

The Grapevine

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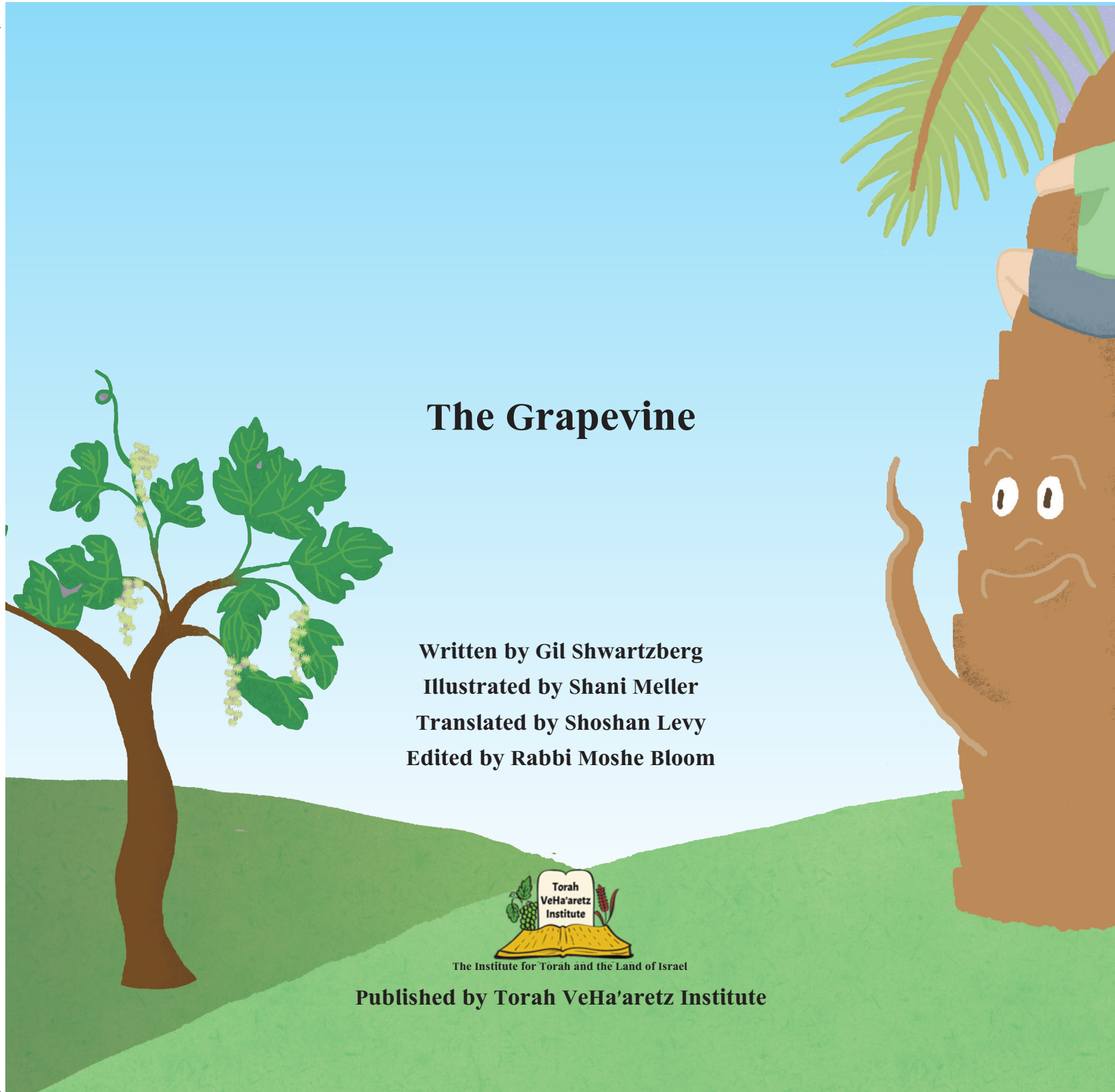
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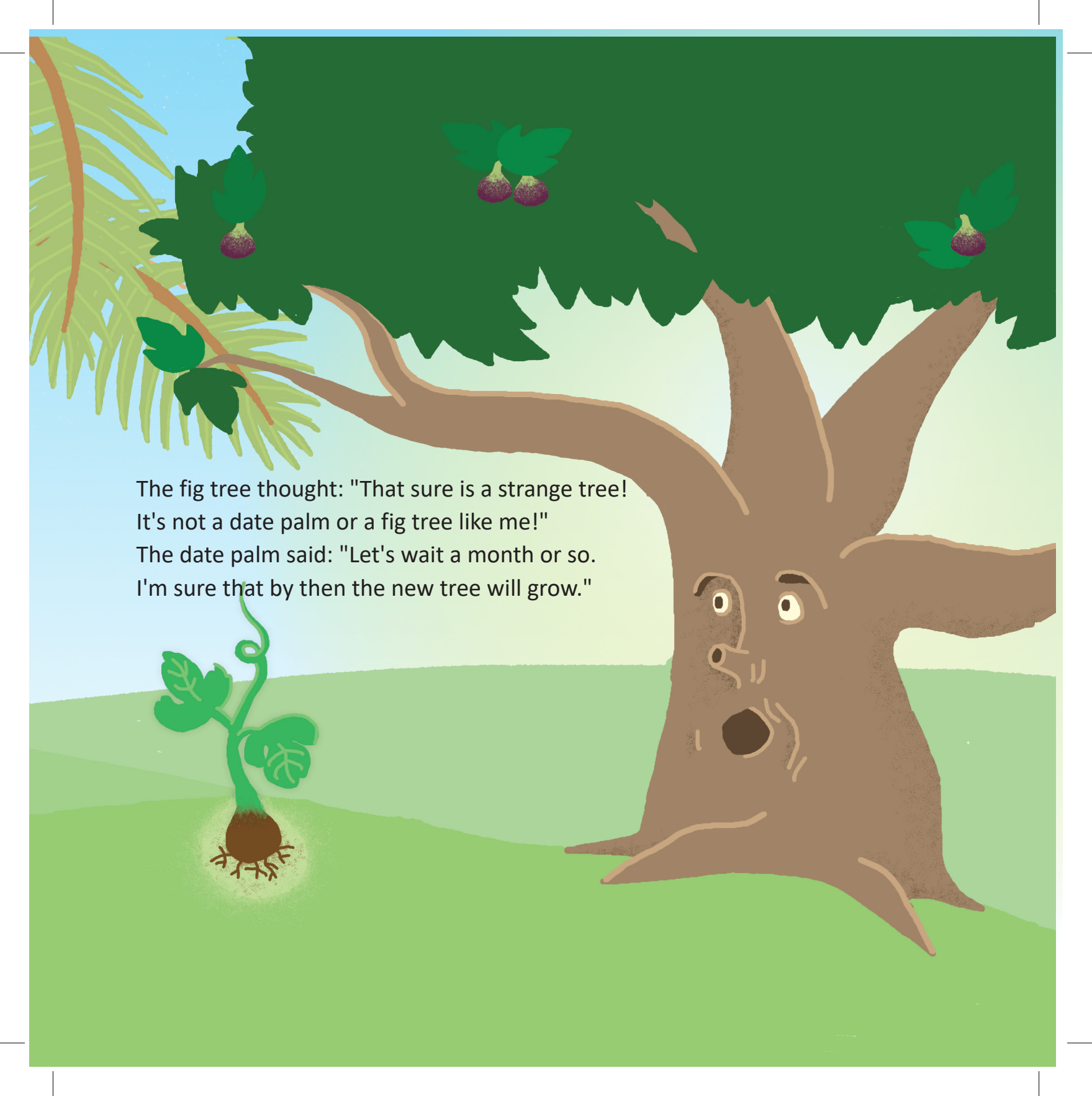
This is the story of a small, simple pit,
But no one knows anything at all about it.
Maybe it rode here with leaves in the breeze?
Or rolled here with apples that fell from the trees?
Maybe a dog carried it here on its head?
Or maybe it saw something scary and fled?
Hashem's ways are hidden and we simply don't know
The way that a pit travels to and fro.



A cartoon illustration of a tree with a brown trunk and green fronds. The tree has a face with large white eyes and a small brown mouth. It is standing on a green grassy hill. A small white dog with brown spots is standing next to the tree. A large brown pit is visible in the ground next to the tree. The background is a light blue sky.

How the pit got here no one can tell,
But it stopped right here in the Land of Israel.
The pit decided: "I'm staying here, I can see.
I'll sit between the date palm and the fig tree."

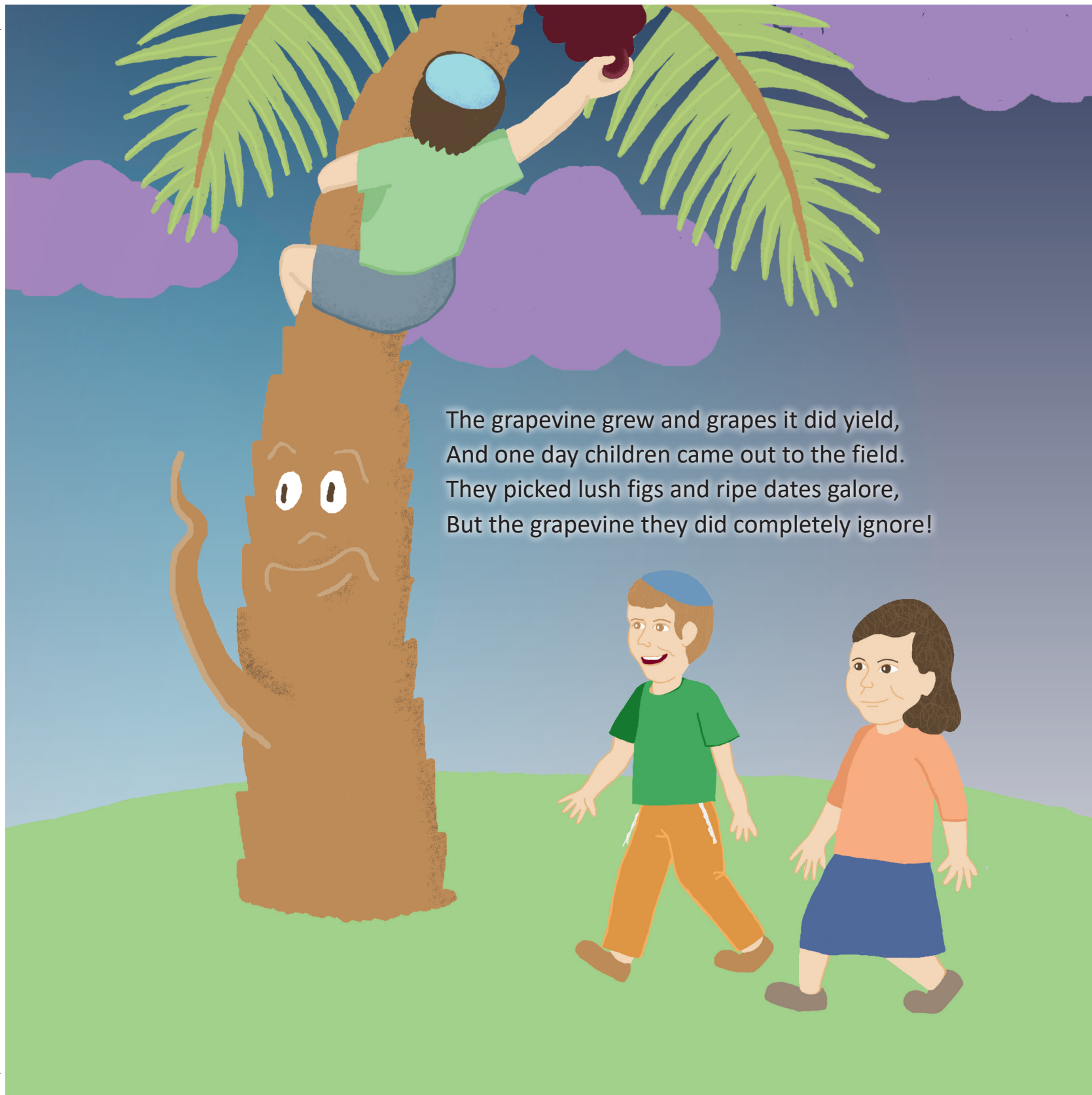
And then all at once the pit began to sprout,
And teeny tiny roots began to peek out.
A little stem grew with green leaves all around,
And the pit took root inside of the ground.



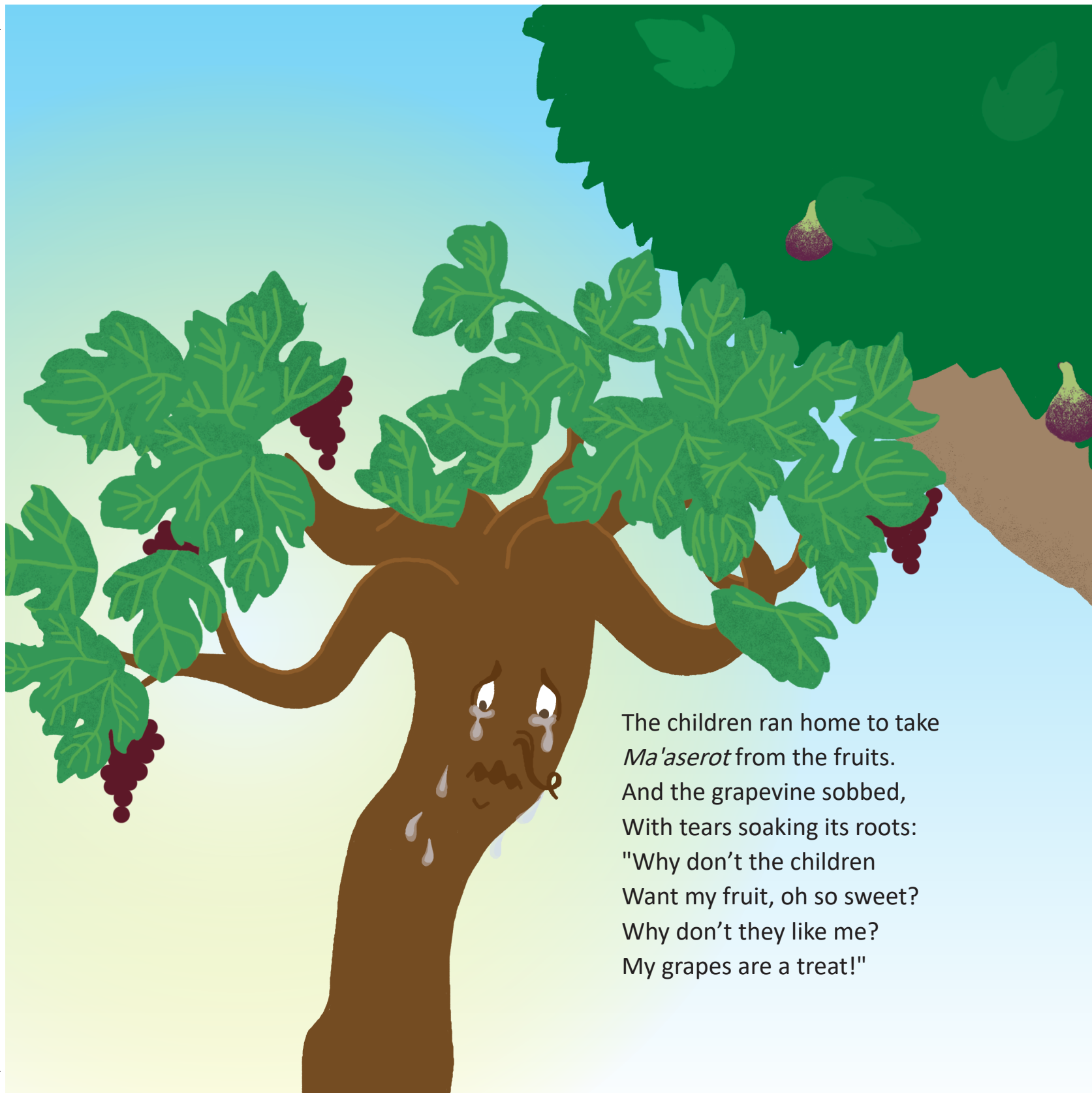
The fig tree thought: "That sure is a strange tree!
It's not a date palm or a fig tree like me!"
The date palm said: "Let's wait a month or so.
I'm sure that by then the new tree will grow."

It rained and it rained day in and day out,
And then little buds began to come out.
The buds turned into clusters that looked oh so fine,
And the fig tree exclaimed: "Of course! It's a grapevine!"






The grapevine grew and grapes it did yield,
And one day children came out to the field.
They picked lush figs and ripe dates galore,
But the grapevine they did completely ignore!



The children ran home to take
Ma'aserot from the fruits.
And the grapevine sobbed,
With tears soaking its roots:
"Why don't the children
Want my fruit, oh so sweet?
Why don't they like me?
My grapes are a treat!"

An illustration of two anthropomorphic trees. On the left is a fig tree with a brown trunk and a wide, flat canopy of green leaves. Several purple figs are hanging from the leaves. The tree has a large, open mouth and wide, surprised eyes. On the right is a palm tree with a tall, slender brown trunk and a crown of green fronds. It has a small, downturned mouth and wide, surprised eyes. The background is a light blue sky with a yellow ground area at the bottom.

Said fig tree: "Don't worry and dry off your tears.
Your grapes are still *orlah* for the first three years."
Palm said: "*Orlah* is forbidden to eat or to use,
But soon your sweet grapes the children will choose."



One year passed and another went by,
And the grapevine was lonely but tried not to cry.
When the children arrived to pick fruit with great care,
They only took fruit from the other trees there.





It was hard for the grapevine, truth be told.
Strong winds blew by day and the nights were so cold.
When crows came to visit and pecked at its fruit,
Or sat on its branches, sometimes it hurt.

Through it all the grapevine
Did hope and did pray
That blessings would be made
On its grapes one day.
And that Hashem would help it
Grow big, sweet, and strong,
So its grapes could be squeezed
For *kiddush* before long.





At last the good times
Finally rolled around,
And the children returned,
Their joy did abound.
But now,
Unlike the previous time,
The children picked clusters
From the grapevine!





They brought baskets decked out with flowers so fine,
And filled them up quickly with grapes from the vine.
Date palm and fig tree were pleased as can be;
They didn't mind that less fruit was picked from each tree.



Grapevine was bursting
With joy to be alive,
Glad that finally, at last,
The fourth year did arrive!
The children marched to Jerusalem
With baskets full to the brim
To eat *neta revay*,
Called *kodesh hilulim*.

May it be *Hashem's* will
That we all merit speedily
To eat *neta revay* in Jerusalem
In holiness and purity!

Dear Parents and Children,

We accompany the grapevine, starting when it is a small wandering seed, along its journey to the Land of Israel, where it takes root and slowly but surely grows into a grapevine.

While the vine is firmly planted in the ground, its fruit still have a long way to go. For three years its fruit is considered *orlah* and is forbidden to eat or use. In the fourth year, when the Beit Hamikdash was standing, the fruit would be eaten in Jerusalem. It was called *neta revay*, fruit of the fourth year.

Anticipation

The grapevine waits a long time—three whole years—for the children to pick its fruit. Did you ever wait a long time for something to happen? What was it? How did you feel while you were waiting?

Take the opportunity to talk with your children about the grapevine's "feelings" as they appear in the story. What did the grapevine pray for? Do you think its prayers were answered? Did you ever pray to *Hashem* when you were waiting and hoping for something to happen?

Mitzvot of the Land

In the story about the grapevine we learn about the *mitzvah* of *orlah* and the *mitzvah* of *neta revay*. What do you think these *mitzvot* teach us? What about the children who waited to eat from the grapes—how did they feel? What did they learn about this long period of anticipation?

There are other special *mitzvot* tied to the Land of Israel, as well. Can you name any of them?

Grapes, Grape Juice, and Wine

There are two special blessings that we make on grapes. What are they? When do we say each one? The wine that we make from grapes accompanies us all year long. On which holidays and special occasions do we use wine?

We hope you have a pleasant read and that you enjoy the sweetness of the fruit of the Land of Israel.

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