

PARSHAT PEKUDEI Mrs. Rachel Kosowksy



What could you be wearing right now which is connected with the *כהונה* described in this week's *פרשה*?

One of the things worn by the *גדול* is the *ציץ*. We are told that the *פתיל תכלת* features a blue thread. This should sound familiar ... very similar to the description in *פרשת שלח* which we recite twice a day as part of *שמע*. We talk about the *מצוה* of *ציצית* which also features a *פתיל תכלת*.

Is there any connection between these different garments beyond the linguistic similarity?

Right before we are given the Torah, ' charges us with being a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." In some way, we are all meant to be *כהנים*. What does the Torah mean by this? What is the role of the *כהנים* and how does that relate to the role of the Jewish people?

Perhaps the next phrase in this charge can help us answer that question. We are told to be a *גוי קדוש*, a holy nation. What does it mean to be holy? A working definition of *קדושה* suggested by Rabbi Menachem Leibtag is something which is separated from the whole to elevate the whole. We separate *שבת* from the other days of the week, for the benefit of the entire week. Similarly, the *כהנים* are separated from the rest of *ישראל* to bring us all closer to ' serving our Creator.

This teaches us something about what Jews are meant to do in the world. As Rabbi Leibtag points out, we are not chosen because we are great, we are chosen to be great. We are *קדושים* in the sense that we have a responsibility to model appropriate behavior for the rest of the world. Wearing *ציצית* is meant to remind us of this role and purpose. The *גדול* models for us the role we each have as individuals in this world to serve ' to the best of our ability, and we in turn, have the responsibility to serve as role models for the people around us.