

## The Chosen Glossary and Concepts

*Hello, soon-to-be Ninth Graders! We hope you enjoy your summer reading of Chaim Potok's The Chosen. As you read, please refer to this helpful glossary of terms. Rest assured that you will not be quizzed on any of these terms during the first few days of class. However, we'd like you to have this document handy as we talk about The Chosen together in September. We look forward to seeing you in the fall!*

### **Proverbs**

The second book of the third section (called Writings) of the Hebrew Bible; a collection of poetry and sayings that raise questions of ethical behavior and good conduct.

### **3 Hasidic Jews**

A sect of Judaism founded in Poland in the 18th century. Hasidism emphasizes strict adherence to all 613 commandments (mitzvot) found in the Torah, mysticism, prayer, religious zeal, and joy.

### **3 Yiddish**

A High German language written in Hebrew characters that is spoken by Jews and descendants of Jews of central and eastern European origin.

### **3 dynastic**

Rulership that follows the same line of descent

### **3 Ba'al Shem Tov**

Baal Shem Tov, "Master of the Good Name," was the title given to Israel ben Eliezer (1698-1760), founder of the Hasidic movement.

### **3 earlocks**

Curls of hair hanging in front of the ear. Hasidic men and boys wear earlocks to adhere to the commandment not to shave the corners of one's head.

### **4 yeshiva**

An Orthodox school

### **6 assimilationist**

A person who advocates a policy of absorbing qualities and/or practices of differing racial or cultural groups.

### **6 Talmud**

Hebrew for "study," the Talmud is one of the central works of the Jewish people. It is the record of rabbinic teachings that spans a period of about six hundred years, beginning in the first century C.E. and continuing through the sixth and seventh centuries C.E. The rabbinic teachings of the Talmud explain in great detail how the commandments of the Torah are to be carried out. The Talmud is made up of two separate works: the Mishnah, primarily a compilation of Jewish laws, and the the Gemara, the rabbinic commentaries and discussion of the Mishnah.

### **7 Semitic**

Jewish; in this context and in general use, the term is a derogatory one. At various points, this term may have been used in a non-pejorative way to refer to Jewish people, but "Semitic" is *not* a neutral synonym for "Jewish."

### **8 holy war**

A war or violent campaign waged often by religious extremists for what is considered to be a holy purpose.

**9 tzitzit**

The fringes or tassels worn on traditional or ceremonial garments by Jewish males as reminders of the commandments of Deuteronomy 22:12 and Numbers 15:37–41.

**9 the Biblical commandment *And ye shall look upon it***

“And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of The Lord, and do them” (Numbers 15:39).

**13 Elijah the prophet**

Hebrew prophet of the 9th century B.C. who championed worship of a single God.

**15 momzer**

A child of a union not sanctioned by Biblical law as interpreted by the rabbis; a child born out of wedlock.

**18 apikorsim**

“The word had meant, originally, a Jew educated in Judaism who denied basic tenets of his faith, like the existence of God, the revelation, the resurrection of the dead. To people like Reb Saunders, it also meant any educated Jew who might be reading, say, Darwin, and who was not wearing side curls and fringes outside his trousers” (23); “a sinner, a hypocrite” (24)

**20 Mincha**

The daily Jewish afternoon service.

**20 shamashim**

Clerks of a religious institution who take care of the grounds and carry out other tasks; in this context, bodyguards.

**21 shleppers**

Yiddish for people who move slowly and tediously

**27 Purple Heart**

A U.S. military decoration awarded to any member of the armed forces wounded or killed in action.

**43 “a prelim man”**

A boxer who fights only in the preliminary matches of a boxing event. An up-and-coming boxer.

**47 Abba**

Hebrew for father.

**51 tefillin**

Two small square leather boxes containing slips inscribed with scriptural passages; traditionally worn on the left arm and on the head by observant Jewish males during morning weekday prayers and especially adherents of Orthodox Judaism during morning weekday prayers.

**54 Caen and Carentan**

French city and French town

**55 D Day**

June 6, 1944, on which Allied forces began the invasion of France in World War II

**68 blatt**

Yiddish for page (literally “leaf”)

**68 Keddushin**

In the Talmud, a section of the Mishnah

**68 Maimonidean**

Referring to Maimonides: Moses ben Maimon, Jewish philosopher, jurist, and physician 1135–1204

**69     Ivanhoe**

An historical novel by Sir Walter Scott, first published in 1820

**69     Freud**

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology through dialogue between a patient and a psychoanalyst.

**80     Darwin**

Charles Darwin (1809–1882), English naturalist and writer, best known as the originator of the theory of biological evolution by natural selection

**80     Huxley**

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), English writer, novelist, philosopher.

**83     symbolic logic**

A science of developing and representing logical principles by means of a formalized system consisting of primitive symbols, combinations of these symbols, axioms, and rules of inference

**83     Russell and Whitehead, *Principia Mathematica***

First published in 1910, a three-volume work on the foundations of mathematics written by Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell.

**87     Shabbat**

Hebrew for Sabbath, the day of rest. (In Jewish practice, Friday evening and Saturday.)

**93     Torah**

The the body of wisdom and law contained in Jewish Scripture and other sacred literature and oral tradition; The Five Books of Moses.

**93     The Zohar**

The foundational work in the literature of Jewish mystical thought known as Kabbalah.

**96     Herzl**

Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), an Austro-Hungarian journalist, playwright, political activist, and writer who was one of the fathers of modern political Zionism. Herzl formed the World Zionist Organization and promoted Jewish migration to Palestine in an effort to form a Jewish state. Though he died long before its establishment, he is generally considered a father of the State of Israel, formed in 1948.

**96     Bialik**

Hayim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934), Jewish poet who wrote primarily in Hebrew but also in Yiddish. Bialik was one of the pioneers of modern Hebrew poetry and ultimately came to be recognized as Israel's national poet.

**96     Chaim Weizmann**

(1874-1952) Zionist leader and Israeli statesman who served as President of the Zionist Organization and later as the first President of Israel.

**97     Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

(1882-1945) an American statesman and political leader who served as the 32nd President of the United States from 1933 until his death in 1945. A Democrat, he won a record four presidential elections and emerged as a central figure in world events during the mid-20th century.

**97 Albert Einstein**

(1879-1955) German-born theoretical physicist. He developed the theory of relativity, one of the two pillars of modern physics (alongside quantum mechanics). Einstein's work is also known for its influence on the philosophy of science.

**101 Utopia**

A place of ideal perfection especially in laws, government, and social conditions.

**103 Pilpul**

“Empty nonsensical arguments over minute points of the Talmud that have no relation at all to the world” (103).

**105 Kabbalah**

“Books of Jewish mysticism” whose study had been “forbidden” (105).

**107 Besht**

Nickname for the Ba'al Shem Tov

**107 Mitnagdim**

Hebrew for “opponents.” Used in context as opponents of Hasidism.

**108 tzaddikim**

Great, righteous leaders of Hasidim; “each Hasidic community ha[s] its own tzaddik” (108).

**109 Aristotle**

(384-322) Ancient Greek philosopher and scientist whose writings cover numerous subjects, from biology to poetry to ethics to government, and constitute the first comprehensive system of Western philosophy.

**109 Maimonides**

See note for page 68.

**109 Spinoza**

(1632-1677) Baruch Spinoza was a Dutch philosopher of Sephardic/Portuguese origin. By laying the groundwork for the 18th-century Enlightenment and modern biblical criticism, including modern conceptions of the self and the universe, he came to be considered one of the great rationalists of 17th-century philosophy.

**109 Leibniz**

(1646-1716) Gottfried Wilhelm (von) Leibniz was a German polymath and philosopher who occupies a prominent place in the history of mathematics and the history of philosophy, having developed differential and integral calculus independently of Isaac Newton.

**109 Hume**

(1711-1776) David Hume was a Scottish philosopher, historian, economist and essayist, best known for his highly influential system of radical philosophical empiricism, skepticism, and naturalism.

**109 Kant**

(1724-1804) Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher who is considered a central figure in modern philosophy. He argued that the human mind creates the structure of human experience, that reason is the source of morality, that aesthetics arises from a faculty of disinterested judgment, that space and time are forms of our sensibility, and that the world as it is "in-itself" is independent of our concepts of it.

**112 shitibblach**

“House of worship” for an individual Hasidic sect (112)

**115 shul**

Yiddish for “synagogue.”

**115 caftan**

A usually cotton or silk ankle-length garment with long sleeves

**122 The Book of Psalms**

A collection of sacred poems forming a book of canonical Jewish and Christian Scripture

**122 catechism**

Oral instruction; a summary of religious doctrine often in the form of questions and answers; a set of formal questions put as a test

**123 tractate**

Treatise (a written work dealing formally and specifically with a subject)

**123 the Me’iri, the Rashba, and the Maharsha**

Rabbis and Talmudic commentators (Menachem ben Solomon Meiri (1249-1306), Shlomo ben Aderet (1235-1310), and Shmuel Eidels (1555-1631)).

**127 Kaddish**

A Jewish prayer recited in the daily ritual of the synagogue and by mourners at public services after the death of a close relative.

**128 Atah Echad**

A Hebrew prayer whose title translates to “You are One.”

**130 Rabban Gamliel**

Jewish leader and sage in the 1st century A.D.

**132 Rabbi Meir**

Jewish leader and sage in the 1st century A.D.

**132 Esav**

Esau, figure in Genesis who sells his birthright to his brother Jacob. Also known as Edom, the progenitor of the Edomites who were established to the south of the Israelites. They were an enemy nation of Israel. The minor prophets, such as Obadiah, claim that the Edomites participated in the destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.

**132 Amalek**

Refers to a grandson of Esau, the descendant nation of Amalekites, and the territories of Amalek which they inhabited. As a people, the Amalekites are identified as a recurrent enemy of the Israelites.

**132 Rabbi Yochanan son of Zakkai**

(30-90 C.E.) An important Jewish sage in the era of the Second Temple, and a primary contributor to the core text of Rabbinical Judaism, the Mishnah.

**133 gematriya**

“Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is also a number, so that every Hebrew word also has a numerical value” (133).

**133 chai**

Hebrew for “life.”

**133 Rabbi Joshua son of Levi**

A scholar of the Talmud, who lived in the Land of Israel in the first half of the third century.

**133 nozuf**

Hebrew, "a reprimand." In use, "reprimanded by God," "a person whom the Master of the Universe hates" (133).

**136 Pirkei Avos**

"A collection of Rabbinic maxims, and a chapter of it is studied by many Jews every Shabbat between Passover and the Jewish New Year" (136).

**137 Sanhedrin, Yoma, Gittin, Nedarim**

Portions of the Talmud

**137 b'kiut**

"Straightforward knowledge and simple explanations of the Talmudic passages and commentaries" (138).

**175 Sanhedrin**

Portion of the Talmud

**175 Avodah Zarah**

Portion of the Talmud

**179 Keddushin**

Portion of the Talmud

**179 Baba Bathra**

Portion of the Talmud

**196 Mr. Eden**

(1897-1977) Anthony Eden served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1955 until 1957.

**197 Ben Gurion**

(1886-1973) David Ben-Gurion was the primary founder of the State of Israel and the first Prime Minister of Israel.

**197 goyim**

Yiddish, slang for people who are not Jewish.

**210 dogmatic**

Characterized by or given to the expression of opinions very strongly or positively as if they were facts.

**210 induction**

Inference of a generalized conclusion from particular instances

**210 intersubjective**

Accessible to or capable of being established for two or more subjects

**213 Zionist**

Member of / believer in an international movement originally for the establishment of a Jewish national or religious community in Palestine and later for the support of modern Israel

**216 Haganah**

Military defense organization for the Jewish community in Palestine, 1920-1948.

**216 Irgun**

Jewish right-wing underground movement in Palestine, founded in 1931. Policies called for the use of force, if necessary, to establish a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan.

**216 Moses**

A Hebrew prophet who led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery and at Mt. Sinai delivered the Law establishing God's covenant with them

**229 Ahad Ha'am**

(1856-1927) Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg, primarily known by his Hebrew name and pen name, Ahad Ha'am, was a Hebrew essayist, and one of the foremost pre-state Zionist thinkers.

**238 Ramban**

(1194-1270) Rabbi Moses ben Nahman, commonly known as Nachmanides, and also referred to by the acronym Ramban, was a leading medieval Jewish scholar, Sephardic rabbi, philosopher, physician, kabbalist, and biblical commentator.

**240 The Partition Plan**

A proposal by the United Nations, which recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish states and a Special International Regime for the city of Jerusalem.

**244 The Palestinian Talmud, The Babylonian Talmud**

The word "Talmud", when used without qualification, usually refers to the Babylonian Talmud, compiled in the 4th century CE in Galilee. The Palestinian Talmud is a collection of Rabbinic notes on the Mishnah.

**247 The Mishnah**

"The written text of rabbinic oral law; in form and content it is for the most part terse and clipped, a vast collection of laws upon which are based almost all the rabbinic discussions which, together with the Mishnah, compose the Talmud" (247).

**247 Rashi and the Tosafists**

(1040-1105) Shlomo Yitzchaki, generally known by the acronym Rashi, was a medieval French rabbi and author of a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud.

**247 The Tosafists**

Tosafists were medieval rabbis from France and Germany who created critical and explanatory glosses (questions, notes, interpretations, rulings and sources) on the Talmud. These were collectively called Tosafot ("additions"), because they were additions on the commentary of Rashi.

**251 inyan**

A passage of Talmud, literally in Hebrew "matter, business, thing"

**256 Tiberias, Haifa, and Safed**

Cities in Palestine

**260 kosher**

sanctioned by Jewish law; proper, acceptable

**264 Smicha**

"Hebrew term for rabbinic ordination" (264)

**276 ought statements**

The is-ought problem, as articulated by Scottish philosopher and historian David Hume (1711–76), states that many writers make claims about what *ought* to be on the basis of statements about what *is*. Hume found that there seems to be a significant difference between positive statements (about what *is*) and prescriptive or normative statements (about what *ought* to be), and that it is not obvious how one can coherently move from descriptive statements to prescriptive ones. The is-ought problem is also known as Hume's law, or Hume's guillotine.

**277 Passover**

A Jewish holiday that commemorates the Hebrews' liberation from slavery in Egypt

**284 Maskil**

Individuals and ideas of the Haskalah movement, the European Jewish enlightenment between the 1770s and 1880s, who sought to reeducate Jews so that they could fit into modern society; they established schools and published works of cultural importance. It was based upon the honorific *maskil*, meaning "scholar" or "enlightened man."

**290 *summa cum laude***

Latin, "with highest distinction"

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