

We live in an era of science and technology where man thinks he can control everything. In fact, Hashem gave us a mitzvah of (בראשית א' כ"ח) וְכִבְשֶׁתָּהּ to control and to run the world for the betterment of mankind. However, we often take that to too far of an extreme and we fall into the trap of (8:17) כְּחֵי וְעֵצָם יָדֵי עֲשֶׂה לִּי. Hashem constantly sends us reminders that this not true. Titus said, "Hashem, You can only defeat me on water. You can't defeat me on land." Hashem said, "Oh yeah? Get onto land and a tiny little gnat will take care of you."

We live in a culture where everything belongs to us and we believe we're in charge of everything. Hashem sends a tiny little virus called Covid and all of a sudden the world grinds to a halt. But this כְּחֵי וְעֵצָם yetzer hara is in every generation, not just now. We need constant reminders that we have to limit our vista and say "Hashem, with your help, I can do anything. Bezras Hashem I can make a parnassa, bezras Hashem I can help a sick person get better.

In this week's פרשה of עקב is the second פרשה of שמע, and it contains a very beautiful but subtle example of what it means to know our limits. The pasuk goes as follows: וְהָיָה מָטָר וְהֶאֱדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת יְבוּלָהּ וְאֲבֻדְתֶּם מִהֶרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר ה' נָתַן לָכֶם. These particular five words, וְהֶאֱדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת יְבוּלָהּ, would be more grammatically correct if it was written יְבוּלָהּ לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת, because the word יְבוּלָהּ means אֶת הַיְּבוּל שֶׁלָּהּ, so the word אֶת is unnecessary. Why did the torah use this extra word אֶת?

אֶת מַה שְׁאַתָּה מוֹכִיל לָהּ, our teacher, our guide, our ultimate all-time rebbi, say on this pasuk? רש"י, What does רש"י say? - כְּעֵינֵינוּ שְׁנֵאֲמַר זְרַעְתֶּם הַרְבֵּה וְהִבָּא מְעַט. No matter what you try to do, you will plant a lot and nothing will come out. Why? Because we think we can do anything with technology. If Hashem doesn't send us rain, it doesn't matter, we'll dig an irrigation ditch. We'll bring in water. We'll make water out of saline water, which is what the Israelis are doing. We'll be able to find ways and means of doing it. Hashem says, "Is that's what you think?" The truth is, if we want to get something done, it is only with bezras Hashem.

The word אֶת represents 'א to 'ת, which means everything in the entire world is only if it comes through Hashem. Yes, וְכִבְשֶׁתָּהּ, Hashem wants us to control the world and wants us to conquer the world and to take care of the world, but only if we keep saying bezras Hashem and in that זְכוּת, we'll have גְּרוּסֵי הַצִּלְחָה and fulfill our תפקיד in this world.

