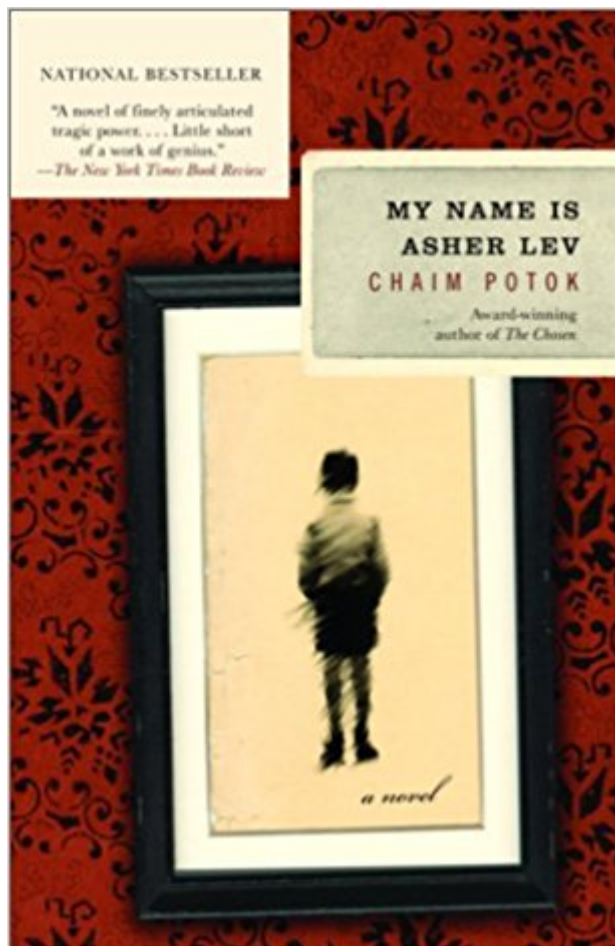


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# My Name Is Asher Lev



## Synopsis

“A novel of finely articulated tragic power. . . . Little short of a work of genius.” --The New York Times Book Review  
Asher Lev is a Ladover Hasid who keeps kosher, prays three times a day and believes in the Ribbano Shel Olom, the Master of the Universe. Asher Lev is an artist who is compulsively driven to render the world he sees and feels, even when it leads him to blasphemy. In this stirring and often visionary novel, Chaim Potok traces Asher’s passage between these two identities, the one consecrated to God, the other subject only to the imagination. Asher Lev grows up in a cloistered Hasidic community in postwar Brooklyn, a world suffused by ritual and revolving around a charismatic Rebbe. But in time, his gift threatens to estrange him from that world and the parents he adores. As it follows his struggle, *My Name Is Asher Lev* becomes a luminous portrait of the artist, by turns heartbreaking and exultant, a modern classic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A novel of finely articulated tragic power. . . . Little short of a work of genius.” --The New York Times Book Review  
“Memorable. . . . Profound in its vision of humanity, of religion, and of art.” --The Wall Street Journal  
“Such a feeling of freshness, of something brand-new. . . . Attention-holding and ultimately moving.” --The New York Times  
“Engrossing and illuminating.” --Miami Herald

*My Name is Asher Lev*-Chaim Potok became a favorite author of mine after reading *My Name is Asher Lev*. I've since had the pleasure of hearing Chaim Potok speak on two occasions. To hear

him answer questions regarding Asher Lev and his paintings is evidence of the true craftsmanship of this author. A most amazing part of the story is the integration of Christian ideals in the Jewish character of Asher Lev and his artwork. Its a truly remarkable story. -Jocelyn Schmidt, Ballantine National Sales Coordinator --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I loved this book. It was raw, full of emotion, and explored a culture that's rarely in fiction. As a Reform Jew, Asher's Hasidic Judaism was both familiar and unfamiliar to me, and I really enjoyed learning about it. I also learned an awful lot about art and Russian-Jewish culture. It's a novel without a definite "resolution", but a "happy ending" would feel inauthentic to this novel, which is so true to life while providing elements of the fantastical in Asher's mind and art. Overall, this is not a light read by any means, but one that is very much worthwhile.

I enjoyed My Name is Asher Lev and felt it was a worthwhile read. This story of the conflicting relationships between an observant Hassidic Jewish family and their son, Asher, a gifted painter. As Asher grows into maturity and develops his talent, he grows further and further apart from his father and community. The book educates the reader on the Jewish traditions as well as the artist's tools and journey and the tortured decisions he feels compelled to make for the sake of his muse. Deep, complex and intense characters and wonderfully descriptive writing with a sometimes slow pace provides a rich and rewarding experience. I'll definitely read the sequel and other books by Chaim Potok.

I was surprised at the gravitas of this author. With a masters of theology I sometimes gravitate toward intellectual books and tend to ignore Mass market items. I would not categorize this as mass-market but it did provide me a challenge to consider and is an excellent work

Powerful book. An oldie but goodie. Asher Lev's ultra-conservative Hasidic father views his son's artistic gift as a temptation from the dark side. Asher's mother is torn between love for her son and loyalty to her husband. Asher manages to reconcile his faith and his art, but is banished from his parents' religious community in Brooklyn and moves to Europe.

I read this book over 30 years ago and still like it just as much, now that I am well past middle age. The book portrays a convincing conflict of a Jewish boy who is torn between his innate artistic gift and his orthodox Jewish background. A truly convincing description of all the major characters in the

book -including his parents and other Hasidic Jews and accepting as well as the hurdles Asher Lev is faced with in the process of finding himself and accepting as the artist he is against or despite his father's wishes. This book addresses the conflict when powers of culture and religion are set up against individual needs and passions.

Asher Lev is not an exciting book. There's no real drama or a real villain. Which makes it all the more impressive that Potok managed to make the book so enjoyable. The main character grows as a character, but doesn't really mature as an adult. He comes across as autistic to be honest. The other major characters are all well developed and believable, although a few of the minor characters border on being stereotypes. Definitely a good book for those who enjoy a good emotional roller coaster.

Though, at first glance, Chaim Potok seems to be presenting merely the story of development of a great artist, the powerful characterisation (even with supposedly minor figures) weaves a tale of concepts of good and evil as they affect the world as a whole. When the young Asher Lev tells his teacher that the Hasid believes it his duty to make the world holy, it is no lip service to formulae of piety. In their own ways, and in the setting of an era and people dominated by the evils of Stalin, all of the characters are seeking meaning, ways of spreading the Jewish commitment to the true God, and personal responsibility to participate in this mission. Since Asher's use of images of the crucifixion of Jesus is constant from very early on, it will spoil nothing if I mention a theme that is very pronounced at the point where Asher produces his masterpiece. Asher's father, and generations of the family before him, had a mission of atonement. Asher's adapting the Christian symbol of atonement in expressing this is brilliant and very intense. (I do not wish to spoil the action and awareness that develops this theme for the new reader of this work, but pay close attention!) The development of a distinguished artist in a climate which, in his earliest years, he learns is "not a pretty world" leaves the reader with much matter for thought and powerful emotion. It is a brilliant work.

I loved this book that I read years ago in my youth. This is the classic story coming of age story, also of the child of an immigrant being more American in ways and view point but so much more. The description in first person of not only a gift for art but an irresistible drive and compulsion was amazing to read. Then there was the opportunity for the reader to become immersed in the Hasidic orthodox Jewish culture to truly understand what life there is like. Also the development of an artist

through training with a master. Easy to read and so compelling. I can't wait to read the sequel that I just learned about and may go back and reread his most famous book The Chosen that I read long ago in my youth. I selected this book after seeing the play of the same name recently in Hollywood. The gut-wrenching conflict among this small family and the application to the larger society was so profound, I wanted to reread the book which I could not remember. As usual with books in comparison to movies or play, they are so much richer and have the space to tell the story fully fleshed out. I loved this book and highly recommend it.

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