


**CHABAD**  
  
**RESEARCH UNIT**

שבת..... *for Friday nights* ..... קדש


Friday 6 May 2011 - 2 Iyar 5771  
 Sedra Emor

**SINGULARITIES**

**CAN WE FACE BEING SINGULAR, BEING SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL, EVEN UNIQUE?** The beginning of the Sedra<sup>1</sup> tells us about the Cohen, the Priest among the Jewish people. In addition to the many laws which apply to each Jew, there are some extra laws in the case of the Cohen. These laws emphasise the spiritual quality of the Cohen, his special nature: in a word, his singularity.

One way this singularity is expressed is by the power of blessing. Often at a wedding ceremony, a Cohen blesses the Bride and Groom as they stand under the Chuppah (Wedding Canopy). In the Synagogue, all the Cohanim have the special duty and privilege to gather in front of the Ark and bless the members of the community. The blessing begins “May G-d bless and guard you”, as we read in Sedra Naso<sup>2</sup>. Outside the Land of Israel this happens only on festivals; in Israel the Cohanim deliver their blessing to the community every day.

Now, there is another singularity: Israel. It is no ordinary country. On the map it is tiny, but Israel is the Holy Land, and the city of Jerusalem, yet another singularity, is the sacred city. Here too there is

	לזכרון נצח מרת טויה בת פרחיה ע"ה In Loving Memory of Mrs Victoria Menashy ע"ה 1 Tammuz 5770
---	---

117 GEORGE STREET, LONDON W1H 7HF  
 cru@lubavitchuk.com - www.chabadresearch.net

the special power of blessing. The Sages tell us that Divine blessing pours from Heaven first into the Holy Land, and from there into the various countries of the world.

Unfortunately, the singularity of the Land of Israel contributes to making it an object of desire for many peoples. In the Middle Ages the battles of the Crusades were fought between the Christians and the Moslems over possession of the Holy Land, and particularly the Holy City. There were many Jews living in Jerusalem, but when the Crusaders entered they massacred all of them. Today the tiny strip of Israel remains a critical point of focus of media attention.

Despite many calamities in the past, the Jewish people lives on. And here we come to another singularity: *The Jews*. It was at Mount Sinai, about 3,300 years ago, that we most clearly and definitively became a people. There G-d said to us, through Moses: "You will be specially chosen for Me, from among all nations... You will be a kingdom of Priests (Cohanim) and a holy nation..."<sup>3</sup>.

What is our singularity? Like the Cohanim, we have special laws, distinguishing us from other nations. According to Jewish teaching, all humanity should observe the Seven Noahide laws, in order to live in a way which is honest, morally pure and just. Yet the Jewish man or woman have many other laws to observe: kashrut, Shabbat and so on. These are revealed in our sacred and unique Torah - another important singularity.

Again, a key aspect of our singularity as Jews is the power of blessing. G-d told our ancestor Jacob: "All families of the earth will be blessed by you and your descendants"<sup>4</sup>.

These singularities come together: Israel, the Torah, the Jewish people. They are all bonded with the greatest singularity of all: the One G-d, Who is the source of all being. Our role is to connect the world with G-d, to spread His universal teaching of goodness and morality, and ultimately, dwelling in the Land of Israel, with the Messiah and the re-built Temple in Jerusalem, to bring G-d's blessings to all humanity.

1. Leviticus chs.21-24. 2. Numbers 6:22-27. 3. Exodus 19:5-6. See the comment of the Baal HaTurim, that each Jew should be like a High Priest, and Maimonides, end of Laws of Shemittah. See also the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Iggrot Kodesh*, vol. 13, 216-7. 4. Genesis 28:14.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

***SPONSORED BY DR REUVEN JOEL***



SEDRA EMOR

**TO BE A COHEN**

Maya strapped on her seatbelt as her mother started the engine and they waited for her father to get into the car. It was Sunday afternoon and they were about to go to visit their cousins, who lived just outside the city.

Soon they were on their way. The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day, Maya let the air rush through her hair as the car sped down the highway. She had been looking forward to this as her cousins had only recently moved to England. It would be the first time that Maya would be visiting them in their new home.

Soon they were out of the city, off the highway, driving along a beautiful winding country road. 'Ah, the scenery is so pretty!' exclaimed Maya. 'And the air is so fresh', she added, opening her window wide and inhaling deeply. 'Yes', agreed her mother from the driving seat, 'we will be coming out here on holiday in the summer, to get some more of this fantastic air'. She too was a fan of country air and country landscape.

The car, driven by Maya's mother, was moving down a delightful narrow lane, sporadically overhung with trees. Suddenly Maya's father, sitting in the passenger seat at the front and looking at a map, sat up straight.

'Hey! I'm sorry!' he called out. 'What's the matter?' asked his wife. 'We have to turn off this road. Quick, stop the car!'

Maya's mother smoothly brought the car to a halt. 'What's

the problem?’ asked Maya, now feeling annoyed. She thought to herself: Parents! They always have some kind of problem! Sitting in the back seat, she snorted audibly.

‘I’m sorry,’ said her father from the front, ‘but we cannot go along this route. We will have to go back and find another road’.

‘Why?’ asked Maya, ‘what is wrong with this lovely road? Mummy was just saying how beautiful it is here...’

Her mother was peering at the map which Maya’s father was showing her. ‘Oh! A cemetery!’, she said. ‘Sorry, I didn’t realise. It’s so good that you noticed it,’ she said to Maya’s father as she began turning the car round, doing a neat three point turn. ‘The problem is,’ she said, glancing back at Maya, ‘that on this road we will soon pass a cemetery. The map shows it very clearly’.

‘What’s the deal with the cemetery? Why shouldn’t we go near it?’ asked Maya, her annoyance partly transformed into interest at something curious.

‘We are a family of Cohanim’, her mother replied. ‘That means we have special rules. Further along this road there are trees hanging over the road and creating a kind of canopy over the graves and us. Since Daddy is a Cohen that is not allowed..’

‘Oh, I remember,’ said Maya. ‘In fact it’s in the Sedra this week. But it doesn’t apply to a girl, does it Mummy?’ ‘No, you are quite right. But it does apply to Daddy, and to your brother Chaim, if he would be here, instead of being on holiday in Israel.’

‘It’s good to remember about being a Cohen’ said Maya. ‘Even out here in the country, the fact that you are a Cohen matters. And when Moshiach comes, and there is a beautiful Temple again in Jerusalem, then the fact that you and Chaim are Cohanim and can serve in the Temple will be *fantastic*...’

***Torah teachings are holy –  
please treat this page with care***