

Tzav

The Mishkan is built, the players are now set to do their specific jobs inside the Mishkan, and the ritual of the job, i.e. sacrifices and ordination is all described in this Parsha. It is the commands to Aaron and his sons who will serve as the high priests in the Temple. This Parsha is a description of ritual and processes leading up to the consecration of the Tabernacle. Each offering, each step in the sacrificial and ordination ceremony is outlined by Gd. There are the sacrifices, the proper clothing, the time and place of each sacrifice and ceremony, the proper structure and placement of the ashes after the animal is burnt, the animal itself and how it was to be disposed of and what parts of the animal were prohibited and what parts were to be used. The parsha describes the anointing oil and the roles of the Levi and the roles of the Israelites. This was all in preparation for the grand inauguration of the Mishkan in next week's Parsha. Aaron and his sons were the main characters in the Tabernacle. They were the High Priests, and it was their duties that is the focus of this Parsha. Interesting to note, the Priest worked all night, into the day. Even though the "day or waking hours" are the hours of productivity and awareness, this Parsha is the description of the job duties at night, when the public will not be there once the Mishkan is ready for use. For Night: the night phase of human life is not to be considered as a realm away from Gd. "Night as well as Day is His." "Creator of Darkness". Night is not a resting mode; it is still a Gdly mode in the universe. The idea in this concept and within the Priestly duties is taken from Parsha Tzav.

It is difficult to read this Parsha and find a meaningful, modern value. How are we supposed to be connected to something so unfamiliar, that we have no similarity in terms of ritual and Priestly order? How can we make this Parsha relevant to our lives today? I guess that is why we come to the synagogue, our Mishkan, to figure out these questions. With the guidance of the Rabbi and the emotional stirring of our soul when we sit in this building, we ponder our place in the Torah. Though we have been without sacrifices for thousands of years, we bring our thanksgiving offerings everyday in prayer. The Thanksgiving offering is mentioned in Chapter 7 verse 12. Connecting the offering with our daily prayers as prayers are a substitute for the ancient history sacrificial system, we wake up with Modeh ani. This is a thanksgiving prayer. When we survive a serious illness, or event we say HaGomel, this is another thanksgiving prayer; and the list goes on. We use prayer not only for thanksgiving offerings but we use prayer as a substitute for the sacrificial system in the Torah. There is a prescribed prayer for everything we do, and the focus of that prayer is most often a communication, introspective thought, a wish

or a thank you. Focusing and praying can bring us closer to our answers, bring us closer to the realization that we are just a mere spec of time in the whole scheme of time. Prayers give us the opportunity to feel grateful. Prayer brings out deep appreciation and acknowledgement. The goal of the sacrifices was to bring this universal ritual and make it an acknowledgement to Hashem. We can substitute that sentence and say: Prayer is a universal ritual, and it is to acknowledge Hashem.

The idea for the High Priests in this Parsha is to gain the knowledge of their job duties, understand the formality of the ritual and to present themselves after a time of reflection and study. They were to segregate themselves in the Mishkan for seven days prior to the inauguration of the Tabernacle. This “togetherness” gave them the concentration and seriousness of their impending task. The Book of Vayikra are the guidelines and instructions for the Levities and most especially the Kohanim. This Parsha is an inside look at their preparations for their future job in the sanctuary. Our little discussion gives it relevance to our lives in today's world.