

SEASONS OF THE MOON

THE MONTH OF ELUL

Elul 5759 / August 13, 1999 - September 10, 1999

THE WORLD'S END

When Christopher Columbus set sail for the New World in

1492, many people thought he would fall off the edge of the earth and vanish into oblivion. The cosmography of the 15th century held that the world was a flat disc. Nowadays, this idea seems childish, however, in one respect, they were right: The physical world has an end. There is a place where this reality ends and another begins. Where is it?

We are living in a physical world. The essence of the physical is that it can exist only within the confines of space and time. In the worlds above this world, there is no space, no time. They are spiritual worlds. Between this existence and its neighbors, however, there exists a place of transition, a border. Where is the border between this world and the next? Where is this gateway to eternity? And what would we see there?

In the First *Beit Hamikdash* (Holy Temple), in the middle of the Holy of Holies, there sat the *Aron HaKodesh* — the Holy Ark. There's an amazing fact about the *Aron*. It took up no space. Even though it had physical dimension¹, nevertheless it took up no space².

How was this possible? How was it possible for the *Aron* to have measurements and yet occupy no space in this world?

Imagine you're driving from France to Italy. Twenty kilometers from the border you see signs in French announcing

FUTURE WORLD

the approaching Italian border. Closer, you notice that the French signs have now been joined by the same signs written in Italian: "Douanes/Dogana" — Customs. On the other side of the border, you notice the reverse. At first the signs are in both languages, then after some kilometers they are written only in Italian.

Wherever there is a border between two entities, we can expect to see elements of both.

ON THE BORDERLINE

The *Aron* was the border of two worlds. It sat on the *Even Shetia*, the rock from which G-d extruded the entire Universe. This was the "border post" between two worlds, thus the characteristics of both this world and the next were manifest. The *Aron* occupied no space because it represents the upper worlds. It contains the Torah, the communication of G-d to man. On the other hand, from the place of the *Aron* flows all Creation, all space and time. This is the place where the physical world begins. From here, it expands outward.

The *Aron* was in this world, but it was not of this world. It was subject to the laws of a higher world where there is no space and time. The *Aron* was the threshold between two worlds. It was the "French/Italian border" between this world and the next. It had dimensions without occupying space.



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FUTURE WORLD *continued*

THE DOT MATRIX

There's a little letter in Hebrew that's like the Aron. From it too flows all of Creation. The letter *yud*. The *yud* is the smallest letter in the Hebrew language. It's no more than a dot. But with this little *yud*, this little dot, G-d created the Future World³. The ideal dot has no dimension. However, If you put any *yud* under the microscope you'll see that it has length and breadth. It's impossible to write it any other way, but ideally it should be the smallest existence capable in this world.

The letter *yud* exists in this world — you can read it in any book — but it represents a world beyond this world. The physical shape of the *yud* hints to this dichotomy: It is a notion without dimension. Naturally, when we write a *yud*, we are constrained by the laws of this world, we have to give it dimension or it would be invisible. However, what the *yud* represents is a world beyond this one where there is no space and no time. It is the world of the *yud*. The Future World.

ELUL AND THE LETTER YUD

The month of Elul was formed by the letter *yud*. If G-d used the letter *yud* to form the month, it means that the letter itself expresses the essence of the month of Elul. Maybe, in this smallest of letters, we may find some of the secret power that is locked into the month of Elul. Let us examine this "dot matrix."

Just as the Future World is the foundation of this world⁴, so too the letter *yud* is the foundation of all other letters. In order to write any letter, you have to start with a little dot, a little dot called *yud*. In other words, the foundation of all language, and thus all cognition, is the *yud*, the smallest dot. Our thoughts are aligned with reality only when we realize why, and on what, this world is founded. Just as the root of language is an infinitesimal dot which stands at the gateway between this world of space/time and the world which is beyond those constraints, so too the root of all knowledge, its *foundation*, is to know that there is a world above this world⁵. When our thoughts turn towards that infinitesimal point, we align ourselves with transcendence.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Two more pieces, and our puzzle will be complete. Elul in Aramaic means searching⁶. We only search for something when we see a future for it. No one searches for a lost cause, a broken camera or a used Coca-Cola can. The essence of searching, of Elul, is that we believe in two futures: Our own future and that there *is* a future. Firstly, we must believe in our own future. We must believe that we are not forever rat-trapped in a Skinner's Maze of our own past mistakes.

Secondly, we must believe that there *is* a future: A Future World where all is clear and the darkness that surrounds us is lit up by the great aura of the Presence of the Holy One. A Jew must know that this world is no more than a dark and narrow corridor to a great palace of light.

Given this, it will not come as a surprise that the letter *yud* is one of the ways that we make the future tense in the Hebrew language. The *yud* is the letter of the future. The letter of the Future World. Elul is the month of the future. The month where our minds are preoccupied with the anticipation of Rosh Hashana, that great and awesome day when The Creator scrutinizes every minute part of His creation, seeing if it corresponds to His intentions, and judging it accordingly.

The essence of Elul is wanting to go back — back to the Future — to connect to that Reality which is beyond this world, beyond space and time, to remake

ourselves in the mold of the maiden.

THE UNQUIET SOUL

*You said you don't believe
in a world to come,
that we ended like so much meat.
"Prove it to me." you said to me.
"Prove that you're my brother" I replied.*

*Inside, that same knowing heart
that shares our flesh
wipes the sleep from its eyes
and stirs.
Unquiet is the soul.*

1. Shemot 25:10. "They shall make an Ark of acacia wood, two and a half amot its length (about five feet), an amah and a half its width, and an amah and a half its height."

2. How do we know that the Aron took up no space? If you went into the Holy of Holies and measured from one wall to the Aron in the middle, then, you measured from the other side of the Aron to the far wall, that measurement would be the same as the distance from one wall to the other without taking the Aron into account. The distance between the two walls of the Holy of Holies was the same whether you measured from the walls to the sides of the Aron, or whether you measured the entire width.

3. Yeshayahu 26:4, "Ki b'Kah, Hashem Tzur ha-olomim"

4. This world was formed with the letter heh. One of the two elements of the letter heh is the letter yud.

5. The world foundation is apposite. Foundation connotes both meanings implied here: a) a beginning, a starting point. And b) the sum total of all that the entity is supposed to be. For example, the Declaration of Independence was the foundation of the United States of America. It was both its beginning and it contained the essence and aspiration of all that the United States was intended to be.

6. Targum, Bamidbar 13:2 "That they may spy out the Land."

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