



## Parshat Reeh

For the week ending 25 Av 5759  
6 & 7 August 1999

### Overview

**M**oshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem. When the nation enters *Eretz Yisrael* they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; *not* to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the *Mishkan*, but in *Eretz Yisrael* meat may be *shechted* anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a "prophet" tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. *Bnei Yisrael* are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted — Hashem will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post, and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year. The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

### Insights

#### THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

**"You shall make the festival of Succot.."  
(16:13)**

**T**he roof of a succah cannot be higher than 20 *amot* (about 35 feet). The Talmud gives three views as to why a height greater than this renders the succah invalid.

Rabba says that because the eye does not normally travel so high, a person sitting in such a succah doesn't have the feeling of being in a succah, and thus such a succah is invalid.

Rabbi Zeira says that the essence of the succah is that its roof should give shade, and in such a high succah the vast majority of the shade would come from the walls and not from the roof.

Yet a third opinion is that of Rava who says that a succah must be a temporary building, and such a large succah comes into the category of a permanent structure.

There is a deeper message beneath the surface of this seemingly technical dispute: These three views hint to the three pillars on which a righteous person must build himself.

The first pillar is the pillar of fearing G-d.

The essence of fearing G-d is to imagine that we are in His presence at all times, that there is never a moment, a deed or a thought which G-d doesn't perceive. The gematria (numerical equivalent) of the word "succah" is 91. The gematria of the Name of G-d which we say as "Adon-ai" is 65. That Name, which we do not pronounce the way it is written, consists of the letters "yud" and "heh" and "vav" and "heh," which add up to 26. Adding this Name the way it

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is spoken to the way it is written, comes to 91.

In other words, the succah is a combination of G-d's Names. It represents the Divine Presence. Thus, if the succah is so high that the eye doesn't normally travel up that much, then it's as though G-d is not "in front of my eyes." If so, then I am lacking in the fear of G-d.

The second pillar is the pillar of trust in G-d.

If I say, "I need to do such and such to get out of the spot I'm in, and through that action G-d is going to save me," it's as if I'm narrowing G-d's ability to save me to the scope of my own actions. The correct mode of trust in G-d is to act, but not to assume that my action in any way limits G-d's options. I may do one thing, and my rescue may come from an entirely different source.

Rabbi Zeira hints that the fist attitude is invalid. The shade of the succah roof represents the Heavenly "shade" of G-d's protection. The four walls symbolize the physical world extending

to the four directions of the compass. By making a succah so high that all its shade comes from the walls, it is as though I'm saying that G-d's "shade" and protection (the succah roof) needs to be supported by my actions in this world (the four walls).

The third pillar is the pillar of humility.

Wealth and success in this world can inflate a person's ego. But when a person realizes how temporary his stay is here, it's hard for him to get a big head. The succah hints to us that this world is but a brief stay in a temporary dwelling, that life is but a passing shadow. This is the third reason that such a high succah should be invalid, for the essence of humility is to make this world into one's temporary dwelling, and concentrate on fitting out our permanent residence in the future world.

*Aruch L'Ner*

## *Haftorah: Isaiah 54:11-55:55*

### *THINGS TO COME*

In this, the third Haftorah of the "seven of consolation," the prophet Isaiah depicts a time in the future when it will be recognized that Hashem has glorified Israel, and the people will hasten to the scion of David who will lead Israel.

In this lyrical evocation of the Messianic Era, the prophet speaks of a world where protection will come openly from Hashem, and where those who hearken to Hashem will be satisfied in abundance, whereas material efforts alone will not suffice.