

“And it was on the eighth day, Moshe summoned Aharon and his sons.” (9:1)

Horav E. Munk, z.l., poignantly explains the significance of that glorious day, the eighth day of the inauguration services. It was *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, the day the *Mishkan* was erected, a day crowned with ten crowns of distinction. On this particular day, *Klal Yisrael* was to attain an unprecedented level of communion with the Divine Presence. Moshe, however, knew that this exalted state of intimacy would require strict discipline from every member of the nation, especially its leadership. The slightest act of desecration would be punished, even if it were committed by those who were closest to Hashem. The *Mishkan* would be consecrated by a public manifestation of Divine Glory.

Moshe prepared for this moment by taking all necessary precautions. Indeed, the *Midrash* states that Aharon and his sons were sequestered in their quarters for seven days. This was a time for meditation and contemplation. In effect, a ritual parallel to the seven day *shiva* mourning period was observed prior to the death of Nadav and Avihu. Induction into leadership requires concentrated deliberation about its awesome responsibilities. These seven days, a melange of joy and sadness, were to drive home the awesomeness of their next undertaking.

In this mixed atmosphere of trepidation and joy, fear and excitement, the eighth day began for Moshe. The *Torah* denotes these mixed feelings with the word *hvhuw* which the *Midrash* tells us indicates anxiety and distress. It is the harbinger of bittersweet joy and mixed emotions. The *Midrash* observes that once again the *Torah* illustrates that the righteous are not permitted to savor their happiness here on this earth.

Horav Munk suggests a novel appreciation of the significance of the “eighth” day. He cites *Horav S.R. Hirsch, z.l.*, who, in a thesis on *Bris Milah*, explains that the day following a seven day period has a special meaning. He explains that the number six represents the limited material and physical nature of creation, while the number seven denotes the superiority of the spiritual dimension over the physical. Hence, the number eight suggests the notion of combining the physical with the spiritual into a harmonious relationship. This is the ideal of Judaism: the symbolic merging of the physical and the spiritual in which the physical is totally dedicated to the advancement and growth of the spiritual.

In the present context, the seven day waiting period for the *Kohanim* comprised their preparation for the climax of their lives. The seven day period ended the physical phase of their lives. With the advent of the eighth day, they ceased to be private citizens. They had now attained a higher level of existence, which demanded their consecration to Hashem and His people. On this exalted day, particularly, the *Shechinah* was to appear.