

Parshat Tzav

Parshat Tsav begins with the idea of the torah of the offerings. The text states: This is the torah of (this kind of) sacrifice. The word torah can mean the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, the Bible. It can also mean the sacred scroll that we have in the Ark in a synagogue. But the word torah can also mean “law” or “ritual” as is it’s meaning here at the beginning for Tsav.

The Holiness of Blood is also discussed here in Tsav. Jewish law prohibits the eating of blood. The Torah states here in chapter 7:26 “You must not consume any blood, either of bird or of animal.” Most commentators agree that there are several reasons for the prohibition against eating blood. The first is that blood was used in pagan rituals and in order to keep the Israelites different from their pagan neighbor’s the prohibition was put into place. The second reasoning was given by Nachmanides, who said that blood may not be eaten because it is the bodies life force and because of this it is holy.

Parts of the laws of Kashrut come from this part of Tsav. Chapter 7:26-27 states “You shall not eat blood whether from fowl or beast...anyone who eats any blood will be ejected from his people.”

Parshat Tsav ends with the ordination ceremony of Aaron and his four sons. The ordination ceremony lasts for seven days and during that time various sacrifices are brought. The ordination ceremony culminates with a ritual of blood and oil being placed on Aaron’s right ear, right thumb, and right big toe. The process is repeated for all of Aaron’s sons. The idea behind this ceremony is that it is making the priestly entire body holy. His ear to make sound judgements, his thumb to take holy action and his big toe to symbolize his holy path in life.