

Reading Guide
Light Fell
by Evan Fallenberg

1. Which character did you care about most in the story? Which one did you care about least? Why?
2. Did your attitude toward Joseph, Yoel, or Rebecca change as you got to know them? In what ways?
3. Do you think it significant that Joseph's children were all boys? Do you think a girl might have reacted differently?
4. Near the end of the book, Joseph says, "I made a choice—the most awful, terrifying, sobering choice of my life." Did he make a well thought out choice when he left home, or did his attraction for Yoel blind him to the consequences and propel him into a course of action he could never have envisaged previously? What choices were made by other characters in the story, and what might this tell us about the role of choice in our own lives?
5. Rebecca seems to have accepted her situation. Could things have turned out differently if she had lashed out instead of nurturing the "snake" inside her?
6. If Joseph had decided to go back to his family after Yoel died—"while we'll still have you," as his father said—do you think he could have resumed his former life?
7. On page 50, Yoel says, "...the doubts will creep in, and the guilt. And the guilt will last until the next time we meet, when we have begun to wonder, begun to know, in our separate prisons, that we have crossed a dangerous boundary into a country that demands too much of citizens like us—shame and abhorrence followed by complete repentance, or the shattering of our lives as we know them." Joseph replies, "Can't we love one another *and* God?" Do you think Joseph was naïve in thinking this? Did he truly believe it? How does this reflect their different attitudes to their relationship?
8. Joseph goes to visit Yoel's widow, assuming she doesn't know who he is and without even knowing what he's going to say to her. She greets him with the words, "My husband's lover and assassin," curses him, and throws him out. Yet Joseph feels "mischievous and daring" when he leaves. Why would this encounter have such an effect on him?
9. Yoel's conflict is reflected in the way he regards their relationship: on the one hand he considers it "self-interested and hedonistic," yet in the long letter he wrote to Joseph, treasured through all those years, he says, "It was His intention that we know each other in order to know Him, that our spiritual and physical love is the love He feels for all creation." What was Joseph's greatest conflict, both when he left home and in the years that followed?

10. At the “birthday dinner,” Joseph feels he must make the boys “see the unfolding of events through his eyes.” How successful is he in this? Is Joseph trying to convince them that his leaving was actually in their best interests at the time? How does each of the boys come to terms with what Joseph tells them?

11. What role does memory play in the unraveling of the story—Joseph’s memories of his boys as children; his memories of his meetings with Yoel; Daniel’s vivid memory of his mother’s “suicide attempt,” as opposed to his total lack of recollection of their outings with their father; Rebecca’s memories of their family life and of her reaction to Joseph’s leaving?

12. At the end of the book, Joseph says to Daniel, “Sometimes you just have to let go.” What do you think he means?

