PTDT

PhiloTorah D'var Torah

NAMES?

What's in a name? Know where that's from? Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet.

But here it's a question from our sedra, specifically, from Perek 24 of B'reishit, the story of Finding the Shidduch for Yitzchak.

Back in the day, it was a respectable question to ask people: Eliezer is the main player in that perek - how many times does his name occur? But, I think most people know the surprising answer - NONE. So instead of asking, I'll share my thoughts on the topic.

First, some numbers. Although the name Eliezer does not appear in the perek, or in all of Parshat Chayei Sara, he is definitely referred to. In fact, three times he is called EVED AVRAHAM. Nine more times, he is HA-EVED, the servant. This is his title - maybe more than a title, his persona. And nine times (feel the balance) he is called HA-ISH, the man. He is Ha-Eved vis a vis Avraham and Yitzchak. He is Ha-Ish as seen be Lavan and Betu'el and Rivka. His role and his description is so important, that his name is almost irrelevant.

Makes me think of what most people call their parents. Mom, Dad, Mommy, Daddy, Mother, Father (ever notice that M is male and F is female but the letters are switched for Mother and Father), Mama, Tatti - but not by their personal names. Aside from using their names being disrespectful, we can also suggest that their names are irrelevant compared to their rolls in the lives of their children. Other people call them by name, but not their children.

So Eliezer is Ha-Eved and Ha-Ish depending upon who's looking - but not Eliezer.

As presented in the Sedra Summary, and repeated here for those who might not read the Sedra Summary and might be reading this PTDT column - Of particular interest is 24:61 - "And Rivka and her maidens arose and rode on the camels, and they followed THE MAN; and THE SERVANT took Rivka and left." In the same pasuk, Eliezer is called HA-ISH and HA-EVED. At the beginning of the pasuk, Rivka consents to go with Eliezer, the man. Once she actually goes, once she gets on that camel to go with him, she becomes part of Avraham's family and Eliezer becomes the servant. And later (in 24:65), Rivka asks the servant about HA-ISH that she sees in the distance. This time, it is Yitzchak who is the man.

I feel the same name game in the first ten p'sukim of Sh'mot's second perek.

Look at how many names seem to be avoided with other descriptive terms. Amram is ISH MIBEIT LEVI, a man from the House of Levi. Yocheved is BAT LEVI. Then she is HA-ISHA, the woman. She takes her child - HAYELED and puts him into a basket and ACHOTO (Miriam) watches over him. BAT PAR'O (later in Tanach we find her with a name - BITYAH) sees the basket... The YELED is also called NA'AR, no name (yet), ACHOTO asks to BAT PAR'O is she should find a woman to nurse the baby. Miriam, not by name but called HA-ALMA, calls to the AIM HAYELED (Yocheved). BAT PARO says to HA-ISHA... And finally, at the end of the tenth pasuk, we hear the drum roll and Bat Par'o naming the baby MOSHE.

Not the same situation as in Chayei Sara, but what seems to be purpose-ful choice to use descriptive terms rather than names. **PTDT**

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microULPAN

Most people think that a cousin is a
BEN DOD or BEN DODA
or BAT DOD or BAT DODA.

Seems there is a more modern word DODAN / DODANIT. True, with these words you can't tell if the cousin is from an aunt or an uncle - but...

And finally, I have a word for First Cousin Once Removed. It is DONAN/DODANIT MISHNEH.