

The Jerusalem Teddy Park Sundial

Early on a Saturday morning, two excited people are speeding in a small, light blue car, on the road to Jerusalem. They are Maty Grunberg, the artist, and Ilan Manulis, the astronomer, director of the Weizman Institute Observatory. Ilan, being a nocturnal star gazer, grumbles and complains about the early hour, one his journal does not even have an entry for. Maty, being Maty, is sharp and awake at the break of dawn. Both greet the rising sun; it – the sun – it the reason for this trip: to take the final measurements of Maty Grunberg's sundial sculpture. The sundial is at Teddy Park, which is now nearing its completion, in Jerusalem – the navel of the world. It stands across from the Tower of David and the Old City walls, above Hutzot Hayotzer Lane, below Mishkenot Sha'ananim, across from Mamilla Mall, as it is called these days.

This is not Grunberg's first sundial. Another sundial created by him stands in front of the New York Hall of Science, yet another tells the time in a private mansion in Ascot, England, and yet another measures sun-time in the mountains near Grenada, Spain. As any obsessed artist, Maty is intimately familiar with sun-time, and so is Ilan, being in the process of founding a new observatory on the edge of the crater in Mitzpeh Ramon, where the sky is particularly clear and starry.

The latter of the two, having just woken up, says: "Maty, we have a problem".

"What is it?" The driver inquires.

"I've checked and done all the calculations, and we have a 2 second deviation in a year."

"You don't say!" Maty responds with exaggerated worry. "Two whole seconds in a year." A hidden snicker vibrates his white mustaches. Ilan nods with scientific graveness.

"What shall we do?" Maty asks with theatrical anxiety, "What shall we do with a two second deviation in a year?"

The astronomer thinks for a long time. "I can live with it", he finally replies.

Maty laughs.

"Don't laugh", the star gazer cautions. "We have another problem."

"What is it?"

"I've measured the analemma" – a round hole in the center of the dial. The sun rays pass through the hole at certain, predetermined times, and illuminate specific places on the dial's base. The size of the analemma and the angle of its cut must be calculated with the utmost precision.

"What about the analemma?" the artist asks, empathizing with the scientist's distress.

"There's a two millimeter deviation", Ilan declares dramatically.

It should be noted here that the dial weighs 2.4 tons. It was cut in China and brought to Israel by ship. Maty Grunberg gasps in theatrical astonishment. "Two millimeters? My, oh, my, what will they do to us?" The two travelers' eyes dance, jovially.

At Teddy Park, Maty and Ilan toil busily around the sculpture until they finally manage to catch a ray of sunlight that had left the sun 8 minutes and twenty seconds earlier and raced through the 150 million kilometers between the Sun and the Earth at the speed of light, which is exactly 299,792,456 meters per second, to finally reach the gnomon (the hand) that casts its shade on the stone dial. It is eight o'clock. The artist and the scientist are satisfied. The sun is behaving as expected. The sundial sculpture, despite being a work of art, is performing to specifications, the shadow pointing at the right time. Maty has defeated time. His art, made of stone and bronze, will remain here, in Jerusalem, long after his passing.

From the notes of Naomi R. Azar