

SHABBAT SHUVAH 2022.

“Welcome to the hurricane season’!!

Let me introduce myself. I am a storm. I have no name, but you like to call me a ‘HURRICANE’. And to separate me from other storms, you give me names. In the past you called me: Sandy, Irene, Wilma or David. Soon I will be “Humberto”.

It really does not matter to me how you call me. And I noticed that among you, human beings, habit dies hard. At least once your weatherman” referred to me as “She.” I test your strength, as individual human beings, as families, and as a community. I know because my eye sees everything, not only what is on the surface, but what is in your hearts.

Yes, I see everything. I see the anxiety my coming closer to you stirs up in you. I see the frantic preparations you take when you think I may overtake you. And I know the sigh of relief you utter when I spare you my rage.

I see how helpless you are in the face of my fury. And I see how fallible you are in trying to deal with me when you know, in fact, that I am beyond your control. I see your humility and your sense of littleness.

You show me the best and the worst in you. You show me how thin is the surface of your civilization, and the cracks that appear in it when stress touches you. You reveal the great and serious differences which emerge under that stress between your young and you're old, between your rich and your poor, you're sick and you're healthy, your brave and you're timid, your selfish and you're unselfish, between your realistic and your deniers of reality, between your helpers and you're helpless.

As a matter of fact, from where I twist and turn, I can see that what happens, when you think I am about to strike you, is only a mirror of your human nature in so-called "normal" times, except perhaps that your actions and reactions are more pronounced under stress.

When I moved northward, away from your shores, your media told of the mistakes, the lack of preparedness, and even the sheer negligence, which some of your people committed in anticipating and facing the danger which I would bring you. Especially your old and your sick complained bitterly. Now, you could have done better. But I would like to say that much of what happened will always happen. We storms are not all alike. Every one of us brings new confusion that you have not faced before. You must also realize that at such crises, when I am present, the helpers among you are relatively few in number, while those of you who need help are beyond counting.

With my gigantic eye I take in everything. I behold the fear your authorities stir up in you when they warn you that I am approaching and what the consequences of my anger are likely to be. Your Darwinian instinct for self-preservation and for the survival of the fittest takes over. You are worried first about yourself, your family and your property. You call your friends on the cell

with genuine interest. But in the final analysis, it's everybody for himself or herself.

I said before, "the survival of the fittest." I should have said, "The survival of the fastest." Those of you who get to the store first, get more than you need. The rest, who are slower, get little or nothing. When a storm like me comes near to you, you take for granted hoarding as well as boarding. It's the thing to do.

Some of you may be too young to remember, but I have known that there was a time among you when you were afraid that even greater storms might come your way. So you began to build shelters deep in the ground. And you put iron doors on them and huge locks, and even guns in case your neighbors also wanted to live but had no shelters.

In my quieter moments I look down and smile. You like to live dangerously. You are willing to take risks. You look down with scorn on those who take me seriously. And then there are times when you believe in the worst of possibilities. You get panicky. You become immobilized. I am

told it has something to do with what you call personality or character.

Now I know that one of your greatest frustrations is that you don't know where I will hit next. That is my nature. I get carried away by my own power. And when I have gone away from you, you feel the wiser for it. If you did not prepare, you feel it was silly to be concern. If you were touched by my force, it was, you think, your way of handling things that saved you. But deep down your hearts you know that a might greater than yours has let you be.

It may seem to you that I am sarcastic. That is not true. With my eye I have seen much in you that is worthy of respect. Many men and women work tirelessly and even sacrificially. Genuine concern kept many old and sick and homeless free from harm. Neighbors help each other. Friends proved to be true friends. Families were reunited in the single task of staying alive and out of danger.

There are times when I think that when I leave you, you are sorry because your togetherness

comes to an end. You must now go, each your own way. The fun and party are over. It is important to remember that a terror like mine, can bring out, in all of you, the most generous of your natures.

And now, if you will listen, you will get my message: You think a lot about your life, how short it is, and how it is unpredictable. You call life a circus, a jungle, a tragedy or a comedy. You even call life a cabaret. Well, let me tell you from where I rage and toss, life is not a cabaret: It's much more like a hurricane.

Think for a moment: You live on the edge of fear always. Even in the calm of the eye, you feel anxious for the storm that is to return. Fear of war, fear of pollution, of hunger, of poverty, fear of getting sick or old. Fear of dying. That fear colors everything you do and are. Sometimes you hide that fear by pretending that you are above it. You have a foolish sense of omnipotence. You insist on living dangerously. Sometimes luck is with you and you escape unharmed. But sometimes, too, the hurricane

catches up with you and you are than a leaf in the storm, swept along by waves and tides.

At times, life may be for you a source of such fear that you cannot do a thing. You take no risks. You are boarded and shuttered up from your family, your friends, even from yourself. You may feel safe that way, but you have not enjoyed the blessings of companionship, of togetherness, of mutuality, that are yours to have, if you would but remove the shutters.

You must also know that life is just like me—beyond your control. Even the most sophisticated and educated among you, who have the science, the insight, the means and the tools necessary for living, cannot predict what will happen. So with life, at any moment, you could become leaves driven by winds and floods. You are not entities unto yourselves. You are a part of the common destiny. Strive as you may, boast as you will, wise or powerful, or rich, you cannot get control of that which was never yours to control in the first place. Hear, then, the voice of your inner feelings, the message of

your heritage, the warning of your conscience. Care for and protect yourself, but also care and protect others. See how frail and weak we are in the storms and that we can, if we will it, increase in stature only as we exercise compassion.

Do not ever allow yourselves to become oblivious to the brief nature of this life; nor to the remarkable and vast impact we can make about us, an impact that could last for generations. Think of the fact that the way we cope with the hurricane called life, will influence the lives of our children and grandchildren.

Re-read, then, more than by rote, the words we have heard this morning:

“This is the day of awe. What are we, as we stand in your presence, O God?

A leaf in the storm... a fleeting moment in the flow of time. A whisper lost among the stars...”

Now, can we find, see, live by, the meaning of those words?

Do we know that the leaf can bring a sense, to all who will behold it, of awareness of beauty and nature's wonders?

Do we know that the moment that is our life, can become an undying part of eternity?

Do we know that the whisper that is our life can be added to the whispers of all others until they are a voice of hope, faith, and fulfillment?

No, life is certainly not a cabaret. It is the greatest of all hurricanes. From it, we can, and I hope will, grasp, beauty, eternity, and contentment.

At this point, it is not for me, a mere hurricane, to say "Amen."

It is rather for you and me, all together, to say, with one voice, with a discerning mind and a full heart, "Amen."

LET US USE, THE NEXT FEW DAYS IN GETTING READY FOR YOM KIPPUR.

