

Chapter 7: A New Problem

Chapter 7: A New Problem opens with Moshe grappling with the impact of Malachi's sudden departure from Pottstown, a situation that has left him unsettled and troubled. A month after Malachi's departure, Moshe finds himself reflecting on the aftermath, particularly the sale of Malachi's bakery, which has now become his responsibility. This series of events, which includes handling the sale and the distribution of the bakery's equipment, feels like an unwelcome burden. Moshe remembers receiving several letters from Malachi, who had outlined the process of selling the bakery and what should be done with the tools. These reminders of Malachi's absence stir feelings of unease in Moshe, who still struggles to come to terms with the abruptness of his friend's departure. In the midst of these thoughts, Moshe's unease is interrupted when Nate approaches him, signaling the start of an important conversation.

As the two men begin talking, Moshe opens up about his deep frustrations with Malachi's view of America, which he perceives as dismissive and ungrateful. Moshe finds it difficult to reconcile Malachi's negativity with the opportunities America has provided to them both. One of Malachi's comments particularly disturbs him—that African Americans in America have a stronger sense of identity than they do in Europe. This idea, though rooted in Malachi's own experiences, leaves Moshe unsettled, as he believes it undermines the possibilities for success and growth in the U.S. Moshe's frustration grows as he tries to understand Malachi's perspective, which seems to challenge the very ideals that Moshe holds dear about life in America. His thoughts are interrupted by Nate, who shares an unexpected request that will bring even more complexity into Moshe's life.

Nate introduces the idea of Dodo, his nephew, who is deaf and has faced significant challenges since an accident. Despite Nate's reservations about the town's doctors, particularly Doc Roberts, known for his ties to the Klan, he insists that Dodo does not

need medical help at this point. Instead, Nate suggests that Dodo would be better off staying at the theater temporarily, until a state representative can come to take him to a special school. Moshe listens intently but is unsure about the practicality of Nate's suggestion, particularly the involvement of state representatives, which brings a sense of unease. Nate reassures Moshe that Dodo will not cause any disturbances and suggests that he stay in the basement. Despite his concerns, Moshe considers the request, trying to balance his apprehension with the compassionate nature of the situation.



As Moshe contemplates Nate's proposal, he is filled with conflicting emotions. His concern about potential government involvement clouds his judgment, yet his memory of kindness and compassion from others in the past urges him to consider it. He eventually agrees to discuss the matter with his wife, Chona, before making a final decision. When Moshe shares Nate's request with Chona, her reaction is one of immediate disapproval. Chona emphasizes her belief that Dodo should not be relegated to the cold and lonely basement; instead, he deserves the warmth of a real home. Her words strike a chord with Moshe, highlighting his lack of understanding of children's emotional needs. Chona's insistence on providing a more compassionate alternative to Dodo's situation forces Moshe to reconsider his initial reluctance.

Chona's challenge to Moshe reflects the deeper complexities of understanding children's needs and the emotional distress that comes with abandonment. She stresses the importance of offering Dodo a stable and loving environment, rather than a cold, isolated space in the basement. Her commanding tone conveys the urgency of her beliefs and underscores her understanding of how children, particularly those like Dodo, need comfort and security in their lives. Moshe is faced with the difficult task of navigating between his own discomfort with the situation and Chona's insistence on offering the boy a chance at a better life. By the end of their discussion, Moshe begins to see the wisdom in Chona's words and realizes that the best thing for Dodo would be to bring him into their home, despite the potential challenges. This decision marks the beginning of a new chapter in their lives, one that will test their capacity for empathy

and understanding in the face of unforeseen challenges.

This chapter speaks to the broader themes of responsibility, empathy, and the complex dynamics of family. Through Moshe's internal conflict and Chona's wisdom, the reader is reminded of the importance of compassion in addressing the needs of others, especially those who are vulnerable. It is a powerful reflection on the ways in which individuals, particularly those from different backgrounds, come together to care for one another, despite their personal reservations or societal pressures. The decision to bring Dodo into their home represents a step toward healing and growth, both for the family and for the larger community. The narrative showcases the depth of human connection, offering a glimpse into the ways in which acts of kindness can transcend fear and uncertainty, paving the way for a more inclusive and understanding future.