Reb Saunders' hand and is welcomed back into the family. We find out that Reb Saunders was concerned that Danny's intelligence would prevent him from being compassionate, so he shut Danny out emotionally, hoping he would experience pain and want. Reb Saunders asks forgiveness from Danny and gives him his blessing to study psychology.



Chapter 1

The novel opens as the narrator, Reuven Malter, a young Jewish boy living in New York during the 1940s, describes the different types of Jews living in his Brooklyn world. There are several Hassidic sects, of which Danny Saunders belongs to one. Reuven never would have met Danny were it not for the United States' entrance into the Second World War. "For the first fifteen years of our lives, Danny and I lived within five blocks of each other and neither of us knew of the other's existence" Chapter 1, p.11. The yeshivas, the religious schools to which the Hasidic Jews attend, want to prove that their students are physically fit as well as intellectually stimulated.

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 1

In order to prove that the yeshiva boys are the best in all mediums and fields, they enter the school league to play against Reuven's secular school, with explicit orders from Reb Saunders, the rabbi, never to lose. On a Sunday afternoon in early June, Mr. Galanter, Reuven's schoolteacher and baseball coach heads the team on the field. As Reuven practices with fellow teammate Davey Cantor, they watch the orthodox boys enter the field not only with fearless confidence and strength of character, but with the official regalia of a yeshiva:

"There were fifteen of them, and they were dressed alike in white shirts, dark pants, white sweaters, and small black skullcaps. In the fashion of the very Orthodox, their hair was closely cropped, except for the areas near their ears from which mushroomed the untouched hair that tumbled down into the long side curls. Some of them had the beginnings of beards, straggly tufts of hair that stood in isolated clumps on their chins, jawbones, and upper lips. They all wore the traditional undergarments beneath their shirts, and the tzitzit, the long fringes appended to the four corners of the garment, came out above their belts and swung against their pants as they walked. These were the very Orthodox, and they obeyed literally the Biblical commandment[s]" Chapter 1, p. 16.

The rabbi coaching the Hassidic team requests a five-minute warm up period on the field, much to Mr. Galanter's chagrin. Reuven's teammates, although all Jewish as well, are dressed in the more secular attire of Americanized clothing and skullcaps. They realize that this baseball game has become a holy war. During this warm up period, a bespectacled Reuven spots a tall, sandy-haired boy on the Hassidic team. He discovers that this is Danny Saunders, the son of Rabbi Isaac Saunders, a strict Hassidic ruler with whom Reuven's father disagrees on most issues.

The game becomes a battle between extremely religious Hassidic Jews and the more Americanized Jews, as both teams play with full force and no holds barred. Danny Saunders approaches the plate and almost hits the pitcher, Schwartzie, in the process of slamming the ball. Danny approaches Reuven with full knowledge of his name and his father, David Malter's, a professor and writer, Zionist reputation.



Topic Tracking: Zionism 1

The game continues as the yeshiva boys claim to kill the apikoros, the non-yeshiva students. The rivalry between these two Jewish schools becomes a full-blown war between the practice of religion: so called righteousness and so called sinfulness. The conflict between the two schools exists because students like Reuven attend parochial school and study English subjects as well as Hebrew and Jewish subjects, permitting the yeshiva boys believe them to be lesser Jews and lesser human beings. This is Reuven's first real contact with that other type of Jew - the Hassid - and he wonders how they learn to play ball so well when all they seem to do is study all day.

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 2

Manning second base, Reuven injures his wrist on a fierce catch from a hefty blow from the yeshiva boys. They continue to shout, "Burn in hell, you apikorsim!" Chapter 1, p. 31. He shakes off the pain and continues to play. Danny comes to the plate, grinning with seeming devilish superiority, and hits the ball so ferociously hard that it knocks Reuven off his feet when he catches it. When Reuven sits up, he realizes that his glasses have been shattered, Danny is safe on first base, and his left eye burns in excruciating pain. Reuven's team loses the game by one run while he is rushed to the hospital.



Chapter 2

Mr. Galanter rushes Reuven to Brooklyn Memorial Hospital for immediate care on his injured eye. The doctors tease him by telling him that stopping a baseball with his eye is no way to play the game. Reuven winces in pain and sees bright lights as the doctors and orderlies move him around the hospital and up the stairs, repeatedly asking for his father. Mr. Galanter tells them that although he is not well, Mr. David Malter is on his way.

Reuven awakens later in the afternoon in shock that so much has happened in the day. Although his vision is blurred, he can see a middle aged man with an eye patch to one side of his bed playing cards, while a young blind boy of ten or eleven lay to his other side. He thought of the events of the day and one reflection continuously came to mind:

"I moved my wrist slowly. It still hurt. That Danny Saunders was a smart one, and I hated him. I wondered what he was thinking now. Probably gloating and bragging about the ball game to his friends. That miserable Hasid!" Chapter 2, p. 46

After another long sleep, Reuven wakes up on Monday afternoon and begins to speak with the two men surrounding him. He eats a kosher meal, placing the skullcap on his head brought by his father earlier. The older man on his left starts a conversation about the skullcap and introduces himself as Tony Savo, a fighter, while the young blonde boy named Billy, also enters the conversation. After Tony has difficulty pronouncing Reuven's name, he introduces himself as Robert - Bobby - an Americanized description of his more religious name.

Reuven sees a blurry image with wire-rimmed glasses come rushing to his bed. It is his father and he is ecstatic to see him, although he is disturbed that his father looks so unkempt and is suffering from a summer cold. The two discuss Reuven's and the surgery which he underwent to remove a small piece of glass that was trapped in his eye. Mr. Malter's obvious concerns show and Reuven immediately picks up on the tone. There is a slight possibility that the scar tissue could grow over the pupil, causing blindness. Regardless, Reuven will be released in a few days while he allows the eye to heal. During this period, he is not allowed to read for two weeks. Therefore, his political activist father brings him a radio so that he can listen to all the current events. The Second World War in Europe is beginning to cause much commotion and chaos in the United States - especially with the Jewish communities.

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 3

"I lay still and thought about my eyes. I had always taken them for granted, the way I took for granted all the rest of my body and also my mind. My father had told me many times that health was a gift, but I never really paid much attention to the fact that I was rarely sick or almost never had to go to a doctor." Chapter 1, p.57



Reb Saunders has called Mr. Malter several times to offer Danny's sincere apologies. Reuven is shocked to hear such news, for he believes Danny to be intentionally cruel. He leaves Reuven to his radio and sleeping pills, as he ponders a life without sight.

Topic Tracking: Friendship 1



Chapter 3

While Reuven is still asleep in the hospital, loud screams and noises rise within the hospital walls. Tony Savo jumps onto his bed mocking the orderlies while they listen to the radio and learn that it is D Day and the Americans have landed on the Normandy Coast. Reuven is still calm and puts on his tefillin to pray, dodging the painful bump that remains on his forehead. Tony teases Reuven over his observant religious practice and wonders if he'll become a priest one day. Reuven tells him that his father wants him to be a mathematician, but he may want to become a rabbi.

Mickey, a young boy with chronic stomach problems comes across the ward to ask Tony to play ball. He does so in order to give the little boy joy and to enjoy himself while hospitalized, much to the chagrin of the head nurse, Mrs. Carpenter. Mr. Galanter visits Reuven with *New York Times* in hand, and talks to both him and Billy about the war. Billy's uncle is a fighter pilot in the war and his father couldn't be a soldier because his mother died in the accident and he has to take care of little Billy. Mr. Galanter is affected by Billy's story and becomes morose and solemn, on account of his inability to participate in the war.

Topic Tracking: Friendship 2

Mr. Galanter leaves and Reuven closes his eyes to nap and avert the sunlight. He soon opens them to see Danny Saunders standing above his bed. Shocked by his presence, Reuven allows his anger to dominate the short conversation. He scolds Danny and tells him to go home and feel miserable for having possibly blinded another person. Danny tells him that he feels terrible and came to talk, not to fight. Reuven's silence forces Danny to leave.

When Mr. Malter visits Reuven shortly after Danny's exit, Reuven tells him of the conversation. Mr. Malter scolds Reuven for his maltreatment of Danny:

"You must remember what the Talmud says. If a person comes to apologize for having hurt you, you must listen and forgive him...What I tried to tell you, Reuven, is that when a person comes to talk to you, you should be patient and listen." Chapter 3, p. 68

They talk about the invasion and the war and Hitler. When Mr. Malter leaves, Reuven begins to feel terrible about his words with Danny. Billy's father comes again to visit and asks Reuven if he will call Billy when they get out of the hospital.

Danny Saunders comes nervously to visit Reuven once again, this time with success. The two begin to talk. Danny came to visit Reuven to tell him how concerned he has been about the game since he hit Reuven. Danny cannot understand why he truly wanted to kill Reuven on the field. Reuven doesn't know how to handle such news coming so frankly out of Danny's mouth. They talk about the game, the heat and power of the war of it, and call each other by his first name. "I looked at him [Danny], and suddenly I had the feeling that everything around me was out of focus...And here was



Danny Saunders talking English, and what he was saying and the way he was saying it just didn't seem to fit in with the way he was dressed, with the side curls on his face and the fringes hanging down below his dark jacket" Chapter 3, p. 72.

The two boys talk about how much they practice baseball to become good players, how much they study Talmud each day, and what they want to do with their lives in the future. Danny tells Reuven that he has a photographic memory, which helps him study four pages of Talmud each day. Reuven wants to become a rabbi one day to help all types of Jews, despite his father's wish for him to become a mathematician/professor. Danny is surprised by Reuven's goals, for he is to take his father's place as rabbi solely from inheritance. He would rather become a psychologist. He tells Reuven that his father doesn't say much. "He told me once he wishes everyone could talk in silence" Chapter 3, p. 76. Reuven doesn't understand this practice of communication, but welcomes his new friend's company. Danny leaves with excitement of visiting Reuven the following day.

Topic Tracking: Friendship 3

Topic Tracking: Silence 1



Chapter 4

Mr. Malter visits Reuven soon after Danny leaves him alone, looking more worn out than the previous day. Reuven tells his father that he looks outside at people who don't know how lucky they are. "'No one knows he is fortunate until he becomes unfortunate,' my father said quietly. 'That's the way the world is'" Chapter 4, p.78. Mr. Malter coughs perpetually throughout their conversation and tells him that he should become friends with Danny Saunders. The Talmud tells a person to find a good teacher and a good friend.

Topic Tracking: Friendship 4

A curtain rises around Tony Savo's bed, causing Reuven and Billy to worry about their roommate. Reuven puts on his tefillin to pray for his new friend. Danny arrives and Reuven calls him the messiah in jest. The two walk outside the room to give Savo quiet and begin to talk about literature. Danny tells him that he is bored of Talmud all the time and constantly reads literature and psychology books in the library. He is currently fascinated by Hemingway and knows that people look at him funny because they wonder what a person like him is doing reading so much. He believes his father frightens off the English teachers in his yeshiva from teaching anything worthwhile or potentially dangerous. This is the first time Danny has spoken of his secret desires. Reuven is confused by his words:

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 4

"I'm all mixed up about you. I'm not trying to be funny or anything. I really am mixed up about you. You look like a Hasid, but you don't sound like one. You don't sound like what my father says Hasidim are supposed to sound like. You sound almost as if you don't believe in God." Chapter 4, p.86

The boys debate their belief in God and then Reuven discusses his fascination with mathematical logic until his father arrives. Reuven introduces his new friend to his father; however, the two have already met. Mr. Malter is the man at the library who has been giving suggestions to and helping Danny read so many books without his father's consent. Reuven is in shock that his father has known Danny for so long without tell him; however, he believes it was for Danny to tell. When the two men leave, Reuven sees that a curtain has gone up around Billy's bed as well.

Mr. Savo returns with one less eye and Billy leaves the room hoping for the best with his new operation. The Dr. Snyderman takes Reuven out and tells him that his eye should be fine and that he is free to go. Mr. Malter joyfully picks up his son from the hospital in time for a homecoming Shabbat.

Chapter 5

Reuven puts on his new replacement glasses and is able to see the world anew, with its clear colors and bright lights. He and his father take a cab home from the hospital to their brownstone row house in Brooklyn, where their Russian housekeeper, Manya, has prepared a welcome home feast. Mr. Malter immediately goes into his study, coughing and stating that he must finish his article. Reuven can hardly believe that he has been gone for only a week and is excited about Danny's visit the next day.



Chapter 6

After the glorious Shabbat meal, Manya quickly cleans the dishes and leaves the two men to discuss Danny Saunders. Reuven wants to know more about him and why he is the way he is. Mr. Malter tells him that in order to understand Danny, he must understand his ancestry and Jewish history, and begins a lecture on the history of Polish Jewry. He talks about the Cossacks, the Polish oppression, the Jewish prosperity in Poland, the coming of the messiah, and finally Jewish scholarship.

Topic Tracking: Zionism 2

Sounding like the soft spoken professor that he is, Mr. Malter discusses the Baal Shem, the great teacher and leader of Hasidic Jewry. There is the new teaching of Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, instead of Talmud, Jewish learning, and the emergence of the tzaddik, the righteous ones. "The Hassidim believed that the tzaddik was a superhuman link between themselves and God" Chapter 6, p. 111. The tzaddikim are inherited positions, and Reb Saunders is a great tzaddik who will one day pass his position on to his eldest son, Danny. The Hasidim live in a world that is frozen, as if it were the Polish world of centuries past, and they believe they must absorb some of the suffering of the Jews of the past. Mr. Malter also talks of other brilliant minds that were able to use their intellect outside of suffocating traditions, such as Maimonides, Kant, and Aristotle. He compares Danny to these men, for his mind is brilliant and superior to most human beings. The mere difference lies in the fact that Danny lives in a free world and is therefore struggling with his own traditions and those of free Americans around him:

"Now, Reuven, listen very carefully to what I am going to tell you. Reb Saunders' son is a terribly torn and lonely boy. There is literally no one in the world he can talk to. He needs a friend. The accident with the baseball has bound him to you, and he has already sensed in you someone he can talk to without fear." Chapter 6, p. 113

Reuven understands what his father is saying and cannot believe that so much has changed within himself in just one week. It is amazing what extraordinary things can happen from such simple ordinary actions.



Chapter 7

Reuven and his father wake up early on Saturday morning to walk to Synagogue after their breakfast from Manya. Each Hasidic sect prays in its own house of worship, and after services were over, Mr. Malter, walks to see a colleague. Reuven lies down and looks up at the blue sky thinking of Danny and Billy's blue eyes.

After a three-hour nap, Reuven awakens to see Danny standing above him ready to leave. They tease one another in an amiable fashion and walk to Reb Saunders' shul so that he can meet Reuven. Danny says that his father must meet and approve of all of Danny's friends - especially those out of the fold.

Topic Tracking: Friendship 5

Reuven comments that his father seems like a tyrant and he would not be able to carry on such a relationship with his father if they never spoke. The only time Danny's father speaks to him is during Talmudic study. Danny does not refute the tyrannical comment; however, he tells Reuven of his father's miraculous and heroic life story of survival during Russia. His first family was shot and killed, while he was saved by a Russian family. He was the second son who only inherited the position because his older brother disappeared. He saved his entire Hasidic community and brought them over to the United States after World War I and changed his name upon arrival to Ellis Island. Danny was born two days before the stock market crashed.

Reuven cannot understand how an entire community can follow another man so blindly. He believes that it sounds like Catholicism. The two boys continue to discuss Hasidism until they arrive at shul - synagogue. Reuven immediately feels out of place and regretful for having agreed to come into this different world. He sees the Hasidic Jews around him: "We were almost halfway through the crowd now, walking slowly together, Danny's fingers on the part of my arm just over the elbow. I felt myself naked and fragile, an intruder, and my eyes, searching for anything but the bearded faces to look at, settled, finally, upon the sidewalk at my feet" Chapter 7, p. 124.

As Danny and Reuven enter the synagogue, it is as if the red sea parts for them. People move away in order to allow Danny, the son of the tzaddik and future tzaddik, to walk through. Reuven sees one of the ruthless members on Danny's baseball team stare at him with enmity and curiosity, and Reuven realizes that both boys will have a tough time explaining their friendship with one another to their respective friends. Everyone suddenly becomes quiet and respectful as Reb Saunders enters the small room. "The silence that followed had a strange quality to it: expectation, eagerness, love, awe" Chapter 7, p. 128. As he enters, the congregants try to touch him and honor him. He comes directly to Danny, who introduces him to Reuven in front of the crowd. With curt and blunt honesty, he asks is he is the son of David Malter, if his eye is healed, how he knows so much about mathematics, and so forth. The questioning is partly in Yiddish on his part and answered in English from Reuven. " "Later we will talk more. I want to know my son's friend. Especially the son of David Malter" Chapter 7, p.130.



After the service, Danny motions for Reuven to sit next to him for the large meal. He eats, although he is not hungry, and joins in the joyous singing and swaying with the others afterwards. Although he is silent, Reb Saunders seems to shed a slight smile, and then speaks after a long silence. He begins a powerful sermon on the importance of studying Torah in the world. As his words echo throughout the room, Danny looks emotionless and lets his eyes sink down, so as to not watch his holy father. He continues to talk of the evils of the world and the importance of study in order to make sense of and live in the world. Reuven begins to enjoy this study, despite his conspicuous difference. The sermon continues into an even larger display of the worship of Torah and the teaching of the rabbis. However, Reuven slowly thinks to himself that there are other important parts to the world, such as Einstein, Roosevelt, the soldiers. While Reuven silently ponders these ideas, Reb Saunders calls upon his son to discover any mistakes made during the sermon. It is customary to give a public quiz on Talmud and Danny's father was giving him a large test on the facts for a substantial period of time. Reb Saunders becomes angry with Danny when he cannot find any more errors in his father's sermon and turns to Reuven, the mathematician. Surprised and terrified, Reuven says he enjoyed everything and then notes that one of the numbers he gave was wrong. Reb Saunders gloriously rewards him with congratulatory words, and both he and Danny realize that Reuven has also just passed a small test.

"I just couldn't get it through my head that Danny had to go through something like that every week, and that I myself had gone through it tonight...I had clearly passed the test. What a ridiculous way to gain admiration and friendship!" Chapter 7, p. 143

After the services and meal, Reb Saunders tells Reuven how he is glad that he is Danny's friend and that Danny needs such a friend. He says that a friend is not an easy thing to be and then leaves. Reuven realizes that Danny and his father exchanged no words all day, save the Talmudic discussion. As Reuven leaves, he divulges his horror at such a game. The people seem to love the game and the excitement, and are happy that it continues on a weekly basis. Danny tells Reuven that his little brother, Levi, is sick with a blood disease. Both boys realize that they will be attending the same college, Raphael Hirsch Seminary and College, the only Yeshiva and secular school admired by the Orthodox community, and Danny will be majoring in Psychology. Reuven realizes how late it has become and races home to his worried father. They discuss the day's events and the public testing. Mr. Malter defends the method by saying that it is the way the world works. "If a person has a contribution to make, he must make it in public. If learning is not made in public, it is a waste. But the business about the mistakes I never heard before" Chapter 7, p. 149.

Topic Tracking: Friendship 6

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 5

Mr. Malter continues to praise Danny's mind and mourn that such a valuable mind might be lost to society. Reuven promises to call if he stays out so late in the future, and the two men go to bed.



Chapter 8

Reuven can hardly believe only one week has passed since the baseball incident, for everything in his life seems different. When he arrives at school, he is somewhat of a local hero for the team, and he revisits the scene of the crime, envisioning Danny as the 'cruel murderer' he used to be in his mind and still remains in the minds of his classmates. He walks to the library and sees Danny reading within the walls, deeply entrenched in literature. "He was reading with phenomenal speed. I could almost see him read. He would start at the head of a page, his head tilted slightly upward, and then his head would move downward in a straight line until he got to the foot of the page" Chapter 8, p. 153.

Reuven watches Danny read, for he is still unable to read because of his healing eye. He closes his eyes to review mathematical logic, as Danny comes up to him and amiably teasing him of sleeping...yet again. A shocked Danny reads a passage to Reuven from Graetz's *History of the Jews*, about the harsh and disgusting representation of Hasidim. Danny is disturbed by the negative impression of his people and defends his father's divine presence and reputation. He explains Freud and psychoanalysis to Reuven, divulging the fact that he is learning German so that he can read the information in its native language. Reuven cannot understand why Danny would teach himself German. Danny explains that it is not an evil language simply because Hitler speaks it. Reuven discusses his afternoon in the library with his father, who is concerned about giving Danny books to read behind his father's back and how difficult it must be to read such vulgarity about himself in texts.

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 6

Danny and Reuven continue to meet in the library and spend the following Shabbat together with his father studying Pirkei Avot, learning passages from the rabbis. Reuven meets Danny's mother and then Danny and his father embark again on the journey through the public games of quizzing, while Reuven watches silently. After their deep exercise is complete, Reb Saunders asks Danny to get them tea. While he has Reuven alone, he states that he knows all about Danny's visits to the library. He wants Reuven to tell him what he reads, since he does not and cannot ask Danny himself.

"I saw frozen and felt a long moment of blind panic. What my father had anticipated was now actually happening. But he hadn't anticipated it happening to me. He had thought Reb Saunders would confront him, not me. My father and I had acted behind Reb Saunders' back; now Reb Saunders was asking me to act behind Danny's back. I didn't know what to say." Chapter 8, p.167

Reb Saunders praises God for giving him such a blessed and brilliant son, but simply worries about him losing his place. He has a rich ancestry that he must live up to, in addition to his phenomenal intellect. Danny returns and feels the tension in the room, knowing that something has happened between his friend and his father. As Danny walks Reuven home, Reuven tells him everything that happened. Danny feels better,



knowing now that he won't have to sneak around the librarybut further explains that he wishes his father could ask him instead of Reuven. Danny loses his temper when he tries to explain that he and his father never speak, except during Talmud study. He is brought up completely in silence.

Topic Tracking: Silence 2

When Reuven tells his father about his Shabbat and the silence between Danny and his father, Mr. Malter is surprised, for he has heard of such a practice...but did not believe that it truly existed.

Chapter 9

Reuven and his father visit Dr. Snyderman for the final appointment to learn that his eye has healed perfectly. He is now able to read and write and take his final examinations, which he passes flawlessly, and is now free for the summer. Reuven calls Billy to check up on him and find out how the surgery went. Billy's father answers the phone with bad news that the surgery was not successful and that he and Billy are moving to Albany.



Chapter 10

The summer months fly? by as Danny studies Talmud with his father and reads Freud in the library, and Reuven plays ball with his classmates and studies with his father. Mr. Malter sees the drastic advances made in Europe with the Second World War and travels to Manhattan for research on a new article. Danny's comprehension of German and Freud have advanced enough to confuse his mind with science.

During one of the regular Talmud games on Shabbat, Reb Saunders becomes irate when Danny's participation is less than fiercely enthusiastic. Danny chuckles because he has discovered the way to read Freud - he must study it, not simply read it. Much of the summer passes with Danny obsessing over and studying Freud with psychological dictionaries and Reuven studying mathematical logic.

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 7

Reuven and his father go to their Peekskill cottage for the month of August for relaxation until Labor Day. Upon their return, Danny is ecstatic, for he missed his friend greatly. Danny had also gone on a trip to Lakewood with his father. Yet, this short trip elicited misery, for he and his father exchanged no words and sat for hours on a bus in utter silence. Danny had read the two books on contemporary Judaism given to him by Reuven and was also disturbed and confused by Freud's paper about sexuality.

Topic Tracking: Silence 3



Chapter 11

The new school year proves to be chaotic and full of excitement, both in the news and on a personal level. Reuven is elected class president and is consumed by his mounting schoolwork and the political extracurricular activities. Mr. Malter is consumed by the war in Europe, from the Battle of the Bulge to the possible conclusion of the fighting. Danny and Reuven do not see each other much, but do not fear the loss of their friendship. Danny still wants to discuss Freud's sexual notions with Reuven, for he has no one else with whom to discuss them and is curious as to what it means.

Reuven finds time in February to visit Danny on Shabbat and is welcomed with the traditional Talmud games until Danny falls ill with the flu and bronchitis. Reuven is unable to even visit his friend throughout most of the following months.

During school, Davey Cantor bursts into class with the news that President Roosevelt has died, causing a disturbance in the middle of English class. School is immediately let out as everyone ponders the loss. Reuven sees the sadness on the streets and feels a strong connection to the country's loss. "I found myself crying too, and felt a gnawing emptiness, as though I had been scraped clean inside and there was nothing in me now but a terrible darkness. I was feeling as though it had been my father who had died" Chapter 11, p. 187.

The death of Roosevelt spreads sadness throughout the community for a long period of time. As soon as Danny regains his health, Reuven falls ill with the flu for ten days and is forced to let go of his political responsibilities in order to catch up on his work. And as soon as Reuven improves, both Reb Saunders and Mr. Malter become ill with the flu and possible pneumonia. When the two fathers are ill, good news explodes in the news that the war on Europe has ended. With such blessed information came the realization of Hitler's genocide on six million Jews. Reuven cannot contemplate the mass numbers of Jews killed and both fathers have trouble dealing with such horrific knowledge. When Reuven visits Danny on Shabbat, the usual Talmudic study is replaced with discussion of European Jewry. Reb Saunders repeatedly cries that the world kills the Jews. He questions the almighty master how such a holocaust could occur and resolves only that it is God's will. Mr. Malter is horrified by such an answer and asks if Reuven is satisfied with it. Reuven cannot believe Reb Saunders' explanation of the atrocities in Europe and instead listens to his own father's words:

"Six million of our people have been slaughtered," he went on quietly. "It is inconceivable. It will have meaning only if we give it meaning. We cannot wait for God... There is only one Jewry left now in the world... It is here in America. We have a terribly responsibility. We must replace the treasures we have lost... A madman has destroyed our treasures. If we do not rebuild Jewry in America, we will die as a people." Chapter 11, p. 192

Topic Tracking: Zionism 3

Soon after Reuven takes his final examinations, Mr. Malter suffers a heart attack. While he recovers in the hospital, Reuven moves into Danny's room to live.



Chapter 12

Reuven feels comfortable in Danny's household and is welcomed by his sickly mother, quiet little brother, attractive sister, and silent father. They discuss Freud extensively and discover his disturbing effects on both their psyche. Although troubled, Danny seems to accept Freud's teachings along with his Hasidic practice, despite their overt contradictions.

When Reuven visits his father in the hospital, he sees a thinner obsessed man with articles and newspapers strewn all over the room. He is convinced that the Jews now need a homeland in Palestine. A stark Zionist, he believes that the Jews cannot wait for a messiah to come, for they may be all murdered in the meanwhile. Soon after this visit, Reuven eats breakfast with the Saunders family and brings up his father's ideas. Reb Saunders explodes at Reuven by saying that the idea of building a Jewish homeland without the messiah is for goyim, non-Jews, apikorsim! "God will build the land, not Ben Gurion and his goyim! When the Messiah comes, we will have Eretz Yisroel, a Holy Land, not a land contaminated by Jewish goyim!" Chapter 12, p. 198. As Danny walks outside with Reuven, he tells him never to bring up the subject of Palestine again. His father is suffering from? the deaths of the six million Jews.

Topic Tracking: Zionism 4

While studying one day, Danny tells Reuven that he feels trapped and poisoned by his inheritance. His younger brother, although sick, would be a great tzaddik and could take over Reb Saunders' position instead of Danny. Reuven chooses to ask about his sister, who has been promised to another man when she reaches eighteen. Danny plans to tell his father in the near future and needs Reuven around when he does so.

During Reuven and his father's vacation at their cottage, the Americans bomb Japan. Reuven enters Hirsch College and starts shaving. Danny remains fairly unchanged, save the new glasses he wears and the heavier beard on his face.



Chapter 13

Danny and Reuven begin college at Hirsch Seminary to mixed reviews. While Reuven excels and adores his abundant studies of mixed secular and orthodox Jewry, Danny suffers from stress and disappointment. He does not agree with the heavily weighed experimental psychology studies and prefers studying psychoanalysis and the human mind to rat mazes and blinking lights. He disagrees with his psychology professor, Nathan Appleman, and therefore receives a B for his first semester. However, while he seems to lie at a crossroads with the psychology department, he is a revered scholar in the Talmudic department, garnering praise from the top professor, Rav Gershenson, and serving as almost tzaddik to his fellow Hassidic students.

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 8

Danny and Reuven continue to debate over the use of science and logic in psychology. Danny is furious that Appleman calls the Freudian followers dogmatic, while Reuven defends the use of scientific testing in psychology. Reuven continues to study Talmud with his father on Saturdays instead of with Danny's family, and begins to learn a more scientific approach to the religious learning.

Mr. Malter, still thin and sickly, begins taking his teaching more seriously than before and lectures perpetually on the importance of Palestine as the Jewish homeland. "He had always prepared for his classes, but there was a kind of heaviness to the way he went about preparing now, writing everything down, rehearsing his notes aloud - as if he were trying to make certain that nothing of significance would remain unsaid, as if he felt the future hung on every idea he taught" Chapter 13, p. 213. Mr. Malter's heartfelt speech about starting a Jewish homeland and not waiting for the messiah anymore touches and concerns Reuven, for he still wants to be a rabbi. Although he wants Reuven to become a professor, he knows that America needs good rabbis. His thoughts on death and his own imminent mortality frighten Reuven and he wonders what his father would think about Reb Saunders' explosion against Zionism. Mr. Malter informs Reuven that Jack Rose, an unreligious, secular Jew has made a large contribution to the Jewish National Fund and that many more Jews like him will now begin attending synagogue more often. Reuven does not want synagogues full of these types of Jews, but nonetheless wants to help with this new wave of American Jewry.

Topic Tracking: Zionism 5

One Friday afternoon, Reuven reads books on Psychology in the library and discovers the source of Danny's frustration. They barely mention Freud and sound precisely like his professor. "Poor Danny, I thought. Professor Appleman, with his experimental psychology, is torturing your mind. And your father, with his bizarre silence - which I still couldn't understand, no matter how often I thought about it - is torturing your soul" Chapter 13, p. 222.

Topic Tracking: Silence 4



The two boys discuss Psychology at lunch and Danny explodes at Reuven after he mentions the importance of both types of study. After Danny finally talks with Appleman for over an hour, he returns to apologize to Reuven over his temper. He now sees what Appleman means and wants to learn more, with the help of a mathematician - Reuven. He now reveres his professor and sees all the problems with his beloved Freud, despite his yearning to still learn more about him.

Mr. Malter's health continues to plummet, causing Reuven to worry on a daily basis. He is obsessed with the rally at which he is speaking on Zionism. The Zionist/anti-Zionist debate escalates in every outlet of society: school, home, friendship, with the two friends. Fights erupt in school comparing Zionists to Hitler, meanwhile Mr. Malter sleeps less and prepares for his rally at Madison Square Garden. Despite a snowstorm and nervousness, the speech is a tremendous success and is covered in every newspaper. The following day, Danny shuns Reuven and ignores him. He eventually talks to Reuven in the bathroom telling him that his father has excommunicated him and his father. Brokenhearted, Reuven cannot believe that his father allowed him to read so many books over the years and did not find problems. "It seemed so incredible to me, so outrageously absurd. Not Freud but Zionism had finally shattered our friendship" Chapter 13, p.231. Shunned by every Hasid in school and the community, Reuven complains to his father. Mr. Malter feels terrible for having both brought the two boys together and now torn them apart. However, he understands that it is Reb Saunders' fanaticism that has kept the Jews alive over two thousand years of persecution.

Topic Tracking: Zionism 6

Topic Tracking: Friendship 7



Chapter 14

The rest of the semester passed without a word or motion from Danny to Reuven. Mr. Malter's health is persistently in question, and despite his opposing views with Reb Saunders, he continues to defend him. The silence angers Reuven so much that his bitterness grows into intense hatred for Reb Saunders. His mind is consumed with hatred and anger, causing his grades to suffer. Finally, Reuven makes a conscious decision to forget Danny altogether and not allow more of his grades to fall.

Reb Saunders and the stark anti-Zionists lead a rally, not as popular as the Zionist one, but somewhat effective nonetheless. They begin even a boycott of a Jewish goyim stores and businesses. Only when the Messiah comes will there be a Jewish homeland.

Topic Tracking: Zionism 7

Reuven's attempt to forget Danny is difficult, for he is moved up to Rav Gershenson's Talmud class, where Danny is a strong presence. He dreads the silence between his named being called and his ability or lack thereof to answer the questions correctly. Danny always answers everyone's questions correctly and quickly and their classroom debates dominated Talmud class. Still, Danny never makes verbal contact with Reuven. However, his facial expressions and glances show Reuven that he cares and is hurting just as much.

Mr. Malter continues to lose weight and spend more time on the Zionist cause, until he gives another massive speech in Madison Square Garden. This time Reuven is able to attend and cries when he sees his small father become such a giant in the community. Reb Saunders' anti-Zionist group continues to distribute pamphlets and champion their cause. Finally, in November, the United Nations votes to give the Jews Palestine, and the Malter men embrace with joy and tears. Soon after the Jewish state is declared, Arabs attack Jews in Tel Aviv and more blood is shed. The turmoil continues and questions arise as to whether or not it is true and right to have a Jewish state.

While the chaos ensues in both America and Palestine, Mr. Malter suffers another near-fatal heart attack. Reuven stays at home alone this time, with the help of Manya in the mornings and evenings. Despite Reuven's straight A report card in school, he is lonely and sad. Danny offers whatever consolation he can:

"The look on Danny's face, though, when I saw him for the first time, helped a little. He passed me in the hallway, his face a suffering mask of pain and compassion. I thought for a moment he would speak to me, but he didn't. Instead, he brushed against me and managed to touch my hand for a second. His touch and his eyes spoke the words that his lips couldn't. I told myself it was bitter and ironic that my father needed to have a heart attack in order for some contact to be established once again between myself and Danny." Chapter 14, p. 241

Topic Tracking: Friendship 8



While Mr. Malter lay in the hospital, Reuven lives alone and spends his evenings studying Talmud incessantly. He knows that Rav Gershenson will call upon him in class for a specific difficult passage, and studies it with all his might. Rav Gershenson does call on him and Reuven spends an hour and a half explaining a slight passage, and goes on for three days, causing silence and awe throughout the class. This display goes on for days until Rav Gershenson calls him to his desk after class one day. He wonders if Reuven studies with his father, a man he considers to be a great scholar and teacher. Reuven tells him that his father is in the hospital and he currently studies alone. Rav Gershenson will call upon Reuven more often in class, now that he knows that Reuven understands the material, but he must never use the same type of explanation in class again. Reuven understands what Rav Gershenson says clearly and leaves to look up his name in the library.

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 9

Chapter 15

Mr. Malter is released from the hospital under careful guidance and is allowed to teach after his month of August in the Peekskill cottage. The state of Israel is formed, and despite the joyous celebration, is welcomed along with violence and the death of one of the boys' classmates. Reuven and Danny continue to see one another and communicate in silence, until Reb Saunders' anti-Zionist group finally dismantles. One day, Danny sits down next to Reuven to ask for help with his experimental psychology formulas.

Topic Tracking: Zionism 8



Chapter 16

After a two year silence, Danny simply tells Reuven that the ban has been lifted and that he can now communicate with his dear friend. With bitterness, Reuven shows his hatred for Reb Saunders and his hurt over the silence. Danny and his father still live in silence, a fact that disturbs both Reuven and his father.

Topic Tracking: Silence 5

Topic Tracking: Friendship 9

Rav Gershenson's class becomes a joy for the two newly reacquainted friends, as they dominate class discussions with their debates. Danny has become fascinated by experimental psychology, still believing Freud to be a genius, but realizing the importance of experiments. He and Appleman believe he should go to Columbia University to become a clinical psychologist. He will tell his father when he receives his rabbinic ordination. Reuven cannot believe that Danny will become a psychologist, while Danny cannot believe that Reuven is to become a rabbi.

Danny's sister is married in June to another Hasid, and Reuven is the only non-Hasid in attendance. It is the first time he sees Reb Saunders in two years and the resentment and hatred only begins to grow. Over the summer, he visits Danny more often, but speaks little to Reb Saunders. He mentions nothing about the silence or Zionism and only shakes Reuven's hand, asking him why he doesn't come over to study Talmud on Saturday afternoons anymore. "That was all he said. Not a word about Zionism. Not a word about the silence he had imposed upon Danny and me. Nothing. I found I disliked him more when I left than when I had entered. I did not see him again that July" Chapter 16, p. 261.

Topic Tracking: Zionism 9

Topic Tracking: Silence 6



Chapter 17

Danny and Reuven begin their final year of college in September and joke about Hasidim and Judaism. Reuven tells Danny an offensive joke about Hasidim that disturbs him, until he explains the silence of learning:

"You can listen to silence, Reuven. I've begun to realize that you can listen to silence and learn from it. It has a quality and a dimension all its own. It talks to me sometimes. I feel myself alive in it. It talks. And I can hear it." Chapter 17, p. 262

Topic Tracking: Silence 7

Reuven has been dating regularly and advises Danny to do the same. Danny alerts Reuven that his wife has already been chosen. This old tradition presents another problem in his decision to leave the fold of Hasidim to become a psychologist, because more than simply his family will be affected.

Levi, Danny's little brother, is Bar-Mitzvahed on an early Monday morning. Although he is called to the Torah successfully, he is still very weak and ill. Soon after the Bar Mitzvah, Levi becomes violently ill and is rushed to the hospital. Danny is worried about his brother, not only for his health, but also because Levi is to continue the family dynasty when he becomes a doctoral candidate for Psychology. Reuven tells Mr. Malter about Danny's decision to become a doctor, bringing upon worry for both men. Mr. Malter warns Reuven that Danny may not be prepared for such a grave change in lifestyle and that he will need Reuven more than ever now. A friend is not an easy thing to be.

Reuven explains all of the minute details that may cause familial problems to Danny over his application to graduate schools. Mr. Malter gives Danny advice on how to speak with his father and warns him that everything is now between the two of them. Danny will not take over his father's position and will not marry his intended wife.

Danny's sister becomes pregnant and Reb Saunders continues to ask why Reuven does not come over anymore. Reuven dislikes him intensely and offers Danny his home before he realizes that he cannot do so because of Danny's strict kosher laws. Danny struggles with the applications and decision to tell his father over his future attendance of Columbia.

Mr. Malter forces Reuven to listen. Reb Saunders is not simply asking to study Talmud with Reuven, but instead wants to talk to Reuven about Danny. As soon as Reuven realizes this, he makes plans to go over to their house on Passover.



Chapter 18

Reuven walks to Danny's house after such a long absence and realizes its age and weariness. He recalls meeting Reb Saunders, the praying, studying, importance of friendship, and ultimately walks to see his friend. Although Reb Saunders' study has changed in the year he has not seen him, the tzaddik has changed greatly. His beard is now almost entirely gray and he speaks to Reuven as a man, not a boy. After asking about Reuven's future, he remembers that Reuven plans to be a rabbi. With difficulty, Reb Saunders thinks about the two boys - now men - going different ways.

Topic Tracking: Friendship 10

Reb Saunders begins to weep as he talks to Danny through Reuven. He uses the corporeal body of Danny's friend in order to explain his emotions and his deep trauma with having a son with such a brilliant mind, comparing Danny to his beloved and tortured brother. During his long speech, he finally speaks about the silence in which he has brought up his beloved son.

"Reuven, the Master of the Universe blessed me with a brilliant son. And he cursed me with all the problems of raising him. Ah, what it is to have a brilliant son! Not a smart son, Reuven, but a brilliant son, a Daniel, a boy with a mind like a jewel... There was no soul in my four-year-old Daniel, there was only his mind. He was a mind in a body without a soul." Chapter 18, p. 276-7

He teaches his son to develop a soul through the silence of a tzaddik. Although he realizes now that his son must live his own life, he is happy that his soul is that of a tzaddik, a learned noble man. Despite the years of suffering and silence, Reuven sees the mutual respect and love between the estranged father and son on their moment of truth. He blesses the almighty and thanks his for bringing Reuven and his father to his son Danny, for he knows that they have incredible souls. From his own experience of silence with his father, Reb Saunders' reaches Reuven:

Topic Tracking: Silence 8

"For years his silence bewildered and frightened me, though I always trusted him, I never hated him. And when I was old enough to understand, he told me that of all people a tzaddik especially must know of pain. A tzaddik must know how to suffer for his people, he said. He must take their pain from them and carry it on his own shoulders. He must carry it always." Chapter 18, p.278

He understands that his son will be a tzaddik as a psychologist. For the first time, Reb Saunders speaks to his son, asking him about his future and whether or not he will remain a religious Jew in dress and observance. Danny will cut off his ear locks and shave his beard, but will still practice all the commandments. Embracing the change, Reb Saunders cries out that his son is now free. He apologizes for not being a wise father - he has always loved his son dearly, but perhaps has not known how to raise



him. After his father leaves the room, Danny weeps. Reuven holds Danny, and they weep together for the years of friendship, years of silence, pain and suffering.

Topic Tracking: Intelligentsia 10

Topic Tracking: Silence 9

Topic Tracking: Friendship 11

Reuven tells his father everything at home that evening, still disagreeing with silence as a method of childrearing. During Shabbat morning services, Reb Saunders announces the entrance of Danny into psychology graduate school, to much commotion and shock. However, despite the congregation's shock, the inheritance happily goes to Levi, the younger brother. The two boys graduate from Hirsch College Summa Cum Laude.

Danny visits Reuven to say goodbye before he leaves for Columbia. He now has no beard or ear locks and looks like a different person, despite the piercing blue eyes that remain the same. Reuven wonders if Danny will raise his own sons in silence one day. Danny says he will do so if he can find no other way. He walks away, hungry for the discovery of psychology and the unknown life of the future.

Topic Tracking: Silence 10