



Gavriel and the Giant Puzzle

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities

Gavriel and the Giant Puzzle

For his birthday, Gavriel gets a puzzle with a thousand pieces.

The picture on the box shows a tall lighthouse on a rocky shore, with blue waves and a pink sunset. Gavriel dumps the pieces onto the dining room table. They cover it from edge to edge.

"Wow," he says. "That's a lot of little pieces."

He picks one up. It is blue. He picks up another. Also blue. Then another. Blue, blue, blue. Which part of the sea do they belong to? He has no idea.

After ten minutes, he has joined exactly two pieces. He flops back in his chair.

"This is impossible. It will take a hundred years."

Zaidy comes in with a cup of tea and looks at the table. "Ah. A big one."

"I'm never going to finish it."

Zaidy sits down. "Do you know how I do a puzzle this size?"

"How?"

"I don't look at the whole thing. That's too much for anybody. First I find the edges. Straight sides only."

Gavriel sorts through the pile. Soon he has a little heap of pieces with one flat side. "Found some!"

"Good. Now just the corners. There are only four."

It takes a few minutes, but he finds them. He clicks each one into place and slides them apart to make the frame. The outline of a big rectangle appears on the table.

"Now it doesn't look so huge," says Zaidy. "It looks like something you can fill."

"But there are still so many pieces."

"So we pick a small piece of the picture. Like the lighthouse top. Let's find all the red and white ones."

Gavriel searches. Red stripe, white stripe, red stripe. Click, click, click. After half an hour, the top of the lighthouse stands in the middle of the frame, tiny and perfect.

"Look at that," he says.

"One small piece at a time," says Zaidy.

Zaidy also tells him a secret. "When you're stuck, walk away for a minute. Come back, and a piece you couldn't see before will jump out at you." Gavriel tries it, and it works twice.

The next day, Gavriel sits down again for just twenty minutes. He does the sunset, pink and orange. The day after, he does the rocks. Each evening, a new patch of the picture appears. His sister Rivky wanders by and adds a few pieces too. Even Totty hums a tune and fits in a wave.

On the ninth day, there is only one blue hole in the sea.

Gavriel holds the very last piece. It is so light in his hand. He presses it in. Click.

"I did it!" he shouts.

Zaidy puts down his book and comes over. "Beautiful. Now what did you learn?"

"That a hundred years was wrong," says Gavriel, grinning. "It took nine days."

"And what was the secret?"

"Edges first. Then little bits. Not all of it at once."

That Shabbos, the family stands around the table and admires the puzzle. Gavriel feels tall. When his teacher gives a long project the next week, he doesn't groan. He finds the edges first.



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. How many pieces does the puzzle have?

2. What does Zaidy say to find first?

3. How many days does it take?

4. What is on the picture?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. Gavriel's sister helps with a few pieces. Fact / Guess
2. Gavriel gives up on the second day. Fact / Guess
3. There are four corners. Fact / Guess
4. Zaidy brings a cup of tea. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. Why does the puzzle feel too big at first?

2. What helps Gavriel keep going?

3. What big job can you break into small pieces?



Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: PUZZLE, LIGHTHOUSE, EDGES, CORNERS, SUNSET, PIECES

I	F	O	P	Y	K	V	H	E	A	D
P	W	C	N	J	T	A	M	C	I	H
U	L	F	E	E	C	B	G	A	U	L
C	W	E	P	N	F	W	B	L	I	R
O	E	N	P	I	E	C	E	S	L	V
R	L	I	G	H	T	H	O	U	S	E
N	S	U	N	S	E	T	E	V	S	R
E	E	D	G	E	S	R	H	W	S	W
R	J	H	J	T	B	O	T	R	W	E
S	E	P	P	A	V	R	W	H	E	Y
P	U	Z	Z	L	E	D	K	T	J	V



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. EZLZPU = _____

2. ISOHLGUTEH = _____

3. ESCNORR = _____

4. UNTSSE = _____

5. CEEPIS = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"One small piece at a time."

"Let's find the edges first."

"It looks smaller now."



Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Small Steps Chart

#	Big job	First small piece	Done!
Job 1			
Job 2			
Job 3			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw the lighthouse puzzle with one blue hole left in the sea.





Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. One thousand
2. The edges
3. Nine
4. A lighthouse

Fact or guess: 1 Fact; 2 Guess; 3 Fact; 4 Fact

Scrambled words: PUZZLE, LIGHTHOUSE, CORNERS, SUNSET, PIECES

Think and write: answers will vary; talk them over together.