

## Chapter 1

### Summary: Chapter 1

The narrator, [Reuven Malter](#), describes the neighborhood in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where he has lived for the first fifteen years of his life. Reuven’s neighborhood is populated by Orthodox Jews, including some Hasidic sects. All the children attend yeshivas—Jewish parochial schools—in the area. Reuven then mentions [Danny Saunders](#), a Hasidic friend. Danny and Reuven grew up five blocks away from each other. However, Reuven explains, the two never met because Danny’s Hasidic community kept to itself, remaining fiercely loyal to its own synagogue and customs. Reuven notes that he probably would never have met Danny if not for the competitive Jewish sports leagues created during World War

One June afternoon, Reuven’s Orthodox Jewish high school softball team plays a game against Danny’s Hasidic team. As Reuven’s team warms up, his enthusiastic and martial coach, [Mr. Galanter](#), shouts out instructions and encouragements. Meanwhile, Reuven’s friend, [Davey Cantor](#), warns Reuven that their opponents, students at a very religious yeshiva, are “murderers.” When the yeshiva boys arrive dressed in their [traditional](#) religious garb, Reuven doubts that they will pose a serious challenge.

The rabbi accompanying the yeshiva team insists that his boys practice for five minutes on the field before the game begins, and Mr. Galanter reluctantly agrees. Reuven notices one particularly strong batter on the yeshiva team, whom Davey identifies as Danny Saunders, the son of [Reb Saunders](#).

Just before the game begins, the rabbi and coach of Danny’s team tells his boys to “remember why and for whom we play.” The Hasidic team bats first, and Reuven takes his position at second base. After the first two hitters are retired, the third, a bullish boy named [Dov Shlomowitz](#), smacks a line drive. On his way around the base path, Dov charges into Reuven, knocking him down. Danny Saunders bats next, and hits the ball directly at the pitcher’s head, forcing the pitcher to dive off the mound. Danny makes it safely to second base, and between batters, Reuven congratulates Danny on his hit. Danny identifies Reuven as the son of [David Malter](#), who writes articles on [the Talmud](#). He tells Reuven, “We’re going to kill you apikorsim this afternoon.” Reuven, struck by Danny’s rudeness, sarcastically tells him to rub his tzitzit—traditional fringe—for good luck.

The next time Danny is up at bat, he again smacks the ball over the pitcher’s head, but Reuven makes a remarkable leaping catch. By the top half of the fifth and final inning, Reuven’s team is leading five to three. Reuven takes over as pitcher and baffles the first hitter he faces, Dov Shlomowitz, with his wicked curveball. Danny bats next and rings up two strikes as Reuven’s curve dives below Danny’s swing. Reuven then pitches two balls, but by Reuven’s fifth pitch, Danny adjusts to the diving action of the curve. He deliberately swings low and crushes a line drive back toward the mound. Reuven brings his glove to his face to catch the ball, but it hits the tip of his glove and bounces back onto his glasses, shattering them. While lying on the ground, Reuven imagines he sees Danny smiling at the injury. Reuven sits out for the rest of the game and watches his team lose eight to seven. After the game, Mr. Galanter calls a cab to take him to the hospital.

## Chapter 2

### Summary: Chapter 2

[Mr. Galanter](#) and [Reuven](#) arrive at Brooklyn Memorial Hospital. A young doctor examines Reuven, who is feeling increasingly nauseous and dizzy. After the doctor realizes that Reuven was wearing glasses when he was hit, he calls in two more doctors to look at his eye, including [Dr. Snyderman](#), a warm and sympathetic eye expert. After examining Reuven, Dr. Snyderman sends him upstairs to the eye ward. In the elevator on the way to the ward, Reuven sees flashing lights and swirling colors, and soon he is unconscious.

Reuven awakes to find himself in the hospital’s sunlit eye ward. His bed lies between the beds of two other patients. To his left is a friendly man in his mid-thirties named [Tony Savo](#). Tony, a professional prizefighter, speaks using boxing metaphors, referring to Reuven’s head as “the old punching bag” and to his injury as a “clap.” To Reuven’s right is [Billy](#), a spirited and optimistic blind boy aged ten or eleven. Billy explains that he lost his sight in a car accident, but will soon undergo an operation that will allow him to see again. Reuven tells Tony and Billy to call him Bobby, since his English name is Robert Malter. While they are talking, a nurse named [Mrs. Carpenter](#) brings dinner, assuring Reuven that all the food is kosher.

[David Malter](#), Reuven’s father, visits and informs Reuven that Dr. Snyderman has operated on his eye. He assures Reuven that everything is all right, but Reuven realizes that his father is not being completely truthful. Finally, Mr.

Malter reluctantly admits that the doctor is worried that, in the process of healing, scar tissue may grow over the pupil, blinding Reuven’s left eye. He also tells Reuven that [Reb Saunders](#) has been calling him to ask about Reuven’s condition. Reuven grows angry and argues that [Danny](#) intentionally hit him. He also tells his father that Danny called him an apikorsim. David Malter is shocked by Reuven’s accusations and remains critical of them.

Mr. Malter informs Reuven that he cannot read at all until his eye has healed. He gives Reuven a portable radio, instructing him to remain aware of news of the War. He also brings Reuven his tefillin and prayer book. Throughout the conversation, David Malter looks sickly. Reuven, upset to see his father looking so tired and unkempt, reminds his father to take care of his own health. David Malter leaves, and Reuven falls asleep thinking about Billy, wondering what it is like to be blind.

## Chapter 3

### Summary: Chapter 3

[Reuven](#) awakes to commotion in the hospital and the sound of the radio. Mr. Savo tells him that it is D-Day: the Allied forces have landed on the coast of France. For the rest of the morning, Mr. Savo, [Billy](#), and Reuven excitedly listen to news of the war. As he listens to his radio, Reuven prays fervently with his tefillin. Mr. Savo asks why he is so religious, and Reuven reveals that he plans to become a rabbi.

After lunch, a sickly six-year-old patient walks into the ward and asks to play catch with Mr. Savo. Mr. Savo explains that the boy, named [Mickey](#), has been hospitalized for most of his life due to a strange stomach condition. Thinking about such a tragic situation, Mr. Savo tells Reuven that they live in a “[c]razy world. Cockeyed.” Savo plays catch with Mickey, but the nurse scolds him. Mr. Savo’s condition is apparently much worse than he has let on, and the exertion of playing catch pains him.

Soon after, [Mr. Galanter](#) comes to pay Reuven a brief visit. He and Reuven discuss the invasion, and Reuven mentions that Billy’s uncle is a bomber pilot. Billy eagerly joins the conversation, asking Mr. Galanter why he is not fighting in the war, assuming that he was injured overseas. Mr. Galanter becomes extremely embarrassed, and hints at a physical condition that prevents him from serving. Reuven feels bad for his teacher’s embarrassment and, after Mr. Galanter leaves, Reuven falls asleep thinking about him, while continuing to fear for his own eye.

Reuven is awakened by a figure standing by his bed. When he opens his good eye, he is shocked to see [Danny Saunders](#). Danny tries to apologize for injuring Reuven, but Reuven rudely dismisses him. Immediately, Reuven feels foolish for having treated Danny in such a way. Later that evening, Reuven’s father comes to visit. After he hears about the encounter with Danny, he reprimands Reuven. After Mr. Malter leaves, [Roger Merrit](#), Billy’s father, introduces himself to Reuven. He asks Reuven to call Billy at home after he leaves the hospital, and Reuven agrees.

The next day, Danny returns and Reuven apologizes for his rudeness. Danny sits down at the edge of Reuven’s bed and tells him that he had wanted to kill him during the ball game, but he cannot understand why. When Reuven compliments Danny on his playing, Danny tells Reuven that his father permits him to practice baseball and read books only after he completes his required daily quota of Talmud—an astounding four pages a day. Danny reveals that this burden is in fact quite easy for him, because he has a photographic memory. He further explains that he is expected to take his father’s place as rabbi and leader of their Hasidic community, even though he would rather become a psychologist. Reuven, in turn, says that his father would like him to become a mathematician, but he is more interested in becoming a rabbi. Danny also reveals a curious fact about his father: [Reb Saunders](#) believes that “words distort what a person really feels in his heart,” and he “wishes everyone could talk in [silence](#).” Danny leaves, promising to return the next day.

## Chapter 4

### Summary: Chapter 4

[David Malter](#) visits [Reuven](#) again and tells him [Dr. Snyderman](#) will examine his eye on Friday morning. Afterward, Reuven probably will be able to come home. Reuven tells his father about [Danny](#)’s last visit and comments that the way Danny looks does not match the way he speaks. Danny dresses like a Hasid, he says, but talks about *Ivanhoe* and Freud. Reuven’s father encourages him to befriend Danny, citing a Talmudic maxim that stresses the importance of choosing a friend for oneself. He also says, “A Greek philosopher said that two people who are true friends are like two bodies with one soul.” After Mr. Malter leaves, Mr. Savo warns Reuven to beware of fanatics like Danny. Reuven wakes up in the middle of the night and is concerned to see a curtain around Mr. Savo’s bed. The curtain is still up the next

morning, and Reuven hears bustling activity and soft moaning from Mr. Savo’s bed. In the early evening, Danny comes to visit for a third time. Reuven is excited by Danny’s visit but worried about Mr. Savo, so he suggests they go into the hall to talk.

Reuven and Danny have a long conversation about their intellectual interests and their aspirations for the future. They discover that they were both born in the same place, Brooklyn Memorial Hospital, where Reuven is currently staying. Danny elaborates on his father’s belief in [silence](#), saying that his father never speaks to him except when they are studying Torah and Talmud. Danny also confesses that even though his father tells him man’s mission in life is to obey God, sometimes he is not sure what God wants. Danny knows that he is expected to take his father’s place as head of the Hasidic dynasty, but he is not sure he wants to do so.

Reuven is surprised by Danny’s confession and even more shocked when Danny reveals that he reads seven or eight non-religious books a week, including writings by authors like the evolutionists Darwin and T. H. Huxley, of whom [Reb Saunders](#) would not approve. Danny tells Reuven that a nice man in the library recommends books for him to read. Reuven tells Danny he doesn’t know what to make of him, saying, “You look like a Hasid, but you don’t sound like one.”

After a silence, Reuven tells Danny about his love for mathematics. Danny knows little about math, and he is excited that Reuven knows so much about a subject he knows nothing about. In the middle of their conversation, Reuven’s father comes to visit, and both boys are astonished to learn that Mr. Malter is the man who has been recommending books to Danny in the library. Reuven is stunned and a little hurt that his father said nothing to him about this activity, but David Malter explains that he was only trying to respect Danny’s privacy. After recovering from his initial shock, Danny thanks Mr. Malter for all his reading recommendations and promises to visit Reuven on Saturday afternoon, after he is home from the hospital.

When Reuven wakes up on Friday morning, the curtain is no longer drawn around Mr. Savo’s bed, but [Billy](#)’s bed is now empty. Mr. Savo tells Reuven that Billy is undergoing the operation to restore his sight. Reuven prays for Billy and then nervously goes to have his examination with Dr. Snyderman. The doctor examines Reuven and tells him that he thinks the scar tissue will heal correctly. Reuven is very excited to return home, and he says goodbye to Mr. Savo. Before he leaves, he learns that Mr. Savo’s bad eye had to be removed.

## Chapters 5–6

### Summary: Chapter 5

[Reuven](#) and his father take a cab home from the hospital back to their brownstone apartment on a street off of Lee Avenue. When Reuven enters the house, he can smell the delicious chicken soup that [Manya](#), their Russian housekeeper, has prepared for them. Manya greets Reuven warmly.

After lunch, Reuven walks through his apartment as if seeing it for the first time. First, he walks through the hallway, which is lined with pictures of great Zionists from the past century: Theodor Herzl, the founder of [modern](#) Zionism; Chaim Nachman Bialik, a great Hebrew poet and writer; and Chaim Weizmann, a Zionist leader who eventually becomes the first president of Israel. Next, Reuven surveys his own room, where New York Times war maps line the wall alongside pictures of Roosevelt and Einstein. He then enters his father’s study, which is lined from floor to ceiling with bookcases.

Reuven’s father is working at his typewriter so Reuven exits quickly, not wanting to disturb him. In the living room, Reuven looks through the window, watching the sunlight. He remembers that [Danny](#) has promised to visit him the following day. Lying on the lounge chair on the back porch, Reuven thinks about Danny and about all that has changed since the softball game.

### Summary: Chapter 6

That night, after Shabbat dinner, Reuven sits at the kitchen table with his father, who sips tea and answers Reuven’s questions about Danny. Mr. Malter warns Reuven that he will begin his explanation far back in history, with a description of the rise of Hasidism in the eighteenth century. In the seventeenth century, [David Malter](#) explains, Polish Jews were persecuted by Polish peasants and by members of the Greek Orthodox Church. As a result of the anti-Semitism, someone pretending to be a messiah deceived them. Serious Jewish faith in Poland was replaced by a superficial belief in magic and superstition. A leader named the Ba’al Shem Tov—The Kind or Good Master of the Name—emerged into this spiritual void with a new vision of Judaism, and Hasidism was born.

Ba’al Shem Tov studied the Jewish mystical texts of the Kabbalah, and downplayed the study of Jewish legal texts in favor of spirituality and prayer. Every Hasidic community was led by a tzaddik, a righteous person who served as a superhuman link between the community and God. The Hasidim lived shut off from the rest of the world and passed

down the position of tzaddik from father to son. Despite opposition from the Mitnagdim—the intellectual opponents of Hasidism—the movement flourished, and its traditions were passed down through the generations. David Malter points out that the clothes the Hasidim wear today are the same style they wore in Poland hundreds of years ago, and that they hold many unique beliefs, such as the belief that Hasidic leaders need to bear the [suffering](#) of the entire Jewish People. Reuven’s explains that Danny is next in line to inherit his father’s great Hasidic dynasty, with all its traditions and customs.

Mr. Malter says that because Danny is so brilliant, he is not satisfied with Jewish texts alone but voraciously consumes all types of literature. In fact, Danny reminds Mr. Malter of [Solomon](#) Maimon, an eighteenth-century Jew who forsook his faith to pursue secular knowledge. Mr. Malter encourages Reuven to become friends with Danny, then apologizes for his long lecture. Reuven tells his father how different the world looks to him now, as a result of only the last five days. Reuven gets up to go to bed, leaving his father to sip his tea pensively at the kitchen table.

## Chapter 7

### Summary: Chapter 7

[Reuven](#) and his father wake up early on Shabbat morning and walk to synagogue together. They return home, eat lunch, and then Reuven falls asleep thinking about the colors of [Billy](#)’s and [Danny](#)’s [eyes](#).

Three hours later, Reuven wakes to find Danny standing over him. Danny suggests they walk over to his shul so that Reuven can meet [Reb Saunders](#). As they walk, the boys tell each other about their families. Reuven explains he has no siblings because his mother died shortly after he was born. Danny says he has a younger sister and a younger brother. The boys then discover that they were born only two days apart. Danny also explains that his father is a great man who saved the members of his community from persecution by bringing them to America after World War I, a journey made in the face of great adversity. He also explains that Reb Saunders’ older brother vanished, so Reb Saunders inherited his father’s position. Danny notes that because his father is a tzaddik, considered a bridge between his followers and God, his congregation will follow him anywhere.

At Danny’s father’s shul, Reuven and Danny meet a crowd of black-caftaned Hasids who part like the Red Sea when Danny approaches. As the boys enter the brownstone, Danny explains that the shul is on the bottom floor and his family lives on the top two stories.

The synagogue soon fills with Hasidim who have come for the afternoon service. Two men approach Danny and ask him to resolve an argument over a passage of Talmud, which Danny interprets masterfully. Danny’s father comes downstairs, and the room is suddenly quiet. Danny introduces his friend to his father, and Reb Saunders remarks that he is interested in getting to know the son of [David Malter](#).

Following the afternoon service, the men sit down at the table for a ritual Shabbat meal led by Reb Saunders. He concludes the meal with an impassioned talk, using Talmudic quotes from several great rabbis to argue that Jews are obligated to serve God’s will by studying Torah. It is through the study of Torah, Reb Saunders says, that God listens to mankind. Reb Saunders also uses gematriya—numerological manipulations of Hebrew words and phrases—to prove his point.

Following his talk, Reb Saunders asks Danny if he noticed any mistakes or inconsistencies in his argument. Danny replies that his father misattributed one quote. Reb Saunders then asks Danny several detailed follow-up questions, and the two launch into an extended discussion of Talmudic precepts. The assembled crowd of Hasidim is obviously pleased by Danny’s quick and sharp answers. Reuven realizes that the whole speech was one great quiz—Reb Saunders made deliberate errors to see if his son would notice and correct him.

Finally, Reb Saunders asks Danny if there were any additional mistakes. When Danny shakes his head, Reb Saunders quietly chastises him for not listening carefully and turns to Reuven, asking the same question. Reuven, terrified and astonished that he is being asked to correct a great tzaddik, tentatively points out a mistake in Reb Saunders’s gematriya. Reb Saunders and Danny, along with the entire crowd, are delighted at Reuven’s intelligence.

After the evening service, Reb Saunders praises Reuven and approves of his friendship with Danny. Danny walks Reuven part of the way home, and the boys happily discover that they both plan to study at the same Jewish college following high school.

Reuven returns home and finds that his father has been worried about him because he has been out so late. Reuven apologizes and tells his father about his experience at Reb Saunders’s shul, noting that he thought Reb Saunders’s quiz was cruel. David Malter replies that it is important to display knowledge in public, but that he finds Reb Saunders’s

intentional mistakes distasteful. Mr. Malter then says he is proud of his son. He reminds Reuven not to read until his eye heals, and then they go to sleep.

## Chapter 8

### Summary: Chapter 8

When [Reuven](#) returns to school, his friends treat him like a hero, but he feels they are acting immature. After school, he takes a trolley to the public library to meet [Danny](#). He finds Danny on the third floor, where the scholarly journals and pamphlets are located. Reuven does not want to disturb Danny so he sits down at another table and reviews symbolic logic in his head. He is still not permitted to read because his eye has not healed completely.

Reuven joins Danny at his table so that he can hear him read aloud from Danny’s book, *Graetz’s History of the Jews*. Graetz’s harsh denunciation of the Hasidim distresses Danny. Graetz argues that many tzaddiks, especially one whom [Reb Saunders](#) has taught Danny to revere, were con artists who took advantage of their followers. Reuven reminds Danny that he should not necessarily take Graetz’s scholarship to heart. Danny then tells Reuven about the psychology text he has been reading concerning dreams and the unconscious.

Danny says he has been studying German so that he can read Freud, and Reuven is astonished, thinking about the [parallels](#) between Danny and [Solomon Maimon](#). When Reuven tells his father about Danny’s activities, [David Malter](#) marvels at Danny’s curiosity and capacity for learning at such a young age. Later that week, Reuven’s father confesses that he isn’t sure whether it is ethical to give Danny books to read without his father’s knowledge. At the same time, he recognizes that no one will stop Danny from reading and takes solace in the fact that, through frequent discussions, he will help Danny digest the material.

That Shabbat, Reuven goes over to Danny’s brownstone, where he meets Danny’s mother and beautiful sister. Danny and Reuven spend the afternoon studying Talmud with Reb Saunders on the third floor of the house, which bears a striking similarity to Reuven’s own home. At first, the depth and intensity of the discussion between Reb Saunders astounds Reuven, but he soon realizes that, although Reuven lacks the breadth of Danny’s knowledge, he is Danny’s equal in depth.

Reb Saunders and Danny reach a stopping point in their discussion, and Reb Saunders sends his son to get some tea. In Danny’s absence, Reb Saunders reveals to Reuven that he knows about his son’s secret reading at the library and studying with Reuven’s father. Reb Saunders asks Reuven to tell him what Danny has been reading, as he cannot ask his son directly. Reuven is unsure what to reveal, but he tells Reb Saunders everything except that Danny is learning German, wants to study Freud, and has read books on Hasidism. Later that evening, Danny walks Reuven home. Reuven confesses that he told Reb Saunders about Danny’s library visits, and that Reb already knew about them. To Reuven’s surprise, Danny is relieved that his father knows.

Danny explains that his father has raised him in [silence](#). Ever since the age of ten or eleven, his father has talked to him only when they study Talmud together. Reb Saunders says that through silence, Danny will learn to look into his own soul for answers. Danny admits that he finds his father’s methods of parenting perplexing, and Reuven agrees. Back at the Malter house, Reuven tells his father about Reb Saunders’s silence. Although Mr. Malter seems to be familiar with that tradition, he refuses to explain it to Reuven. He does, however, say that Reb Saunders is using Reuven as a buffer through whom he can talk to Danny.

## Chapters 9–10

### Summary: Chapter 9

On Monday morning, [Reuven](#)’s father takes him to [Dr. Snyderman](#)’s office for an eye examination. The doctor pronounces Reuven’s eye perfectly healed and says he can read again. Reuven is excited to get back to his studies and to make up his exams.

That Friday, Reuven calls [Roger Merrit](#), [Billy](#)’s father, to ask him about Billy’s eyesight. Mr. Merrit informs Reuven that Billy’s surgery was unsuccessful. When Reuven asks if he can visit Billy, Mr. Merrit says his company has transferred him to Albany, and Billy has already moved there. When Reuven gets off the phone, his hands are freezing, and he cannot concentrate. He sits on his porch and watches a housefly trapped in a spider web. Reuven blows on the web to free the fly and watches as the spider tumbles from the broken web and disappears from view.

## Summary: Chapter 10

During the first month of summer, Reuven and [Danny](#) spend almost every day together. In the mornings, they study Talmud with their fathers—although Reuven spends three days a week playing ball instead of studying. In the afternoons, they read together in the public library. [David Malter](#) frequently joins them, quietly researching for an article he is writing. On Saturdays, Reuven and Danny discuss Talmud with [Reb Saunders](#), but Danny’s father does not ask Reuven any more questions about Danny’s extracurricular activities. Danny and Reuven spend most evenings together, walking and talking, although occasionally Reuven goes to movies with his other friends, an activity from which Danny is prohibited. Reuven and his father devotedly follow the progress of the war in the newspapers, and Danny begins reading Freud in German.

One week, Reuven’s father travels to Manhattan to do research. Reuven spends the week studying with Danny at the library. During this period, Danny is frustrated with Freud’s German and seems stuck. Then one day, during a Talmud session with his father, Danny realizes that he must study Freud like he studies Talmud, with dictionaries and commentaries. Up to that point, Danny explains to Reuven, he had been reading Freud instead of studying him. He begins to make progress with this new approach.

Meanwhile, Reuven reads a book on symbolic logic. He lends Danny some books to read while Reuven and his father are at their cottage near Peekskill during the month of August. Upon Reuven’s return, the boys meet in the library, and Danny is excited to discuss what he has learned about Freud. The two agree to talk about it in the near future, but as the new school year begins, Reuven becomes too busy to talk with Danny about Freud.

## Chapters 11–12

### Summary: Chapter 11

That school year, [Reuven](#) is elected president of his class. Although he and [Danny](#) still meet regularly on Shabbat afternoons, they never get around to discussing Freud. In the winter, the Germans launch a major offensive; everyone is preoccupied with the events of the war and with keeping track of American casualties. After several exciting rumors that the war is nearing an end, Danny catches the flu and is bedridden for a week.

On a Thursday afternoon in April, Reuven learns that President Roosevelt has passed away. The news devastates Reuven. He had thought of FDR as being immortal, and he compares hearing the news of his death to hearing that God died. He returns home to listen to the radio with his teary-eyed father. Less than a week after Roosevelt’s death, Reuven comes home from school with a high fever and is bedridden for ten days. That May, [Reb Saunders](#) and Reuven’s father also become sick. They are both seriously ill when the world learns that the War in Europe has ended.

At first everyone is joyous following the news of the surrender, but then the terrible reports of the German concentration camps shock and sadden the Jewish community. [David](#) Malter breaks down in tears, and Reuven is overwhelmed by the stories of destruction and devastation. Danny’s father talks wistfully of the Jewish world in Europe and of the brutal persecution Jews have experienced throughout history. The next Shabbat, Danny and Reuven meet with Danny’s father, but they do not study Talmud. Instead, Reb Saunders speaks mournfully about European Jewry and questions how God could let such terrible things happen. Reb Saunders’s conclusion, that everything must be a part of God’s will, is an answer neither Reuven nor his father can accept. David Malter tells Reuven that it is up to Jews in America to preserve Jewish tradition, now that Hitler has destroyed most Jewish culture in Europe.

After Reuven’s final exams that year, his father suffers a heart attack. In the first few frightening days following the episode, Reuven is cared for by [Manya](#), the Malters’ housekeeper, but soon Reb Saunders invites Reuven to live with him while Reuven’s father recovers in the hospital. On the first day of July, Reuven moves into Danny’s room.

### Summary: Chapter 12

The Saunderses treat Reuven like a member of the family. Danny’s mother constantly heaps food on his plate, and Danny’s sister jokingly teases the boys, calling them David and Jonathan, the inseparable biblical pair. [Levi Saunders](#), Danny’s brother, floats around the house, sickly and silent. Most perplexing, Danny’s father broods constantly and occasionally breaks into tears for no apparent reason.

Danny and Reuven spend all their time together. They finally have the discussions they were unable to have during the busy school year. Danny patiently explains Freud to Reuven, and Reuven is astounded by the depth of Danny's knowledge and by the unsettling nature of Freud's theories.

During Reuven's visits to his father in the hospital, Mr. Malter speaks passionately about the need to build a Jewish homeland in Palestine. One morning, Reuven raises the topic of Zionism with Reb Saunders. Reb Saunders flies into a rage and screams that the activities of the secular Zionists are sacrilegious because it is profane to build a Jewish home in Israel before the arrival of the Messiah. Danny tells Reuven that if Reb Saunders knew of David Malter's Zionist beliefs, he would throw Reuven out of the house. Reuven never mentions the topic again in front of Reb Saunders, and Reb Saunders seems to forget the incident.

A few weeks later, while Reuven and Danny are studying in the library together, Danny confesses that one of the main reasons he worries about his brother Levi's health is that he wants Levi to take over his father's Hasidic dynasty so that he himself can study psychology. Danny remarks that the day he breaks this news to his father, he will need to have Reuven nearby for support. Reuven tries to change the subject by coyly mentioning Danny's sister. Danny quietly and peremptorily informs his friend that his sister was promised in marriage at the age of two, and the subject is never discussed between them again.

In August, Reuven and his father again go to their cottage near Peekskill, where his father recovers from his illness. That month, the United States drops atomic bombs on Japan, and the war with Japan ends. That fall, Reuven and Danny enter Hirsch College, and Danny begins to wear glasses.

## Chapter 13

### Summary: Chapter 13

[Danny](#) and [Reuven](#) commence their studies at the Samson Raphael Hirsch Seminary and College, an Orthodox Jewish institution where the students' time is divided between Talmudic and secular education. Danny is placed in the highest Talmud class, taught by [Rav Gershenson](#), and quickly becomes the leader of the small Hasid community at the school. Reuven is placed only one class below Danny. Danny, however, is primarily concerned with his psychological studies, and he is extremely distressed to learn that the psychology department at Hirsch only focuses on experimental psychology, and that the head of the department, [Professor Appleman](#), criticizes Freud's methodologies. Reuven encourages Danny to talk with Professor Appleman about his concerns.

Reuven's father grows increasingly sickly and frail, but continues his passionate involvement in Zionist causes. He exhausts himself by speaking at rallies, raising money for the Jewish National Fund, and teaching adult education classes in Jewish subjects. When Reuven expresses concern about this father's health, Mr. Malter tells his son that he is trying to do something meaningful with his life before he dies, so that he will feel worthy of rest. Such blunt talk of death stings Reuven, and [David Malter](#) reassures his son that he will see a doctor for a checkup. The two continue talking, and eventually Reuven declares that he is firmly committed to becoming a rabbi. David Malter lovingly approves his son's decision, but warns him that American rabbis have a great responsibility to educate newly curious Jews in the aftermath of World War II.

On a Friday afternoon, Reuven goes to the college library and looks through some texts on experimental psychology. He begins to understand Danny's frustration with his studies. However, a few days later, Danny tells him that after an hour-long talk with Professor Appleman, he has come to respect Appleman's opinions. Danny also mentions that Appleman suggested he find someone to help him learn mathematics, so Reuven agrees to tutor Danny.

The Hirsch student body becomes polarized into two starkly opposed factions: those who support the Zionists on one side and those who oppose the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine on the other. Day by day, tension grows between the groups. One night, Reuven's father delivers an influential speech at a Madison Square Garden rally in support of the Zionist cause. The day after the rally, Danny avoids Reuven entirely, and the next day, he secretly tells Reuven that his father has forbidden him to see or speak to Reuven, on account of David Malter's Zionist beliefs. This is extremely painful for Reuven, but when he denounces [Reb Saunders](#) as a fanatic to his father, his father responds, "the fanaticism of men like Reb Saunders kept us alive for two thousand years of exile." Despite his father's words, Reuven remains deeply angry with Reb Saunders and sad that his relationship with Danny appears to be over.

## Chapter 14

### Summary: Chapter 14

For the remainder of their first year at college, [Danny](#) and [Reuven](#) have no contact with each other, and Reuven is furious at [Reb Saunders](#). Meanwhile, Danny’s father has intensified his anti-Zionist activity, and tensions increase between the opposing factions at the college. Reuven’s pain at losing Danny’s friendship leads him to do poorly on his exams. The summer provides little respite: July and August are marked by horrible violent events in Palestine, then [David Malter](#) is forced to cut short the annual vacation in Peekskill to deal with pressing Zionist matters. When the new semester begins in September, Reuven decides that he wants nothing more to do with Danny Saunders, but his resolve is challenged by the fact that he now shares [Rav Gershenson](#)’s Talmud class with Danny.

Rav Gershenson is a gentle, wise old scholar. His Talmud class is rigorous, and, of course, Danny is his star pupil. Danny and Gershenson frequently have lengthy discussions in class that remind Reuven of [the Talmud](#) sessions he and Danny used to have with Reb Saunders. Reuven feels comfortable with the material, and when he is called on in early October, Gershenson is pleased with his response. But for some reason, Gershenson refuses to call on him again. By the middle of October, Reuven is the only student who has not been called more than once and he is perplexed.

In November, the United Nations votes in favor of the Partition Plan to establish a Jewish state, and Reb Saunders accelerates his anti-Zionist activities. His supporters plaster anti-Zionist leaflets all over Hirsch College, and fistfights nearly break out among the students. Reuven almost screams at the anti-Zionist protestors, but stays silent. As the first semester ends, Reuven receives straight A’s—even in Rav Gershenson’s class—and Reuven’s father continues to work tirelessly in support of the UN decision. During Reuven’s winter break, his father collapses at a Jewish National Fund meeting, [suffering](#) a second heart attack. In school, Danny brushes up against Reuven in a gesture of sympathy, but remains unable to speak to him.

David Malter is hospitalized for over a month, and Reuven lives at home alone, feeling incredibly lonely. He deals with the newfound [silence](#) in his apartment by diving ferociously into his Talmudic studies. Although Gershenson has not called on him for several months, he becomes convinced that he will be called upon for one particularly difficult passage that none of the students can understand, so he prepares an especially intense analysis.

As Reuven expected, Rav Gershenson finally calls on him to clarify the difficult passage, and Reuven finds himself dominating the class for several days. Although he has figured out how to apply his father’s critical methods to resolve the text’s internal contradictions, he refrains from employing these controversial methods in front of the class because he thinks that Rav Gershenson would not approve. Instead, he gives an extraordinarily thorough interpretation using [traditional](#) methods like the ones Reb Saunders would use with Danny.

After class, Rav Gershenson detains Reuven and asks him how his father might have resolved the passage’s contradictions. Reuven explains how his father would have reconstructed the text to make sense of it. Rav Gershenson is clearly impressed and praises both Reuven and his father. He says that he is not personally opposed to these controversial techniques but tells Reuven that he must never use them in his class. Afterward, Reuven looks for Rav Gershenson’s name in the school library’s card catalog, but does not find it. He realizes that Gershenson cannot publish, because if he expressed his belief in controversial Talmud scholarship, he would not be allowed to teach at the conservative college. Reuven realizes that his father’s controversial writings are the reason he is not teaching at Hirsch, even though he is a brilliant scholar.

## Chapters 15–16

### Summary: Chapter 15

In March, [David Malter](#) returns from the hospital and [Reuven](#) is elated to have his father home. At school, [Rav Gershenson](#) now calls on him regularly, and Reuven is always ready with expert answers. [Danny](#) continues to ignore Reuven, and Reuven finally comes to accept Danny’s [silence](#).

As fighting in Palestine increases, Reuven and his Zionist classmates intensify their efforts, even volunteering to load supply trucks with military gear to be shipped overseas. In April, David Malter wistfully tells Reuven that he had been selected to be a delegate at the Zionist General Council in Palestine the coming summer. However, following his heart

attack, he no longer will be able to attend. In May, the State of Israel is born, and Reuven and his father weep with joy. The Arabs immediately attack the young nation, and as they invade, David Malter again becomes distracted and unsettled. In June, the students at Hirsch learn that a recent Hirsch graduate was killed during the fighting. The college holds a memorial assembly, and all anti-Zionist activity at Hirsch immediately ceases.

Reuven receives straight A's for his sophomore year, passes a quiet July in sweltering New York, and a calm August with his father at their cottage. In September, he begins his third year at college and chooses philosophy as his major. David Malter gradually resumes his teaching, and then, a few months later, his Zionist activities. That spring, after Israel has secured the upper hand, [Reb Saunders](#)'s anti-Zionist activities appear to end. Soon after, Danny approaches Reuven in the lunchroom, and, with a smile on his face, asks for Reuven's help with math.

### Summary: Chapter 16

After not speaking for more than two years, Reuven and Danny talk about the silence that existed between them. Reuven asks Danny how he can possibly bear the silence between him and his father, and Danny replies that he has learned to live with it. Reuven also expresses his dislike for Reb Saunders and remarks that Danny has lost weight. Danny says that his [eyes](#) have been bothering him. That night, Reuven discusses Reb Saunders's imposed silence with his father. David Malter cryptically remarks, “What a price to pay for a soul,” but refuses to explain any further. Danny and Reuven resume their regular weekday meetings, and also begin having dazzling disputes in class that please Rav Gershenson. Outside of class, Danny reveals that he resigned himself to the experimental methods of psychology and has begun to see the shortcomings in Freud's work. Nevertheless, he still does not want to become an experimental psychologist. Instead, he has decided to go into clinical psychology, which combines experimental hypotheses with therapeutic work with human patients. Also, Danny has applied to doctoral programs in psychology. He informs Reuven that he is waiting until the day of his smicha—his Rabbinic ordination—to break the news to his father.

That June, Reuven attends Danny's sister's wedding and sees Reb Saunders for the first time in more than two years. Since Reuven last saw him, Danny's father appears to have aged a great deal. Due to the crowd of people at the wedding, Reuven is unable to speak to Reb Saunders, but he does not mind the lack of communication with the rabbi, whom he still dislikes intensely. Later that summer, in July, Reuven visits Danny's house and goes up to Reb Saunders's study. Danny's father says he is very happy to see Reuven and asks why he has not been coming over on Saturday afternoons to study Talmud. Reuven answers that he has been studying with his own father, but Reb Saunders asks him if he could come over one Saturday anyway. Though Reuven says he will try, he has no intention of honoring Reb Saunders's request. After Reb Saunders says nothing about Zionism or about the silence he imposed between Danny and Reuven, Reuven finds he likes the old man even less than before.

## Chapter 17

### Summary: Chapter 17

In the fall, [Reuven](#) and [Danny](#) begin their final year of college. One day, Reuven makes what he thinks is an innocent joke about hearing [silence](#). Danny responds that Reuven is being more insightful than he realizes. Danny explains that he has begun to hear silence—he listens to it and hears it talking to him. He also tells Reuven that he cannot start dating because a wife has already been [chosen](#) for him.

Reuven attends [Levi Saunders](#)'s Bar Mitzvah in October. The next day, Levi becomes violently ill and is taken to the hospital. Reuven tells his father about Levi's illness. He also reveals to his father that Danny is panicking about the illness because he has been relying on his brother to take over the dynasty. [David Malter](#) encourages Reuven to speak with Danny about how he plans to break this news to his father. David Malter also enigmatically reveals more about the custom of raising a child in silence, saying it is an old Hasidic tradition that is used to teach children compassion. But again, he refuses to give Reuven any specific information.

The following week, when Danny tells Reuven that he is applying to Harvard, Berkeley, and Columbia for a fellowship in psychology, Reuven urges him to figure out how he will tell his father. Danny tries to brush aside Reuven's concerns, but soon realizes that his father will inevitably see the mail from the schools to which he has applied. He becomes panicked, and Reuven urges Danny to come over and talk to David Malter. That evening, Reuven's father cautions Danny that he must carefully consider all that his decision entails, including breaking off his pre-arranged marriage. He also warns Danny that he must thoughtfully plan exactly what he will say to [Reb Saunders](#) on the day of the confrontation. Before Danny leaves, David Malter asks him if he can, in fact, hear silence. Danny replies that he

can, and asks Reuven’s father if he understands the way his father has raised him. David Malter refuses to explain the matter to either Danny or Reuven, saying it is a private matter between Danny and his father. Danny receives acceptance letters from all three schools he applied to. Though Reb Saunders has obviously seen the return addresses on the envelopes, he has not approached Danny about them. Danny decides to go to Columbia, but he is still too afraid to broach the subject with his father. While discussing his dilemma with Reuven, Danny mentions that Reb Saunders has been asking again why Reuven has not come over for a Shabbat Talmud session. In the months that follow, Reb Saunders, through Danny, continues to drop hints that he would like Reuven to come over some Shabbat afternoon. Because of his dislike for the rabbi, Reuven continues to ignore the requests. Later that spring, Danny tells Reuven that Reb Saunders has made the special request that Reuven come over on the first or second day of Passover. That night, Reuven tells his father that Reb Saunders has been asking to see him. David Malter becomes quite angry with his son, saying he should speak with Reb Saunders if Reb Saunders wishes him to do so. He points out that Reb Saunders wants to use Reuven to talk to Danny. Reuven quickly calls Danny and tells him he will come over the following Sunday, during Passover.

## Chapter 18

### Summary: Chapter 18

On the afternoon of the first day of Passover, [Reuven](#) goes over to the Saunderses’ house, where [Danny](#) greets him. Full of fear, Danny leads Reuven up to his father’s third floor study. Inside, everything is exactly as Reuven remembers it, except [Reb Saunders](#) himself, who looks haggard and stooped with [suffering](#). He greets Reuven and makes some small talk. When Reuven says he plans to be a rabbi after graduation, Reb Saunders stiffens as though in pain. In a soft voice, he remarks that after graduation, Danny and Reuven will go “different ways.” Danny’s mouth falls open in shock: he and Reuven realize that Reb Saunders knows about Danny’s plans not to become a rabbi.

Reb Saunders continues, talking to Danny through Reuven, never once looking at his son. He explains why he raised the Danny the way he did. From a very early age, he saw that Danny had an unbelievably brilliant mind, but possessed little soul. As a young boy, Danny felt no compassion for the suffering of others, no empathy, no sense of mercy. Reb Saunders tells the story of his brother, who forsook Jewish observance in favor of intellectual pursuits and then died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. He explains that only knowledge of the immense suffering in the world can redeem one’s soul.

Reb Saunders reveals that the [silence](#) he imposed upon Danny was a way to teach him compassion, to teach him to feel the suffering of others. His own father raised him that way. Reb Saunders learned through silence to turn inward, to feel his own pain and, in doing so, to suffer for his people. He says that bearing this burden of suffering is a fundamental part of being a tzaddik.

In America, Reb Saunders explains, he could not prevent Danny from his ravenous pursuit of knowledge. He decided to raise Danny in silence, understanding that it would drive Danny away from becoming a rabbi, because he felt it was most important that Danny’s “soul would be the soul of a tzaddik no matter what he did with his life.”

Danny’s father finishes by telling Reuven that he and [David Malter](#) have been a blessing to Reb Saunders. He says he knew Reuven and his father both possessed good, deep souls, and he thanks God for sending both of them to Danny at a time when he was ready to rebel. In conclusion, he announces that he does not care what profession Danny chooses—he knows now that his son has the soul of a tzaddik, and “he will be a tzaddik for the world” no matter what job he holds.

Reb Saunders turns to Danny. Speaking quietly, he asks his son if he will shave off his beard and earlocks for graduate school; Danny nods that he will. He asks if Danny will continue to observe the Ten Commandments; Danny nods again. Stuttering, Reb Saunders then asks Reuven to forgive him for the silence he imposed between him and Danny. His voice breaks, and he turns to Danny, asking his son to forgive him for the pain his style of parenting caused. Then, his shoulders stooped and his face full of grief, he shuffles out of the room. Danny bursts into tears. Reuven, also crying, tries to comfort him. Afterward, the two boys walk for hours in total silence.

When Reuven returns home, he and his father discuss what Reb Saunders said. David Malter says that a father has a right to raise his son however he sees fit, but that he does not like the way Danny was raised. He tells Reuven that he is glad not to be a tzaddik and not to have the burden of raising his son as a tzaddik. A few weeks later, Reb Saunders announces to his congregation that Danny will study psychology, thereby implying that he is transferring

inheritance of the tzaddikate to [Levi](#). Reb Saunders also withdraws his promise to the family of the girl Danny was supposed to marry.

Both Reuven and Danny graduate summa cum laude from Hirsch College. One evening in the fall, Danny, now without beard or earlocks, comes over to the Malter's apartment to say goodbye before he moves to an apartment in Manhattan, near Columbia University. Danny mentions that he and his father now speak regularly to each other. David Malter asks Danny if, in the future, he will raise his son in silence. Danny replies that he will, unless he can find another way to teach his son to have the soul of a tzaddik. Danny promises to return on Saturdays to study Talmud, and Reuven watches as Danny turns and walks away, his metal-capped shoes tapping on the sidewalk.

## Character List

**Reuven Malter** - The narrator of the novel and one of its two protagonists. Reuven is a traditional Orthodox Jew who lives with his father in a brownstone apartment in Brooklyn. He observes the Ten Commandments and attends a Jewish parochial school, or yeshiva, where his father teaches. He is an intelligent, conscientious, and popular boy, talented in softball, math, and Talmud study. *The Chosen* is primarily the story of his long and sometimes complicated friendship with Danny Saunders. As Reuven and Danny struggle toward adulthood during the tumultuous end of World War II and creation of the modern State of Israel, Reuven examines his understanding of religion, culture, and spirituality.

**Danny Saunders** - The novel's other protagonist. Danny is the son of Reb Saunders and heir apparent to his father's Hasidic dynasty. He is a brilliant scholar with a photographic memory and a deep interest in Freud and psychoanalysis. Danny attends his father's Hasidic yeshiva, but he reads secular books in secret at the public library. He is torn between his duty to his father and his own ideas about how to live his life. As the heir to a Hasidic dynasty, he feels an obligation to remain within his cloistered, extremely conservative Jewish community. At the same time, he longs to study intellectual ideas in the outside world.

**David Malter** - A traditional Orthodox Jew and a teacher, scholar, writer, and humanitarian. Mr. Malter raises his son, Reuven, to be an ethical, caring, and intellectually honest young man, well-versed in both Judaic and secular studies. Mr. Malter is notorious within the Hasidic community for his controversial Biblical scholarship and his outspoken support of Zionism. His health deteriorates as the novel progresses due to his tireless hard work on behalf of the Zionist movement. He wants Reuven to become a mathematics professor, but once he realizes his son is dedicated to becoming a rabbi, he fully supports Reuven's decision. Throughout the book, he encourages the intellectual curiosity of both his son and Danny Saunders.

**Reb Isaac Saunders** - The pious and zealous patriarch of a Hasidic dynasty. Reb Saunders's home is also the center of study and prayer for his followers, who join him at his table every Shabbat. Reb Saunders is a wise, learned, and deeply religious sage who raises Danny in silence, speaking to him only when discussing the Talmud. At the end of the novel, he reveals that he raised Danny in silence in order to teach him to have compassion for others. Reb Saunders is fervently committed to his strict and limited Hasidic worldview, and he imposes his views on everyone around him.

**Levi Saunders** - Danny's sickly younger brother. Unlike Danny, Levi is not raised in silence. Danny hopes that Levi will take over his father's dynasty so that Danny can study psychology instead.

**Mr. Galanter** - The gym instructor at Reuven's yeshiva. Mr. Galanter leads Reuven's high school softball team and brings Reuven to the hospital after his eye injury. He speaks to his team using military metaphors, and the boys wonder why he is not fighting in World War II. Mr. Galanter later tells Reuven that he "couldn't make it as a soldier," but he never elaborates.

**Rav Gershenson** - An Orthodox rabbi and Danny and Reuven's teacher in the highest-level Talmud class at the Hirsch Seminary and College. To Reuven's surprise, Rav Gershenson is familiar with David Malter's Talmudic criticism, and he considers Mr. Malter a great scholar.

**Professor Nathan Appleman** - The chairman of the psychology department at the Hirsch Seminary and College. Professor Appleman's class frustrates Danny at first, because Appleman critiques Freud's methods and focuses on experimental psychology. However, after Danny and Appleman discuss their differences, Danny comes to respect Appleman and his methodology.

**Manya** - The loving Russian housekeeper who cooks and cleans the Malter's apartment.

**Tony Savo** - A patient who occupies one of the hospital beds next to Reuven. Tony Savo's speech, which he peppers with boxing terms, reflects his former career as a professional prizefighter. Reuven and Mr. Savo become friends, and he warns Reuven to beware of religious fanatics like Danny. Mr. Savo had to have his right eye surgically removed.

**Billy Merrit** - A young boy who sleeps in the hospital bed on the opposite side of Reuven from Mr. Savo. Billy became blind after a car accident and is in the hospital in preparation for an operation to restore his sight. Reuven later learns that the operation is unsuccessful.

**Roger Merrit** - Billy Merrit's father. He was the driver in the car accident that resulted in his wife's death and Billy's blindness.

**Dr. Snyderman** - The doctor who operates on Reuven's eye at Brooklyn Memorial Hospital.

**Mickey** - A sickly six-year-old boy Reuven meets while in Brooklyn Memorial Hospital. Mickey has lived most of his life in the hospital due to a strange stomach condition.

**Sidney Goldberg** - Reuven's friend and softball teammate. Sidney is a likeable and athletic boy.

**Davey Cantor** - Reuven's timid friend and softball teammate. At Hirsch College, Davey is the student who informs Reuven about FDR's death.

**Dov Shlomowitz** - Danny's burly Hasidic classmate and softball teammate.

**Mrs. Carpenter** - A kindly yet strict nurse at Brooklyn Memorial Hospital.

**Solomon Maimon** - A young Polish Jew who lived in the second half of the eighteenth century. Solomon Maimon was a ravenously intelligent student who studied non-Jewish literature after the Talmud could not satisfy his hunger for knowledge. As a result of his heresy, he died rootless and alone. In Chapter 6, David Malter says that Danny Saunders reminds him of Solomon Maimon.

## Key Facts

**FULL TITLE** · *The Chosen*

**AUTHOR** · Chaim Potok

**TYPE OF WORK** · Novel

**GENRE** · Bildungsroman; Jewish-American Literature

**LANGUAGE** · English

**TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN** · 1960–1967, in Philadelphia, Israel, and Brooklyn

**DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION** · 1967

**PUBLISHER** · Simon and Schuster

**NARRATOR** · *The Chosen* is narrated by Reuven Malter, who reflects several years after the events of the novel on his coming-of-age in Brooklyn.

**POINT OF VIEW** · Reuven Malter, the narrator, speaks in the first-person. He explains events in chronological order, adjusting his perspective over the course of the novel to reflect his increasing maturity. Reuven's narration is not omniscient, as he does not know what others are thinking or feeling. Instead, he reveals Reuven's observations of others' behavior and analyzes other characters' thoughts and emotions.

**STONE** · Reuven is an introspective, highly intellectual young man. As a result, he is rarely quick to judge others, and usually spends time considering multiple perspectives, trying to be as thoughtful and open-minded as possible. These qualities only improve as his relationship with Danny alters the way he looks at the world. It is important to note that for the majority of the novel, Reuven is very quick to judge Reb Saunders and rather harsh in his judgment. Only at the very end of the novel does he learn that he has not been seeing the complexity of Reb Saunders’s character.

**SETTINGS (TIME)** · Early summer, 1944 to fall, 1950

**SETTING (PLACE)** · The neighborhood of Williamsburg in Brooklyn, New York

**PROTAGONISTS** · Reuven Malter and Danny Saunders

**MAJOR CONFLICT** · Danny’s struggle between his family and religious obligations, and his desire to become a psychologist is the novel’s central conflict. Reuven experiences this conflict indirectly—as he helps Danny struggle through it, he struggles to understand it himself.

**RISING ACTION** · After Danny injures Reuven during a softball game, the two boys become friends and teach each other all sort of lessons. After many years, Danny’s father, Reb Saunders, decides to end Danny’s friendship with Reuven. Eventually the boys are permitted to become friends again. Reuven discovers that Danny has applied and been accepted to graduate programs in psychology, even though Reb Saunders expects Danny to take over the leadership of his Hasidic community.

**CLIMAX** · Using Reuven as a buffer through whom he can speak to his son, Reb Saunders confronts Danny. He asks his son about his plans and explains his reasons for treating Danny with silence for so many years.

**FALLING ACTION** · After Reb Saunders issues his approval of Danny’s plans for psychology, Danny and Reuven leave and walk together in silence. Reuven and Danny graduate from Hirsch College, and Danny goes on to graduate school at Columbia University. Reuven says farewell to Danny.

**THEMES** · The importance of parallels to individual growth; silence as a path to the soul; the conflict between tradition and modernity; choosing versus being chosen

**MOTIFS** · Father-son relationships; perception; suffering

**SYMBOLS** · Eyes and eyeglasses; the Talmud

**FORESHADOWING** · Foreshadowing is prevalent throughout *The Chosen*. The warm silence between Reuven and Danny at the hospital foreshadows the positive side of Reb Saunders’ silence. David Malter’s comments to his son about the dangers of being a buffer foreshadow the uncomfortable role Reuven will play as a buffer between Danny and Reb Saunders. Danny’s revelation that his father inherited his role as a tzaddik when his brother (Danny’s uncle) abandoned the family dynasty foreshadows the fact that Reb Saunders will have a complex and perhaps sympathetic response to Danny’s own situation.