'I have no choice,' he said again. 'It's like a dynasty. If the son doesn't take the father's place, the dynasty falls apart. The people expect me to become their rabbi. My family has been their rabbi for six generations now. I can't just walk out on them. I'm – I'm a little trapped. I'll work it out, though – somehow.' But he didn't sound as if he thought he would be able to work it out. He sounded very sad.

We sat quietly a while longer, looking out the window at the people below. There were only a few minutes of sunlight left, and I found myself wondering why my father hadn't yet come to see me. Danny turned away from the window and began to play with his earlock again, caressing it and twirling it around his index finger. Then he shook his head and put his hands in his pockets. He sat back on the bench and looked at me. 'It's funny,' he said. 'It's really funny. I have to be a rabbi and don't want to be one. You don't have to be a rabbi and do want to be one. It's a crazy world.'

I didn't say anything. I had a sudden vivid picture of Mr Savo sitting in his bed, saying, 'Crazy world. Cockeyed.' I wondered how he was feeling and if the curtain was still around his bed.

'What kind of mathematics are you interested in?' Danny asked.

'I'm really interested in logic. Mathematical logic.'

He looked puzzled.

'Some people call it symbolic logic,' I said.

'I never even heard of it,' he confessed.

'It's really very new. A lot of it began with Russell and Whitehead and a book they wrote called *Principia Mathematica*.'

'Bertrand Russell?'

'That's right.'

'I didn't know he was a mathematician.'

'Oh, sure. He's a great mathematician. And a logician, too.'

'I'm very bad at mathematics. What's it all about? Mathematical logic, I mean.'

'Well, they try to deduce all of mathematics from simple logical principles and show that mathematics is really based on logic. It's pretty complicated stuff. But I enjoy it.'

'You have a course in *that* in your school?'

'No. You're not the only person who reads a lot.'

For a moment he looked at me in astonishment. Then he laughed.

'I don't read seven or eight books a week, though, like you,' I said. 'Only about three or four.'

He laughed again. Then he got to his feet and stood facing me. His eyes were bright and alive with excitement.

'I never even heard of symbolic logic,' he said. 'It sounds fascinating. And you want to be a rabbi? How do they do it? I mean, how can you deduce arithmetic from logic? I don't see –' He stopped and looked at me. 'What's the matter?' he asked.

'There's my father,' I said, and got quickly to my feet.

My father had come out of the elevator at the other end of the halll and was walking toward the eye ward. I thought I would have to call out to attract his attention, but a few steps short of the entrance to the ward he saw us. If he felt any surprise at seeing me with Danny I didn't notice it. His face did not change radically. It went from curiosity to bewildered astonishment. He looked for a moment as though he wanted to run away. I could see he was nervous and agitated, but I didn't have time to think about it, because my father was standing there, looking at the two of us. He was wearing his dark gray, double-breasted suit and his gray hat. He was a good deal shorter than Danny and a little shorter than I, and his face still looked pale and worn. He seemed out of breath, and he was carrying a handkerchief in his right hand.

'I am late,' he said. 'I was afraid they would not let me in.' His voice was hoarse and raspy. 'There was a faculty meeting. How are you, Reuven?'

'I'm fine, abba.'

'Should you be out here in the hall now?'

'It's all right, abba. The man next to me became sick suddenly, and we didn't want to disturb him. Abba, I want you to meet Danny Saunders.'

I could see a faint smile begin to play around the corners of my father's lips. He nodded at Danny.

'This is my father, Danny.'

Danny didn't say anything. He just stood there, staring at my

father. I saw my father watching him from behind his steel-rimmed spectacles, the smile playing around the corners of his lips.

'I didn't –' Danny began, then stopped.

There was a long moment of silence, during which Danny and my father stood looking at each other and I stared at the two of them and nothing was said.

It was my father who finally broke the silence. He did it gently and with quiet warmth. He said, 'I see you play ball as well as you read books, Danny. I hope you are not as violent with a book as you are with a baseball.'

Now it was my turn to be astonished. 'You know Danny?'

'In a way,' my father said, smiling broadly.

'I – I had no idea,' Danny stammered.

'And how could you have?' My father asked. 'I never told you my name.'

'You knew me all the time?'

'Only after the second week. I asked the librarian. You applied for membership once, but did not take out a card.'

'I was afraid to.'

'I understood as much,' my father said.

I suddenly realized it was my father who all along had been suggesting books for Danny to read. My father was the man Danny had been meeting in the library!

'But you never told me!' I said loudly.

My father looked at me. 'What did I never tell you?'

'You never told me you met Danny in the library! You never told me you were giving him books to read!'

My father looked from me to Danny, then back to me. 'Ah,' he said, smiling. 'I see you know about Danny and the library.'

'I told him,' Danny said. He had begun to relax a bit, and the look of surprise was gone from his face now.

'And why should I tell you?' my father asked. 'A boy asks me for books to read. What is there to tell?'

'But all this week, even after the accident, you never said a word!'

'I did not think it was for me to tell,' my father said quietly. 'A boy comes into the library, climbs to the third floor, the room

with old journals, looks carefully around, finds a table behind a bookcase where almost no one can see him, and sits down to read. Some days I am there, and he comes over to me, apologizes for interrupting me in my work and asks me if I can recommend a book for him to read. He does not know me, and I do not know him. I ask him if he is interested in literature or science, and he tells me he is interested in anything that is worthwhile. I suggest a book, and two hours later he returns, thanks me, and tells me he has finished reading it, is there anything else I can recommend. I am a little astonished, and we sit for a while and discuss the book, and I see he has not only read it and understood it, but has memorized it. So I give him another book to read, one that is a little bit more difficult, and the same thing occurs. He finishes it completely, returns to me, and we sit and discuss it. Once I ask him his name, but I see he becomes very nervous, and I go to another topic quickly. Then I ask the librarian, and I understand everything because I have already heard of Reb Saunders' son from other people. He is very interested in psychology, he tells me. So I recommend more books. It is now almost two months that I have been making such recommendations. Isn't that so, Danny? Do you really think, Reuven, I should have told you? It was for Danny to tell if he wished, not for me.'

My father coughed a little and wiped his lips with the handkerchief. The three of us stood there for a moment, not saying anything. Danny had his hands in his pockets and was looking down at the floor. I was still trying to get over my surprise.

'I'm very grateful to you, Mr Malter,' Danny said. 'For everything.'

'There is nothing to be grateful for, Danny,' my father told him. 'You asked me for books and I made recommendations. Soon you will be able to read on your own and not need anyone to make recommendations. If you continue to come to the library I will show you how to use a bibliography.'

'I'll come,' Danny said. 'Of course I'll come.'

'I am happy to hear that,' my father told him, smiling.

'I –I think I'd better go now. It's very late. I hope the examination goes all right tomorrow, Reuven.'

I nodded.

'I'll come over to your house Saturday afternoon. Where do you live?'

I told him.

'Maybe we can go out for a walk,' he suggested.

'I'd like that,' I said eagerly.

'I'll see you, then, on Saturday. Goodbye, Mr Malter.'

'Goodbye, Danny.'

He went slowly up the hall. We watched him stop at the elevator and wait. Then the elevator came, and he was gone.

My father coughed into his handkerchief. 'I am very tired,' he said. 'I had to rush to get here. Faculty meetings always take too long. When you are a professor in a university, you must persuade your colleagues not to have long faculty meetings. I must sit down.'

We sat down on the bench near the window. It was almost dark outside, and I could barely make out the people on the sidewalk below.

'So,' my father said, 'how are you feeling?'

'I'm all right, abba. I'm a little bored.'

'Tomorrow you will come home. Dr Snydman will examine you at ten o'clock, and I will come to pick you up at one. If he could examine you earlier, I would pick you up earlier. But he has an operation in the early morning, and I must teach a class at eleven. So I will be here at one.'

'Abba, I just can't get over that you've known Danny for so long. I can't get over him being the son of Reb Saunders.'

'Danny cannot get over it, either,' my father said quietly.

'I don't –'

My father shook his head and waved my unasked question away with his hand. He coughed again and took a deep breath. We sat for a while in silence. Billy's father came out of the ward. He walked slowly and heavily. I saw him go into the elevator.

My father took another deep breath and got to his feet.

'Reuven, I must go home and go to bed. I am very tired. I was up almost all last night finishing the article, and now rushing here to see you after the faculty meeting.... Too much. Too much. Come with me to the elevator.'

We walked up the hall and stood in front of the double doors of the elevator.

'We will talk over the Shabbat table,' my father said. He had almost no voice left. 'It has been some day for you.'

'Yes, abba.'

The elevator came, and the doors opened. There were people inside. My father went in, turned, and faced me. 'My two baseball players,' he said, and smiled. The doors closed on his smile.

I went back up the hall to the eye ward. I was feeling very tired, and I kept seeing and hearing Danny and my father talking about what had been going on between them in the library. When I got to my bed, I saw that not only was the curtain still around Mr Savo's bed, there was now a curtain around Billy's bed, too.

I went up to the glass-enclosed section under the blue light where two nurses were sitting and asked what had happened to Billy.

'He's asleep,' one of the nurses said.

'Is he all right?'

'Of course. He is getting a good night's sleep.'

'You should be in bed now, young man,' the other nurse said.

I went back up the aisle and got into my bed.

The ward was quiet. After a while I fell asleep.

The windows were bright with sunlight. I lay in the bed a while, staring at the windows. Then I remembered it was Friday, and I sat up quickly. I heard someone say, 'Good to see you again, Bobby boy. How've you been?' and I turned, and there was Mr Savo, lying on his pillow, the curtains no longer drawn around his bed. His long, stubbed face looked pale, and he wore a thick bandage over his right eye in place of the black patch. But he was grinning at me broadly, and I saw him wink his left eye.

'Had a bad night, kid. Comes from playing ball. Never could see anything in chasing a ball around.'

'It's wonderful to see you again, Mr Savo!'

'Yeah, kid. Been quite a trip. Gave the Doc a real scare.'

'You had Billy and me worried, too, Mr Savo.' I turned to look at Billy. I saw the curtains had been pulled back from his bed. Billy was gone.

'Took him out about two hours ago, kid. Big day for him. Good little kid. Lots of guts. Got to give him that three-rounder one day.'

I stared at Billy's empty bed.

'I got to take it real easy, kid. Can't do too much talking. Have the old ring post down on my back.'

He closed his eye and lay still.

When I prayed that morning it was all for Billy, every word. I kept seeing his face and vacant eyes. I didn't eat much breakfast. Soon it was ten o'clock, and Mrs Carpenter came to get me. Mr Savo lay very still in his bed, his eye closed.

The examination room was down the hall, a few doors away from the elevator. Its walls and ceiling were white, its floor was covered with squares of light and dark brown tile. There was a black leather chair over against one of the walls and instrument cabinets everywhere. A white examination table stood to the left of the chair. Attached to the floor at the right of the chair was a large, stubby-looking metal rod with a horizontal metal arm. Some kind of optical instrument formed part of the end of this metal arm.

Dr Snydman was in the room, waiting for me. He looked tired. He smiled but didn't say anything. Mrs Carpenter motioned me onto the examination table. Dr Snydham came over and began to take the bandage off. I looked up at him out of my right eye. His hands worked very fast, and I could see the hairs on his fingers.

'Now, son, listen to me,' Dr Snydman said. 'Your eye has been closed inside the bandage all the time. When the last bandage comes off, you may open it. We'll dim the light in here, so it won't hurt you.'

I was nervous, and I could feel myself sweating. 'Yes, sir,' I said.

Mrs Carpenter turned off some of the lights, and I felt the bandage come off the eye. I felt it before I knew it, because suddenly the eye was cold from the air.

'Now, open your eye slowly until you become accustomed to the light,' Dr Snydman said.

I did as he told me, and in a little while I was able to keep it open without difficulty. I could see now through both my eyes.

'We can have the lights now, nurse,' Dr Snydman said.

I blinked as the new lights came on.

'Now we'll have a look,' Dr Snydman said, and bent down and peered at the eye through an instrument. After a while, he told me to close the eye, and he pressed down on the lid with one of his fingers.

'Does that hurt?' he asked.

'No, sir.'

'Let's have you on that chair now,' he said.

I sat on the chair, and he looked at the eye through the instrument attached to the metal rod. Finally, he straightened, swung the instrument back, and gave me a tired smile.

'Nurse, this young man can go home. I want to see him in my office in ten days.'

'Yes, Doctor,' Mrs Carpenter said.

Dr Snydman looked at me. 'Your father tells me you know about the scar tissue.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well, I think you're going to be all right. I'm not absolutely certain, you understand, so I want to see you again in my office. But I think you'll be fine.'

I was so happy I felt myself begin to cry.

'You're a very lucky young man. Go home, and for heaven's sake keep your head away from baseballs.'

'Yes, sir. Thank you *very* much.'

'You're quite welcome.'

Outside in the hall, Mrs Carpenter said, 'We'll call your father right away. Isn't that wonderful news?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

'You're lucky, you know. Dr Snydman is a great surgeon.'

'I'm very grateful to him,' I said. 'Ma'am?'

'Yes?'

'Is Billy's operation over yet?'

Mrs Carpenter looked at me. 'Why, yes, of course. It was Dr Snydman who operated.'

'Is he all right?'

'We hope for the best, young man. We always hope for the best. Come. We must call your father and get you ready to leave.'

Mr Savo was waiting for me. 'How'd it go, boy?' he asked.

'Dr Snydman says he thinks I'll be fine. I'm going home.'

Mr Savo grinned. 'That's the way to do it, boy! Can't make a career out of lying around in hospitals.'

'Are you going home soon, Mr Savo?'

'Sure, kid. Maybe in a couple of days or so. If I don't go catching any more balls from little Mickey.'

'Dr Snydman operated on Billy,' I said.

'Figured as much. Good man, the Doc. Got a big heart.'

'I hope Billy's all right.'

'He'll be okay, kid. Important thing is you're getting out.'

An orderly came over with my clothes, and I began to dress. I was very nervous, and my knees felt weak. After a while, I stood there, wearing the same clothes I had worn on Sunday for the ball game. It's been some week, I thought.

I sat on my bed, talking with Mr Savo, and couldn't eat any of my lunch. I was nervous and impatient for my father to come. Mr Savo told me to relax, I was spoiling his lunch. I sat there and waited. Finally, I saw my father coming quickly up the aisle, and I jumped to my feet. His face was beaming, and his eyes were misty. He kissed me on the forehead.

'So,' he said. 'The baseball player is ready to come home.'

'Did you hear what Dr Snydman said, abba?'

'The nurse told me on the telephone. Thank God!'

'Can we go home now, abba?'

'Of course. We will go home and have a wonderful Shabbat. I will take your things from the table.'

I looked at Mr Savo, who was sitting up on his bed, grinning at us. 'It was wonderful meeting you, Mr Savo.'

'Likewise, kid. Keep the old beanbag away from those baseballs.'

'I hope your eye gets better soon.'

'The eye's out, kid. They had to take it out. It was some clop. Didn't want the little blind kid to know, so kept it quiet.'

'I'm awfully sorry to hear that, Mr Savo.'

'Sure, kid. Sure. That's the breaks. Should've been a priest. Lousy racket, boxing. Glad to be out of it. Would've been in the war if that guy hadn't clopped me in the head like that years back. Busted up something inside. That's the breaks.'

'Goodbye, Mr Savo.'

'Goodbye, kid. Good luck.'

I went out of the ward with my father, and out of the hospital.

Book Two

Silence is good everywhere, except
in connexion with Torah.
– *The Zohar*

Chapter 5

We took a cab and on the way home my father handed me my other pair of glasses with a warning not to read until Dr Syndman told me I could, and I put them on. The world jumped into focus and everything looked suddenly bright and fresh and clean, as it does on an early morning with the sun on the trees, and there was newness everywhere, a feeling that I had been away a long time in a dark place and was now returning home to sunlight.

We lived on the first floor of a three-story brownstone house that stood on a quiet street just off busy Lee Avenue. The brownstone row houses lined both sides of the street, and long, wide, stone stairways led from the sidewalks to the frosted-glass double doors of the entrances. Tall sycamores stood in front of the houses and their leaves threw cool shadows onto the paved ground. There was a gentle breeze and I could hear the leaves moving over my head.

In front of each house was a tiny lawn planted with either morning glories or a hydrangea bush. The hydrangea bush – or snowball bush, as we called it – on our lawn glowed in the sunlight, and I stared at it. I had never really paid any attention to it before. Now it seemed suddenly luminous and alive.

We climbed up the wide stone staircase and came through the vestibule into the long hallway where it was dark and cool, and narrow like the corridor of a railroad car. The door to our apartment was at the end of the hallway, below and to the right of the staircase that led to the two stories above us. My father put his key into the lock, and we stepped inside.

I could smell the chicken soup immediately, and I had only taken two or three steps when Manya, our Russian housekeeper, came running out of the kitchen in her long apron, her man-sized

shoes, and with strands of dark hair falling across her forehead from the braided bun on the top of her head, scooped me into her huge arms as though I were a leaf, and smothered me with a hug that pushed the air from my lungs and left me breathless. She planted a wet kiss on my forehead, then held me at arm's length and began to babble in Ukrainian. I couldn't understand what she was saying, but I could see her eyes were moist and she was biting her lips to keep from crying. She released me, and I stood there, smiling and catching my breath, while my father talked to her.

'Are you hungry, Reuven?' my father asked me.

'I'm starved,' I said.

'There is lunch on the table. We will eat together. Then you can lie on the porch and rest while I finish typing my article.'

Lunch turned out to be a massive affair, with a thick soup, fresh rye bread, onion rolls, bagels, cream cheese, scrambled eggs, smoked salmon, and chocolate pudding. My father and I ate without talking, while Manya hovered over us like a protective bear, and afterwards my father went into his study and I walked slowly through the apartment. I had lived in it all my life, but I never really saw it until I went through it that Friday afternoon.

I came out of the kitchen and stood for a moment staring down at the strip of gray carpet that ran the length of the hall. I turned left and walked slowly along the hall, past the bathroom and the dumb-waiter to my left, past the telephone stand and the pictures of Herzl, Bialik, and Chaim Weizmann that hung from the wall on my right, and into my bedroom. It was a long, somewhat narrow room, with a bed against its right wall, a bookcase along its left wall, two closets near the door, and a desk and chair set a bit away from the wall facing the door. To the left of the desk, along the bookcase wall, was a window that looked out onto the alleyway and back yard beyond. The room had been cleaned, the bed carefully made and covered with its green-and-brown spread, and on the desk were my school books arranged in a neat pile. Someone had brought them home for me after the ball game, and there they were, on the desk, as though I had never been away.

I went over to the window and stared out at the alleyway. I could see a cat lying in the shade of our wall, and beyond was the grass of our back lawn and the ailanthus tree with the sun on its leaves. I turned, sat down on the window seat, and stared at the *New York Times* war maps I had put on the wall over my bed. There were maps of the North African, Sicilian, and Italian campaigns, and now I would have to add a map of Europe, too. Over the maps was the large picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt I had cut out of a *New York Times* Sunday magazine section, and next to it was the picture of Albert Einstein I had taken years ago from an issue of *Junior Scholastic*. I looked at my desk. My pens and pencils were neatly tucked into the holder alongside my lamp, and on top of a pile of papers was the recent issue of the WQXR *Bulletin*. I remembered I had wanted to listen to a Tchaikovsky symphony on Sunday night, the night of the ball game which I had been so certain we would win.

At the head of the bed was the door that led to my father's study. The door was closed, and I could hear my father working at his typewriter inside. There was no way to get to the living room except through the study, and I walked around behind my desk, opened the door, stepped inside, and closed it quietly behind me.

My father's study was the same size as my room, but it had no windows. The wall alongside the door was lined with floor-to-ceiling bookcases. Along the opposite wall were curtained French doors bounded by two large Ionic columns. What was left of that wall was also covered with bookcases, as was the wall adjoining it to the right. My father's desk stood near the outside wall of the house, in almost the exact position where I had asked to have my own desk placed. But it was a good deal larger than mine, with dark, polished wood, deep drawers, and a large, green, leather-bordered blotter that covered almost its entire top. It was strewn with papers now, and my father was working intently over his old Underwood typewriter. The study was the darkest room in the apartment because it had no windows, and my father always worked with the desk lamp on, the yellow light bathing the desk and the floor around it. He sat there now, wearing his small, black skullcap and pecking at the typewriter with his index fingers, a

thin, frail man in his fifties, with gray hair, gaunt cheeks, and spectacles. I looked at him and suddenly realized that he hadn't coughed once since he had come to take me from the hospital. He glanced up at me for a moment, frowned, then went back to his work. He didn't like me to disturb him while he was at his desk and I went quietly through the study, walking on the gray rug that covered the floor, then through the French doors into the living room.

Sunlight poured through the three wide windows that faced the street and spread gold across the gray rug, the French-style sofa, chairs and end tables, the polished, glass-topped coffee table, and along the white walls. I stood near the sofa for a moment, blinking my eyes which always hurt a little whenever I came from the darkness of my father's study into the brightness of our living room.

The windows were open, and I could hear children playing in the street. A warm breeze came into the room and lifted the lace curtains that fronted the windows.

I stood in that room for a long time, watching the sunlight and listening to the sounds on the street outside. I stood there, tasting the room and the sunlight and the sounds, and thinking of the long hospital ward with its wide aisle and its two rows of beds and little Mickey bouncing a ball and trying to find someone who would play catch with him. I wondered if little Mickey had ever seen sunlight come through the windows of a front room apartment.

I turned, finally, and went back through the apartment and through the door that led from my father's bedroom onto our wooden back porch. I sat on the lounge chair in the shade that covered the porch and looked out at the back lawn. Somehow everything had changed. I had spent five days in a hospital and the world around seemed sharpened now and pulsing with life. I lay back and put the palms of my hands under my head. I thought of the baseball game, and I asked myself, Was it only last Sunday that it happened, only five days ago? I felt I had crossed into another world, that little pieces of my old self had been left behind on the black asphalt floor of the school yard alongside the shattered lens of my glasses. I could hear the shouts

of children on the street and the sounds of my father's typewriter. I remembered that tomorrow Danny would be over to see me. I lay very still on the lounge chair and thought a long time about Danny.

Chapter 6

That night as we sat at the kitchen table, with the Shabbat meal over and Manya gone until the morning, my father answered some of my questions about Danny Saunders.

It was a warm night, and the window between the stove and the sink was open. A breeze blew into the kitchen, stirring the ruffled curtains and carrying with it the odors of grass and flowers and orange blossoms. We sat at the table dressed in our Shabbat clothes, my father sipping his second glass of tea, both of us a little tired and sleepy from the heavy meal. There was color now in my father's face, and his cough had disappeared. I watched him sip his tea and listened to the soft rustling of the curtains as they moved in the breeze. Manya had done the dishes quickly after we had chanted the Grace After Meals, and now we sat alone, embraced by the warm June night, the memories of the past week, and the gentle silences of the Shabbat.

It was then that I asked my father about Danny. He was holding his glass of tea in his hands, the bottom of the glass resting upon his left palm, the body of the glass encircled by his right hand, and he put the glass on the white cloth that covered the table, looked at me, and smiled. He sat silent for a while, and I knew his answers would take a long time. Whenever he did not respond immediately to one of my questions, the answer was always a lengthy one. I could see he was arranging it in his mind, so that it would be carefully organized. When he finally spoke, his voice was soft, and the words came out slowly.

He told me he would have to go back a long time into the history of our people in order for me to understand his answer. He asked me if I had the patience to sit and listen quietly, and I nodded. He sat back in his chair and began to speak.

I knew enough Jewish history, he said, not to make him have

to start at the beginning. He would start, instead, with the history I had not yet learned in school, with the centuries of horror our people had experienced in Poland. Because it was really in Poland, or, more accurately, in the Slavic countries of eastern Europe, that Danny's soul had been born.

'Poland was different from the other countries of Europe, Reuven. Poland actually encouraged the Jews to come and live and be part of her people. This was in the thirteenth century, during a time when the Jews of western Europe, especially in Germany, were going through terrible persecutions. Jews had been living in Poland before this century, but they were not a very large community. Why did Poland want Jews when almost every other country was persecuting them? Because Poland was a very poor country, with a bankrupt aristocracy and a crushed peasantry. Her upper-class nobles would not engage in work and instead managed to survive by what they could squeeze out of the labor of the serfs. Poland wanted people who would build her economy, organize her affairs, and bring her to life. Jews had a reputation for possessing these abilities, and so the Polish nobles were eager to have Jews settle in their country. They came by the thousands from western Europe, especially from Germany. They ran the nobles' estates, collected the taxes, developed Polish industry, and stimulated her trade. Poland became a kind of Jewish Utopia.

'But the Jews did not only prosper economically. They also built many great academies of learning throughout the country. Every community had its Talmudic scholars, and by the end of the sixteenth century the Jewish academies in Poland had become centers of learning for all of European Jewry.

'And then, Reuven, a great tragedy occurred. It is a tragedy that happens often to anyone who acts as a buffer. The Jews were helping the nobility, but in doing so, in collecting taxes from the serfs and peasants, for example, they were building up against themselves the hatred of these oppressed classes. And the hatred finally exploded into violence. In the borderland east of Ukrainia in Russia, there was a community of Cossacks who were members of the Greek Orthodox Church. This community belonged to Poland, and the Polish nobles, who were Catholics, treated the Cossacks who lived there with cruelty and contempt.