



Bamidbar

Why will this coming Shabbat be extra special?

The previous Gerrer Rebbe was once asked: Is there a title for the Shabbat before Shavuot? After all, the Shabbat before Pesach is called Shabbat HaGadol, and the Shabbat before Yom Kippur is called Shabbat Shuva. He responded that it should be called “שַׁבַּת דְּרֵךְ אֶרֶץ.” The Shabbat of courteousness, of kindness, of consideration, of menschlichkeit.

There's a fascinating Gemara in *מסכת ברכות* ו' ע"ב: Rabbi Yehushua ben Levi teaches that any person who benefits from a seuda, a celebratory meal, at a wedding, “זוֹכָה לַתּוֹרָה”, merits having a life filled with Torah.

So what's the connection between the wedding feast and meriting a life of Torah?

Many of us will be able to understand this, because when you host a Simcha, so much emphasis is put into the meal: the menu, the tasting, keeping up with special dietary needs.

It's so important at the end of the simcha to go over to your host and say, “I really loved that meal.” Make

them feel good, as they deserve to be. That is דְּרֵךְ אֶרֶץ. That is courteousness.

The Mishna tells us

“דְּרֵךְ אֶרֶץ קִדְמָה לַתּוֹרָה” – “Derech Eretz precedes Torah”.

A key ingredient of receiving Torah in one's life, is being a decent, person. As a result therefore, we can understand the connection in the Gemara. If you are enjoying a meal in honour of a bride and groom, and demonstrating your gratitude, “זוֹכָה לַתּוֹרָה” - you can have Torah in your life.

In a week's time, we're going to be celebrating that great anniversary, of the most significant day in the history of the world - when we received the Torah. And it's so crucially important for us to recognise that an integral part of our Torah learning and our Torah observance is being a mensch, a decent human being, engaging with דְּרֵךְ אֶרֶץ.

Therefore, let's send out that message. Let this Shabbat be an extra special one, because it is for all of us a שַׁבַּת דְּרֵךְ אֶרֶץ.

Shabbat Shalom.