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TRADITIONAL VALUES AND PRAGMATIC CHANGE AS SEEN IN THE NOVELS OF CHAIM POTOK

I. Some introductory ideas and such:

A. The author of the novels...a few brief notes

B. The interest of TVT in such things

C. A word about novels...and novel reading:

1. The value of the novel:

- a. offers an alter ego for the writer
- b. provides a field of empathy for the reader
- c. affords a protective idealizing under a sympathetic umbrella
- d. enables the exploration of sociological issues on theoretical lines...and so avoids the catastrophe of blunders and error planned or otherwise.

2. Novel qualities:

- a. relation of a saga, not the telling of an experience in abstract.
- b. conveyance of life setting even if the novelar setting is surreal.
- c. portrayal of characters who are culturally believable, with whom the reader may identify and whom the reader may recognize objectively the next day on the street!

These qualities (not a totality of the subject) account for greatness and explain mediocrity with regard to the novels and the literature.

II. The Potok novels

A. A brief sketch of each:

1. The Chosen (1967)...the early years of two young men as they mature and form life direction....

2. The Promise (1969)...the continuing account of our earlier heroes, now on the threshold of adult life, and the steps that lead them into somewhat non-traditional roles.

(Both of these books depict the struggles within the culture of Jewish community life as the older ideas clash with the newer.)

3. Asher Lev (My Name Is) (1972)...the account of a gifted Hasidic youth whose ability in art moves him away from the community spectrum.

(The struggle in this book is the adaptation of one's skills and abilities in a foreign cultural medium.)