

Shemot: Habaim - The Rav zt"l

- Nisson Shulman.

Rav Soloveitchik wonders about the word HABAIM. Shouldn't it have been ASHER BAU? The answer is the Jew is always "coming", never considered to have arrived, always considered a newcomer with all the disadvantages of an outsider. This is true even in the way many other nations regard Jews in Israel.

SHEMOT: HABAIM

(Based on a thought heard from Rav Yoseph Dov Soloveitchik, zt"l, with added examples [Ed.]

VEELE SHEMOT BENEY YISROEL HABAIM MITZRAYMA. They came hundreds of years earlier? years ago! Shouldn't it have been in the past tense? Shouldn't it have been, BAU? Why is it in the present tense?

The answer is: The Jew never arrives in any country as an immigrant and becomes part of the citizenry. He can be there for a thousand years. Yet the inhabitants consider him as if he just arrived yesterday on the boat. Because, unlike any other minority, he is never truly accepted, even if, in the strictly legal sense, he has legal rights and citizenship. Yet everyone knows that if a Jew commits a crime, the entire Jewish people are blamed, not just the individual. (One need not go back as far as the Dreyfus case. Consider the Packard case as an example, and consider the extraordinary punishment for a crime, which never before merited such harsh treatment....)

Einstein was asked: "Are you German, French or Jewish? He answered: "If my theory should prove correct, the Germans will claim that I am German, and the French will claim that I am French. But if my theory shall be proven wrong, then they will both say that I am Jewish!"

The Jews were in Germany a thousand years, but it was always HABAIM. They never really integrated though they desperately wanted to do so. They didn't let us do so.

The best proof is that even in Israel, which is our country, we have not arrived, because as far as the rest of the world is concerned, we are immigrants! We took it away from someone else! We are always - HABAIM.

What is the lesson? If the Jew has any brains, let him recognize that he is regarded, even by those we would normally consider our friends, as HABAIM. So this explains latent hate and anti-Semitism we find in Western countries in Europe and even in America. And this also should make people who are ashamed of their Jewishness and their Zionism, less ashamed, and even proud. There is no need to lick anyone's boots!

The Kotzker Rebbi pointed out: VATIKRA SHEMO MOSHE, VATOMER KI MIN HAMAYIM MESHITIHU. For she was a TZADEKES. She went out, says the Gemara in Sota, to “wash” in the Nile, in order to cleanse herself from the idolatries of her father's house. She wanted to demonstrate that his attempt to destroy the Jews by throwing them into the Nile, the great waters of assimilation, thus making them indistinguishable from the rest of Egypt, would not work. So she made a declaration, saying that I shall draw him out from those waters, KI MIN HAMAYIM MESHITIHU....

Submitted by Nisson Shulman