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RABBI WEIN'S WEEKLY BLOG

Avraham and Sarah have a loyal and devoted trustworthy servant named Eliezer. His abilities and nobility of character enable him to be entrusted with the most personal and sensitive of assignments and missions. His name has been used by Jewish families for thousands of years as an honorable name for their sons.

In fact, our great teacher Moshe named his younger son Eliezer as a remembrance of God's saving him from the vengeance of Par'o. Yet this original Eliezer who occupies such a significant role in this week's Torah reading somehow disappears into the mist of history.

What was the future of this great disciple of Avraham? What of his family and progeny? Is he part of our continuing story or is he like Lot and Lavan, side characters who eventually depart the scene of Jewish eternity?

Neither Torah nor tradition informs us as to these matters. Eliezer's end like his beginning remains a complete mystery to us. But his name is preserved in the Jewish world regularly and eternally and that is no small matter of importance.

It is interesting to note that this is the way of the Torah regarding many great personalities in Jewish

history who are mentioned in Scripture but remain basically unknown. Their names are remembered and referenced throughout the generations but their lives and experiences remain hidden to us. To a certain extent they are like the "unknown soldier", the one who sacrifices all for the cause but whose own story remains a mystery to later generations.

In a comment to a later narrative that appears in the Torah, Ramban points out that God, so speak, uses unknown or "ordinary" people to propel forward great historical and spiritual processes. Eliezer is no ordinary person but his personal story, whatever it truly was, is not essential to the message of continuity of the generations that created the Jewish people.

He, like all humans, had a purpose and mission in life. He was to further and spread the faith and ideas of Avraham in a disinterested pagan world. He did his part by loyally fulfilling the instructions of Avraham in finding the proper mate for Yitzchak. He may not have realized how eternally important that mission and task really was, but the Torah devotes much space and detail to the matter, proving its importance.

He accomplished the goal set before him by history and circumstance. His name was and is preserved throughout all later Jewish generations though his personal biography itself remains shrouded in silence and secrecy.

The Torah, like life itself, is often enigmatic, concentrating on the forest and not dwelling on the individual trees. Appreciating this basic fact will go a long way in allowing us to have a proper understanding of Torah and its message to us in all times and ages.

The Torah, which is very detailed at times, nevertheless presents us with the broad and timeless view of people and events. We should always remember this for we are all participants in the drama of the Jewish people and its wondrous story. 🍷