

WE ARE ALL SURVIVORS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Shemini

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Weekly Portion Torah Tapes: Tape # 544, Bedikas Chametz. Good Shabbos!

After the death of Nadav and Avihu, the pasuk [verse] says: "Moshe spoke to Aaron and to Elazar and Ithamar, his remaining sons..." [Vayikra 10:12]. Elazar and Ithamar are referred to as the "left over children" (banav haNosarim) of Aaron. Rashi adds: "They were left over from death. This teaches that death was decreed upon them as well (as a punishment for their father), for the sin of the Calf." However, Moshe's prayer nullified half the decree against Aaron's children, as it says "And I prayed for Aaron, too, at that time." [Devorim 9:20]

The word haNosarim literally means "the survivors." The quoted phrase may thus be translated "Moshe said to the surviving sons...". In today's world, the word "survivor" means someone who went through the Holocaust and emerged alive. The truth is that survivors do carry a special responsibility on themselves. They survived where others perished. In Parshas Vayikra, we mentioned the teaching of the Seforno: Moshe is called Moshe because he was drawn forth (mashuee) from the Nile. He was a survivor and therefore had a responsibility to make the most of his life that was spared from destruction. This is the responsibility of all survivors.

But it is not just those people who were in the concentration camps in Europe who were survivors. Even those of us who were over here in the comfort and security of the United States of America and who did not have parents or grandparents who suffered directly in the Holocaust, should not feel that "we are not survivors." That would be an incorrect way of viewing things (hashkafa).

Just like the decree (following the Sin of the Calf) was against all the sons of Aaron, but because of G-d's Mercy two of them escaped, the same applies to all of us regarding the Holocaust. We must all consider ourselves survivors from the decree that befell the Jewish people in that era. Some

people bore the brunt of that decree because they were in Europe, but all of us were included in the decree and all of us who survived are "Nosarim" [survivors].

What difference does it make whether or not we are survivors? The difference is this very lesson of the Seforno. We are all "mashuees" [pulled from the water]. If we are all "mashuees" then we all have to be Moshes.

We see it routinely. When a person walks away from a plane crash, it changes his life. "99 people died on this plane and I survived. I must have survived for a reason. I have to do something with my life." This is how every Jew who lives today must feel. "I am a survivor. The Ribbono shel Olam saved me. It is not enough for me to be a "mashuee" (a passive survivor), I must be a Moshe (an active leader)."

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. The halachic topics covered for the current week's portion in this series are:

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