

This week marks 21 years since September 11, 2001.

When such a thing happens, what is the message supposed to be. There were a lot of messages being sent to us. What came to my mind in the first few minutes was the second perek in Sefer Yeshayahu. And at that time, I spoke extensively about it in Yeshiva.

The novi Yeshayahu describes the end of times. As history unfolds and comes down to its finale, the world will at last recognize the truth. They will come to Har Habayis and to the Beis Hamikdosh – where Torah emanates from – for guidance about how to live their lives. All the nations of the world will seek those who know the Torah and find out what the derech Hashem is. The Beis Hamikdosh will be the center of the world because it is the center of limud Torah.

The Torah isn't just a collection of do's and don'ts. It gives us a whole approach to life. So even though the non-Jews will not be allowed to convert to Judaism, they still want to know how to live their lives according to the will and wisdom of Hashem. They will come to the talmidei chachomim to find out how.

What is Klal Yisroel doing at this time? They will rectify all the mistakes they made in the past. The land was full of gold and silver and they kept on trying to amass more and more wealth. They don't want money for the purpose of taivoh. They want it for its own sake. What sense does this make? Why would someone want to have more money than he could possibly spend during his entire lifetime?

The posuk says one who loves money will never be satisfied with money. It is strange that Rashi there, who usually gives us pshuto shel mikrah, explains that this posuk is referring to mitzvos – not to money. Why does Rashi do this?

The answer is very simple. Normal desires are necessary because the human body has physical needs which, if not met, cannot function properly. If we weren't given a desire to fulfill these needs, we would neglect them and cause ourselves serious damage. If we didn't feel hungry, we wouldn't feed ourselves and we would die. For most desires, after we satisfy our needs, the desire fades away. We stop feeling hungry after we eat enough.

Why did Hashem plant inside a human being a desire that could not be fulfilled and never fades? The answer is that Hashem wants us to have a never-ending desire for mitzvos. We should never feel satisfied with what we have accomplished. We should always strive to do more and more mitzvos. But people have twisted this never-ending desire for mitzvos and turned it into a desire for money which will have the same quality of never being satisfied.

The novi says that this was the failure of the people in this time. They will not worship Hashem. They will worship their own material accomplishments and take great pride in them. The novi predicts that someday they will realize that all their wealth and all their pride in their material accomplishments will have been worth nothing. The only thing of value in this world is Hashem. In order to make people realize this, Hashem will cause their tall towers and impressive structures to collapse. Then the pride of these people will be humbled.

The Twin Towers were the symbols of America's material success. They housed the center of American finance and were the symbol of America's enormous power and influence over the entire world. They were brought down by a handful of people who denied the value of material wealth and were true believers in their twisted and warped

religion. This symbol of American gaivoh was brought down by people who believed.

The Beis Halevy lived at a time when the haskoloh movement was making tremendous inroads in the Jewish world. Frum people were leaving Yiddishkeit in frightening numbers. A person came to the Beis Halevy for an explanation what was happening. He responded that the truth always prevails. But he asked: don't we have the truth? Why aren't we prevailing when we have the truth and the maskilim don't? The Beis Halevy said that we serve the truth with a lack of sincerity and conviction, and the maskilim serve their false ideology with total conviction and sincerity. That is why they are succeeding.

Although America was on top of the world, they were defeated by the total commitment of these true believers. These Islamic fundamentalists have a twisted, corrupted version of the truth – imagine what we can accomplish if we are committed to fighting for the truth with total conviction.

People are full of contradictions. The human capacity for gaivoh doesn't get humbled so easily. Now they put up a tower that is even taller than the original Twin Towers. But all the way down at the bottom of the building there is a memorial for the destruction of 9/11. It is a contradiction because in the middle of the center of financial success, there is a reminder of how it all got destroyed by a bunch of true believers.

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In this week's parsha we read the brochos and kollosh that were said on Har Gerizim and Har Eval. The halacha is that brochos and kollosh have to be read before Rosh Hashono. There is a machlokes if it refers to the brochos and kollosh in Ki Savo or Nitzovim, so we make sure to read both before Rosh Hashono. Why?

In the end of Perek 27 it says "arur asher lo yokim es divrei haTorah hazos la'asos osom". Rashi says that with this kollosh, Klal Yisroel accepted all the mitzvos with an ollosh and a shevuah. Torah is not just a good, wonderful, inspiring set of ideas. There are consequences for not keeping the Torah. If you keep it, good things will happen, and if you don't disaster will happen.

When we approach the Yom Hadin, we need to realize we are being judged by how much we are keeping our commitment to observe the Torah. The future of the year to come is being determined by how seriously we take this acceptance we made 3,300 years ago.

I want to go through some of the commentary to this last kollosh.

The Ramban says:

(כז) אשר לא יקים את דברי התורה הזאת - ולפי דעתנו, כי הקבלה הזאת, שיודה במצות בלבו ויהיו בעיניו אמת ויאמין שהעושה אותן יהיה לו שכר וטובה והעובר עליהן יענש, ואם יכפור באחת מהן או תהיה בעיניו בטלה לעולם הנה הוא ארור.

One has to believe that the mitzvos are real – they really bring reward and punishment. If one thinks they aren't real, or that even one mitzvah isn't relevant nowadays, he is included in this kollosh.

The Torah is eternal and so are all of the details. In today's twisted world of gender fluidity and WOKE culture, we affirm every day that the Torah's view has been, is and will always be true. We say every day in davening that the Torah is true and enduring for this generation and all generations forever and ever. It never becomes obsolete.

The Ramban continues:

אבל אם עבר על אחת מהן, כגון שאכל החזיר והשקץ לתאוות או שלא עשה סוכה ולולב לעצלה, איננו בחרם הזה, כי לא אמר הכתוב אשר לא יעשה את דברי התורה הזאת, אלא אמר אשר לא יקים את דברי התורה הזאת לעשות, כטעם קיימו וקבלו היהודים (אסתר ט כז). והנה הוא חרם המורדים והכופרים.

The kloloh does not apply to someone who has a weakness and gives in to his urges to do an aveiroh. Only to someone who denies that the mitzvah is real or that it isn't applicable to him.

Then the Ramban quotes the Yerushalmi:

ויברושלמי בסוטה (פ"ז ה"ד): ראייתי: אשר לא יקים, וכי יש תורה נופלת? רבי שמעון בן יקים אומר: זה החזן, רבי שמעון בן חלפתא אומר: זה בית דין של מטרן. דמר רב יהודה ורב הונא בשם שמואל על הדבר הזה קרע יאשיהו ואמר: עלי להקים. אמר רבי אסי בשם רבי תנחום בר חייה: למד ולימד ושמר ועשה והיה ספק בידו להחזיק ולא החזיק, הרי זה בכלל אחר.

Cursed is the one who doesn't uphold the Torah. Is the Torah falling down? It refers to the one who does hagboh. The one who does hagboh gets the most reward of all the kibbudim. Why? Because when you pick up the Torah in shul, you get the whole tzibbur to declare the Torah is true.

The Yerushalmi brings the story of King Yoshiyahu. He read this posuk and realized that even though he may be the biggest tzaddik, if he has the power to strengthen Torah observance in Klal Yisroel, and he doesn't do this, he is arur. So King Yoshiyahu started a whole teshuvah movement.

These aren't mutually exclusive ideas. One is strengthening the Torah on a smaller scale when he causes the tzibbur to declare the Torah is true, and another is strengthening the Torah when he causes others to understand the Torah and increase their level of Torah observance.

The pesukim go on to say that by keeping the Torah you will become a superior nation. You will be showered with all the blessing of the world.

When you listen to the voice of Hashem... The Ohr Hachayim says:

והכונה בזה, כי על ידי עסק התורה יעלה במעלות, לזכות שה' ידבר בו, והוא אומר תשמע בקול ה' אלהיך.

Through toiling in Torah – working hard – not just sitting back and flipping pages. Treat it like your business – then you will rise level after level and you feel that Hashem Himself is talking to you directly through His Torah.

How does a person listen to the voice of Hashem? Learn Torah – you hear the voice of Hashem coming through the Torah and the meforshim.

עוד ימשך לך המשמיעה לשמור ולעשות שהתורה מצלת מן החטא הרמוז בשמירה, גם תלמוד תורה, גדול כמו שמביא לידי מעשה, והוא אומר ולעשות.

The more your mind is preoccupied with the ideas of the Torah, it will guard you from doing aveiros. Torah is a powerful tool – it will automatically assist you in doing all the mitzvos – no matter what subject you are learning.

ועוד לך ונתנך ה' עליון וגו', וחוצ' מדרכינו, יכוין הכתוב לומר שצריך שיעסוק בתורה, בגדר מעלתם על הדברים, שממקום קדוש עליון באו. והוא אומר תשמע, פירוש תהיה שמיעתך אותם כפי ערך המדבר אותם, שהוא ה' אלהיך, ועוד לשמור ולעשות על דרך אומרם ז"ל (אבות פ"ד): הלומד על מנת ללמד מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד והלומד על מנת לעשות וכו' ע"כ. הרי שמובחר הלימוד הוא לקיים, והוא אומר אם שמעו תשמע וגו', פירוש שתשמע לשמור ולעשות.

We need to learn Torah because it is superior. It wasn't a normal creation. It came from the highest levels of ruchniyus. The Torah is coming straight to you from Hashem Himself.

ונתנך ה' עליון וגו'. הנה האדון חלק יעודי הטובה, כנגד קיום המצות, כל אחד כפי מה שראוי לו, כללות המצות הם ג' הרשומים בפסוק אם שמעו תשמע, והם: תלמוד תורה, ושמירת לא תעשה, וקיום מצות עשה, כנגד תלמוד תורה יעד ברכה ונתנך ה' עליון ובאו עליך כל הברכות האלה והשיגוך, ופירוש הכתוב שזה יהיה כנגד שרר אם שמעו וגו' במה שגמר אומר כי תשמע בקול ה' אלהיך הרי שיעוד זה הוא כנגד שרר

תלמוד תורה, והוא גם כן מכון אליו, כי באמצעות התורה ישתנו למעלה מכל האומות שאינם בני תורה.

You want to learn because you want to fulfill everything that Hashem wants you to do. Every mitzvah has a unique reward. There are three general categories of mitzvos. Each one has its own special impact on a person. Limud Torah changes a person. It makes you a superior human being. You will become a superior nation through your limud Torah and rise above the nations who do not have the Torah.

ואמר עוד ובאו עליך כל הברכות וגו' פירוש נוסף על יעוד ונתנך ה' עליון עוד לו ברכות אלו בשכר תורה, ואומר והשיגוך יתבאר על דרך אומרם ז"ל (ילקוט ראובני פ' ויקרא) כי האדון אלהי ישראל מדותיו רחמים על הדופק על רחמיו, ימלא ה' משאלותיו, להריק עליו טובה כאשר יחפוץ. אלא שבהגעת הטוב ההוא למטה, ישפטו סנהדרי מעלה אם ראוי. אם אינו ראוי לא יגיעו, לזה אמר והשיגוך הברכות, שזה הוא עיקר ההבטחה שלא יתעכבו בבתי דינים שלמטה. והנה תמצא שכל הברכות האמורות בענין הם מכוונים כנגד שכר תלמוד תורה על זה הדרך, אומר ברוך אתה בעיר וגו' על דרך אומרם ז"ל (ע"ז י"ט): דבר זה כתוב בתורה ושנוי בנביאים ומשולש בכתובים, כל העוסק בתלמוד תורה נכסיו מוצלחים.

Limud Torah brings all the good things in this world. It is not a minor thing in this world. It is the center of everything.

We live in a strange world where people believe in and dedicate their lives to unbelievably meaningless things and accomplishments. In the end of the day Hashem shows us just how meaningless all these material accomplishments are. He causes their enormous towers and impressive structures to crumble into dust.

All these oligarchs in Russia amassed so much wealth and bought these huge expensive yachts which they hardly use. They thought they could have it all. Suddenly Russia started a war which they expected to win in a few days, and this stubborn Jew decided to fight them. The unexpected happened and the Russians start to lose, and the government needed to finance a longer drawn-out military campaign. These oligarchs have all of their fancy possessions taken away by the western powers.

People create things and take such pride in them, and overnight, Hashem shows them how worthless they are.

The Mishna in Ovos says even if you have learned a lot of Torah, don't take so much pride in it. This is what you were created for – this is what life is all about – this is why you were put in this world. You wouldn't expect your heart to take pride in beating or your lungs to take pride in breathing. This is what they were designed to do – that is their job. The same thing is for us when we learn Torah.

The Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh says after all the curses, the only way you get to the top and become a superior nation is by limud haTorah. You may not have an 850 million dollar yacht. You will have the most valuable thing you can have in this world. The Torah is true and its value never becomes obsolete. The world will eventually recognize that you represent Hashem and they will come to you for guidance and leadership.

It is an unbelievable promise for those who make Torah the center of their lives.

This is how we prepare for Rosh Hashono – understanding what counts in this world.

The Rambam in the first perek of Hilchos Teshuvah says that one who does teshuvah for a specific aveiroh all year must detail it in his viduy. But the preparation for the din on Rosh Hashono and Yom Kippur isn't to focus on the details. It means looking at yourself as a total human being and assessing where you are holding in your general level of avodas Hashem. You look at the last year's growth and preparing for the next year's growth. Where am I going and how can I become that superior human being?

With Hashem's help, when we keep these things in mind, we will prepare adequately for the upcoming Yom Hadin.