



IT COULD ALWAYS BE WORSE

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In this beloved tale from Eastern Europe, a distraught man discovers a positive attitude for dealing with the overcrowding in his small home.

Folktales play a central role in Jewish literature. While many of the most well-known stories of this type originate in Eastern Europe, other Jewish tales are set in places far removed from that part of the world. The Museum of Ethnology and Folklore in Haifa has collected over 20,000 different folktales from Jewish communities from North Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia and America, as well as from non-Jewish communities living in Israel.

Your family might enjoy considering these ideas that arise in the story:

- What would it really be like to live in a one-room hut with so many people?
- Why did the rabbi's advice make the man feel better? What advice would you have given the man?
- What is the most crowded situation you
- remember? Perhaps you've participated in a very large seder during Passover?
- What might be a good alternative title for this story?

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Often prominent in Jewish folktales—and in this particular story—is a rabbi who dispenses advice and justice. His guidance turns out to be truly wise—even when it may appear a bit odd to us at first. Jews in the *shtetl* (from the Yiddish

for “town,” small Jewish settlements from the 16th to early-20th century) retained their independence and self-respect through their intellect and humor, both of which are joyfully evident in this story

It Could Always Be Worse can act as a marvelous steppingstone for a guessing game. Have fun! With your children, take turns making the sounds of the animals in the story and guessing the animal being imitated. A variation is to assign each person an animal; everyone makes his/her designated sound simultaneously—and loudly! Would anyone in your home enjoy this uproar? Pj

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