

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי קָרָא מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו וּלְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

“And it was, on that eighth day, Moshe called to Aharon, and his sons, and the elders of Yisroel.” (Vayikra 9:1).

What day did this occur? The two prevailing opinions is that it was either the first of the First Month (Nissan) (Rashi) or it was the eight of the First Month (Ibin Ezra). This episode is spread across several places in the Torah. At the end of Shmos the Torah says that Moshe put up the Mishkan on the first day of the First Month. (Shmos 40:2). Then the Torah says that Moshe taught Aharon and his sons for seven days. (Vayikra 8:33). On the same day that Moshe finished building the Mishkan – the first of the First Month – all twelve tribal chieftains (Nisiim) came to offer their inaugural offering. (Bamidbar 7: 2). The offerings were then divided and given on each of the first twelve days of the First Month. (Ibid 7:11).

The reason the eight day is so important, is because on that day, Aharon’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, offered foreign fires to the Mishkan and died. (Vayikra 10:2). It was a national tragedy and it has to fit into the events of the inauguration of the Mishkan. The difficulty posed in getting the exact *calendar* date for the “eighth day” is that the Torah spreads the narrative over many parshios. The clues, however, are apparent in the Torah. Each time the narrative is visited the Torah says what happened. In the later narratives the Torah provides more details. However, no mention of the tragedy is mentioned in any narrative of the ordination, other than here.

In Shmos, Hashem gives Moshe the command about the day that the Mishkan will be erected. It is to be the first day of the First Month. (Shmos 40:2). He was to put all the parts in place. (Ibid 40:3-11). He was also to dedicated Aharon and his sons by washing them (ibid 40:12), dressing them (ibid 40:13), and anointing them (ibid 40:15). Hashem had given Moshe previous instruction as well. Moshe was to do the first avodah in the Mishkan. (Ibid 29:1). Moshe was instructed, on his first visit to Har Sinai, to wash (ibid 29:4), dress (ibid 29:5), and anoint (ibid 29:7) Aharon and his sons. Then the Torah describes the initial offerings Moshe would bring to ordinate Aharon and his sons. (Ibid 29:35). Moshe is then commanded to train Aharon and his sons for seven days. (Ibid 29:35). Afterwards, Hashem Himself would consecrate the Mishkan, the kohanim, and reside within Yisroel. (Ibid 29:44-45).

When all instruction about the ordination was completed, Hashem tells Moshe that “at the entrance to the Ohel Moed (Miskan) I will meet you.” (Ibid 29:42). The Torah says this came to pass. וְלֹא-יָכַל מֹשֶׁה לְבוֹא אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד כִּי-שָׁכַן עָלָיו הָעָנָן “And Moshe was unable, anymore, to enter the Ohel Mohed because the cloud of His Presence settled upon it.” (Ibid 40:35). This was not a physical barrier. It was that Moshe’s job was finished. After building the Mishkan, training Aharon and his sons, his job was no longer to enter the Ohel Moed. When he would talk to Hashem, he would come אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד “to the Ohel

Moed.” (Bamidbar 7:89). He no longer went inside. He heard the voice from the Kodesh Kedoshim but he was not physically inside. (Ibid).

The Torah says, Moshe did as Hashem instructed him. He washed (Vayikra 8:6), dressed (ibid 8:7), and anointed (ibid 8:10) Aharon and his sons. He brought the offering as instructed. (Ibid 8:14). This had to be the first day of the First Month. Moshe then instructed Aharon and his sons not to leave the Ohel Moed for seven days. (Ibid 8:33). He gave them further instructions to remain in the Ohel Moed for seven more days. (Ibid 8:35). Were these two sets concurrent (a positive command and negative command)? Or were they consecutive (fourteen days)?

The korbanos described in Shmos 29 and Vayikra 8 are identical. They are a bull and a ram. They were for Moshe to bring when ordinating the Mishkan and the kohanim. (Ibid 29:35). For seven days that was the korban brought by Moshe. (Ibid 29:37). On the “eighth day,” Aharon and his sons take a new korban, a calf. (Ibid 9:2). Therefore, this is not the ordinating korban but one done *after* the seven days. When was this “eighth day?”

It is clear that it was not the first day of the First Month. On that day Moshe finished erecting the Mishkan, brought Aharon and his sons close, washed, clothed, and anointed them. Then for seven days Moshe brought the korban of the bull and the ram, ordinating Aharon and his sons. This ends up at the eight of the month.

The problem with this day of the month – and certainly for the first of the month, even if the calculations did not already rule that day out – is that these were the twelve days of the mizbeach dedication service. The Nissei HaShvotim – the tribal chieftains – were watching as their korbanos were brought each day. It was a great celebration. All of the gifts were given on the first day, but Moshe had the Leviim watch over the gifts for twelve days and he gave the same exact gift for each shevet each day. “The chieftains brought their mizbeach dedication on the day it was dedicated.” (Bamidbar 7:10). This was the first day of the First Month. Then one Nasi came per day to offer his tribe’s dedication. (Ibid 7:11).

These twelve days of mizbeach dedication concurred with the seven days that Moshe told Aharon and his sons to remain in the Mishkan. At first, Moshe told Aharon and his sons not to leave for seven days. (Vayikra 8:33). However, when he saw how Bnei Yisroel came together to dedicate the mizbeach and Mishkan, in such a unified way – each one bringing *the same exact gift* – he was moved. He told Aharon and his sons, “remain in the Ohel Moed” for an additional seven days. (Ibid 8:35). Moshe offered the first seven days of the mizbeach service. After that, it was the Kohanim’s time in the Mishkan and Moshe could no longer enter. Aharon and his sons offered the remaining korbanos. They remained in the Mishkan for the thirteenth and thirteenth of the First Month as well, to light the Menorah, burn the ketores, and sanctify the Leviim. (See Bamidbar 8:2, 6, and Shmos 30:7). Then came the first Pesach in the desert. It was on the “eighth day” after the second seven-day period, or the fifteenth of the First Month that this tragedy occurred. That day, on the first Pesach, Aharon brought his korban, blessed the people for the first time from the Mishkan entrance, and then his sons brought in their fire offering. That is why the mizbeach dedication service does not appear disturbed.