

INTRODUCTION TO HURRICANE SERMON
(Used in delivering Hurricane talk in 1961)

A.121r

At the very outset, we must limit the question that we have posed as the theme of this sermon. Our question is not why the hurricanes occur. First, we do not even know the physical causes of hurricanes, despite our weather satellite, certainly we cannot know the spiritual reasons. Secondly, "why" is a fruitless question. It sounds more like a complaint than a quest for information.

F.121r

In one of the moving psalms of King David, he cries out Eli, eli, lamah azavtani - "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Rabbi Samson Raphael Hersh offers a comment on this verse that is most relevant to our theme - and, in fact, pertinent to all our lives at any occasion or crisis. He directs our attention to the fact that the word for "why," lamah is in the Masoretic Text, recorded as having the accent on the second rather than on the first syllable. It is not LAmah, but laMAH. The first form of that word, LAmah, is indeed, the word "why." It is a Plaintive demand for information and explanation. But the version laMAH means not "why" but "wherefore". It is not a demand that God explain his reasons for visiting suffering upon us, but rather a prayer to God to teach us what to do with our suffering, what lessons to learn from it, what good to derive from these experiences. So, each of us, when faced with crisis, trouble, difficulties, or problems - must ask ourselves "wherefore?" rather than turning plaintively to God and demanding of Him, "why?"