



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Dr and Mrs Brian Benatar on the occasion of Benyamin's Aufruf in Cape Town this Shabbos.

Go gentle into that good night

Dani Epstein

Outside of the small world of 3D printing, BCM3D is an unknown company, so it comes as no surprise that their recent publication of the source files to a robotic arm developed by them made no ripples in the news. I, on the other hand, immediately downloaded the assembly manual and BOM in order to determine whether or not this was a project worthwhile undertaking. About half way through I did a double-take, because of something that looked like shades of Ikea; you know, when you stand proudly in front of your new shelving and then turn around to find some screws left on the floor and realise you are going to have to start all over again.

At first glance it looked like some of the instructions were out-of-sequence. One would end up having to dismount some pretty major components in order to slip a drive belt into place. Not something you would want to do when surrounded by small children waiting for the magic to happen. As it turned out, I had misread that particular page, and in fact everything is quite straightforward, or as straightforward a project can be which involves programming the kinematics of a 6-axis-of-freedom bot and wiring several stepper motors from a manual written in Spanish.

It's self-evident that one of a manual's most important features are getting things in the correct sequence if you plan to keep your readers happy.

With regards to the Torah, on the other hand, there is raging difference of opinion between the meforshim regarding the linearity of the narrative of the Torah - **יש מוקדם ומאוחר בתורה** - Is the sequence of the events depicted by the Torah truly sequential, or are some events recounted out of order?

Rashi has numerous proofs, one of the them occurring after the epic two chapters recounting the beginning of Moshe's career as leader of the Bnei Yisroel, most of which consists of him arguing with Hashem. **וַיָּשָׁב אֶרְצָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת מַטֵּה ה'** - he (Moshe) returned to the land of Mitzrayim and took the staff of Hashem." Now, if Moshe took a staff with him, presumably that came from where he left - Midyon; in which case the sentence should be reversed, with the taking of the staff being mentioned prior to his return to Mitzrayim. Regarding this Rashi comments: **אין מוקדם ומאוחר מדוקדקים במקרא** - Chronological order is not strictly adhered to in the Torah".

Don Yitchak Abravanel is absolutely rigid with regards to interpreting the chronology of the Torah and frequently takes Rashi and the Ramban to task over the matter with a no-holds-barred approach. In his opinion the Torah's linearity is definitive, and he brooks no argument to the contrary.

It hardly comes as a surprise that he questions the position of five items that appear to be randomly placed here. The first one is the mitzvoh of clearing out Canaan of all enemies and idol-worshippers. This was to be a comprehensive cleansing of the land from the pernicious evils that were the direct outcome of idol worship. Next was the job of setting the borders of the Promised Land. The third mitzvoh was that of apportioning the land to each of the Shevotim. The fourth mitzvoh was

the assignment of forty two cities to the Leviim and finally the fifth was the designation of the six Cities of Refuge - the Orei Miklot.

If these mitzvos were no different than any other mitzvos in the Torah, asks the Abravanel, then why are they written here? They should have been taught together with all the other mitzvos. And in fact they were. All these mitzvos have been mentioned already, so really there are no novelties this week at all. This makes the mention of these mitzvos here all the more mysterious.

And the mystery deepens, because in **פרשת ואתחנן** we read: **אֲזַיְבְּדִיל מֹשֶׁה שְׁלֹשׁ עָרִים, בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן** - Then Moshe designated three cities in the Transjordan". Now, if he had already designated three **ערי המקלט** - Cities of Refuge, why do they require designation yet again?

To appreciate the Abravanel's answer we have to understand his approach to the greatest figures of Tenach. First of all, he does not sweep their sins under a carpet of "something we do not understand". When someone has committed an aveiroh, then the Abravanel's approach is head-on, and he explains exactly what the parameters of the transgression were without trying to repackage anything in such a way as to make the sin a virtue for everyone else. This in itself is not all that remarkable because many other rishonim have the same approach. What he does almost uniquely is portray every figure in simple human terms. They are people who are at times happy, sad, annoyed, angry, who love and hate etc.

One would imagine that treating pivotal figures such as the **אבות**, Moshe and so on in such a manner would detract from their greatness and somehow reduce the message the Torah is conveying.

The truth is quite the opposite. If we place all the figures of Tenach on a pedestal we have destroyed any connection we could have with them. "Well," we might say. "These were zadikim who were greater than the malochim, so what possible lesson can we learn from such individuals?" If we do this, we in fact detract and possibly destroy the messages, morals and lessons learned from the great (and some evil) figures of Tenach.

So, in this week's sedrah we observe Moshe losing his temper with the officers of the army who failed to follow orders properly. And he

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת מטות מסעי

1st Mincha / Candle Lighting	7.05pm / Not before 7.21pm
2nd Mincha / Candle Lighting	7.35pm / 7.57pm-8.05pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.23am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	8.50pm
Rov's Shiur, Halachos of 9 days	following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	9.55pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

was quite justified in doing so, and no-one argues with him about that. Bear in mind that in the midbor, the Bnei Yisroel were quite happy to argue with Moshe, despite his unique greatness, and they whined to him, complained to him and called him names behind his back. "That ben Amrom" was quite popular example, which is a bit like saying "that Kanievsky" when referring to Reb Chaim. If someone slaps you when you say that, you deserve it. How much more so if you were referring to Moshe like that! Yet they did.

On a later occasion when the tribes of God and Reuvein approach him, he misunderstands their motives. They say to Moshe, Elozor and the Nesiim: "If it's OK with you we would like the lands of the Transjordan as our inheritance." Moshe mistakes their motives and gives them quite a lengthy mussar drosho. They defend themselves by explaining that they had no intention of leaving the fight. Far from it! They were in fact going to lead the fight, and form the vanguard of the army.

Moshe retreats a little, but does not trust them fully and warns them that they have to stick to their word. They simply reply twice that they will follow their masters orders; i.e. they will do exactly what Moshe tells them to do.

On a previous occasion, by the **חֲנוּכַת הַבַּיִת**, the dedication of the Mishkon, Aharon raises Moshe's ire. In Vayikra, chapter 10, we read how Moshe turns up to find the **חֲטָאת** goat had not been eaten, something which he had explicitly commanded Aharon and his sons to do. So Moshe turns to Elozor and Isomor and yells at them: "Why did you burn the korbon instead of eating it?"

Even in his anger, Moshe retained his self-control and instead of giving Aharon a ticking off, he shouted at Aharon's sons, out of respect for his brother who happened to be older than him; but everyone knew perfectly well who his wrath was addressed to.

Aharon tactfully keeps up the pretence and refers to his sons as well, even though he was defending his own actions, and replies: "Today they have brought their **חֲטָאת** and **עֹלָה** offerings before Hashem, and this incident (the death of his two sons) happened today, would Hashem really have wanted them to eat that **חֲטָאת**?"

What the argument centred around was this: a kohen who is an **אוֹנֵן**, i.e. has lost a close family relative but has not yet buried them, may not eat korbonos. Moshe instructed Aharon and his sons to consume the korbonos nonetheless since this was a special occasion, and Hashem had instructed Moshe thus.

Aharon has understood at the time the rule was taught that whilst this applies to the unique korbonos of the day, this did not apply to the regular korbonos that would also be offered in the future. Consequently he burnt the regular **חֲטָאת** korbon although he did eat the special korbonos of the day.

Now this is what should have happened. Moshe should have shouted back: "I am the godol hador. I am the godol hador because Hashem said so. I have actual, real daas Torah because Hashem instructed me and not you. I am therefore right and you are wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong."

Instead, he simply admits that Aharon was in fact correct, and that was the end of that.

This is the first machlokes in Halocho recorded in the Torah. This is also an occasion in which Moshe blew a fuse and was quite clearly wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

Does the retelling of this incident diminish Moshe's splendour somehow? Does it reflect badly on this unique and great personality that he actually forgot a halocho and had to be corrected by his own brother?

Quite the opposite. The Torah does not paint Moshe as a superhuman. He got angry. That's pretty human. He turned out to be wrong sometimes. That's pretty human. He admitted when he was wrong. Now if anything, that's superhuman.

He had every rhyme and reason to bluff his way through every situation when a potential embarrassment was in the offing. Moshe was the one who brought Egypt to its knees. Moshe was the one who provided fresh water when all there was was bitter (not everyone likes beer). Moshe brought them to Sinai and brought down the Torah and did all manner of amazing things, and Hashem Himself gave Moshe His imprimatur whilst Moshe was still alive – a unique occurrence in the history of mankind. Yet Moshe never took all these unique, incredible and amazing things and abused them by pulling rank. If anything he did was actually superhuman, that truly was.

So now Moshe was standing in view of the Promised Land and realised he was about to die. At this point he was feeling really low. After all, as the Abravanel puts it, he had planted the tree and now someone else would eat the fig. He, who shepherded the most recalcitrant, argumentative, quarrelsome and generally annoying people across the wasteland of Sinai, who brought and taught them the Torah, would not be able to implement the final steps of the master plan.

Can we possibly imagine how sad this realisation must have made him? All this years of effort, and now the culmination – the very reason he worked day and night for over forty years now, all this would be pulled from under him and to Yehoshua would go the glory. Despite his unique greatness, Moshe was quite human in his reaction to the his impending death, and there was nothing wrong with that. And we know that, because of the way Hashem reacted to that sadness.

Hashem came to comfort Moshe, and told him thus.

"There are five tasks that will have to be undertaken when the Bnei Yisroel enter the land. The first will be to conquer the land and drive out your enemies and the idol worshippers. The second will be to establish its boundaries. The third will be to distribute the land to the tribes equitably. The fourth will be to apportion cities to the Leviim, and the fifth will be to designate the three cities of refuge, as you did in the Transjordan."

There would be no possibility any more of Moshe handling all these task on his own, since now the nation would be distributed over a large area, the complexities of each job would increase exponentially since now everyone's plot of land would be affected by every little incident, and the each task would require its own bureaucracy in order to be prosecuted successfully.

"Do you really think that if you crossed into the land," said Hashem. "You would be able to undertake all these tasks? The only way to carry them out would be to delegate every job. You would not be involved anyway, other than instructing who does what, and whatever glory would rub off would be simply because you instructed them, not because you yourself carried out any of the tasks. So, instruct them now."

This, says the Abravanel, explains the seemingly redundant position of these five halochos in this week's sedrah. They were given here by Hashem as a comfort – a **נַחֲמָה** – to Moshe who was grieving

OHR YERUSHALAYIM INVITES THE KEHILLA TO A TISHA B'AV EVENT

6.00PM	RABBI DOVID EISENBERG שליט"א
6.35PM	LESLIE KLEINMAN נ"י A SURVIVOR'S STORY
7.35PM	RABBI SHLOMO ANGEL שליט"א
8.10PM	TALLIS & TEFILLIN
8.15PM	MINCHA & MAARIV
9.28PM	TA'ANIS ENDS

**TAKING PLACE AT OHR YERUSHALAYIM
470 BURY NEW ROAD
MEN AND LADIES WELCOME**