

The Finkler Question Study Guide

The Finkler Question by Howard Jacobson

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Plot Summary

The Finkler Question by Howard Jacobson is an intriguing novel about three friends, two of whom are Jewish and one who decides to be a Jew. Julian Treslove struggles with his newfound identity as a Jewish Gentile while Libor Sevcik mourns his wife's death and Sam Finkler learns to cope with his convoluted feelings about being Jewish. The Finkler Question is a very interesting and entertaining novel that questions what it means to be Jewish in an inherently anti-Semitic world.

After leaving dinner with Libor and Sam, Julian is mugged by a woman, causing him to become obsessed with his belief that she may have called him Jewish. Both recently widowed, Libor mourns for Malkie, but Sam is unable to mourn for Tyler. When Julian tells Sam about the mugging, Sam believes Julian invented it because he wants to be Jewish. After recalling his affair with Tyler, Julian runs into Libor while searching for the mugger, and Libor invites Julian to dinner with a group of fellow Jews, so Julian attends his first Seder where he meets Hephzibah. Meanwhile, Sam has a falling out with the ASHamed Jews, an academic group he joined despite Tyler's objections. Emmy, an old friend, contacts Libor to ask for help in contacting the media after her grandson is blinded in an anti-Semitic incident. After a vacation in Italy, Julian moves in with Hephzibah and finds that he enjoys being Jewish. He agrees to help her set up the new Anglo-Jewish museum of which she will be curator. Libor continues to grieve for Malkie.

When Julian invites Libor and Sam over for dinner, he is jealous of the way the three Jews interact, feeling he is excluded and will never understand their secret Jewish language and customs. Though Julian studies Judaism intently, he fears he will never understand it. Hephzibah is both amused and frightened when there are vandalisms at the museum, but Julian does not possess the emotional flexibility to understand how she can experience both emotions at once. Libor informs Emmy that he cannot help her because there is no point in doing so; maybe this is the way things are supposed to be. While Hephzibah worries that Julian is draining her of gloom and her Judaism, Julian suspects that Hephzibah and Sam are having an affair. When Julian confides in Libor about his suspicions and his affair with Tyler, Libor is saddened and claims Julian, like everyone else, is an anti-Semite. Julian, Hephzibah and Sam go to a play and out for drinks to celebrate Julian's birthday, and Julian begins to think he has had his share of them. Hephzibah becomes nervous about the influx in recent anti-Semitic incidents, and Julian believes that he feels more for Jews than they do for themselves; he believes that Jews, like him, do not have a chance. Sam reads a letter Tyler left him in which she claimed his expectations for Jews are higher than for anyone else.

After Libor commits suicide by jumping from the cliffs at Beachy Head, Julian, Sam and Hephzibah mourn for their lost friend. Because he feels life is disgraceful, Julian often walks through Regent's Park, and one day, he breaks up a group taunting a young Sephardic Jew. He returns home to realize he is late for the museum opening, so he rushes to the museum where security refuses him entrance because he forgot his invitation. After a brawl, Julian spends the night in the hospital, and though Hephzibah visits while he is sleeping, she is convinced he simply does not want to see her because



she has become part of what disgusts him in life. Sam and Hephzibah say the Kaddish for Libor. Hephzibah also laments the loss of Julian because she is unsure if he was ever really there, and Sam mourns for Libor, Tyler and all Jews, in addition to Julian who, he realizes, he never really knew either.



Part 1, One

Part 1, One Summary

The Finkler Question by Howard Jacobson is an intriguing novel about three friends, two of whom are Jewish and one who decides to be a Jew. Julian Treslove struggles with his newfound identity as a Jewish Gentile while Libor Sevcik mourns his wife's death and Sam Finkler learns to cope with his convoluted feelings about being Jewish. The Finkler Question is a very interesting and entertaining novel that questions what it means to be Jewish in an inherently anti-Semitic world.

Because he always sees things coming, he should have been prepared. On a school holiday in Barcelona, Julian paid a gypsy to read his palm, and she warned him that, in the future, he could not avoid a woman named Juno, Julie or Judith, and danger would accompany the woman, though the gypsy could not tell if the danger would be to Julian, the woman or both. One late summer evening, Julian walks through London on his way home from dinner with a couple old friends, and though he quickens his pace to avoid danger, he is attacked and his possessions are stolen. The attack occurs at exactly 11:30 P.M., but the fact that Julian finds most galling is that his attacker was a woman. Before the assault, Julian had a sweetly painful evening with his two widowed friends, Libor Sevcik and Sam Finkler, at Libor's house.

Julian does not understand how Libor survived the death of his wife, Malkie who found fulfillment in Libor though her parents never liked him, and Libor tells Julian the only reason he is still alive is because he promised Malkie that he would not die before her. Libor and Malkie once considered a double suicide if one of them got seriously ill, but though they had walked along Beachy Head cliffs, they never did anything about it when Malkie got sick. The premature death of Tyler Finkler left Sam angrier than sad. He sat by her deathbed, but she never shared her true feelings for him as she was always secretive, so Sam withholds his tears until he is better acquainted with his grief. Sam and Julian have been friends and rivals since school, though Julian knows he will never be as clever as Sam. Libor was three times their age when he turned up to teach them European history. Though he did not last long as a teacher because he tried to give students a taste of the wider world, he continued to see Sam and Julian because their innocence diverted him. As he became famous again, his friendships with the boys faded, but they tracked his life through the biographies he published of famous women for several years. Sam became a famous, well-known television personality. Libor, Sam and Julian never lose contact, though their lives go in different directions, but when their shared bereavement rekindles their affection, they can become young men again with their women gone.

After dinner, Julian walks to Regent's Park, thinking of Sam and Libor's debates about Israel and Judaism over dinner. Libor refers to Sam as a self-hating Jew, but Julian has never met anyone who hates himself less than Sam does, though Sam detests his fellow Jews for their clannishness about Israel. After a half hour at the park gates, Julian



walks toward West End, down the street where his father once owned a cigar shop. In front of J. P. Guivier, the oldest violin store in the country, he recalls how his father would not allow him to learn the violin, and though he could have taken up music after his father's death, he has no one to play it for. Julian is attacked while looking at the violins, but he does not fight as he is grabbed by the woman. The problem is what he believes she says to him when he relives the event in following moments, though he could be wrong. He suspects she said "your jewels" as in a feminist triumph over his masculinity, "you're Jules" which was his mother's nickname for him, or "you Ju" which makes no sense since Julian is not Jewish.

Part 1, One Analysis

When Julian Treslove first sees a beautiful woman, he imagines the tragic ending of her death, but reality is women walk out on him for stifling their creativity. At the age of 49, his expectation of some tragic event gives Julian a youthful appearance. This search for tragedy fuels the plot of the novel. When Julian is attacked, he does not fight back because there is no sense of preservation in him. Because Malkie always played the piano, Libor hired someone to teach him to play after her death. He tells Julian, "Just when you think you've overcome the grief, you realize you are left with the loneliness" (page 14), causing Julian to wonder if it is better to never know happiness at all so there is less to mourn. Unlike Libor, Sam is consumed with anger because of his wife's death, and the distance between them explains his anger.

In the second part of this chapter, the narrator describes how the three main characters, Julian, Sam and Libor, met and became friends. Sam and Julian attended school together, and Libor was their teacher for a short period of time. As Sam was the first Jew whom Julian met, Julian feels 'Finkler' is a better name for Jews, and that is what he calls all Jews to take away the stigma associated with the word Jew, though he cannot explain this to Sam. Libor had been a journalist in Czechoslovakia and a commentator in Hollywood before he met Malkie. Sam disassociated himself with his Jewish heritage somewhat after his father's death while he was at Oxford. As he acquired wealth in the television industry, Sam often joked that he needed to make money for when Tyler left him, hoping she would say she loved him too much to ever leave him, but she never did. Although Julian is lonely, he cannot picture the girls on the street dying in his arms so he cannot love or desire them since "melancholy was intrinsic to longing" (page 28) for Julian. He does not understand why his lovers always leave him, so he is reduced to weeping for others' losses, and he envies Libor his bereavement. Julian's curiosity and uncertainty about what his attacker said drives his mania over the next several chapters as he tries to interpret what her words could mean.



Part 1, Two

Part 1, Two Summary

Libor begins the first date of his widowhood by misunderstanding the questions of a woman less than half his age, and he just wants Malkie back. Realizing this is going nowhere, Libor apologizes to Emily since this is not fair to her, and they are both relieved when they part. A week after the mugging, Julian refuses Libor's dinner invitation because he does not want his friend to see his black eye or his unsteadiness on his feet. When Libor mentions that he cannot fathom having an affair with someone who looks German because there are "some things you don't do" (page 40), Julian wonders if he will ever get to the bottom of things that Finklers do and do not do. While Sam is also surprised that Libor needs company twice in one week, he is more accommodating than Julian and invites Libor over for Chinese food as long as Libor promises not to talk about Israel. Libor is surprised when Sam asks if he ever wonders whether he has lived the best life possible, pointing out how disappointing Julian's life must look to him. When Sam objects that Julian's time may yet come, Libor wonders if Sam is scared Julian might still overtake him; it is unlikely Julian will make himself a household name, but there are other measures of success. After Libor leaves, Sam looks in Tyler's closet where he still has not removed her clothes, but he cannot forget himself in grief as Libor does, so he gets online to play poker which allows him to forget himself.

Julian usually wakes to a sense of loss, so it is strange that the morning after he is mugged, he wakes to an "alien sensation of near-cheerfulness" (page 48) as though the palpable loss was what had been missing from his life. He uses his mental space to think about why he was attacked rather than someone else, considering the possibility that some woman was planning vengeance on him, but he rules out all of the women with whom he has been in contact other than the face-painting incident which he is not up to recalling. After four days of pain, Julian visits Dr. Lattimore who insists his nose is not broken, and Dr. Lattimore suggests Julian contact the police after hearing about the mugging. Though Julian wants to talk about what the woman said, it does not make sense and he does not know who to talk to about it. He ponders what the woman said but does not tell the police or his two sons by different women, Alfredo and Rodolfo. Julian decides to invite Sam over for tea because maybe someone mistook Julian for his Jewish friend, plus this is Finkler business and Sam is a Finkler. When Julian tells Sam about the mugging, Sam mocks him for being mugged by a woman and does not believe him when Julian tells him what she said. He insists Julian was in an emotional state from meeting with Sam and Libor, and since he has always wanted to be like them, he now wants to be a Jew. Julian claims he likes being who he is, but Sam insists Julian does not know who he is so he wants to be a Jew. He tells Julian to get on with his life, and Julian is crestfallen in the face of so much philosophic certainty.



Part 1, Two Analysis

For his first date after Malkie's death, Libor's friends set him up with Emily, a woman less than half his age, because she works for the World Service, but Libor feels more connected to Hugh, Emily's boyfriend who killed himself two years ago. When Julian talks to Libor on the phone a week after the attack, he marvels at Libor's courage in dating, but Libor tells him, "I could use the company but I can't go through the pain of getting it" (page 37). He sent flowers to Emily to apologize and claimed he was impotent which reminds him of the time he was made impotent by his jealousy of Malkie meeting Horowitz whom she called Maestro. Since Julian refuses Libor's dinner invitation because he needs to be alone, Libor warns Julian that one day he will regret needing to be alone when he has no other choice, but though Julian already regrets it and feels guilty for refusing the lonely old man, he has his own impotence to nurse. Though he never dreams, Sam dreams of punching his father in the stomach, continuing harder when his father talks in Yiddish, but he wakes, no longer able to dream, when his father's stomach opens. As Sam and Libor discuss their deceased wives, Sam envies Libor's range of grief and measures his husbandly worth against Libor's. Libor was always faithful to Malkie, and though Sam feels guilty for his infidelities, "It takes two to create fidelity, and while he wouldn't go so far as to say Tyler was not worthy of his, she certainly hadn't made it easy" (page 43). It seems as though Julian is jealous of the grief that he imagines Sam and Libor experience, but Sam is jealous that Libor is actually mourning for his wife while Sam is simply angry that things did not work out the way he expected. Julian dreams of a young girl running and stopping to remove her shoes. He has dreamed this all his life, and though he no longer knows if it originated with something he once saw, he welcomes its recurrence. Julian notes that it is odd he does not feel shameful ignominy after being mugged by a woman. Though he needs to discuss the mugging with someone, Julian has no history of talking to his sons about his problems, and the benefits of not raising his sons is that they do not come to him with problems and he does not have to blame himself for what became of them, though he sometimes misses the intimacy he imagines fathers share with their sons. Instead, Julian tells Sam about being mugged and what he thinks the mugger said, but Sam mocks Julian and decides that Julian simply wants to be Jewish, foreshadowing Julian's actions in the coming chapters.



Part 1, Three

Part 1, Three Summary

On Julian's first night back working as a lookalike at a lavish party for a fifty-year-old woman, he meets Kimberley, a vague American woman with whom he returns home. They have a night of short, repeated sexual encounters after which Kimberley gives Julian her card in case he is ever in Los Angeles. Realizing that Kimberley mistook him for Jewish actors at the party, Julian is puzzled that two women in two weeks mistook him for a Jew. Tyler and Julian both think Sam had it coming, but Julian also knows a woman as beautiful as Tyler should not have to suffer. Tyler had called Julian to ask if they could watch Sam's new television program together, and though they know they should not be in bed together, they both agree that Sam had it coming. In Julian's imagination, the unprovoked attack on him for being a Jew becomes little short of atrocious. He visits the scene of the crime, naming his assailant Judith. He does not know if he is inviting her to rough him up again or if he wants to confront her, but he forms a resolution to apprehend her if she shows up. Retracing his steps from the night of his attack, Julian tries to appear more vulnerable than usual. He is frightened by the idea that the woman may want to pay him back for something Sam did. As Julian looks at the instruments in J. P. Guivier's window, a hand taps him on the shoulder as he cries out "Judith" in shock.

Part 1, Three Analysis

Because Kimberley mistakes Julian for Jewish actors, Julian is puzzled that two women have mistaken him for a Jew, and this causes him to question the validity of their mistake. After his first sexual encounter with Tyler, Julian wonders why he does not feel guilty for betraying his friend, and he thinks that maybe Sam "koshed his wife from the inside regardless of her origins" (page 78), so maybe being with Tyler was as good as being with a Jew. He still wonders about the mysteries of the Jewish life after Tyler's tragic death. He sighs as he recalls Tyler is dead. When Julian tells Tyler she is his first Jewess, she tells him she is not a Jew; she converted to Judaism before marrying Sam, though Sam could not care less, and she is now more Jewish than Sam. Thinking about why he did not notice his attacker, Julian wonders if he saw her and allowed her to attack him because that would explain what she said since the Jews are prone to disaster. He wonders how many anti-Semitic attacks take place on real Jews and is surprised by the sheer quantity of attacks when he searches for it online. He phones Sam who responds indifferently. As Julian reenacts the night of his mugging, someone taps him on the shoulder, and he believes it is his former attacker.



Part 1, Four

Part 1, Four Summary

Around this time, Julian's sons are paying for dinner with their mothers who now know each other though they did not when they were carrying their sons. When Josephine asks if the boys have heard from their father lately, Alfredo suggests sitting back down. Libor asks who Judith is, and though he tries to evade the question at first, Julian agrees to go back to Libor's place to tell him about Judith. Libor suggests Julian is overwrought and needs a vacation, disbelieving the story because women do not mug men. Julian wonders if he is right, listing the signs from his childhood that he believes may indicate his father kept the fact that they were Jewish a secret. Telling Julian to stop his ridiculous speculations, Libor suggests phoning a relative or family friend, but Julian claims he has none. Deciding Julian does not want to know the truth because he prefers to invent it, Libor tells him to go ahead and be a Jew, and he invites him to dinner next week to meet some people who will be pleased to meet him. Sam is warmly disposed to Julian's sons, but he knows Alfredo best since Alfredo had seen him with his mistress, Ronit Kravitz, at the Grand Hotel in Eastbourne where Alfredo had been playing the piano, thus beginning a "compelling but mutually irritating friendship between two men of unequal age and interests" (page 104). Since Alfredo has never told his brother or mother about his friendship with Sam, he tells them he ran into Sam at a bar and describes Julian's mugging. Sam thinks Julian needs a holiday and that it would be best if his sons accompanied him, but neither Alfredo nor Rodolfo find this idea appealing. As they are ready to leave, Alfredo recalls that Julian has also decided he is a Jew, and the boys joke about being half Jewish.

Part 1, Four Analysis

Section Four begins by explaining how Julian has two sons and describes both his sons and their mothers. Julian had made provisions before losing love, and he tried to keep his overlapping girlfriends apart as he tried to keep his sons apart until he accidentally confused the days when he was supposed to have Rodolfo and Alfredo. The boys had fun together, but their mothers were outraged when they found out. The women eventually agreed to meet each other only to be shocked by how similar they were, as well as their sons. Josephine and Janice do not know who came first with Julian, but both women are equally glad to be rid of him. Even after their sons are grown, the women meet every few years. Libor does not believe Julian's story about the mugging and suggests, like Sam, that Julian is simply overwrought and needs a vacation. Since Julian insists he may be Jewish, Libor invites him to dinner with some Jews who may want to meet him. Julian objects that they will want to check his credentials when he has none, but he agrees to come if he can bring Judith as his credentials, so Libor agrees. Though Julian's sons have little interaction with Sam's sons, Alfredo and Rodolfo like to think of their famous "Uncle Sam." Sam and Alfredo begin an uneasy and awkward friendship after Alfredo sees Sam at a hotel with his mistress. Alfredo tells

his brother and their mothers about Julian's mugging and his new-found belief that he is Jewish. The suggestion that Alfredo and Rodolfo accompany Julian on vacation foreshadows their vacation to Italy, though neither young man finds the thought of a vacation with their father to be appealing. They joke about being half Jewish, foreshadowing their mockery of Julian during their vacation.



Part 1, Five

Part 1, Five Summary

After deciding his fate is calling out to him, Julian goes to dinner at Libor's two nights later to dine with his fellow Jews. About six months before Tyler's death, Sam had been invited to be on "Desert Island Discs," and though she begged him not to do it, he insisted it was good for his career. On the show, Sam makes much of going to the synagogue every morning as a child to prove to Tyler that she is not the only Jew in their marriage, but when he announces that he is profoundly ashamed in the matter of Palestine, Tyler is deeply ashamed of his public display of shame. Sam is flattered when he receives a invitation to join the Ashamed Jews, a group of well-known academic and theatrical Jews, and though Tyler points out he does not respect any of the members and he does not like Jews, Sam responds that he is honored to join them but suggests changing the name of the group to ASHamed Jews.

Tyler tells Julian about Sam's confession of shame on "Desert Island Discs" and his involvement with the ASHamed Jews, clarifying that they are ashamed of Israel, not of being Jews. Julian wonders if Sam's shame extends to his circumcised penis but does not have the courage to ask Tyler for a comparison. After mocking Julian about the absence of his mugger, Libor invites him inside for Seder, a Passover service. When he is asked to read the Four Questions, he is embarrassed because he cannot read Hebrew, but the great-granddaughter of the oldest woman there tells him he can read them in English. Later in the evening, Julian introduces himself to the young woman, Hephzibah Weizenbaum, and though she is larger than his normal type, Julian thinks he is in love with her. When he mispronounces Hephzibah's name, she invites him to call her Juno but does not understand his astonishment as Julian believes her presence means his hour has come.

Part 1, Five Analysis

Julian argues for and against the possibility of his mugger calling him a Jew, finally deciding that his fate is crying out. As Sam recalls Tyler's disapproval of him appearing on "Desert Island Discs," he thinks, "It was a mystery to him why he bothered to have mistresses when he found his wife so much more desirable than any of them" (page 110), but Sam believes it is not in man's nature to be monogamous, even when it is at odds with his desires. Tyler is disappointed in Sam when he publicly announces his shame in the matter of Palestine on the show, and she disapproves of his decision to join the ASHamed Jews; however, Sam feels Tyler is wrong about him joining for acceptance; he feels the need for someone to speak the truth. Julian notices Tyler growing tired and subdued. He tells her he loves her, and she thanks him for making her feel wanted, though she knows he wants Sam more in the sense that he wants Sam's competence to rub off on him. When she tells him about Sam's proclamation of shame on "Desert Island Discs," she clarifies that she is not ashamed of being Jewish, but she



is ashamed of her husband because he is not a Jew. When she asks if Julian gets tired of the Jews' preoccupation, he notes that, "If anyone's going to be ashamed then maybe we all should be" (page 121). At his first Seder at Libor's house, Julian knows the story of the Passover, but he does not understand the second part which consists of Jews telling God how much he has done for them. He is perplexed by the rituals and embarrassed by his lack of understanding. After the service and Passover meal, everyone sings songs; "It wasn't just a historical event that was being remembered, it was the stored intelligence of the people. His people..." (page 129). Julian is mesmerized by Hephzibah and decides he has fallen in love with her, though she is not physically the type of woman in which he is normally interested. As they talk about their families, Julian is obviously uncomfortable telling her about his two grown sons because he is not good at family which is ironic since he professes much interest in Hephzibah's Jewish family. When she tells him that her nickname is Juno, Julian knows the night is different because he has finally found his Juno which is one of the names that the gypsy fortune teller in Barcelona foretold could be the woman whom he could not avoid.



Part 2, Six

Part 2, Six Summary

Sam has a falling out with the group over a boycott which he scorns but Merton Kugle supports. While Merton argues, Sam looks around the room and is disappointed to see few of the illustrious comedians and actors who first attracted him to the group. "First among equals was how he had envisaged his role, but where were his equals?" (page 144). On vacation in Italy with his sons, Julian hopes to clear his head of the nonsense filling it. He discusses women with Alfredo and Rodolfo, but when Alfredo introduces him to Hannah, claiming she has something in common with Julian because they are both Jews, Julian wonders if his sons are anti-Semites.

After Libor receives a letter from a woman he has not seen in fifty years asking if he still writes his column, his response leads to him sitting in the bar at the University Women's Club in Mayfair with the only woman to whom he has ever lost his heart besides Malkie, Emmy Oppenstein. Once they finish catching up on their lives over the past fifty years, Emmy explains why she contacted Libor: she is writing all her friends who have a public voice because her twenty-two-year-old grandson was stabbed in the face and blinded by an Algerian man in an anti-Semitic attack in London. She claims it will get worse unless people speak up, but Libor knows there is nothing to do about the Jew-hating, so he tells her that he will speak to a few people he knows. Emmy suggests he see a grief counselor to help him deal with Malkie's death.

Part 2, Six Analysis

The sixth chapter begins Part 2 of *The Finkler Question*. At this point, the novel changes focus from Julian's introspective questions about Jews to his active involvement in Jewish life as he moves in with Hephzibah. Sam meets with the ASHamed Jews every other Wednesday, and Tyler knows he feels an "immodest delight... in seeing his influence extend far beyond philosophy" (page 139). He tones his behavior down after her death in honor of her memory but cannot give up being ASHamed altogether because the movement and the Palestinians need him. As Sam argues with Merton Kugle about the boycott issue, he wonders why he got involved with the ASHamed Jews because he does not particularly wish to be around Jews, but he is pleased to recall Libor, a Jew he actually likes. When Alfredo and Rodolfo mock the possibility of being half-Jewish, Julian feels he has never seen them before and is not sure he wants to see them again. When Libor meets Emmy at a bar, he does not recognize her though and knows there is no chance of courting her. She asks for his help in alerting the media because her grandson was the victim of an anti-Semitic attack, and Libor says he will make some calls because he is unable to tell her the truth which is that though he is sympathetic, he cannot help because none of it matters. Emmy's suggestion that Libor see a grief counselor foreshadows his visit to the counselor she recommends as well as the conclusion of Libor's grief when it overwhelms him.



Part 2, Seven

Part 2, Seven Summary

The agreement is that Julian will decide after his vacation with his sons whether to resume his previous existence or to move in with Hephzibah. He loves the Jewess and is ready to marry her because "she was what he'd been promised" (page 159); however, Hephzibah has already had two husbands and is not looking for a third, plus she is unsure about the reliability of Julian's certainty. Hephzibah recently left her job at the BBC to set up a museum of Anglo-Jewish culture, and Julian notes that the philanthropist who brainstormed the project obviously chose her because she is not biased in reporting about the Middle East like other Jews are. Julian wakes to unfathomable joy each time he sees Hephzibah next to him, but, "It wasn't just Hephzibah he loved, it was the whole world. God, being Jewish had stuff going for it" (page 165). Since Hephzibah thinks it is demeaning for Julian to work as a lookalike, she suggests he help her set up the museum, and since he is delighted with the idea, she agrees to talk to the board.

When Sam refers to the ASHamed Jews simply as ASH in a newspaper and radio interview, the group chides him for changing their name without consulting them. A debate ensues until Tamara Krausz, the best known academic among the ASHamed Jews, interjects that "to be a Jew is a wonderful and various thing, and that it carries no more of a compulsion to defend Israel against all criticism than it does to live in constant fear" (page 169). Libor visits the bereavement counselor that Emmy recommends, Jean Norman, and he is relieved that she does not say anything mundane about the death of loved ones, allowing him to grieve for himself. To celebrate his luck, Julian invites Sam and Libor to dinner. When he introduces Sam to Hephzibah, he is disconcerted that they seem to speak the secret language of the Jews, so he decides he must learn it before he is through. Libor arrives, but his attempts to lure Sam into their usual arguments about Jews are prevented by Hephzibah. In discussing the museum Hephzibah is working on, Sam claims they have enough Holocaust museums, but she insists it is not a Holocaust museum. While Julian helps Hephzibah clean up in the kitchen, Libor notes to Sam that they seem happy, and he believes Julian and Hephzibah are good for one another.

Part 2, Seven Analysis

After his vacation to Italy, Julian makes the decision to move in with Hephzibah when he returns to England. Hephzibah agrees but will not marry him because she is not sure about his apparent certainty. When Julian tries out various Yiddish pet names for Hephzibah, she tells him, "I fear you're going to teach me how to be Jewish." Hephzibah questions Julian about his beliefs concerning anti-Semitic Jews because she does not want him to change his politics for her and end up resenting her. She has already asked Libor about him, and Libor hopes they will be happy, though he worries that Julian will



not be free to visit him whenever he calls. Hephzibah works on setting up a new museum for Jewish history, and Julian is ecstatic when she suggests he work with her. During the debate regarding Sam's use of the acronym ASH rather than the group's name ASHamed Jews, he is delighted by Tamara's interjections into the conversation. Imagining Tamara screaming in his arms, Sam asks her about people they both know who are involved with the movement, satisfied that the moment of insider intimacy drives the others crazy. Visiting the grief counselor Emmy recommended, Libor is surprised and appalled by his self-consciousness, but in the end, he cannot speak his heart because there is nothing to be said; there is no genuine expression of how he feels. At this point in the novel, Sam loses money at poker, but his books sell well and he has not yet made a pass at Tamara. Libor is sinking fast because he lost Malkie, and he is at pains not to confuse his feelings about Jews being publicly attacked again with his feelings for Malkie when Emmy calls to update him about her grandson. Julian and Hephzibah sing Yiddish songs as he begins to understand Jewish culture. During his dinner party, Julian is concerned that Hephzibah and Sam seem to speak a secret language of the Jews, foreshadowing his jealous suspicions concerning his friend and his lover. Since Hephzibah prevents Sam and Libor from arguing about Israel, Julian is amazed by the miracles she performs. When Libor tells the group about his friend's grandson being blinded, Hephzibah comforts him, but he tells her he is upset because he feels nothing; Sam claims this is because they, as Jews, rehearse their feelings on the subject too freely and too often. Libor and Sam discuss Julian's new relationship, deciding Hephzibah is good for their friend since she acts as the mother he has always needed.



Part 2, Eight

Part 2, Eight Summary

Though Sam is looking forward to playing online poker, his plans are altered when he receives a voicemail from his daughter, Blaise, stating that his younger son, Immanuel, was involved in an anti-Semitic incident but there is no need to worry. When neither Blaise nor Immanuel answer their phones, Sam hires a limo to drive him to Oxford. Since Immanuel is not at his home, Sam continues on to Blaise's apartment on Cowley Road. She is shocked to see her father and insists Immanuel is fine, but Sam is adamant about seeing his son once he learns Immanuel is with Blaise. Immanuel sits in Blaise's bed with a magazine and a rum and coke when his father enters. Sam asks what happened, and Immanuel explains there was a scuffle outside the Union after a debate about whether Israel has forfeited its right to exist. The police may charge Immanuel, depending on what the other guys say. As Sam erupts in outrage, Blaise interjects that she witnessed the event and her brother started it by picking a fight with the Zionists. Immanuel looks at Sam challengingly as he insists it is true; he has heard his father say so himself. Sam argues it is different to state a general political truth than to pick a fight, and when Immanuel admits to knocking the man's hat off his head, Sam calls his son an anti-Semite.

Since Julian does not have much to do as assistant curator until the museum is up and running, Hephzibah suggests he ruminate about who or what else they should be honoring, but since this is a challenge for someone who was not brought up as a Jew, she allows him to write the menu for the teas she plans to serve in the pretty garden on the side of the museum. He is happy to think and spends much time obsessing about a biker Jew wearing a PLO scarf who seems to live in the synagogue across the street from the museum. When he asks Hephzibah about the man, she claims they parade their humanity for non-Jews, and when she kisses his head as though saying he has a lot to learn, Julian goes home and tries to learn it, starting from scratch. Labor suggests he hire a Hebrew teacher, but Julian feels Hebrew is still beyond him. Hephzibah suggests Moses Maimonides' *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Julian frequently asks Hephzibah whether she loves him uncircumcised. As Julian reads Moses Maimonides' *The Guide for the Perplexed*, he feels this religion is too old for him, and though Hephzibah notices his despondency, she attributes it to him not having enough to do. When Julian tells Hephzibah that Judaism is tough because it keeps going off into metaphysics, she tells him living it is easier than understanding it. Julian is intrigued with Maimonides' chapter about circumcision since he claims it limits sexual enjoyment, and he begins to feel empowered by the idea that he is uncircumcised, though he worries that his lustfulness disgusts Hephzibah and maybe she would prefer him circumcised because of some ethno-religious principle. When Julian asks Sam's opinion about Maimonides' view of circumcision, Sam claims the use of circumcision to inhibit sexual impulse is not specifically Jewish and the idea of using circumcision as an instrument of sexual restraint never worked on Sam; however, Sam knows an ASHamed Jew, Alvin Poliakov, who feels he has been cheated of pleasure and is in the process of reversing



the operation. When Julian asks Libor about his stance on circumcision, Libor claims it would have been a problem for him if it had been for Malkie, but he feels that he looks the way he is supposed to. Libor has no cause to complain about its effects on his sexual excitation because it is all he has ever known, but he suggests it would be a problem for Julian if he had the procedure done at his age. Knowing Julian is curious if it led to his faithfulness, Libor tells him not to make him too chaste in his report after Libor is gone because it is demeaning for a wife to be married to a man who is totally faithful her entire life.

When Hephzibah returns home from work in tears one day, she confides that the external doors to the museum's side doors were defaced with bacon wrapped around the handles. Julian is angry, but Hephzibah laughs that it is just bacon; yet, it makes her wonder what else is out there. Julian and Hephzibah are silent as they think of all the anti-Semites in London, and Hephzibah is bothered by "their exaggeration of our presence. They find us before we find ourselves. Nowhere is safe from them because they think nowhere is safe from us" (page 207). Julian does not understand how she can feel fear and amusement simultaneously because he does not possess that emotional flexibility. Not for the first time recently, he feels that he has failed a test.

Part 2, Eight Analysis

When Sam first hears that his son was involved in an anti-Semitic incident, he thinks his friends are playing a prank on him to teach him a lesson for his insensitivity earlier in the evening, but since that seems unlikely and he is unable to reach his children when he attempts to contact them, he hires a limo to drive him to Oxford, demonstrating his paternal sentiments. During the drive, he is irrationally anxious, and he curls into a ball and cries because he feels he let Tyler down since he promised to make their children his first priority before she died. He likes his children and wants to make amends for being uninterested in them when they were younger, but he worries it is too late now and wonders if his neglect somehow contributed to the attack. Sam thinks that the word Jew is no longer safe to use in public; "It was a password to madness. Jew. One little word with no hiding place for reason in it. Say 'Jew' and it was like throwing a bomb" (page 185). In Oxford, Sam checks on Immanuel and learns that he started the fight when he accused a group of Zionists of stealing someone else's country, practicing apartheid and slaughtering women and children. Immanuel defends his actions by claiming his father has said so, leading to Sam accusing his son of being an anti-Semite. Sam asks Blaise how long this has been going on, and she says it comes and goes, depending on what Immanuel reads. When Immanuel objects that he has a mind of his own, Sam is tempted to break his son's other arm.

As he plans the menus for the museum's tea garden, Julian worries that the location of the museum will prohibit the passing trade necessary for a successful tea garden, but he does not mention his fear of vandalism. Julian's fear of vandalism is so great and paranoid that he interprets the graffiti of John Lennon's lyrics to "Imagine" as an anti-Semitic threat. Julian spends his time studying Judaism and trying to understand the ancient religion; "The question of what precisely Treslove was for- whether in the



professional, the religious or indeed the marital sense- remained to be addressed" (page 197). Julian secretly wonders if the task of understanding Judaism is beyond him, and he worries that he will revert to the fantasy of holding Hephzibah in his arms as she dies, foreshadowing Julian abandoning his newfound faith. Julian becomes obsessed with the idea of circumcision after reading that it inhibits sexual enjoyment, but neither of his friends has suffered from being circumcised because they know no other way. Sam directs Julian to the blog of Alvin Poliakov, a Jew who is in the process of reversing the procedure. Julian does not understand why Libor claims it is demeaning for a woman to have a husband who is too faithful, and he reads that it is because he is not Jewish in Libor's silence. Hephzibah makes Julian feel he has found his niche as a man. She is his sun, so no one can tell him he is not Jewish. When she says something is good, he feels "good as an expression of the absolute rightness of the universe" (page 205).



Part 2, Nine

Part 2, Nine Summary

Libor invites Emmy to breakfast at the Ritz, but he is concerned when she asks if he is wooing her here again because he could not have afforded it in his impoverished pre-Malkie days unless it was not that long ago in which case perhaps it is better that he has forgotten. Libor tells Emmy he will not do anything for her grandson because there is no point, by which he means, "As long as there were Jews like Malkie's parents in the world, there would be people to hate them" (page 213). As he talks of all the bad Jews in the news, Emmy points out that he is the one who sees them as Jewish because he expects them to live differently than other people. Sam loses over two thousand pounds playing poker online so he goes to find a prostitute, needing something to do more than he needs sex. As he prowls the streets, he encounters Alfredo who he tells he is on his way to meet a producer about a new television series. Alfredo asks about the Jews because he has been reading that the Nazis and concentration camps never happened. Sam warns Alfredo not to believe everything people tell you; "I believe in believing nothing" (page 219).

From Alvin's blog, Julian learns how Alvin attempts to conjure a faux foreskin, stretching the loose skin of his penis over the shaft and measuring it daily because he seeks to "restore what was stolen from them, in violation of their human rights, before they were old enough to have a say in the matter" (page 220). When Julian tells Hephzibah about the blog, she tries not to encourage this new interest, warning him not to believe everything he reads online, especially as these are desperate people. Though Hephzibah likes Julian, she worries about his propensity and hunger for gloom, wondering if his fascination with Jews is a search for more gloom since there does not seem to be enough in his own person to satisfy Julian. Julian loves Hephzibah and feels he is nearly a Jew himself in his heart, though he is deficient in practice. She worries he wants to suck out her Jewishness along with her gloom as she realizes she has been less boisterous, vulgar and earthy since she met Julian because he wants her to be a certain type of woman. Hephzibah does not tell Julian when the vandalisms occur again for fear of worrying him. "That's what Jews did. They kept terrible news from one another. And now she was doing it with Treslove" (page 229).

Sam dreams, though he never dreams, about people punching his father in the stomach. What begins as friendly changes, and Sam waits for his father to call for help but he never does. Sam wakes when the kicking starts. Sam is anxious about a speaking engagement in Holborn with Tamara Krausz and two others because he does not trust himself with Tamara. He never disagrees with her, but the way she phrases things excites and irks him. At the engagement, Sam sits at the table next to Tamara while two establishment Jews sit on the opposite end. Sam and Tamara easily win the debate, and Sam thinks the establishment Jews should have hired him to win for them because "you win by understanding something of what the other side thinks, and they understood nothing" (page 234). When the floor is opened to questions, the evening



finally becomes lively as a Gentile woman asks what other country besides Israel defines itself and those it permits to enter on racial grounds. Tamara notes that the woman speaks from her bruised heart, and Sam answers from a bruised heart, but the question is whose bruised heart. Sam asks how dare she, pausing a moment before continuing to ask how dare a non-Jew tell Jews what sort of country to live in when the Gentiles make a separate country for Jews necessary. The audience boos, but Tamara thinks it is hysterical.

Part 2, Nine Analysis

In the months after Malkie's death, Libor's pain was unbearable, but now it is different as he recalls all the bad things that have happened to them, between them and as a consequence of them, darkening his memory of her. Libor thinks maybe it is Nature's way of helping him but is not sure he wants to be helped. Worst is the dissolution of Malkie's relationship with her rich, property-owning German Jewish parents who felt Libor was too poor for their daughter. Libor invites Emmy to breakfast to tell her he cannot help her; in fact, he states that maybe things are supposed to be this way. He is shocked by his words, but he knows that he means Jews like Malkie's parents are always going to generate hate so as long as such Jews exist, people will always hate Jews. Emmy points out that Libor expects Jews to live differently than other people, and this idea will be echoed in the near future.

When Sam runs into Alfredo while he is strolling for prostitutes, he hopes his friend's son does not realize what he is doing, foreshadowing the fact that Alfredo does in fact realize that Sam is searching for prostitutes when Alfredo tells his father. Drunk, Alfredo claims he thinks that surveillance on the street is necessary because everyone is so bad. He has not heard from Julian since their vacation, but he has heard his father moved in with some woman. When Alfredo tells Sam he has heard that the horrors of the Holocaust never really happened, Sam tells his friend's son not to believe everything he reads.

The importance of this concept is repeated only a few pages later when Hephzibah warns Julian about believing everything he reads online in regards to Alvin's blog about circumcision. Julian feels unsafe, worrying everyone is infected by such ideas, but Hephzibah argues that progress is made such as the abolition of slavery and women receiving the vote. She tries to initiate him into Jewish rituals, but he claims the weddings, engagements and bar mitzvahs are not serious enough. He raves about Jewish family but is withdrawn when he meets Hephzibah's family. When she asks why he has not introduced her to his sons, he insists that "they are a part of my life I want to be done with" (page 226). Though she does not want children, Hephzibah worries Julian will see it as a failure between them, but he assures her he does not want children. Hephzibah realizes that being with Julian has changed her, as some of his previous ex-lovers have claimed, and this foreshadows the imminent dissolution of their relationship.

At a speaking engagement with Tamara, Sam is appalled by their opposition's lack of understanding and thinks he could have won the debate for them if they had hired him

since it is necessary to understand the opposition's beliefs in order to argue against them. When a Gentile woman in the audience questions the racism of Israel, Sam is outraged as he disputes the validity of her question by claiming that non-Jews have made a Jewish country necessary. Tamara is amused by his outburst.



Part 2, Ten

Part 2, Ten Summary

Though Julian has no reason to believe Sam is interested in Hephzibah, he thinks so anyway. He worries whether Hephzibah is interested in Sam as well, so he brings it up in bed by asking if she wants to invite Sam over for dinner and pursuing the affirmative answer in search of whether it is Sam specifically that she likes inviting for dinner. The next day, Julian asks Hephzibah if there is a special bond between Jews and if she makes a connection with Sam. She sighs the next three times he asks her about Sam, but the third time is for a different reason because Sam visited her at the museum that afternoon and asked for a tour.

At Nosh Bar on Windmill Street, Libor tells Julian he is probably imagining it and his dread comes from the usual place where people long for the end of things. When Julian objects, Libor insists he has been longing for the end of things as long as Libor has known him. Julian impulsively confides in Libor about his evenings with Tyler, causing Libor to cry because he would rather not remember Julian and Tyler that way. Libor claims Julian makes the world a sadder place and it was cruel of him to tell Libor who has enough burdens. When he asks why Julian is proud of the conquest, Julian confesses he may be proud of getting into their world from which he felt excluded because Sam was always different: he was more clever, famous and Jewish. Suggesting the Jewish part is what matters, Libor claims that is also the reason he assumes Hephzibah and Sam are having an affair. Libor says Julian is an anti-Semite, but they all are so he is not alone.

On Julian's birthday, Julian, Sam and Hephzibah go to see "Sons of Abraham" in the theatre. Though the play receives a standing ovation, it causes Sam to laugh, but he claims his laughter is "the contortions of grief" (page 250). After the play, they go out for a drink where they run into Abe, Hephzibah's ex-husband. As the three Jews discuss the play, Julian grows jealous and begins to wonder if he has had his share of them.

Part 2, Ten Analysis

Julian suspects that Sam is interested in Hephzibah for several reasons, beginning with the fact that Sam has changed, growing quieter and unwilling to talk about Israel. Hephzibah learns that Sam has fallen out with the ASHamed Jews over the proposed academic boycott. Sam is also less combative with Julian, causing Julian to worry that Sam covets what Julian has found for himself. When he asks if she is thinking about having an affair with Sam, Hephzibah assures Julian that she is not interested in Sam because he is the type of Jewish man she has been avoiding all her life and she has been waiting for Julian all her life. When Julian told Hephzibah that Sam is lonely, he failed to mention that Alfredo saw Sam trolling for prostitutes. He is sorry if it is true but sorrier if not since Sam looks like a man without a home or wife to go to; "it was a



terrible thing to lose the woman you loved" (page 243). This fulfills the earlier foreshadowing concerning the fact that Alfredo recognized Sam's intention when they ran into one another while Sam was searching for a prostitute. When Julian tells Libor his fears about Sam being interested in Hephzibah, Libor believes Julian is interested in Judaism because he thinks it is a shortcut to catastrophe, but Libor is not going to tell Julian he is wrong because "there's no escaping the Jews for anyone" (page 245). He warns Julian that people who expect the worst will always see the worst. Libor is distraught when Julian confides about his affair with Tyler Finkler, and as he determines that Julian's obsession with Jews is what led to his feeling of conquest in sleeping with his friend's wife, Libor tells Julian that he, like everyone, is an anti-Semite. Julian grows jealous as he watches Hephzibah and Abe discuss the play and their jobs. The play has caused him to decide the Jews do not know how to defend themselves because they have "ceded their sense of outrage" (page 254). When he returns from the bathroom to see Sam has rejoined their group, Julian thinks that perhaps he has had his share of them.



Part 2, Eleven

Part 2, Eleven Summary

Hephzibah is at the end of her tether with all of them as she walks to the museum a week later. She is busy with the museum, and though there has not been any more vandalism, the lull feels sinister, and she becomes more paranoid. Julian does not even quite believe his own suspicions about Sam and Hephzibah, but he feels lonely and dejected because he is not a real Jew. He believes Hephzibah's family treats him like a Gentile and will not let him in, but when they did, it did not go well. Julian recalls the face-painting incident. In school, he met a beautiful hippy girl at a party in East Sussex, but when she insisted he paint her face, he made her a clown, causing her to cry since he made a fool out of her. He recalls the incident when Hephzibah takes him to a family birthday party. A little girl talks to him and claims he is funny in a different way, so Julian insists to Hephzibah that the girl recognizes him as a non-Jew. After claiming he is being ridiculous, Hephzibah suggests he paint the girl's face, but Julian refuses and leaves. Julian begins to feel he cannot deal with the Jewish way of life. Yet, Julian feels more for the Jews than they feel for themselves. He is outraged by the play, but it is "hard to go on feeling outrage for people who behave to you exactly as they were accused of behaving to everyone else precisely because of which accusations you were outraged for them" (page 266). After a year of being an adopted Jew, Julian finds that the Jews do not have a chance, but at least he shares this with them.

The worst times for Malkie were the mornings when the horror of knowing her death was imminent returned. Libor wishes he could have spared her that knowledge, but the morning was always waiting for her, as it now waits for him. He wishes they had both been believers; faith is not a mystery to him, but holding onto faith is. Despite his attempts at hope, things get worse for Libor. Tyler's death ended much more quickly. She arranged the details of her death in a business-like manner, causing Sam to ask if this is all he gets. Over time, he realizes there were things Tyler never mentioned for fear of upsetting him or her. In her closet, Sam finds a box marked "to be opened by my husband when I have gone" (page 270), and it contains copies of his articles, a tape of "Desert Island Discs" and the documents regarding Tyler's conversion to Judaism. It also contains a short manuscript written by Tyler after a sudden insight into her husband: he is too Jewish, seeing everything from a Jewish point of view and expecting more from Jews than from other people. Unable to finish reading, Sam places the manuscript in the box which he returns to Tyler's closet, and he does not have the impulse to read it again until the night he returns from seeing the play with Julian and Hephzibah. Sam is amused by Tyler's cheek as he reads her opinion of Jews and Israel. She claims his expectations for Jews are too high and he should let them be right and wrong like everyone else. Looking at the letter for some time, Sam weeps. He realizes he did not escape what was oppressive about being Jewish by joining the ASHamed Jews because "talking feverishly about being Jewish was being Jewish" (page 275).



Part 2, Eleven Analysis

A week later, Hephzibah is not sure if Sam is chasing her, but Abe definitely is, though she told him she is happy and he claims to be interested in the museum. Sam stops being ironical when he talks about the museum, and he starts coming around more. Hephzibah cannot clearly judge what Sam's civility means since she is affected by Julian's suspicions. Hephzibah wonders if she is being paranoid as a group of Muslim men look at her in a way that makes her uncomfortable. Unless her stare makes them uncomfortable. A young Muslim boy cradles his cell phone oddly, and she wonders if he is using it as a camera or a detonator. Julian wants to talk to Sam about the play, but when he invites Sam to dinner, Sam claims he has lost all mirth. Thinking of Alfredo's prostitute text, Julian wonders if Sam sought a prostitute after being with Hephzibah either out of guilt or to express his satisfaction. Julian finally recounts the face-painting incident: during school, he made a young woman cry when he painted her as a clown because she felt he made a fool out of her. It takes Julian a long time to recover from the incident because it marks him as a man who does not know how to relate to people, especially women. When Hephzibah wants him to paint a child's face at a family birthday party, he refuses, leading to an argument between him and Hephzibah. When Hephzibah finds him at home, Julian tells her he does not do face painting, but she believes he means he does not do family and tells him to stop the fantasy about how wonderful he finds them. Julian feels he has bitten off more than he can chew with Jews, children, parties, families and face painting. Thinking that he feels more for the Jews than they feel for themselves, Julian can see what his friends cannot because he is on the outside: there will be no settling this until another Holocaust. He believes he shares the Jews' fate in the sense that he does not have a chance either. Libor cannot hold onto his faith as his grief worsens. Tyler's death was much more professional and business-like, leaving Sam with a feeling of incompleteness. She left him a box that contained, among other things, a manuscript she wrote after a sudden insight into her husband in which she claims he expects more from Jews than other people. Sam cries as he pictures Tyler writing this. He never supported her conversion to Judaism because he felt he was Jewish enough for both of them, but now that she is dead, he wants Tyler to have had a better life than the one he gave her. Sam does not return to the manuscript until the night he returns from seeing the play with Hephzibah and Julian. He weeps as he reads his wife's accusation that he has higher expectations for Jews than for anyone else and that he should just leave them alone and let them be like other people. He likes Tyler's idea that he is a patriot burning the place he fears losing, and though he is unsure if it is true, "something had to explain the queer, passionate hatred of these people" (page 275). Sam also realizes joining the ASHamed Jews was just another way to feel the oppression of Judaism. Sam tries to avoid playing online poker, but it serves his purpose since it is the nearest thing to being dead.



Part 2, Twelve

Part 2, Twelve Summary

Meyer Abramsky, along with his wife and their seven children, are ejected from their home on the settlement he helped found sixteen years ago. He refuses to leave at first, but instead, he boards a bus and shoots an Arab man, woman and child. Having already made his decision, Libor sits opposite from Alfredo on the train to Eastbourne, but they do not know each other since Julian never introduced them, so Julian is to blame. In Beachy Head, Libor sits at a table, drinking whisky and looking out to sea. He walks up the down lands. Despite Malkie's belief that she married an exceptional man, he does not fly or float; Libor drops straight down like anyone else. When Alfredo sees news of Libor's suicide, he mentions that he sat across from the old man on the train to his mother who recognizes the name and tells Julian. Julian blames Alfredo and the taxi driver for not noticing something was wrong, but he knows it is his fault for neglecting Libor and burdening him with knowledge of Julian's affair with Tyler. Hephzibah blames herself for allowing other concerns to distract her from Libor. She believes that Libor went for a walk and simply fell. After Libor's funeral service concludes, Sam and Julian leave the family alone at the graveside, knowing they will have their time once the family is gone. They discuss Abramsky because they fear discussing their feelings about Libor. Wondering what they could have done differently, Sam admits he felt that Libor left them earlier when Malkie died, but Julian feels Libor left when he got with Hephzibah as though Julian's new beginnings reminded Libor that he would have no more new beginnings. Sam claims "me and Libor were dead men inhabiting a dead faith... we died so that you could live, Julian" (page 285). Julian's objection that Sam is not dead is interrupted by an elegant, elderly woman who sprinkles soil on Libor's grave. Emmy introduces herself as a long-time friend of Libor's, though she only came back into his life recently to ask for his help. She wants to know she did not pressure him more than he could bear since it is unlike Libor to refuse to help anyone. She tells Sam and Julian about her grandson and how Libor said that was what happened to Jews. Sam, Julian and Emmy wish each other long lives, as is customary at Jewish funerals.

When Julian dreams he is summoned to a death chamber, he does not doubt he has come to pay his last respects to Libor, but the voice that calls him to the bed belongs to Sam. Sam asks Julian to absent himself from felicity for awhile if he ever held Sam dear in his heart, and beckoning Julian closer, Sam spits in his face, saying, "That's for Tyler" (page 288). Julian feels a disgrace in being part of nature and being unable to get beyond the ride of blood after thousands of years of trying. "Alternatively, the disgrace was himself, Julian Treslove, who looked like everyone and everybody but was in fact no one and nobody" (page 290). Though Hephzibah hears Julian get up and go out on the terrace, she does not follow him because one knows when the person they are living with finds life disgraceful. She wonders if it is her fault for failing to save him, but she is unsure if Julian is savable. They are both still mourning for Libor, and Hephzibah is concerned with the museum's opening. She crosses her fingers, hoping for an end to the ugly talk about Jews. Hephzibah wants to postpone the museum's opening because



of its bad timing. Her mental health is not doing well because she has been reading conspiracy theories about Jews. The museum will open when Hephzibah's bosses want it to open because she cannot run scared in the twenty-first century in St. John's Wood.

Part 2, Twelve Analysis

It is unlikely Libor read the article about Abramsky or that he was affected by it if he did read it because he had already made his decision. This is why he is on the train to Eastbourne. He sits opposite Alfredo who does not recognize him since Julian had never introduced his sons to Libor. In Eastbourne, Libor tells the taxi driver to take him to Beachy Head, declining the driver's offer to wait because he needs no way back; this foreshadows his intentions at Beachy Head. This foreshadowing is further reinforced by Libor's thought that he may be sitting at the same table he and Malkie sat at long ago when they came to Beachy Head to test each other's courage. Since their discussion was in regards to suicide, this indicates Libor is finally going to carry out their original design. When Alfredo reads of Libor's death in the newspaper, he notes sitting near the man on the train to Eastbourne, and when Josephine notes Libor's name, she mentions it to Julian who is outraged at the idea of his friend spending his final moments in the presence of his degenerate son. Josephine notes the strangeness of two people from Julian's past coming together, noting "everybody's from your past, Julian. That's where you put people" (page 279). Though Julian blames himself for Libor's suicide since he burdened his friend by confessing to his affair with Tyler, he cannot discuss it with Hephzibah because he does not want to tell her about Tyler. This silence foreshadows a rift in their relationship. Meanwhile, Hephzibah blames herself for being distracted by the increase in anti-Semitic incidents. Because of the murder of the Arab family on the bus, she is horrified on behalf of the Arabs and in anticipation of the consequences. The anti-Semitic incidents are renewed to the point that Hephzibah cannot bear to open a newspaper. She refuses to believe that Libor committed suicide, instead opting to believe that he simply fell while going for a walk. Deciding that leaving the ASHamed Jews does not mean he relinquished his right to be ashamed, Sam feels diminished by Abramsky's act of murder because he is part of mankind. After Libor's funeral service, Sam and Julian discuss the death of their friend, both agreeing that it seemed that Libor had already left them. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Emmy who introduces herself; she also feels responsible for Libor's suicide, thinking she put too much pressure on him by asking him to help with her grandson. When she tells them what Libor said about things being the way they are supposed to be, Sam is not pleased that Libor had surrendered in the end. Julian knows his dream is a combination of dread and desire, and he wakes to his old feeling of loss. The world is no longer well; Libor is dead and Sam is dying in his dreams. It is not a good time to be a Jew. It has not been a good time to be a Jew for over two thousand years, but Julian thought it was a good time for him to be a Jew; however, it is impossible to have one happy Jew in an island of ashamed or apprehensive Jews, "least of all when that Jew happens to be Gentile" (page 289). Hephzibah realizes when Julian begins to find life disgraceful, driving a larger wedge between them, but she is unsure if there was anything she could do to prevent this. Hephzibah recently ran into Ben, her other ex-husband, who told her about sleeping with a Holocaust denier. Ben claims he wanted to reform her, though he fails.

Hephzibah wants to postpone the opening of the museum because the timing is not good, but she knows it will open when her bosses choose for it to open because they cannot run scared in the modern day.



Part 2, Thirteen

Part 2, Thirteen Summary

On mornings when the disgrace is overwhelming, Julian leaves Hephzibah's apartment and walks through the park to Libor's place to think. His walks are a "memorial walk to the new life that had not materialized" (page 295). On this particular day, Julian does not know why he returns to the park after his pilgrimage to Libor's house because he normally walks past the BBC and along the shops on his way home. On this day, he eats lunch and returns to the park where he naps on a bench. Julian's nap is interrupted by a group of schoolchildren taunting someone Julian cannot see. Julian tries to get a better look, even as he thinks it is a big mistake to do so. In the middle of the taunting children is a fifteen-year-old Sephardic Jew, and though the children are not particularly menacing, Julian knows this must be stopped. He makes eye contact with a woman walking her dog who seems to agree with him, and they join forces to disperse the children. The Sephardic Jew leaves without thanking Julian or the woman, and Julian notes the look of accustomedness in the boy's eyes as the boy shrugs as though saying this is simply the way things are. As Julian returns to the bench to think about the incident, he notices one girl who did not leave with the others. The girl bends down and takes her shoes off, causing Julian to recognize her from the recurring dream he had before Hephzibah. When he asks why she is removing her shoes, the girl calls him a freak and runs away.

When Julian returns to the apartment early that evening, it is oddly quiet, but it is obvious Hephzibah has gone out because the wardrobe door is open and her shoes are scattered on the floor. Julian suddenly recalls that the museum is opening and he promised he would not be late. The lack of a note from Hephzibah indicates the high degree of her anger and hurt, and Julian wonders if it is over between them. As he sits on the edge of the bed, he thinks his life has been a farce; he tried to nose his way into the tragedy and grandeur of others because he could not lay his hands on any of his own. Thinking it is time for another goodbye, Julian asks why not since he is good at goodbyes, and he thinks of the various directions his life can now take: he can disappear, return to his apartment in Hampstead or hurry to the museum. Julian thinks there is honor in vanishing, but looking at Hephzibah's shoes, he realizes how much he loves her and decides he owes them a second chance. He dresses and rushes out, unsure how nearly two hours have passed since he reached the apartment and deciding the only explanation is he fell asleep. On the ten minute walk to the museum, Julian tries to ignore the Arab graffiti. At the museum entrance, the security guard will not admit Julian because he does not have his invitation with him. Looking around for someone who might recognize him and vouch for him, Julian finds himself looking into the eyes of the Jew with the PLO scarf, and he realizes the group of people outside is holding a silent vigil. He asks the security guard why he is allowing the demonstration, and when a man with a candle objects they are just there, Julian asks why they are at a place of study and reflection since they are not at war here. When someone grabs Julian, he lashes out without caring who he hits because he wants one of them to kill



him since "it's heroic to die a Jew. If you have to die for something, let it be for being Jewish" (page 304). As the struggle continues, Julian falls and headlights blind him. The Jew in the PLO scarf bends over Julian and asks if he is alright, surprising Julian with his gentleness. The biker introduces himself as Sydney and notes that Julian is lucky the guy had good brakes. Though Julian is not badly hurt, the hospital keeps him overnight. He is sleeping when Hephzibah visits, but she believes he simply does not want to acknowledge her because she has become part of all that disgusts him and he wants out just like Libor. She is wrong, but it does not matter because "what she might be wrong about today she will be right about tomorrow" (page 305).

Part 2, Thirteen Analysis

As Julian walks through Regent's Park, thinking, "It was not purposeful thinking, it was just thinking. Reliving himself. Thinking meaning existing in his head" (page 294). When he first got with Hephzibah, Julian used to imagine walking through the park with her and Libor, but circumstance made the fantasy idle. Now, the symmetry is broken, but it was only Julian's idea because he is the only one looking for a way in or out; Libor took his way out, and Hephzibah was happy until Julian turned up to idealize her into misery. To observers, Julian looks like a man in mourning, but they do not know why he is mourning. One day in particular, he returns to the park after visiting Libor's home, and he wakes from his nap on the bench to find a group of schoolchildren taunting a young Sephardic Jew. Julian is shocked by the boy's ingratitude after he causes the children to disperse; the boy looks at him and shrugs as though saying things simply are this way, an echo of Libor's earlier assertion to Emmy. When Julian sees the girl from his dreams removing her shoes, he asks why she is doing so, and when she calls him a freak, Julian realizes that freak, like Jew, means anyone who is not them, "not worth anybody dying for. Or was the opposite the truth: Not worth anybody living for" (page 299). Returning home to find Hephzibah gone, Julian realizes he has forgotten that the museum opens that night. He is never late and he never forgets arrangements, so he wonders why he did this time, knowing Hephzibah will say he forgot because he wanted to forget. Julian considers his options at this point, and just before deciding to vanish, he realizes how much he loves Hephzibah and rushes to get ready. Unsure how he wasted so much time, Julian decides "he was not in charge of himself. Things happened to him. He was not the agent of his own life. He wasn't even living his own life" (page 301). When Julian reaches the museum around 9 P. M., he wonders if Sam is acting as Hephzibah's proxy escort since he let her down. Since the security guard will not permit Julian to enter the museum, he begins a ruckus by arguing with the group peacefully assembled, insisting they are demonstrators. Someone grabs him, and he is nearly run over by a vehicle. Julian is shocked to find that the Jew in the PLO scarf with whom he was previously obsessed checks on him with surprising gentleness. Rather than be beholden to Sydney, Julian wishes the brakes were bad, demonstrating the same ingratitude that he had seen from the young Sephardic Jew at the park. Visiting Julian in the hospital, Hephzibah does not believe he is asleep, choosing instead to believe that he sees her as part of everything that disgusts him. Though it is not true at that point, it is true the next day, thus fulfilling the foreshadowing regarding the end of Julian and Hephzibah's relationship.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

Since Libor has no children, Hephzibah and Sam decide to say the Kaddish for him. Julian is not allowed to recite the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead, since he is a Gentile. Since Hephzibah is not a synagogue person, she prays at home, praying and crying for Libor and Julian. She is pained by the finality of her separation from Julian because she does not know if he was ever there for her to feel separated from. It is less convenient but more straightforward for Sam. He goes to the nearest synagogue and says the Kaddish three times each day. The beauty of the Kaddish is that it is so all-embracing that he can simultaneously mourn as many dead as he wants, including Tyler, Libor and it might as well be all Jewish people. Sam even mourns for Julian who is alive and well and presumably working as a lookalike again. Taking his cue from Hephzibah with who he has been in frequent contact, Sam realizes he never really knew Julian either which is another reason to lament. There are no limits to Sam's mourning.

Epilogue Analysis

Sam and Hephzibah decide to say the Jewish prayer for the dead, the Kaddish, over Libor since he does not have any children to do so for him. Hephzibah prays from home for both Libor and Julian. Though Julian is still alive, he has left her life as effectively as though he were dead. She wonders if they were just experimenting with each other. Julian told Hephzibah she was his fate, but "who wants to be somebody's fate" (page 306). Sam goes to the nearest synagogue three times each day to say the Kaddish. Though the obligation ends after thirty days instead of eleven months since Libor is not Sam's parent, Sam continues saying it and does not know that he will stop even after eleven months. Sam says the Kaddish for Libor and Tyler, as well as all Jewish people. He also mourns for Julian, realizing that, like Hephzibah, he never really knew Julian either, though they were friends for decades. The novel ends with no limit to Sam's mourning which shows his character development since he was unable to mourn for his recently deceased wife at the beginning of the novel.



Characters

Julian Treslove

Julian Treslove is one of the main characters in *The Finkler Question*. He is a forty-nine-year-old Gentile who is friends with Sam and Libor, and he craves sorrow. After leaving dinner with Libor and Sam, Julian is mugged by a woman, causing him to become obsessed with his belief that she may have called him Jewish. When Julian tells Sam about the mugging, Sam believes Julian invented it because he wants to be Jewish. After recalling his affair with Tyler, Julian runs into Libor while searching for the mugger, and Libor invites Julian to dinner with a group of fellow Jews, so Julian attends his first Seder where he meets Hephzibah. After a vacation in Italy, Julian moves in with Hephzibah and finds that he enjoys being Jewish. He agrees to help her set up the new Anglo-Jewish museum of which she will be curator. When Julian invites Libor and Sam over for dinner, he is jealous of the way the three Jews interact, feeling he is excluded and will never understand their secret Jewish language and customs. Though Julian studies Judaism intently, he fears he will never understand it. Hephzibah is both amused and frightened when there is vandalism at the museum, but Julian does not possess the emotional flexibility to understand how she can experience both emotions at once. Julian suspects that Hephzibah and Sam are having an affair. When Julian confides in Libor about his suspicions and his affair with Tyler, Libor is saddened and claims Julian, like everyone else, is an anti-Semite.

Julian, Hephzibah and Sam go to a play and out for drinks to celebrate Julian's birthday, and Julian begins to think he has had his share of them. Julian believes that he feels more for Jews than they do for themselves; he believes that Jews, like him, do not have a chance. After Libor commits suicide by jumping from the cliffs at Beachy Head, Julian, Sam and Hephzibah mourn for their lost friend. Because he feels life is disgraceful, Julian often walks through Regent's Park, and one day, he breaks up a group taunting a young Sephardic Jew. He returns home to realize he is late for the museum opening, so he rushes to the museum where security refuses him entrance because he forgot his invitation. After a brawl, Julian spends the night in the hospital, and though Hephzibah visits while he is sleeping, she is convinced he simply does not want to see her because she has become part of what disgusts him in life. Sam and Hephzibah mourn for Julian because they realize they never really knew him.

Hephzibah Weizenbaum

Hephzibah Weizenbaum is a Jewish woman, distantly related to Libor, whom Julian meets at his first Seder. Her nickname is Juno which immediately convinces Julian that she is the woman he was promised by the fortune-telling gypsy in Barcelona, though she is not his normal type physically. Hephzibah meets Julian at a Seder dinner at Libor's house, and Julian moves in with her after his vacation to Italy. She works frantically at setting up the new Museum of Anglo-Jewish Culture of which she will be



curator. Hephzibah is both amused and frightened when there is vandalism at the museum, but Julian does not possess the emotional flexibility to understand how she can experience both emotions at once.

While Hephzibah worries that Julian is draining her of gloom and her Judaism, Julian suspects that Hephzibah and Sam are having an affair, and he begins harassing her about her feelings for Sam. Julian, Hephzibah and Sam go to a play and out for drinks to celebrate Julian's birthday. Hephzibah becomes nervous about the recent increase of anti-Semitic incidents. After Libor commits suicide by jumping from the cliffs at Beachy Head, Julian, Sam and Hephzibah mourn for their lost friend. After a brawl on the opening night of the museum, Julian spends the night in the hospital, and though Hephzibah visits while he is sleeping, she is convinced he simply does not want to see her because she has become part of what disgusts him in life. Hephzibah says the Kaddish for Libor, and she mourns for Julian because she realizes she never knew him.

Sam Finkler

Sam Finkler, one of the main characters, is a fifty-year-old Jew who has been friends with Julian since they attended school together. He is a well-known television personality. Though recently widowed, Sam is unable to mourn for his wife, Tyler. When Julian tells Sam about being mugged, Sam believes Julian invented it because he wants to be Jewish. Sam has a falling out with the ASHamed Jews, an academic group he joined despite Tyler's objections. Because of the way Sam interacts with Hephzibah and his feelings of exclusion since he is not Jewish, Julian suspects his friend of having an affair with his girlfriend. Julian, Hephzibah and Sam go to a play and out for drinks to celebrate Julian's birthday, and when he goes home, Sam reads a letter Tyler left him in which she claimed his expectations for Jews are higher than for anyone else. After Libor commits suicide by jumping from the cliffs at Beachy Head, Julian, Sam and Hephzibah mourn for their lost friend. Sam says the Kaddish for Libor, and he mourns for Libor, Tyler and all Jews, in addition to Julian who, he realizes, he never really knew.

Libor Sevcik

Libor Sevcik, a main character, is the oldest of this trio of friends. He is a Jewish Czech man in his seventies, and he befriended Julian and Sam when he was their history teacher. Libor is a famous writer and biographer, and he worked as a commentator in Hollywood before he met Malkie. Recently widowed, Libor mourns for his beloved Malkie. When he runs into Julian in front of J. P. Guivier, Libor invites Julian to dinner with a group of fellow Jews, so Julian attends his first Seder where he meets Hephzibah. Emmy, an old friend, contacts Libor to ask for help in contacting the media after her grandson is blinded in an anti-Semitic incident. Though he sees a grief counselor, Libor continues to grieve for Malkie. Libor informs Emmy that he cannot help her because there is no point in doing so; maybe this is the way things are supposed to be. When Julian confides in Libor about his suspicions and his affair with Tyler, Libor is



saddened and claims Julian, like everyone else, is an anti-Semite. Libor commits suicide by jumping from the cliffs at Beachy Head.

Tyler Finkler

Tyler Finkler is Sam's recently deceased wife and the mother of Blaise, Jerome and Immanuel. She converted to Judaism before her marriage, and she is ashamed of Sam's admission of shame on "Desert Island Discs" and of the fact that he is not a Jew. Tyler has an affair with Julian. She is dark and angular with sharp features and pitiless sarcastic eyes. Tyler leaves a box for Sam to open after her death which contains a manuscript about how he expects more from Jews than from other people and he should just leave them alone.

Malkie Sevcik

Malkie Sevcik is Libor's recently deceased wife with whom he was deeply in love, and Libor mourns her death throughout the novel.

Rodolfo

Rodolfo's nickname is Ralph, and he runs a sandwich shop in the city. He is the son of Janice and Julian, and Julian suspects he is a homosexual. Rodolfo goes on vacation in Italy with Julian and Alfredo where the boys mock their father for his newfound belief that he is Jewish.

Alfredo

Alfredo, the son of Julian and Josephine, is nicknamed Alf. He plays the piano in hotels which is how he develops an uneasy friendship with Sam after seeing Sam at a hotel with his mistress. He informs Rodolfo and their mothers about Julian's mugging and his decision that he is Jewish. He goes on vacation to Italy with Julian and Rodolfo where he joins his brother in mocking their father for his belief that he is Jewish. Alfredo also sits across from Libor on the train to Eastbourne, but they do not recognize one another since Julian had never introduced them.

Josephine

Josephine is Julian's ex-girlfriend and Alfredo's mom. She mocks Julian whenever given the opportunity.



Janice

Janice is the mother of Rodolfo and one of Julian's ex-girlfriends. She is the only woman during that period in Julian's life who actually cared for him.

Emmy Oppenstein

Emmy Oppenstein is an elegant, elderly Jewish woman who had been friends with Libor fifty years ago. She contacts Libor for help in alerting the media after her grandson is blinded in an anti-Semitic attack. Emmy had also been Libor's lover long ago, though he does not remember her. She visits Libor's graveside after his funeral where she meets Sam and Julian and expresses her concern that her request for help was overwhelming and contributed to Libor's suicide.

Immanuel Finkler

Immanuel Finkler is Sam's younger son who lives in Oxford and is the victim of an anti-Semitic incident. After rushing to Oxford, Sam asks what happened, and Immanuel explains there was a scuffle outside the Union after a debate about whether Israel has forfeited its right to exist. The police may charge Immanuel, depending on what the other guys say. As Sam erupts in outrage, Blaise interjects that she witnessed the event and her brother started it by picking a fight with the Zionists. Immanuel looks at Sam challengingly as he insists it is true; he has heard his father say so himself. Sam argues it is different to state a general political truth than to pick a fight, and when Immanuel admits to knocking the man's hat off his head, Sam calls his son an anti-Semite.

Tamara Krausz

Tamara Krausz is the best known academically of the ASHamed Jews. She is a Zionist who commands respect, and her way of putting things irritates and arouses Sam. Tamara speaks with Sam at the debate.

Blaise Finkler

Blaise Finkler is Sam's daughter who lives in Oxford. She contacts Sam after Immanuel is injured in an anti-Semitic incident.

Jerome Finkler

Jerome Finkler is Sam's older son.



Alvin Poliakov

Alvin Poliakov is a member of the ASHamed Jews who tries to regrow his foreskin because he feels circumcision limits sexual enjoyment. While Julian is obsessed with the idea of circumcision, he reads Alvin's blog which details his attempts to regrow his foreskin.

Sydney

Sydney is a Jewish biker who wears a PLO scarf around his head. He lives in the synagogue across the street from the museum, and Julian becomes obsessed with the oddity of Sydney. After Julian is injured outside the museum on opening night, Sydney surprises him with his gentleness.



Objects/Places

England

The main setting of this novel is England, and all of the action occurs in England except Julian's vacation with his sons.

Museum of Anglo-Jewish Culture

The Museum of Anglo-Jewish Culture is a new museum over which Hephzibah will be the curator, and she works planning and organizing the museum. Julian assists her by thinking about what else they should honor. The museum is the victim of several anti-Semitic vandal attacks which frighten Hephzibah.

Oxford

Oxford is where Immanuel and Blaise live, and Sam hires a limo to drive him to Oxford after learning Immanuel was injured in an anti-Semitic incident.

St. John's Wood

St. John's Wood is where Hephzibah's apartment is located, and Julian moves in with her after his vacation.

Regent's Park

Regent's Park is located between Hephzibah's apartment and Libor's home. When Julian finds life disgraceful after Libor's suicide, he spends his days walking through the park to Libor's place. He also breaks up a group of schoolchildren taunting a fifteen-year-old Sephardic Jew, and this causes him to be late for the opening of the museum.

J. P. Guivier

J. P. Guivier is the oldest violin shop in the country. After dinner with Sam and Libor, Julian stops in front of the store to look at the violins in the display window, and this is where he is mugged.

Italy

Italy is where Julian goes on vacation with his sons before moving in with Hephzibah.



Israel

Israel is the topic of much conversation and debate among the ASHamed Jews and between Sam and Libor. Sam is ashamed of Israel.

Beachy Head

Beachy Head is the name of the cliffs near Eastbourne. Libor and Malkie once considered committing a joint suicide by jumping from the cliffs if one of them ever fell seriously ill, but they do nothing when Malkie becomes sick. When his grief over Malkie's death becomes unbearable, Libor goes to Beachy Head and jumps from the cliffs, falling to his death like anyone else.

ASHamed Jews

The ASHamed Jews is a group of well-known theatrical and academic Jews who invite Sam to join them after his confession on "Desert Island Discs" that he is ashamed of Palestine. Tyler disapproves of Sam joining the group because he has no respect for its members. Eventually, Sam has a falling out with the ASHamed Jews because he disagrees with their plans to get involved with the proposed academic boycott. He does not know why he got involved with the group in the first place since he does not particularly like Jews.

Barcelona

Barcelona is where Julian goes on a school holiday and has his fortune read by a gypsy who warns him of a woman in his future named Juno, Julie or Judith whom he cannot avoid. She warns him that danger will accompany the woman, though she cannot say if the danger will be to Julian, the woman or both of them.



Themes

Judaism and Anti-Semitism

One of the major themes in this novel is that of Jewish customs and the importance of the Jewish heritage. This can be seen in Julian's desire to be Jewish, as well as the struggles of Sam and Hephzibah to deal with the fact that they are Jewish. Sam and Julian have been friends and rivals since school, though Julian knows he will never be as clever as Sam, and as Sam was the first Jew that Julian met, Julian feels 'Finkler' is a better name for Jews, and that is what he calls all Jews to take away the stigma associated with the word Jew, though he cannot explain this to Sam. Sam disassociated himself with his Jewish heritage somewhat after his father's death while he was at Oxford. When Julian is attacked, he believes his attacker called him a Jew which, combined with Kimberley who mistakes him for several Jewish actors, convinces Julian that he is Jewish. Deciding Julian does not want to know the truth because he prefers to invent it, Libor tells him to go ahead and be a Jew. Libor invites Julian to Seder where he meets Hephzibah, and shortly afterward, Julian moves in with Hephzibah. Sam meets with the ASHamed Jews every other Wednesday, and Tyler knows he feels an "immodest delight... in seeing his influence extend far beyond philosophy" (page 139). He tones his behavior down after her death in honor of her memory but cannot give up being ASHamed altogether because the movement and the Palestinians need him. Sometimes, he wonders why he got involved with the ASHamed Jews because he does not particularly wish to be around Jews, but he is pleased to recall Libor, a Jew he actually likes. Emmy contacts Libor because she is writing all her friends who have a public voice since her twenty-two-year-old grandson was stabbed in the face and blinded by an Algerian man in an anti-Semitic attack in London. She claims it will get worse unless people speak up, but Libor knows there is nothing to do about the Jew-hating, so he tells her that he will speak to a few people he knows; he is unable to tell her that truth which is that though he is sympathetic, he cannot help because none of it matters.

Julian and Hephzibah sing Yiddish songs as he begins to understand Jewish culture, but Julian is jealous when Sam and Libor come over for dinner because he feels excluded from his Jewish friends. Though Sam is looking forward to playing online poker, his plans are altered when he receives a voicemail from his daughter, Blaise, stating that his younger son, Immanuel, was involved in an anti-Semitic incident but there is no need to worry. When neither Blaise nor Immanuel answer their phones, Sam hires a limo to drive him to Oxford. In Oxford, Sam asks what happened, and Immanuel explains there was a scuffle outside the Union after a debate about whether Israel has forfeited its right to exist. The police may charge Immanuel, depending on what the other guys say. As Sam erupts in outrage, Blaise interjects that she witnessed the event and her brother started it by picking a fight with the Zionists. He accused them of stealing someone else's country, practicing apartheid and slaughtering women and children. Immanuel looks at Sam challengingly as he insists it is true; he has heard his father say so himself. Sam argues it is different to state a general political truth than to



pick a fight, and when Immanuel admits to knocking the man's hat off his head, Sam calls his son an anti-Semite. Julian attempts to learn about Judaism but finds the ancient religion difficult to understand. The museum is the victim of several anti-Semitic vandal attacks, a circumstance that frightens both Julian and Hephzibah. Hephzibah becomes paranoid about possible anti-Semites. Julian feels he has bitten off more than he can chew with Jews, children, parties, families and face painting. Yet, Julian feels more for the Jews than they feel for themselves. He is outraged by the play, but it is "hard to go on feeling outrage for people who behave to you exactly as they were accused of behaving to everyone else precisely because of which accusations you were outraged for them" (page 266). Because he is outside of it, Julian can see what his friends cannot, that there will be no settling this until another Holocaust. After a year of being an adopted Jew, Julian finds that the Jews do not have a chance, but at least he shares this with them. Sam finds a letter from Tyler in which she claims his expectations for Jews are too high and he should let them be right and wrong like everyone else. Looking at the letter for some time, Sam weeps. He likes Tyler's idea that he is a patriot burning the place he fears losing, and though he is unsure if it is true, "something had to explain the queer, passionate hatred of these people" (page 275). He realizes he did not escape what was oppressive about being Jewish by joining the ASHamed Jews because "talking feverishly about being Jewish was being Jewish" (page 275).

Meyer Abramsky, along with his wife and their seven children, are ejected from their home on the settlement he helped found sixteen years ago. He refuses to leave at first, but instead, he boards a bus and shoots an Arab man, woman and child. Deciding that leaving the ASHamed Jews does not mean he relinquished his right to be ashamed, Sam feels diminished by Abramsky's act of murder because he is part of mankind. At Libor's funeral, Sam tells Julian "me and Libor were dead men inhabiting a dead faith... we died so that you could live, Julian" (page 285). Julian realizes it is not a good time to be a Jew. It has not been a good time to be a Jew for over two thousand years, but Julian thought it was a good time for him to be a Jew; however, it is impossible to have one happy Jew in an island of ashamed or apprehensive Jews, "least of all when that Jew happens to be Gentile" (page 289). He feels a disgrace in being part of nature and being unable to get beyond the ride of blood after thousands of years of trying. In Regent's Park, Julian's nap is interrupted by a group of schoolchildren taunting someone Julian cannot see. Julian tries to get a better look, even as he thinks it is a big mistake to do so. In the middle of the taunting children is a fifteen-year-old Sephardic Jew, and though the children are not particularly menacing, Julian stops the children. The Sephardic Jew leaves without thanking Julian, and Julian notes the look of accustomedness in the boy's eyes as the boy shrugs as though saying this is simply the way things are. When someone grabs Julian during the fight outside the museum on opening night, he lashes out without caring who he hits because he wants one of them to kill him since "it's heroic to die a Jew. If you have to die for something, let it be for being Jewish" (page 304).



Friendship

A major underlying theme in *The Finkler Question* is that of friendship. At the heart of the novel are three friends: Julian Treslove, Sam Finkler and Libor Sevcik. Libor and Sam are Jewish while Julian is not, yet Julian wants to be like them so he decides that he is Jewish. Julian joins his friends in mourning for their recently deceased wives. Sam and Julian have been friends and rivals since school, and Libor was three times their age when he turned up to teach them European history. Though he did not last long as a teacher because he tried to give students a taste of the wider world, he continued to see Sam and Julian because their innocence diverted him. As he became famous again, his friendships with the boys faded, but they tracked his life through the biographies he published of famous women for several years. Libor, Sam and Julian never lose contact, though their lives go in different directions, but when their shared bereavement rekindles their affection, they can become young men again with their women gone. Libor and Sam constantly debate about Israel and Judaism, leaving Julian to feel like an outsider. When Libor wants company only a few days after dining with Julian and Sam, Julian refuses to join him because he does not want Libor to see what happened to him during the mugging, but Sam invites Libor over for dinner. When Julian tells Sam about the mugging, Sam mocks him for being mugged by a woman and does not believe him when Julian tells him what she said. He insists Julian was in an emotional state from meeting with Sam and Libor, and since he has always wanted to be like them, he now wants to be a Jew. Julian claims he likes being who he is, but Sam insists Julian does not know who he is so he wants to be a Jew. Julian reveals that he is not a very good friend when he recalls his affair with Tyler, Sam's recently deceased wife. Because of this, he begins to suspect Sam of being interested in Hephzibah later in the novel.

Though Julian has no reason to believe Sam is interested in Hephzibah, he thinks so anyway. He worries whether Hephzibah is interested in Sam as well, so he brings it up in bed by asking if she wants to invite Sam over for dinner and pursuing the affirmative answer in search of whether it is Sam specifically that she likes inviting for dinner. When he asks if she is thinking about having an affair with Sam, Hephzibah assures Julian that she is not interested in Sam because he is the type of Jewish man she has been avoiding all her life and she has been waiting for Julian all her life. At Nosh Bar on Windmill Street, Libor tells Julian he is probably imagining it and his dread comes from the usual place where people long for the end of things. Julian impulsively confides in Libor about his evenings with Tyler, causing Libor to cry because he would rather not remember Julian and Tyler that way. Libor claims Julian makes the world a sadder place and it was cruel of him to tell Libor who has enough burdens. When he asks why Julian is proud of the conquest, Julian confesses he may be proud of getting into their world from which he felt excluded because Sam was always different: he was more clever, famous and Jewish. Suggesting the Jewish part is what matters, Libor claims that is also the reason he assumes Hephzibah and Sam are having an affair. Libor says Julian is an anti-Semite, but they all are so he is not alone. At Libor's funeral, Sam and Julian wonder what they could have done differently. Sam admits he felt that Libor left them earlier when Malkie died, but Julian feels Libor left when he got together with Hephzibah



as though Julian's new beginnings reminded Libor that he would have no more new beginnings. Sam claims "me and Libor were dead men inhabiting a dead faith... we died so that you could live, Julian" (page 285). At the end of the novel, as Sam says the Kaddish for Libor, Tyler and all Jews, he even mourns for Julian who is alive and well. Taking his cue from Hephzibah with whom he has been in frequent contact, Sam realizes he never really knew Julian either which is another reason to lament. There are no limits to Sam's mourning.

Mourning

One of the most predominant themes in *The Finkler Question* is that of grief and mourning. All of the characters mourn at various times, but they all deal with their grief in different ways. At the age of 49, his expectation of some tragic event gives Julian a youthful appearance. Julian does not understand how Libor survived the death of his wife, Malkie who found fulfillment in Libor though her parents never liked him, and Libor tells Julian the only reason he is still alive is because he promised Malkie that he would not die before her. Libor and Malkie once considered a double suicide if one of them got seriously ill, but though they walk along Beachy Head cliffs, they never did anything about it when Malkie got sick. Because Malkie always played the piano, Libor hired someone to teach him to play after her death. He tells Julian "just when you think you've overcome the grief, you realize you are left with the loneliness" (page 14), causing Julian to wonder if it is better to never know happiness at all so there is less to mourn. The premature death of Tyler Finkler left Sam angrier than sad. He sat by her deathbed, but she never shared her true feelings for him since she was always secretive, so Sam withholds his tears until he is better acquainted with his grief. Although Julian is lonely, he cannot picture the girls on the street dying in his arms so he cannot love or desire them since "melancholy was intrinsic to longing" (page 28) for Julian. He does not understand why his lovers always leave him, so he is reduced to weeping for others' losses, and he envies Libor his bereavement. After meeting Libor to request his help concerning her grandson, Emmy suggests he see a grief counselor to help him deal with Malkie's death. Libor is sinking fast because he lost Malkie, and he is at pains not to confuse his feelings about Jews being publicly attacked again with his feelings for Malkie when Emmy calls to update him about her grandson. In the months after Malkie's death, Libor's pain was unbearable, but now it is different as he recalls all the bad things that have happened to them, between them and as a consequence of them, darkening his memory of her. Libor thinks maybe it is Nature's way of helping him but is not sure he wants to be helped. Worst is the dissolution of Malkie's relationship with her rich, property-owning German Jewish parents who felt Libor was too poor for their daughter.

Julian is sorry that Sam looks like a man without a home or wife to go to; "It was a terrible thing to lose the woman you loved" (page 243). At Nosh Bar on Windmill Street, Libor tells Julian he is probably imagining it and his dread comes from the usual place where people long for the end of things. When Julian objects, Libor insists he has been longing for the end of things as long as Libor has known him. Libor believes Julian is interested in Judaism because he thinks it is a shortcut to catastrophe, but Libor is not going to tell Julian he is wrong because "there's no escaping the Jews for anyone"



(page 245). He warns Julian that people who expect the worst will always see the worst. Julian believes he feels more for the Jews than they feel for themselves. He is outraged by the play, but it is "hard to go on feeling outrage for people who behave to you exactly as they were accused of behaving to everyone else precisely because of which accusations you were outraged for them" (page 266). Because he is outside of it, Julian can see what his friends cannot, that there will be no settling this until another Holocaust. After a year of being an adopted Jew, Julian finds that the Jews do not have a chance, but at least he shares this with them. The worst times for Malkie were the mornings when the horror of knowing her death was imminent returned. Libor wishes he could have spared her that knowledge, but the morning was always waiting for her, as it now waits for him. He wishes they had both been believers; faith is not a mystery to him, but holding onto faith is. Despite his attempts at hope, things get worse for Libor. Tyler's death ended much more quickly. She arranged the details of her death in a business-like manner, causing Sam to ask if this is all he gets. She leaves Sam a box which contains a short manuscript written by Tyler after a sudden insight into her husband: he is too Jewish, seeing everything from a Jewish point of view and expecting more from Jews than from other people. Sam cries as he pictures Tyler writing this. He never supported her conversion to Judaism because he felt he was Jewish enough for both of them, but now that she is dead, he wants Tyler to have had a better life than the one he gave her. In response to his deep grief for Malkie, Libor sits at a table, drinking whisky and looking out to sea. It may be the same table he and Malkie sat at long ago when they came to Beachy Head to test each other's courage. He walks up the down lands. Despite Malkie's belief that she married an exceptional man, he does not fly or float; Libor drops straight down like anyone else. Julian, Hephzibah and Sam all mourn greatly for Libor.

Julian decides the world is no longer well; Libor is dead and Sam is dying in his dreams. It is not a good time to be a Jew. It has not been a good time to be a Jew for over two thousand years, but Julian thought it was a good time for him to be a Jew; however, it is impossible to have one happy Jew in an island of ashamed or apprehensive Jews, "least of all when that Jew happens to be Gentile" (page 289). He feels a disgrace in being part of nature and being unable to get beyond the ride of blood after thousands of years of trying. Since Libor has no children, Hephzibah and Sam decide to say the Kaddish for him. Julian is not allowed to recite the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead, since he is a Gentile. Since Hephzibah is not a synagogue person, she prays at home, praying and crying for Libor and Julian. She is pained by the finality of her separation from Julian because she does not know if he was ever there for her to feel separated from. She wonders if they were just experimenting with each other. Julian told Hephzibah she was his fate, but "who wants to be somebody's fate" (page 306). It is less convenient but more straightforward for Sam. He goes to the nearest synagogue and says the Kaddish three times each day. Though the obligation ends after thirty days instead of eleven months since Libor is not Sam's parent, Sam continues saying it and does not know that he will stop even after eleven months. The beauty of the Kaddish is its ability to simultaneously mourn as many dead as he wants, including Tyler, Libor and it might as well be all Jewish people since the prayer is so all-embracing. Sam even mourns for Julian who is alive and well and presumably working as a lookalike again. Taking his cue from Hephzibah with whom he has been in frequent contact, Sam

realizes he never really knew Julian either which is another reason to lament. There are no limits to Sam's mourning.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in *The Finkler Question* is third person and omniscient. This is demonstrated by the fact that the narrator is able to report on the thoughts and emotions of all the characters, in addition to the actual events which take place. Presumably, the narrator presents a reliable point of view since nothing is proven incorrect, and the narrator is explicit when reporting something that a character suspects or believes as opposed to events that actually occur. This point of view is useful because it allows the reader to see the similarities and differences between characters, and readers are also able to witness the characters' thoughts and feelings which are frequently at odds with their words and actions, thus obtaining a more complete and accurate understanding of each character.

The novel contains a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue which is beneficial to readers since it allows them to see what characters truly believe and how they feel about certain things which is frequently not the same as what they tell their friends. This serves to show how little this group of friends actually know one another. This novel is told from the viewpoint of various characters. Most frequently, the events in the novel are seen through the eyes of Julian, Libor or Sam; however, the viewpoint also detours to Hephzibah, Alfredo and various other characters for small intervals.

Setting

This novel is set in the real world, primarily in England. It is set in modern times, in the twenty-first century. The characters are a group of friends from various professions, along with their families. The distinction between these characters is found in the division of Jews and non-Jews since anti-Semitism and Jewish culture are the two major themes in *The Finkler Question*.

The main setting of this novel is England, and all of the action occurs in England except Julian's vacation with his sons. The Museum of Anglo-Jewish Culture is a new museum over which Hephzibah will be the curator, and she works planning and organizing the museum. Julian assists her by thinking about what else they should honor. The museum is the victim of several anti-Semitic vandal attacks which frighten Hephzibah. Oxford is where Immanuel and Blaise live, and Sam hires a limo to drive him to Oxford after learning Immanuel was injured in an anti-Semitic incident. St. John's Wood is where Hephzibah's apartment is located, and Julian moves in with her after his vacation. Regent's Park is located between Hephzibah's apartment and Libor's home. When Julian finds life disgraceful after Libor's suicide, he spends his days walking through the park to Libor's place. He also breaks up a group of schoolchildren taunting a fifteen-year-old Sephardic Jew, and this causes him to be late for the opening of the museum. J. P. Guivier is the oldest violin shop in the country. After dinner with Sam and Libor,



Julian stops in front of the store to look at the violins in the display window, and this is where he is mugged. Italy is where Julian goes on vacation with his sons before moving in with Hephzibah. Beachy Head is the name of the cliffs near Eastbourne. Libor and Malkie once considered committing a joint suicide by jumping from the cliffs if one of them ever fell seriously ill, but they do nothing when Malkie becomes sick. When his grief over Malkie's death becomes unbearable, Libor goes to Beachy Head and jumps from the cliffs, falling to his death like anyone else. Barcelona is where Julian goes on a school holiday and has his fortune read by a gypsy who warns him of a woman in his future named Juno, Julie or Judith whom he cannot avoid. She warns him that danger will accompany the woman, though she cannot say if the danger will be to Julian, the woman or both of them.

Language and Meaning

The language used in *The Finkler Question* is casual and formal. The narrator uses proper grammar to construct this narrative, and the language used by the narrator and the characters show their education and the fact that the points made in the novel are meant to be taken seriously. The style of the language also serves to present a comparison of the characters' views about Jews and anti-Semitism, by comparing their thoughts to one another's and to their own words which often conflict with their true feelings. The language is quite easy to understand, aiding readers in comprehension of the themes presented in the novel.

The language used characterizes the individual characters as well as their differences as Jews or non-Jews. The distribution of exposition and dialogue is fairly equal. This is beneficial to readers since it allows them to see what characters truly believe and how they feel about certain things which is frequently not the same as what they tell their friends which serves to show how little this group of friends actually know one another. The language in this novel is quite comprehensive and modern, allowing readers to become well acquainted with the characters. Overall, the novel is easy to read as a result of the language used.

Structure

This novel is divided into thirteen chapters and an epilogue. It consists of three hundred, seven pages, and the chapters average around twenty to thirty pages in length. The chapters are numbered rather than titled, and the first five chapters are separated into Part 1 while the remaining chapters comprise Part 2. The chapters are fairly long, but they are subdivided into numbered sections as the focus of the chapter changes between specific characters' lives. The chapters are quite detailed as various amounts of time pass. The entire novel encompasses around a year in the lives of the characters.

The Finkler Question by Howard Jacobson is an intriguing novel about three friends, two of whom are Jewish and one who decides to be a Jew. Julian Treslove struggles

with his newfound identity as a Jewish Gentile while Libor Sevcik mourns his wife's death and Sam Finkler learns to cope with his convoluted feelings about being Jewish. The Finkler Question is a very interesting and entertaining novel that questions what it means to be Jewish in an inherently anti-Semitic world. The pace of the novel is somewhat slow due to frequent bouts of introspection by various characters, especially Julian and Sam, but it is easy to read overall. Frequent flashbacks occur as Julian, Sam and Libor recall their pasts or as the narrator provides background information on these and other characters. Overall, The Finkler Question is very easy to read and highly entertaining.



Quotes

"That was the poetry of his life. In reality it had all been women accusing him of stifling their creativity and walking out on him." Part 1, One, page 4

"Was it better then- measuring the loss- not to know happiness at all? Better to go through life waiting for what never came, because that way you had less to mourn? Could that be why Treslove so often found himself alone? Was he protecting himself against the companioned happiness he longed for because he dreaded how he would feel when it was taken from him? Or was the loss he dreaded precisely the happiness he craved?" Part 1, One, page 15

"In fact, Treslove's intuition that Finkler no longer wanted to be thought a Finkler was the right one... What Treslove couldn't have understood was that the Finkler name still meant something even if the Finkler idea didn't. By staying Finkler, Finkler kept alive the backward sentiment of his faith. By ditching Samuel he forswore the Finkler future." Part 1, One, page 22

"Not because I'm handsome did they want me, you understand, but because I made them laugh. The more beautiful the woman, the more she needs to laugh. That's why Jewish guys have always done so well. But for me they were easy to resist. Because I had Malkie who was more beautiful than all of them. And who made me laugh." Libor, Part 1, Two, page 42

"At any age there is future one doesn't have. Never enough life when you are happy, that was the thing. Never so much bliss that you can't take a little more." Part 1, Two, page 43

"There were advantages in having sons he hadn't brought up. He didn't have to blame himself for what had become of them, for one. And he wasn't the first person they came to when they were in trouble. But he sometimes missed the intimacy he imagined real fathers enjoying with their sons." Part 1, Two, page 60

"I'm another version of him, that's why. We were each out to conquer the other's universe. He wanted the goyim to love him. I wanted the Jews to love me. And I liked the idea of having Jewish children. I thought they'd do better at school. And boy, have they done better!" Tyler, Part 1, Three, page 77

"That's good, Julian. Getting touchy is a good sign. You can't be Jewish if you can't do touchy." Libor, Part 1, Four, page 99

"No, it's at your age that the glass is half full. At my age we don't want half a glass, full or empty. In fact we don't want a glass, end of. We want a tankard and we want it overflowing. We are the have-everything generation, remember." Alfredo, Part 1, Four, page 103



"Some men find God where they least expect to. Some discover their purpose in social action or self-sacrifice. Treslove had been in waiting for as long as he could remember. Very well then. My fate cries out, he thought." Part 1, Five, page 109

"It was a mystery to him why he bothered to have mistresses when he found his wife so much more desirable than any of them. Was he a bad man or just a foolish one? He didn't feel bad to himself. As a husband he believed himself to be essentially good and loyal. It just wasn't written in a man's nature to be monogamous, that was all. And he owed something to his nature even when his nature was at odds with his desire, which was to stay home and cherish his wife. It was his nature- all nature, the rule of nature- that was the bastard, not him." Part 1, Five, pages 110-111

"Treslove would have said 'Come and die at my place' but he knew he couldn't. A woman must die in her own home and in her own husband's arms, no matter that her lover would mop her brow with more consideration than the husband ever could." Part 1, Five, page 116

"He's ashamed because he's a Jew, I'm ashamed because he's not." Tyler, Part 1, Five, page 121

"Why is this night different from all other nights? The question answered itself. Juno. Juno, by Jesus!" Part 1, Five, page 133

"There is always more to hear... Just as there is always more to say." Sam, Part 2, Six, page 143

"What was pleasant- no more than pleasant, but pleasant was enough- was the being here with his sons. Should he leave it at this? he wondered. Accept the role of paterfamilias, take his sons away twice a year, and forget the rest. He would be fifty soon. Time to settle. Nothing else had to happen. Who he was, he was. Julian Treslove. Bachelor of this parish. Gentile. Enough." Part 2, Six, page 147

"She was what he'd been promised. And the fact that she didn't look anything like the woman he thought he'd been promised- the fact that she made fools of all his expectations- only proved that something far more powerful than his inclination was in operation... She was not his kind of woman. She came from somewhere other than his wanting. Ergo- she was a gift." Part 2, Seven, page 159

"Don't we have to show that to be a Jew is a wonderful and various thing, and that it carries no more of a compulsion to defend Israel against all criticism than it does to live in constant fear. We are not, are we, a victim people? As that brave Israeli philosopher Avital Avi said recently in a heartwarming speech in Tel Aviv which I had the honour to hear from the platform, it is we who are keeping the Holocaust alive today, we who continue where the Kapos left off. Yes, of course it demeans the dead to forget them, but to disinter them in order to justify carnage demeans them more." Tamara, Part 2, Seven, page 169



"What need was there for this? Why did he not simply speak his heart? Because the heart did not speak, that was why. Because language presupposes artificiality. Because in the end there was nothing, absolutely nothing, to be said." Part 2, Seven, pages 172-173

"A half truth is a whole lie." Hephzibah, Part 2, Seven, page 177

"It isn't only the doing nothing that's upsetting, it's the feeling nothing." Libor, Part 2, Seven, page 181

"What if it was all a bit late? What if his neglect had contributed in some ways to this attack? Had he left his children vulnerable, unable to take care of themselves, insufficiently aware of danger?... It was a password to madness. Jew. One little word with no hiding place for reason in it. Say 'Jew' and it was like throwing a bomb." Part 2, Eight, page 185

"Some things you cannot acquire. You have to be born and brought up a Jew to see the hand of Jews in everything. That or be born and brought up a Nazi." Part 2, Eight, page 191

"That's because you insist on understanding it. You should try just living it." Hephzibah, Part 2, Eight, page 198

"Whether this was, after all, a Finkler thing he didn't know. Drop the Finkler, then. What she was to him was humanly important, whatever that meant. And he idolised her for it. The sun did not shine out of her, the sun was her. So go tell him he wasn't Jewish." Part 2, Eight, page 205

"It's their exaggeration of our presence. They find us before we find ourselves. Nowhere is safe from them because they think nowhere is safe from us." Part 2, Eight, page 207

"This is how things are. And maybe how things should be." Libor, Part 2, Nine, page 212

"I believe in believing nothing." Sam, Part 2, Nine, page 219

"Darling, you mustn't believe everything you read on the Internet. But even if they're genuine it's understandable. We all turn a blind eye to one issue for the sake of another. And these are desperate people." Hephzibah, Part 2, Nine, page 223

"He constrained her. He wanted her to be a certain kind of woman and she didn't want to let him down... It was a strain being a representative of your people to a man who had decided to idealise them. It wasn't only him she didn't want to let down; it was Judaism, all five thousand troubled years of it." Part 2, Nine, page 227

"Why didn't they hire him to write their scripts? He could have won it for them. You win by understanding something of what the other side thinks, and they understood nothing." Part 2, Nine, page 234



"In jealousy a feeling is a reason. He accepted that such a feeling might simply be the child of his devotion. When you love a woman deeply you are bound to imagine that every other man must love her deeply too. But it wasn't every other man he had reason to believe had set his sights on Hephzibah. Just Finkler." Part 2, Ten, page 238

"My friend, all the years I've know you you've been longing for the end of things. You've lived in preparation, on the edge of tears, all your life." Libor, Part 2, Ten, page 244

"You make the world a sadder place, Julian, and it is already sad enough, believe me. Why did you tell me? It was unkind of you." Libor, Part 2, Ten, page 247

"Don't sound so astonished. You're not alone. We're all anti-Semites. We have no choice. You. Me. Everyone." Libor, Part 2, Ten, page 249

"Hard to go on feeling outrage for people who behaved to you exactly as they were accused of behaving to everyone else precisely because of which accusations you were outraged for them. Hard, but not impossible. Treslove saw where this was taking him and refused to go there. A principle of truth- political and art truth- stood beyond such personal betrayals and disappointments." Part 2, Eleven, page 266

"Faith wasn't a mystery to him; the mystery was holding on to faith." Part 2, Eleven, page 269

"Now that she was dead he wanted her to have had a better life than he had given her. No husband is ever more magnanimous, he thought, than when he becomes a widower." Part 2, Eleven, page 272

"Is yours some perverted patriotism that burns up territory you're afraid of losing so that it won't fall into enemy hands? Answer me this: Why don't you mind your own fucking business, Shmuel? You won't be judged alongside Israyelis unless you choose to be. You have your country, they have theirs- a fact, to quote you on being married to me, that 'invites neither exceptional sympathy nor exceptional censure'. They are no just ordinary bastards, half right, half wrong, like the rest of us. Because even you, my false, beloved husband, are not ALL wrong." Tyler, Part 2, Eleven, page 274

"Treslove had blemished, discredited, defiled, the story of the three men's long-standing friendship, turned the trust between them, whatever their differences, into a fiction, a delusion, a lie." Part 2, Twelve, page 280

"If any man's death diminishes me, because I am of mankind, then any man's act of murder does the same." Sam, Part 2, Twelve, page 283

"We couldn't have competed with you. Yours was a beginning to end beginnings. You weren't a widower. You weren't even a divorcee. You started from scratch. New woman, new religion. Me and Libor were dead men inhabiting a dead faith. You took both our souls on two counts. Good luck to you. We had no use for them. But you can't pretend the three of us were ever in anything together. We weren't the Three Musketeers. We



died so that you could live, Julian. If that isn't too Christian a thought in such a place."
Sam, Part 2, Twelve, page 285

"Finkler, too, found it hard to find words. He remembered all the arguments he'd had with Libor on the subject. And it pleased him not at all that Libor had surrendered at the last. Some arguments you don't have in order that you will win." Part 2, Twelve, page 287

"Well, the symmetry was broken now. But in truth it had only ever been Treslove's idea and no one else's. Only Treslove was looking for a way out or a way in. Libor had taken his. And Hephzibah had been happy where she was until Treslove had turned up to idealise her into misery." Part 2, Thirteen, page 295

"He was not in charge of himself. Things happened to him. He was not the agent of his own life. He wasn't even living his own life." Part 2, Thirteen, page 301

"She believes he knows she's there but doesn't want to acknowledge her. She has become part of all that disgusts him. Like Libor, he wants out. She's wrong. But it doesn't matter. What she might be wrong about today she will be right about tomorrow."
Part 2, Thirteen, page 305

"It's from Hephzibah, with whom he is in frequent contact, that Samuel Finkler takes his cue. Her sense of incompleteness, of a thing not finished that might never have begun, becomes his sense. He never really knew Treslove either. And that too strikes him as a reason for lamentation. There are no limits to Finkler's mourning." Epilogue, page 307



Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast Julian, Sam and Libor.

Why does Julian refer to Jews as "Finklers"?

What does Julian suspect about his mugging, and how do his friends and family react to his suspicions?

How does Julian feel about Jews, and how does he show this?

Why does Sam become involved with the ASHamed Jews, and how does he feel about Jews in general?

Describe Julian as a person. Would you want to be his friend? Why are Sam and Libor friends with Julian?

Why does Hephzibah lament the end of her relationship with Julian?

Why does Libor commit suicide?