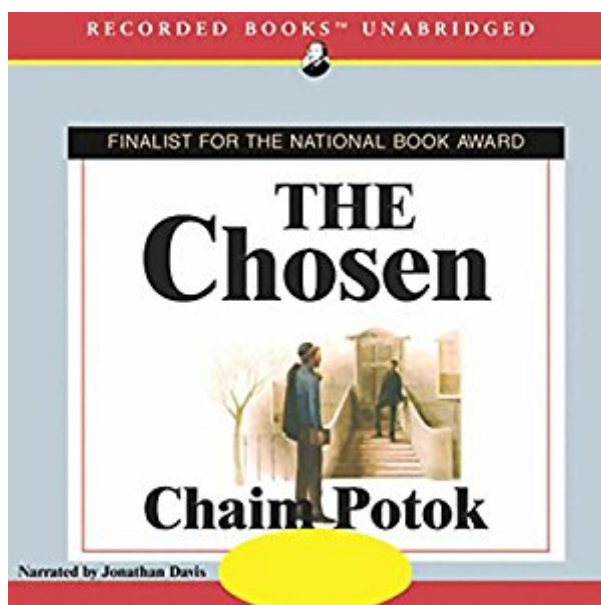


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The Chosen



Synopsis

The Talmud says that a person should do two things for himself: one is to acquire a teacher, the other is to choose a friend. The Greeks say that two friends are like one soul with two bodies. Set in New York toward the end of WW II, this is the story of two teenage Jewish boys, one the son of a Zionist, the other of a Russian Hassidic. They turn to each other in a fine show of male bonding. "A jewel...profound and universal...to be read and reread." (The Wall Street Journal) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I will never be able to choose one book as my all-time favorite book, but *The Chosen* will always be in the top two. I read this when I was thirteen years old and loved it so much that I read every Potok book I could find. (This was before the Internet, so my choices were limited) I have since read much more and I continue to be stunned at his gift for characterization. He writes so many books about Jews in Brooklyn, but his ability to create new voices is strong enough that one never muddles the characters' identities. The beauty of a father's sacrifice for love of his son, and the opportunity to be a fly on the wall as he expresses it after years of misunderstanding, the loveliness of two unlikely friends, the way he draws us in to the world of the Hasids; Potok has given us a gift.

I read this book in my book club. The person who suggested the book had read it as a young adult and it was a favorite book. I thought the book was slow. There were several Jewish words that I was

not familiar with and if this had been available on Kindle I would have ordered an e-copy so I could look up the words. I did learn things about the Jewish faith and people and that is what made the book interesting to me.

This is one of those books I should already have read but hadn't. There are so many of those! I am so glad I finally picked this up. It's short and straight-forward, as books used to be, yet complex and beyond meaningful, as books at their best are. It isn't hard reading, by any means, but it reveals a strong, strong lesson played out through the friendship of two young boys, their complex relationship to one another and within their small world, their fathers' relationship to each another (and their worlds and thought processes), and how they are viewed--and view--their school and community. All of this in such a tiny book - while nowadays books are 800 pages of nada (and I'm just in my 30's). It's not a children's book and, while simple, it's far from simplistic. The "lesson" or "moral" or journey of the two boys is life-altering for them, and really, in its way, was for me too - because of how haunting it is, how direct its story, how the plot is the thing. We're handed the message, easily, on a platter - and that is all that's needed. The levels of complexity are within these peoples' worlds, not wordplay or fancy writing. It's the/their real world - a world full of those who don't fit in where they "should," those trying to find their own ways, being judged by others, and pressured by their own. Some of the themes are universal; the world in which these two live isn't. Their world is specific and small, and has to be for this story; yet, for anyone interested in this particular world--the multifacets of Judaism and its sects at some of the highest, most historic or profound, levels--the book is a history lesson. It isn't a boring history lesson but one told through the eyes of two boys finding their ways through their respective cultures and into the world. Do people [does a person] want to be the part of the world laid out for them and what is involved in leaving it? This question applies to everyone. It's mainly their relationship to each other that reveals the information. Two boys talk and teach one another; people love and resent; one boy is uniquely pressured, the other more free. This is a book about Jewish history, about friendship, about personal choice, and the road to independent thought. The thing that makes a character a brilliant talmudic scholar is the same character trait that makes him an independent thinker who questions the path set out for him and his duty to fulfill it. His duty and his feelings are at odds; he is a young boy and his struggles are moral, intellectual, historic, and human. His conversations with his friend are profound and eye opening, both for the characters and the reader. Conversation and human interaction dominate a book that is predominantly a journey of thought. It's lovely. This approach leads us to feel not only for the characters but for their relationships - the boys' to one another and

each to his and the other's father, as well as the bonds formed with "minor" characters. From the first chapter, I was hooked. It begins with an edge-of-your-seat baseball game. I couldn't be less interested in baseball, but there was something going on here, a nail biter, a bring-us-in chapter that brought us into a world so complicated yet, again, written and shown to us so easily. Piecemeal, in a way - from the game to the hospital, other characters in the ward, then to their outside-the-hospital world that is the rest of the book. It's a must read, truly. It is a must-read for Jews (I am Jewish) but also universal in theme, and an insight into particular elements of Judaism. I'd recommend it to absolutely anyone. It's taken me a long time to write the review since finishing the book, as I didn't even know where to start. But, *The Chosen* is with me in the same way as the day I put it down, and as I hope it will always be. I hope not to forget. I hope no one does.

I was required to read this book for my literature class and thoroughly enjoyed it. With universal themes of friendship (it sounds cheesy, I know), father-son relationships, and growing up, it is a book that will leave me thinking about my own life. The first chapter was a pain to get through, as it seemed as if this book would be about some religious white boys playing baseball throughout the book. In the following chapters though, the plot does get deeper and more interesting as you find out more about the characters. Some of the side characters are lacking in personality, as if they were just put there to fuel some plot, but otherwise the main characters were very likeable. Not really a book that I would go out of my way to recommend to people, but it is a good read for anyone who comes across it.

I read this book only because it was assigned reading for my daughter and I was curious about it. Once I started it I found it hard to put down, and absolutely loved it. It's a coming-of-age story of a friendship between two Jewish boys, set in America during World War II, as well as their relationships with their fathers, who are philosophical opposites. Aside from that it provides a rich window into the differences between the Hasidic and the more sectarian Jews. Knowing nothing at all about the Jewish religion made this fascinating to me, and it's easy to see why the school assigned it. I also found very interesting the struggle for the establishment of a Jewish state and the divisions it caused between the factions in favor of and opposed to it. Highly recommended.

I learned so much reading this book. Plus, the characters were believable and intriguing. My husband and I spent hours discussing the book, the characters, the philosophy, family dynamics and religious aspects. I highly recommend it. It is still timely these many years later. A real classic!

Now I will follow up with THE PROMISE, by same author.

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