
The Shabbos Hurricane

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Last Friday and Saturday a storm hit New York, hit us hard. As we ventured out Sunday with no heat, power, or phones we learned that the fierce storm had actually been an unpredicted unnamed hurricane, the Shabbos Hurricane. The hurricane proved fatal for a few, but devastating for many in the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan region. Four days later, with the schools closed we still didn't have power and were just one family of 120,000 of the original 500,000 still without power. But it was only while attempting to drive around, that we realized the extent of the devastation: thousands upon tens of thousands of large trees had been ripped out of the ground and toppled over upon houses, cars and most often the power lines, causing the telephone poles that carried those power lines to snap and topple with them across the main thoroughfares. We couldn't travel 2 blocks without being detoured. The 75 mile an hour winds and even stronger gusts caught the numerous tall evergreen trees like sails on the sea, and splintered any other tree not in prime condition. **The first comment anyone and everyone had was that this was a war zone.** So why did it happen?

Usually the weatherman and weather channels track these storms with non-stop team coverage for a week before they make landfall with vivid pictures of weatherman standing on the shore, leaning into wind microphones aloft, to show us how brave they are and what we're up against. So how did this storm, predicted to dump 2-4 inches of rain—sizable, but manageable—over our region take them all by surprise?

I first look to the spiritual, and yes, trees and nature live a life cycle that includes weeding out the weaker ones to make room for new growth, and yes, many souls are locked up inside trees and maybe they all needed releasing at this moment in time for some reason unbeknownst to us. But once our power and order was restored and I found the time to catch the news, another reason occurred to me.

While the storm was just making shore and was still a simple rainstorm on Friday, the Obama administration was threatening Israel and verbally attacking it for continuing to build homes for its people (Bnei Israel) and for not actively engaging its enemies (Ishmael) in a "so-called" peace dialogue. This is the same administration that spent the past year twiddling its thumbs while Iran sped along its developments of a nuclear arsenal aimed at Israel. It's not hard to see where the Obama administration's priorities lie, but it *is* quite *coincidental* that as the verbal attacks on Israel intensified Friday and Saturday, the simple rainstorm suddenly became the most devastating natural disaster to befall our region in known history.

What was also seemingly coincidental was the freak death of the very beloved Rabbi Rubenstein, who was struck by lightning in his Shabbos sleep less than 1/4 mile from here exactly **23** months ago to the day of our Shabbos no name hurricane.

Since the hurricane hit on Shabbat, it behooves us to look for answers to the Torah portion read this week, Vayakel, whose numerical value is **151**, the same as the word "mikve," representing a physical and significantly, a spiritual cleansing. We just finished the incident of the golden calf and Moses is about to give us the laws of Shabbat. And since the first verse, phrase, or words of anything and in this case, the portion, is the seed level and thus the spiritual guide for the rest of portion, we should examine the first **7** word phrase of this portion: "Moses assembled the

whole Israelite community (VYKHL MShH ET CL ADT BNY YShREL).”

The first word as we said represented the power of the mikve, or **cleansing**.

And while the second word is Moshe, representing **healing**, the first two together (spiritual cleansing-healing) numerically sum to **496**, that of the sefira (dimension) of **Malchut**, our world, and thus a cleansing and healing of our world, a tikune or correction if you will.

In contrast, the 3rd and 4th words add up to **451**, the numerical value of **Ishmael**, representing the Arab and Moslem nations, also fathered by Abraham.

The next word is the 5th word, a permutation of the word **Da’at**, “knowledge, the *sefira* (dimension) representing the combined upper worlds.

And finally “**Bnei Israel**” the Israelites, whose numerical value with the kolel for their 8 letters is **611**, the numerical value of **Torah**.

As further evidence of this imagery, we have the sum of the first 5 initials of the phrase adding up to **137** and the last two to **12**, possibly representing the **137** years of **Ishmael**’s life and the **12** tribes of Bnei Israel.

Of course, beyond revealing the encoding anything we can say about this verse would be no more than inference, but we do know from the sages of blessed memory that the final letters point toward the future and the **7** final letters in this phrase including the kolel add up to **913**, the numerical value of Bereshit, the Torah’s first word, “In the beginning,” hinting at the time of **Da’at** that existed in the beginning and to a new beginning. And also the numerical value of the initials through the word Da’at, **137**, is also that of “to receive,” inferring “a receipt of Da’at.”

Nevertheless, the full value of the **7** words, reminiscent of the Torah’s first verse, also of **7** words, is **2017**, when the kolel for the **7** words is removed. Or **2001**, if the kolel for the **23** letters of the phrase is removed, and we all know the destruction that took us by surprise and befell our region in **2001**.

As to what new beginning there may be in **2017**, we can look to the one word that both the Torah’s first verse and this phrase have in common, *Et*, whose numerical value when the kolel for the other 6 words in either case is added is 407, whose square root in turn is **20.17424**, or **2017** again and **424**, the numerical value of Moshiach Ben David, which coincides with the predictions of certain tzaddikim of blessed memory.

And if Obama is elected to a second term, that term will be up in **2017**.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ezra