### The Chosen



***The Chosen*** is a [novel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novel) written by [Chaim Potok](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaim_Potok). It was first published in 1967. It follows the main character Reuven Malter and his friend Daniel Saunders, as they grow up in the Williamsburg neighborhood in [Brooklyn, New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn%2C_New_York), in the 1940s. The book is the basis for a film of the same name released in 1981.

Reuven "Robert" Malter and Daniel "Danny" Saunders are two 15-year-old Jewish youths living in the same predominant Jewish neighborhood whom have never met nor have anything in common.

Reuven is a smart, popular in his community, Modern Orthodox Jew whose mother died during the early years of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany nearly 10 years earlier. Reuven's bitter, widowed father, David Malter, is a Talmudic scholar, college professor, and a practicing Zionist whom supports the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the hopes that he and his only son will return to someday to live for good and be free from worldwide persecution.

Danny is a Hasidic Jew, and the first-born son of Reb Isaac Saunders, a Rabbinic sage and tzaddik who moved to the USA with his family and congregation from Russia before the 1917 October Revolution. Danny is also highly intelligent with a photographic memory, and interested in psychology (particularly Freudian psychoanalysis) but lacking in aptitude for mathematics. He wants to become a psychologist, but he feels trapped by the Hasidic tradition which forces him into the role as next in line to succeed his father as Rabbi.

Reuven and Danny meet for the first time as rivals in a softball game between their high school teams that turns into a spiritual war. Danny's batting style is such that the ball is sent speeding back up the middle of the field, and so he receives a reputation of trying to kill pitchers. Angered by unsuccessful attempts to hit Reuven's previous pitches, Danny hits a line drive toward Reuven, shattering his eyeglasses and sending him to the hospital with an injured left eye. While recovering from his injuries, Danny visits Reuven and apologizes and the two become best friends over time despite the difference between their different Jewish cultures. Reuven learns that Danny's father, a respected Rabbi, only talks to Danny during religious conversations - Danny is being brought up "in silence". Reuven also learns Danny's deepest secret: he wishes to become a psychologist rather than a rabbi as his father wants. The only people who know about this are Reuven and a man who has been offering Danny advice, revealed to be Reuven's father.

In 1945, following the end of World War II, Reuven comes to experience the pain of silence himself. Though accepted as family, he incurs Reb Saunders's wrath when he speaks favorably of the struggle to establish a secular Jewish nation in Palestine, which Saunders and the Hasidic community vehemently opposes. When Mr. Malter makes a speech at a pro-Israel rally that makes the newspapers, Saunders forbids his son to speak to Reuven, or even mention his name. (Danny breaks this order once, to let Reuven know, but tells him: "I won't go against my father. I won't!").

Afterwards, Reuven experiences anguish, rage, and depression before learning to cope with being alone. Due to stress of working long hours without sleep or food, Reuven's father collapses from a stroke and is hospitalized. Reuven spends his solitary time visiting his father as well as wondering the streets, and even partakes in the smuggling of several crates of weapons off the Brooklyn docks headed for Palestine in support of the Jewish underground ressistance movement there.

In November 1947, Reuven and his invalid father hear a radio news report about the UN assembly voting to establish the Jewish state of Israel in Palestine and Mr. Malter tells Reuven that they are going to return to their homeland (Israel) when he is well enough. A few days later, Danny suddenly shows up at Reuven's front door wating to re-establish their friendship after two years of seperation. Danny explains to Reuven that Reb Saunders has relented and accepted defeat, since the new nation of Israel is "no longer an issue; it's a fact." Reuven finds that Danny has come to terms with the silence imposed by his father, having discovered that silence can be a teacher, and a source of beauty as well as pain. Danny himself waits in fear for the day following high school graduation, when he must tell his father that he does not wish to succeed him. (Reb Saunders already knows this to be true, after Danny receives an acceptance letter from Columbia University.)

A few months later in 1948, Reuven again finds himself a buffer between father and son when the two friends learn Reb Saunders' purpose for raising his son in silence: Reb Saunders had discovered early on that his son's dawning intelligence was far outstripping his sense of compassion for others. He wanted his son to understand the meaning of pain, so he shut him out emotionally. Finding the grown-up Danny indeed has a heart, and cares deeply about other people, Reb Saunders is willing to give his blessing to Danny's dream of studying psychology. "He will be a tzadik for the world," Reb Saunders tells Reuven. Saunders then finally, after many years, truly talks to Danny, asking him to forgive him for the pain he caused, bringing him up as he did. The words finally spoken, he leaves the room, and both boys burst into tears.

In the final scene, set in 1950, a transformed Danny visits Reuven on his way to Columbia University. Danny has shaved off his beard, cut off his Hasidic hairlocks shorn, and his clothing is up to date. Reuven tells Danny that he has definitely decided he wants to be a rabbi, and is going on to study at a yeshiva in Israel with his father whom has almost completely recovered from his stroke. Danny tells Reuven that his younger brother, Levi, will take his place as his father's successor, and his own relationship with Reb Saunders has completely changed. "We talk now," he says quietly. Danny is finally set free, and Reuven and Danny taste profoundly the pain in life, and the consolation of deep friendship which is quietly comming to an end. Danny goes on to study psychology and Reuven leaves for Israel.

* www.imdb.com/title/tt0082175
* en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\_Chosen\_(Potok\_novel