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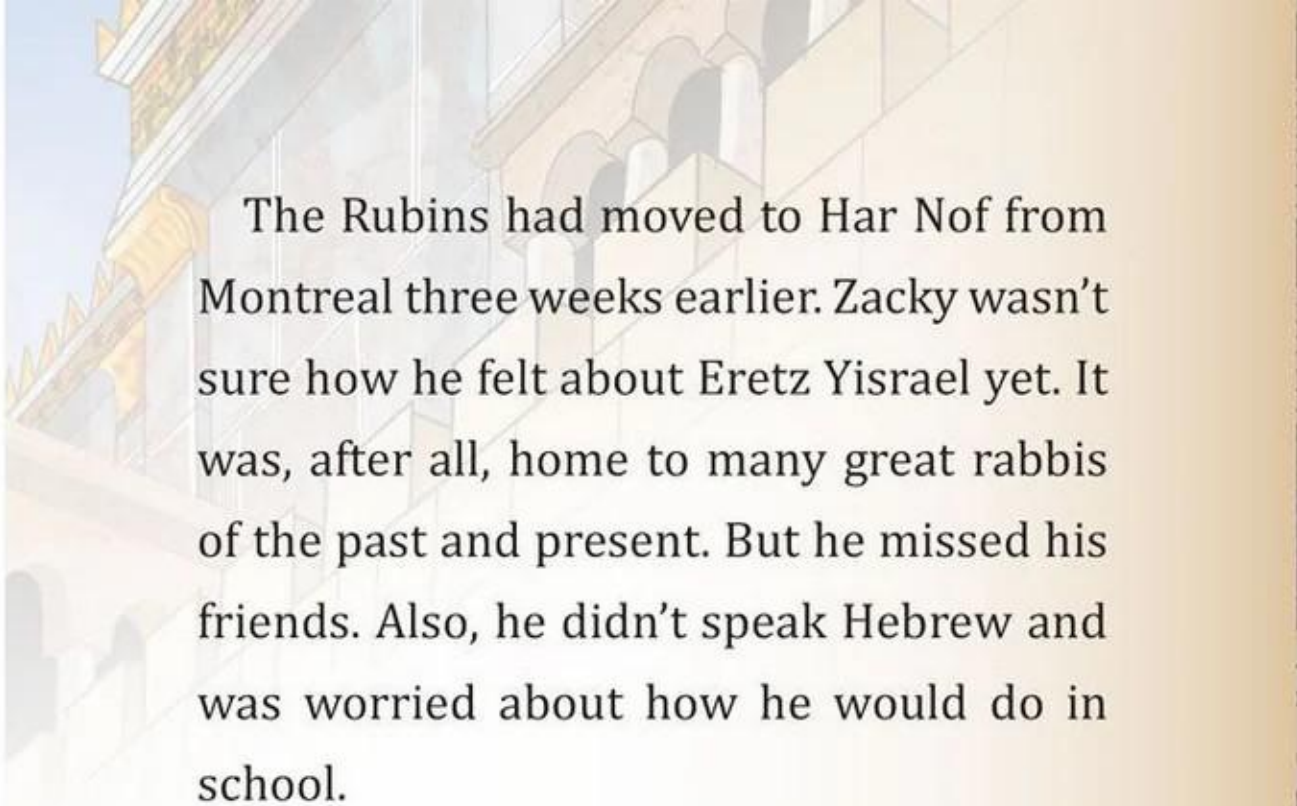
CHAPTER 1

WHAT'S THE RUSH?

“Zechariah, you’re going to be late!”

Ten-year-old Zacky Rubin dropped his book and jumped out of bed. He had completely lost track of time! He rushed down the hall, past the now-empty cardboard boxes. He poked his head into the kitchen but didn’t see his mother. As if sensing Zacky was looking for them, his mother called out, “We’re in the sukkah!”





The Rubins had moved to Har Nof from Montreal three weeks earlier. Zacky wasn't sure how he felt about Eretz Yisrael yet. It was, after all, home to many great rabbis of the past and present. But he missed his friends. Also, he didn't speak Hebrew and was worried about how he would do in school.

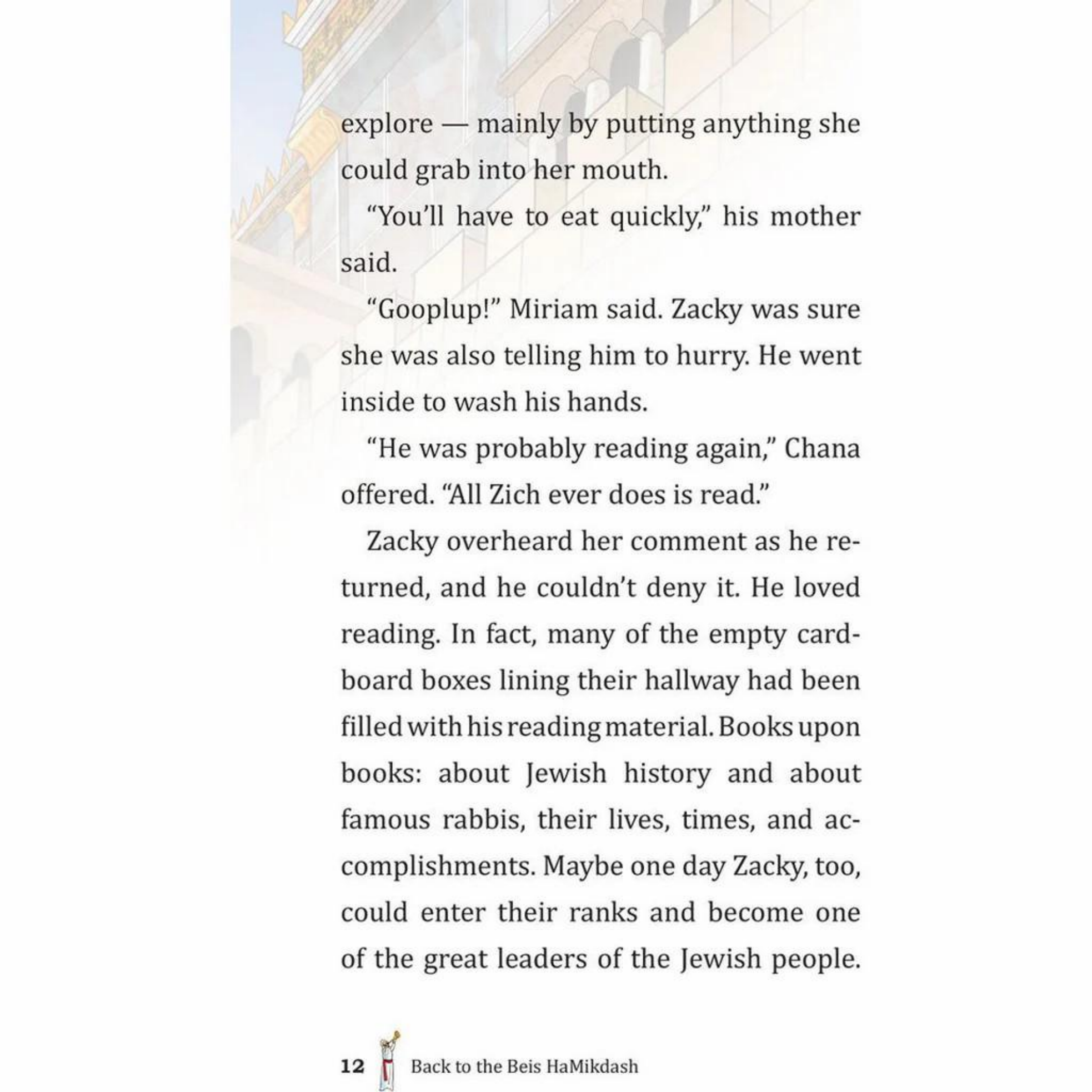
Zacky stepped onto the balcony where his father had built a modest sukkah, just large enough for their family. He found that his mother had prepared him a grilled cheese sandwich, his favorite.

"C'mon, Zacky, hurry up!"

Zacky's eight-year-old sister, Chana, was already at the table eating her breakfast. Miriam, the latest addition to the Rubin household, was sitting on her mother's lap. At seven months old, she was beginning to







explore — mainly by putting anything she could grab into her mouth.

“You’ll have to eat quickly,” his mother said.

“Gooplup!” Miriam said. Zacky was sure she was also telling him to hurry. He went inside to wash his hands.

“He was probably reading again,” Chana offered. “All Zich ever does is read.”

Zacky overheard her comment as he returned, and he couldn’t deny it. He loved reading. In fact, many of the empty cardboard boxes lining their hallway had been filled with his reading material. Books upon books: about Jewish history and about famous rabbis, their lives, times, and accomplishments. Maybe one day Zacky, too, could enter their ranks and become one of the great leaders of the Jewish people.



But in the meantime, he was content just to wake up on time for cheder.

“I’m sorry I didn’t hear you,” Zacky apologized, after taking a bite of his sandwich. “What’s the rush?”

“We’re going to Yerushalayim!” Chana exclaimed.

“We’re already in Yerushalayim,” Zacky said, thinking, *I must be missing something.*

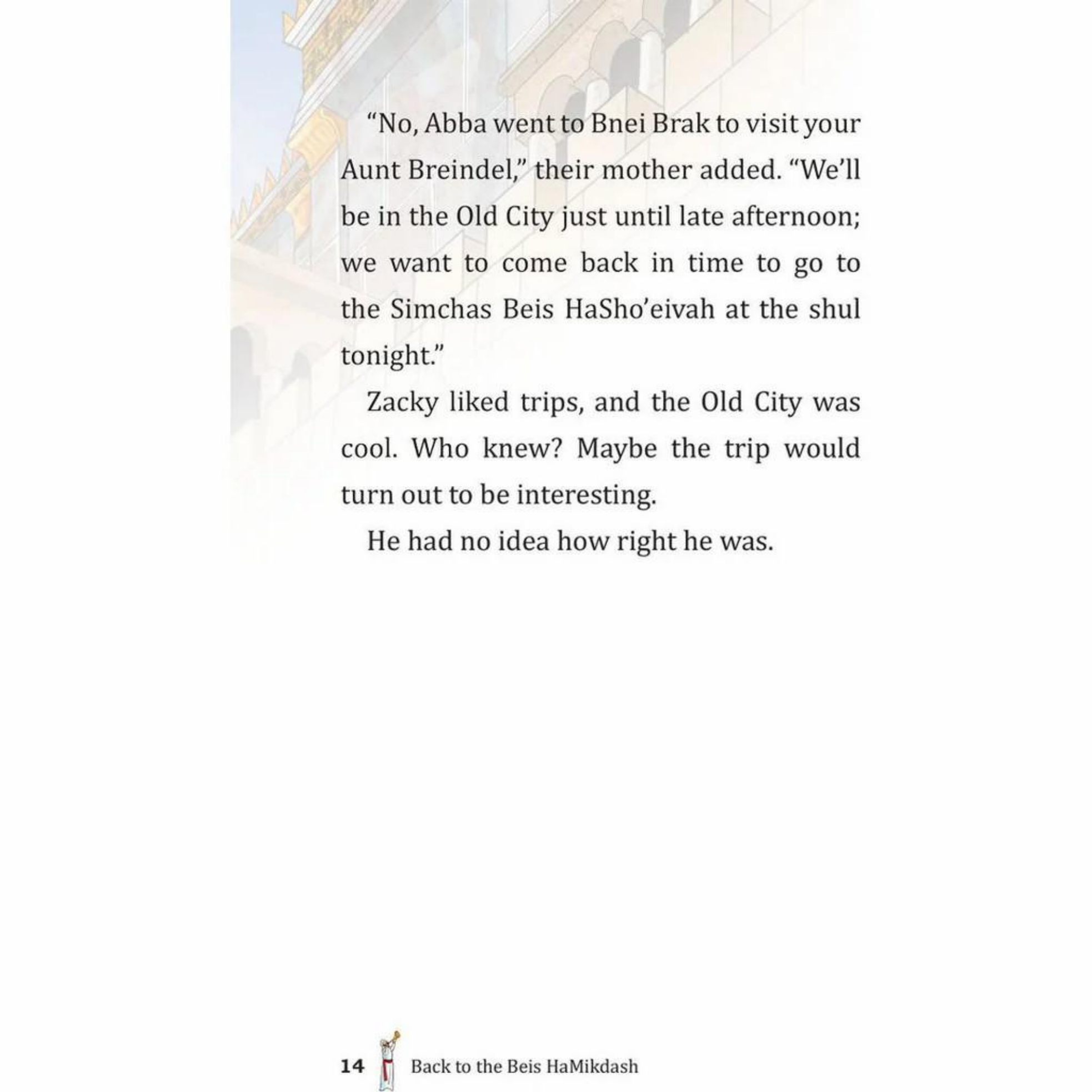
“The Old City,” his mother explained, tugging a napkin from Miriam’s pudgy fist. It had been headed straight for her mouth. “You know, the Kosel, and that area.”

“I’m putting a note in the Kosel,” Chana announced. “I didn’t get to since we moved here, and I want to real bad.”

Really badly, Zacky corrected.

“Whatever.” His sister shrugged. “Abba’s not coming, though.”



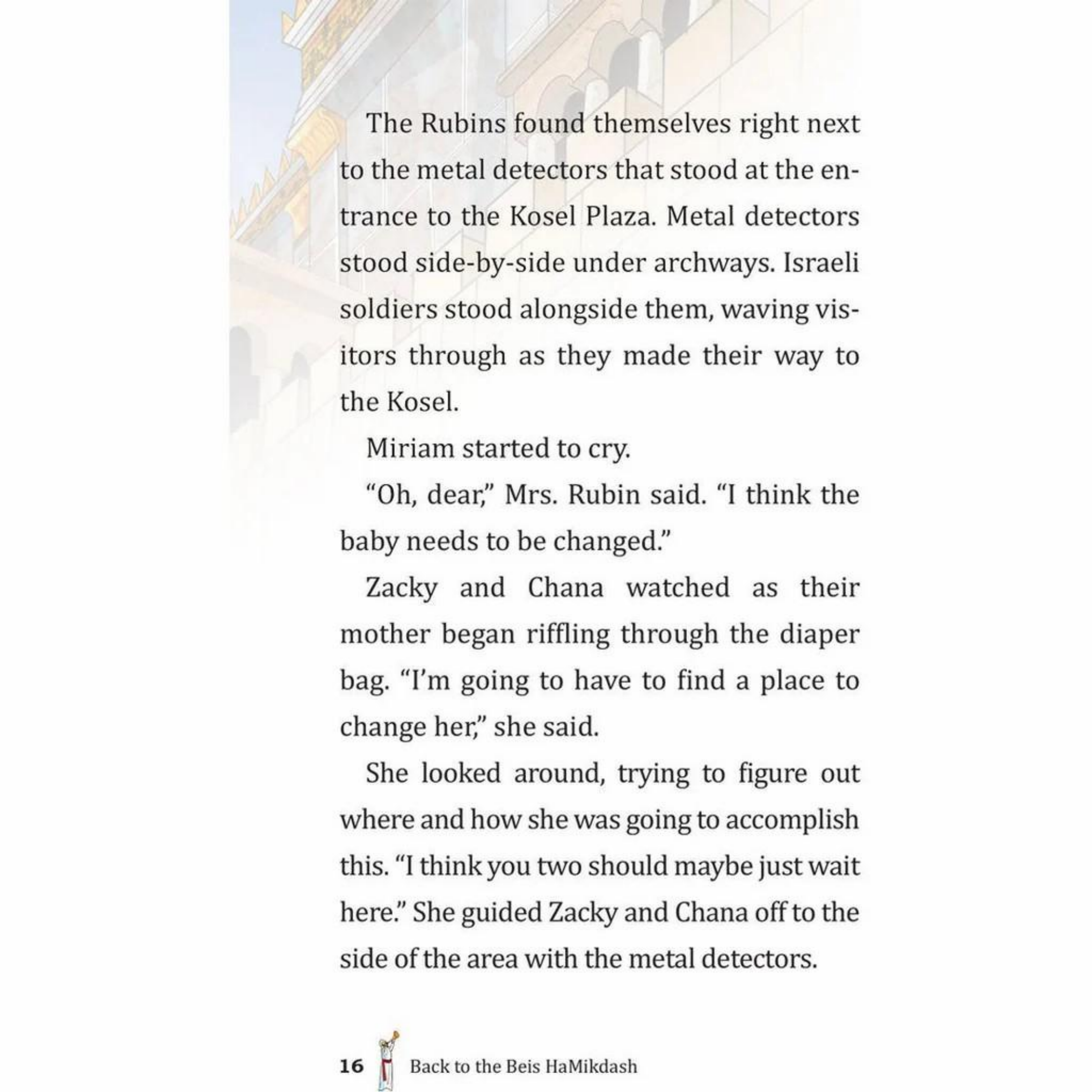


“No, Abba went to Bnei Brak to visit your Aunt Breindel,” their mother added. “We’ll be in the Old City just until late afternoon; we want to come back in time to go to the Simchas Beis HaSho’eivah at the shul tonight.”

Zacky liked trips, and the Old City was cool. Who knew? Maybe the trip would turn out to be interesting.

He had no idea how right he was.





The Rubins found themselves right next to the metal detectors that stood at the entrance to the Kosel Plaza. Metal detectors stood side-by-side under archways. Israeli soldiers stood alongside them, waving visitors through as they made their way to the Kosel.

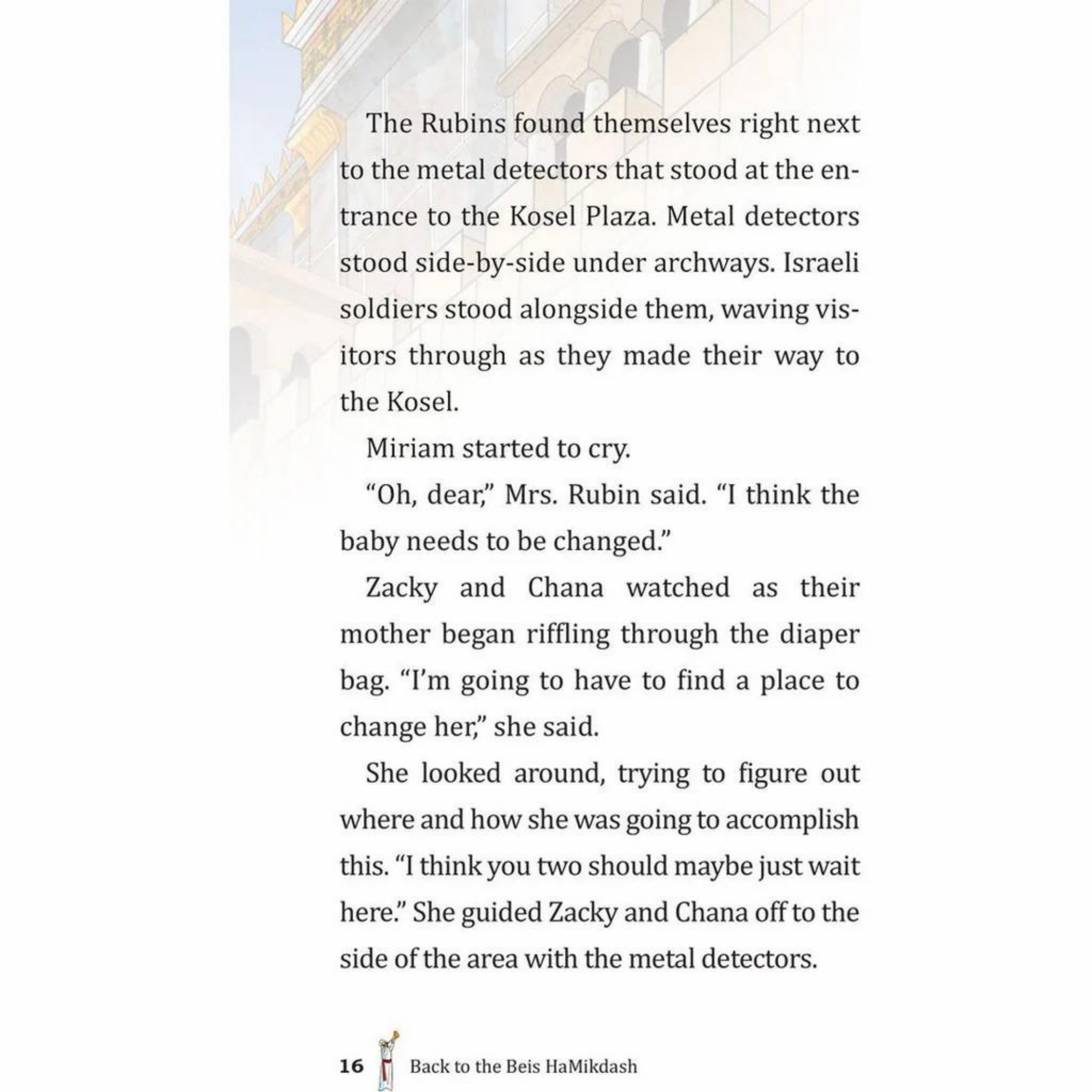
Miriam started to cry.

“Oh, dear,” Mrs. Rubin said. “I think the baby needs to be changed.”

Zacky and Chana watched as their mother began riffling through the diaper bag. “I’m going to have to find a place to change her,” she said.

She looked around, trying to figure out where and how she was going to accomplish this. “I think you two should maybe just wait here.” She guided Zacky and Chana off to the side of the area with the metal detectors.





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