



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

EICH KOR'IM L'CHA?

How do they call you?

What's your name? is a standard question in English. In Hebrew, when you are being given an aliya to the Torah, the gabbai will ask you what your name is. But, other than that, the regular way that one is asked for his name, is by asking What are you called.

The answer to that question changes, depending on context. (Pardon the expression.)

For example, one of my brothers is named Nachum. In the context of his being an English teacher during his earlier years in Israel, he was known as TEACHER (it usually sounded like Teacha, when his students said it). In that context, his actual name was not as important as his role. He is brother, Daddy, Grandpa... and a bunch of other titles - depending upon who is referring to him. Just an example.

And in Parshat Chayei Sara, we have another example. Tradition tells us that Avraham Avinu sent his longtime, trusted servant to find a suitable wife for Yitzchak. The name of that servant was probably Eliezer,

but you wouldn't know it from reading this week's sedra.

The name Eliezer does not appear even once in Chayei Sara, even though we would have expected it to appear many times. Not once.

EICH KOR'IM LO? How is he called? That depends on context. (Again, pardon the expression.)

The first time he is referred to, it is as AVDO (Avraham's servant), Z'KAN BEITO (the elder of his house, major domo), HAMOSHEIL B'CHOL ASHER LO (the one in charge of everything that Avraham has). Subsequently, the term EVED AVRAHAM occurs three times in the sedra.

But one of the two major titles that he has in the sedra is HA-EVED, The Servant. That title is used to describe him vis-a-vis Avraham (and Yitzchak). HA-EVED occurs in the sedra, nine times.

Eliezer's other title is HA-ISH, The Man! This term is used in the context of and the relationship to B'tu'el, Lavan, and Rivka. HA-ISH occurs also nine times. Very balanced.

The pasuk that sums up who he was is B'reishit 24:61 - "Rivka arose with her maidens. They rode on the camels, and followed THE MAN; THE SERVANT took Rivka, and went his way."

In this pasuk he is referred to as

HA-ISH when Rivka first went with him. But, as that was the completion of the betrothal of Rivka to Yitzchak, Rivka became part of the family of Avraham and Eliezer became HA-EVED, the servant. Next occurrence of HA-ISH refers to Yitzchak, Rivka's man. **PTDT**

BTW, In all of Torah, the name Eliezer occurs twice - once as DAMESEK ELIEZER, Avraham's servant (different opinions include, that Eliezer was from Damascus, or that his name was originally Damesek and it was changed to Eliezer). The other time the name occurs, it is referring to the second son of Moshe Rabeinu.

In the rest of Tanach, there are a few other Eliezers, mention a number of times in Ezra and in Divrei haYamim.