



HARE AND TORTOISE RACE ACROSS ISRAEL

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You know the story of the tortoise and the hare, right? In this version, they race across Israel – and see many sights along the way. At least, Tortoise does....

JEWISH CONCEPTS

This contemporary version of the well-known tale about the hare and the tortoise underscores Israel's great diversity, both of the land and its people. From the bustling city of Tel Aviv through the historical sights of Jerusalem, and over the hills of the Judean desert to the shores of the Dead Sea, this very small country (only the size of New Jersey!) boasts a vastly varied landscape.

The fabric of Israel is woven from strands of many people and cultures. Residents are Jewish, Bedouin, Christian and Muslim. They are religiously observant and secular. The majority of Israeli Jews are immigrants who brought with them traditions, music, language and recipes from places as diverse as Yemen, Russia, Argentina, Ethiopia, Morocco, and the United States.

Ethics of the Ancestors, a Jewish text of moral tenets, teaches, "Do not seek greatness for yourself, and do not lust for honor" (*Pirke Avot* 6:5). Unfortunately for Hare, only after he loses the race does he come to understand this. Slow-but-steady Tortoise, who exemplifies two core Jewish values, *anava*, humility, and *malacha*, hard work, is rewarded with a happy finish.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Throughout the race, Tortoise calls "*Shalom*" to everyone he passes. This Hebrew word has three meanings: hello, goodbye and peace. What meaning of the word do you think Tortoise implies as he greets his friends? How do you show warm greetings to people you meet?

When Hare arrives in Jerusalem -- believing he has plenty of time to spare! -- he visits the *shuk*, the famous marketplace also known as *Mahane Yehuda*. Much of the shuk is an open-air market where natives and tourists alike are frequently seen shopping for cheeses, fish, nuts, yummy baked goods and every kind of fruit and vegetable imaginable.

Olives, carrots, rugelach, baklava, falafel, apricots and persimmons, all mentioned in this story, are just some of the wonderful flavors of Israel. If there is something on this list you've never tasted, why not give it a try? Take a trip to your local grocery store or Farmers' Market and see what you can find. Challenge yourself to serve some Israeli food at every meal for a whole week!

Compare where you live with the landscape of Israel. What do you see in the pictures of the book that you would never see at home? Which places in the book would you most like to visit? Why?