

# The Treasure of Tel Maresha

By Tammar Stein | Illustrated by Barbara Bongini

# READING & ACTIVITY GUIDE

## About the Book

Becca Goldstein couldn't enjoy her family vacation to Israel. It was too hot, and the archeology dig in Tel Maresha was boring. But most importantly, it was just more time away from her home and friends that she would be leaving behind forever when her dad started his new job in a different state. What's worse: Becca lost her friendship bracelet made by her best friend, an all too upsetting reminder that they were about to be separated.

But as her family finds ancient treasures at the site, Becca starts to feel a connection to the people who once lived in Tel Maresha. The clay pots they made, not seen in centuries, were preserved in this cave. And the more Becca thinks about the families that lived here, the more inspired she is to look for more treasures. This leads her to find something extraordinary.

Two thousand years earlier in Maresha, Rebeka couldn't believe her family was leaving. Generations of her family had lived there. But when a Greek trader offers to bring her family along with his caravan to Athens, her parents think they will be safer by moving. Tensions in Jerusalem have been mounting between the Edomites and Jews, and Athens was a wealthy city that would flock to buy Rebeka's family wool.

But Rebeka didn't want to move. Her entire life was in Maresha, including her best friend Adah, an Edomite. She couldn't understand why everyone was unable to get along anymore. The two friends decide to make parting gifts for each other: pottery from Adah's family business and kerchiefs made from Rebeka's family wool. As they say goodbye, Rebeka's family packs quickly to make it to the caravan on time, leaving behind some of their precious belongings in hope for a better future in Athens.

Modern-day Becca finds one of these treasures left by the Rebeka so long ago.



## Key Themes:

Moving; Coping with changes; Coming-of-age; Family

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Ages 8–10 years

Use these questions to preface and conclude a reading of this book with children.

Encourage them to share their observations as you read the book together, and take time to linger on pages or spreads that generate more discussion.

### Before Reading

Have you ever been unhappy about something you're supposed to be happy about?

### After Reading

- How did Becca's feelings about the trip change over the course of the dig?
- What are some similarities between Rebeka and Becca? What are some differences?
- If Rebeka could send a message to Becca in the present day, what do you think she would say?
- Did anything surprise you about the descriptions of how people lived 2,000 years ago?
- Have you ever found something that somebody lost? Were you able to return it to them? What did that feel like?

### Optional: Extension Activity

Imagine you are an artist who designs and decorates pottery for people in your community. Your assignment is to decorate a flowerpot. But before you begin, think about who will use your flowerpot: an important public figure? A local family? Will you use geometric designs, or symbols and images that reflect your community? Use paint or markers to decorate your pot.

While it dries, imagine your community is abandoned over the centuries. Buildings collapse and many personal belongings are broken and buried, including your precious flowerpot. Put your pot into a paper bag and gently smash the flowerpot using a hammer. Shake the bag gently to mix up the pieces.

Now, imagine one thousand years have passed since you designed your flowerpot. An archaeologist discovers the site where your community once stood. After months of digging, she unearths many pieces of pottery. If you were that archaeologist, could you put the pieces together? Remove the larger pieces of the shattered flowerpot out of the bag. Use glue or tape to try and reassemble them.