

Saunders vs. malters



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The Chosen, by Chaim Potok, is a novel written about two Jewish boys growing up in Brooklyn. Though they lived only five blocks from each other, Danny and Reuven lived very different lives, primarily because of the influence of their fathers. Reb Saunders and Mr. Malters approached raising a child, their Jewish faith, and the world in general from two very different perspectives. Despite the profound differences, both men tried very hard to do what was right for their sons. As fathers, Reb Saunders and Mr. Malters both loved their sons very much, however they demonstrated this love quite differently. Reb raised his son in complete silence, wanting him to learn compassion and to develop a soul to go with his great mind, talking to him only when studying the Torah. To be specific, unless it related to his religious studies, Reb did not talk to or with Danny after the age of 3. On the other hand, Mr. Malters placed a great deal of emphasis on good and frequent communication between himself and his son. Reb wanted Danny to find things out for himself, while Mr. Malters wanted Reuven to be able to come to him with questions. Mr. Malters and Reuven would often talk for hours about various subjects, such as the time Mr. Malters explained the history of Hasidism to him. Mr. Malters was his son's friend and could be depended on for emotional support such as when President Roosevelt died. Danny did not have this close relationship with his father, thus explaining his dependency on Reuven. Even though Reb Saunders and Mr. Malters raised their sons in opposite ways, they did so out of love and deeply felt that they were doing the right thing. Because both Saunders and Malters were Jews, they had the same basic doctrines and worshiped the same God. However, because they belonged to different sects, there were some significant differences as well. Worshiping as a Hasid, Reb Saunders lived a strict and structured life. As the

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tzaddik, he was expected to bear the emotional burden of his people. Mr. Malers, not a rabbi, simply a scholar, was an orthodox Jew and abstained from the formality of Hasidism. While Hasids were required to wear earlocks, tallits and dark clothing at all times, orthodox Jews were not required to wear earlocks or dark clothing and only wore a tallit while praying. The Hasidic community felt it wrong to publish any kind of writing whereas in the orthodox community publishing was commonplace, a freedom Mr. Malers took advantage of. Both placed their son's religious education as a top priority and actively observed all the Jewish holidays, though they did so in accordance with their own particular sect. Despite these differences, both men truly loved God and wanted to serve him in everything they did. Mr. Malers and Reb Saunders held drastically opposite views on the world. Reb believed that he was simply passing through the world on his way to eternal life and that it was unimportant and burdening. In contrast, Mr. Malers thought life was important and needed to be productive. He said, "A man must fill his life with meaning, meaning is not automatically given to life." Mr. Malers felt it necessary to go out and change things in the world, while Reb shrank away from the world, in fear that it would corrode his faith. Believing he had to protect himself from the evil found in the world, Reb said "A man is born into this world with only a tiny spark of goodness in him. The spark is God, it is the soul; the rest is ugliness and evil, a shell. The spark must be guarded like a treasure, it must be nurtured, it must be fanned into flame." Reb Saunders feared the world would take him further from God, whereas Mr. Malers felt you had to take God to the world. Extremely different with very few similarities, Reb Saunders and Mr. Malers approached life from two angles, both truly seeking to do the right thing. They differed as fathers, as

men of religion and men of the world but they were working towards the same goal; to raise their sons well. Both being successful, they raised two strong godly men, men who learned from their fathers and loved them for how they were raised.