

What ideas (themes) does the novel convey about these topics—and HOW:

- making sense of suffering (and God's silence)
- the struggle for identity
- the past/tradition and individuality
- religion—the relationship between God and mankind/creation
- tolerance and acceptance
- the American Dream
- the role of faith
- friendship and love
- the relationship between fathers and sons
- making meaning of life

Why doesn't Danny want to become a rabbi? Why is he so drawn to study psychology?

Does Danny love his father? What exactly does he feel about his father? Does Danny feel or believe that his father loves him? What is the relationship between the two?

Why doesn't Reb Saunders talk to his son Danny except when studying Talmud? What is he trying to accomplish? Do you agree with the rabbi's method and purpose? Why or why not?

What do Reb Saunders and his Hasidic congregation feel about the Zionist movement to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, and why does David Malter believe equally passionately in the Zionist movement—and how might their beliefs reflect in their relationships with their sons?

At the end of the book, David Malter says to his son that perhaps the way Reb Saunders raised Danny is the only way to raise a tzaddik (a Hasidic spiritual leader) (p. 289). Why might this be so? How does Danny feel about it at the end of the novel? Does Danny come to agree with this and appreciate what his father has done to/for him?

The novel is a coming-of-age story for both Danny and Rueven. What has Danny become outwardly and within? What does Rueven learn about himself and others because of his relationship with Danny and his father?

If you were to boil down the novel to one central message/lesson from the author, what would it be?