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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

## THE PUZZLE PIECE ALWAYS FITS!

### PARSHAS ACHAREI MOS

Life's challenges can cause untold stress. However, we can feel calm, safe, and secure when we remember that Hashem runs the world. Events that occur are not haphazard. Rather, they are all part of Hashem's master plan. We can visualize a large puzzle. Each challenge is a critical piece in our personal jigsaw puzzle of life.

The following two stories can help us with this visualization:

*Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein is a well-known educator. One of his programs enables troubled youths to turn their lives around. He learned about equine therapy which involves activities with horses to promote therapy for mental health. So, Rabbi Wallerstein decided to buy a ranch to start this new program. He searched for years, trying to find the right location. Rabbi Wallerstein wondered why Hashem did not*

*listen to his prayers to help him find an appropriate ranch. Finally, he found the perfect location. It had a large indoor area with many horse stalls. The house on the premises was large enough for his program's needs. It seemed as if it was brand new and had never been used. When questioned, the real estate agent explained that the owner had been a millionaire. He had spent a few years building a magnificent house and grounds for his prize horse. Then, he had a massive heart attack the day that the house was completed and never used it. Now Rabbi Wallerstein understood that Hashem had listened all along to his prayers and had been preparing the perfect location for him. Rabbi Wallerstein said, "Sometimes we think that we have been forgotten by Hashem. With proper bitachon (belief) we realize that Hashem is working for us behind the scenes." (Night of Emunah by Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky)*

*"And Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon's two sons...." (Vayikra 16:1)*

*A similar theme revolves around the story of the Mir Yeshiva in Europe. In early 1941, seizing the opportunity to escape from the Nazis and the Soviets, the rabbis and students of the Mir Yeshiva traveled as a group. They traveled across the Soviet Union to Japan and then to Shanghai, where they spent the rest of the war. The Mir emerged as the only eastern European yeshiva to survive the Holocaust intact. It is interesting to note that in Shanghai, the yeshiva found a perfect building on the outskirts of the town. The*

*building had enough space for all the students and had a large kitchen and dining hall. The story behind their building is fascinating! Silas Haroon, was brought into Shanghai from Iraq by the Sassoon family to help manage their real estate business. There, he became independently wealthy. Although he was an assimilated Jew, he but he built a synagogue in Shanghai, in memory of his father, Aharon. He built the synagogue on the outskirts of town where it was not accessible to the public. There is no evidence that the synagogue had ever used for Jewish worship. Yet, fourteen years after its completion, the Mir Yeshiva managed to secure the Beth Aharon structure for their learning. The synagogue was converted into the beis medrash. **There were exactly 252 seats in the synagogue, and there were exactly 252 yeshiva students who filled those seats!** (Silas's Folly: The Beth Aharon*

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Synagogue in Shanghai and how it Saved the Mirrer Yeshiva by Vera Schwarcz)

Clearly, Hashem orchestrated events, many years earlier, to provide the Mirrer Yeshiva with exactly what it needed!

**When challenges come our way or we hear nerve racking news, we can stay calm,**

**knowing that Hashem is in control. All that occurs is part of Hashem's plan.**

We see the benefit of visualization from the parsha. Hashem told Moshe to tell Aharon that he was forbidden to enter the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. He was only permitted to enter on Yom Kippur and only at certain times of that day. The **Torah** states, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon's two sons.... (Vayikra 16:1)" The following pasuk states, "And Hashem said to Moshe, tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will into the Holy of Holies...." **Rashi** (see **Sifsei Chachamim and Sforno**) is troubled as to why the first pasuk says that Hashem spoke to Moshe and then then repeats in the second pasuk that Hashem again spoke to Moshe. It seems that Hashem gave Moshe two directives to tell

Aharon. **Rashi** quotes Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah who illustrated both directives with a parable: A doctor visited a sick person and told him, "Do not eat cold things or sleep in a damp place!" Another doctor came and told the patient, "Do not eat cold things, or sleep in a damp place so that you not die as Mr. So-and-so died!" Certainly, the second doctor's warning, which was more graphic, was more powerful.

**Rabbi Henach Leibowitz** zt"l pointed out that we can understand why a regular person might need a graphic warning. However, why would someone as great as Aharon need such a warning? Wouldn't it have sufficed to simply tell Aharon that he was usually forbidden to enter the Holy of Holies? Yet, Hashem felt that the graphic warning was necessary even for someone as great as Aharon. On some level, the added warning would make a difference to Aharon, as well. If it would make a difference to him, certainly it would make a difference to us.

One can be aware of the serious punishment for sinning as well as the wonderful reward for performing mitzvos. However, the evil inclination is very strong and in the moment of challenge, one may tempted and momentarily forget the importance of doing the right thing.

**Visualizing the rewards or consequences of our actions  
can help strengthen us against the onslaught of the evil inclination.**

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*Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.*

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