

Our חכמים tell us in מסכת סוטה (5a): [שבגאון] (5a): אַחַד מִשְׁמוֹנֶה בְּשִׁמְיָנִית [שבגאון] This is a very cryptic statement. Even though גאון is generally considered a very distasteful and disfavored מידה, nevertheless, a חכם should have this "one-eighth of one-eighth" of גאון.

The גאון derives this concept from this week's פרשה, פרשת וישלח. In the תפילה that יעקב אבינו davened to save him from the הקדוש ברוך הוא, he says (32:11): קִטַּנְתִּי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים. The גאון notes that this פסוק is found in the eighth פרשה of the תורה, פרשת וישלח, and it is the eighth פסוק in the פרשה. From this, he explains, we learn a critical lesson: even though יעקב אבינו had so much to take pride in - his large משפחה, his wealth, and the נחת from his accomplishments - he still recognized and proclaimed מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים. This perspective reflects ענוה, a hallmark of true greatness. According to the גאון, the proper way to utilize גאון is to channel it towards ענוה, keeping oneself grounded even amidst success.

Another פשוט on this פסוק offers a complementary perspective. יעקב אבינו says (32:11): קִטַּנְתִּי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים. He acknowledges the tremendous kindness הוא הקדוש ברוך הוא has done for him. However, there seems to be a קושיא here: how could יעקב imply that he merited all of these חסדים on his own? After all, we know that all the חסדים and goodness we receive from הוא הקדוש ברוך הוא are in the זכות of the אבות. For instance, when דוד המלך sought to build the המקדש, בית המלך, דוד המלך could not get the doors to open until he invoked the זכות of דוד המלך.

The תירוץ given is based on this very פסוק. When יעקב אבינו reflects on the חסדים of the past, he says קִטַּנְתִּי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים, expressing gratitude for what הוא הקדוש ברוך הוא has already done for him, acknowledging that he may have tried as hard as he could to earn it. However, when looking to the future, יעקב admits his dependence on זכות אבות. He says קִטַּנְתִּי, recognizing his limitations and placing his trust in the זכות of the generations that came before him.

This is a crucial lesson for us as well. When considering the past, we must humbly appreciate what הקדוש ברוך הוא has done for us. But when looking to the future, we rely on זכות אבות and daven for continued ישועה. This is reflected in our daily תפילות, especially in עשרה עשרה, where we invoke the זכות of our אבות.

May we take this message to heart, recognizing both our accomplishments and our dependence on the זכות of the פריעדיקע generations who came before us.

