



Matot-Masei

Moshe Kept A Diary?

In Parshat Masei, Hashem instructed Moshe to write down all the details of the journeys of the Israelites in the wilderness:

“וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מוֹצְאֵיהֶם לְמַסְעֵיהֶם”
“Moshe wrote down all of their goings out according to their journeys.”

And then, fascinatingly, in the continuation of the very same verse, the order is reversed:

“וְאֵלֶּה מַסְעֵיהֶם לְמוֹצְאֵיהֶם”
“And these are their journeys according to their goings out.”

What sense can we make of this? Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch gives a beautiful explanation. A change in direction in one's life must be based on “מַסְעֵיהֶם”, “their journeys”. Humans have a natural desire for change. However, change for the sake of change can sometimes bring about disastrous results.

Therefore, you must have the destination in mind and for the right purpose. Fascinatingly, explains Rav Hirsch, what happened in the wilderness was the opposite. People put the journeys in

place because of their desire for change. And that's what led to so many of the problems that they encountered during their 40-year sojourn in the מִדְבָּר, in the wilderness.

A powerful message emerges for us. Often, we just want change. We want a fresh approach. We're bored with what we've got. For example, in political circles, from general election to general election, you have a change of government. Sometimes it's for good reason, but on many occasions, the reason comes from a desire for change. That could be good for the nation, or it might not.

And similarly, we have got so used to our power to change what we have, the accessibility of ways in which we can facilitate that change - appliances in our homes, tools that we use, even the location of where we live - people are itching to try something new.

Hashem's message to us in Parshat Masei is: change is fine - as long as you've got the right destination in mind. As long as you don't engage in change just for change's sake.

Shabbat Shalom.