Coping with Pride (Translation)

Part 1: Lessons from life

This part describes various occurrences in my life that happened over the years, and from which I learnt lessons as to how to cope with pride. They are written according to their importance in my eyes, and not in the order in which they occurred.

1) Channel pride into other positive feelings

When one of my children was in secondary school, he returned home with an excellent certificate in his hand. He said he was proud of the certificate he received. I replied, don't take pride in it because it might make you think you're better or more important than others. But be as happy as you please, and try to channel feelings of pride into other positive feelings such as joy, contentment, satisfaction, etc. My joy was twofold because both my child and I accepted what was said. Channeling pride into other positive feelings helps coping with pride.

2) Praise the deed, and also praise the doer

The following discussion, with a little editing, took place between me and my children:

Eldest and youngest son: We are proud of you Dad.
Me: Thank you very much; but don't be proud, even of others.

Particularly with children, if you say "I'm proud of you", that might put pride in them. It is best to be happy, calm, contented, satisfied, joyful, etc. You can say "it really encourages me" etc. Please help me add words and phrases of encouragement to the above list.

Second son: Agree with the above.
Youngest Son: Everything's fine.

Proud of you, but also happy for you, encouraging you with every other word you want.

Pride is not us; we are proud of you.
That is something else. ☺

I think according to Jewish law, it is permissible to be proud of your son, or your dad. Maybe you can check it out?
Me: I know that phrases like "I'm proud of you," are used to encourage others. But perhaps someone who hears this, especially a child, may become proud! Perhaps the speaker will become proud. In my opinion it is better to encourage with other words.

I once again ask for your help in adding words and expressions of encouragement without mentioning pride.

Daughter: Praise the action in a more specific sense, for example: fascinating writing, an interesting idea, such a colourful painting, what good eyes that found things so quickly, what quickness, etc., etc. It is tailored to children from life's experience.

The fact that the other person receives a positive response, that they were seen and appreciated, is all that is needed.

Me: Praise the deed, and also praise the doer. Here are some examples: excellent suggestion my daughter, you painted such a colourful painting, what a good deed you did, etc.
3) It’s nice to be important—but it’s more important to be nice

This happened during a period when I was a department head. At that time, I thought of myself that I was important, I judged others unfavourably. There was anger and resentment in my heart. I wanted to belittle others who did not agree with me but didn’t do so.

And what happened? I went to the bank to collect a cheque book, and behind the clerk was written “It’s nice to be important”—a lesson from an executive toy that I am very appropriate for my situation at that time. In the end, I resigned as a department head because I felt I couldn’t cope with the challenges of authority.

4) A lesson from an executive toy

This too happened during the time when I was a head of department. I once saw in a shop window, a small helicopter—what would happen if a helicopter set its own goals and all the computer capabilities came through? Computer designers and manufacturers would buy the toy but learnt nothing.

5) Faith in the Creator helps eliminate pride

According to science, the laws of nature apply everywhere in the universe and at all times. Also: “All living organisms store genetic information using the same molecules—DNA and RNA.” (See http://www.dnaftb.org/40/.)

Clear evidence that there is one Creator.

An allegory: What would happen if a computer prides itself on its ability to do quick calculations and retrieval information quickly for us? Computer designers and manufacturers would think what is the computer proud about! After all, we built it and all the computer capabilities came through us.

And the analogy: All our abilities have been given to us by the Creator and we have nothing to be proud of. One can rejoice with the challenges of authority.

6) Recognizing the Creator’s wisdom helps eliminate pride

Here are two examples of well-known phenomena that seem simple on the surface but testify to the great wisdom of the Creator.

• The path of a ray of light traverses from one place to another is such that its travel time is the smallest of all possible paths. It even happens when it passes through different transparent materials and mirrors.

• The shape of a soap film has the smallest area that joins its boundary. Finding the path with the least time or the shape with the least area as in these examples, requires advanced mathematics.

(See for example http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minimal_surface.)

Part 2: Lessons from faith

This part describes how faith in the Creator and recognition of His wisdom helps eliminate pride.

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However, in these examples, this happens "naturally" because of the laws of refraction and reflection for light rays, and the law of surface tension for fluids. It is beyond my understanding as to how the Creator conceived and established such laws, and also created such materials that faithfully work according to these laws. These laws make finding these paths and shapes effortless and fast. For us advanced mathematicians and a computer are needed! All this testifies to the Creator's genius and great abilities. In view of the Creator's greatness, pride is inappropriate for us. We can rejoice in our abilities as stated above.

7) Stay far away from pride

I have written only a little in this article, but there is a comprehensive book "The Ways of the Righteous" about the correction of character traits, and it is worthwhile reading this book. According to this book, whose author is unknown, pride is the character trait which should be corrected first. One should stay far away from pride for it can cause you to think that you are more important than your fellow man. Worst of all, it can make you forget your Creator. Here are excerpts from this book, from the first chapter, which is about pride.

- Pride is the coin which was made invalid by the great King blessed be He, and he has warned us about this in his Torah, as is written: "Beware lest thou forget the Lord, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 6, 12). For the proud can forget his Maker, as is written "And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, ... And thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God ... And thou say in thy heart: 'My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth' (Deuteronomy 6, 12). For the proud can forget his Maker, and for His guiding and thy heart is an abomination to the Lord … (ibid. 8, 13-18). And concerning the king it is said "That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren ..." (ibid. 17,20). If the Torah warned even the king, how much more so that laymen should not lord it over each other.

- And even if he is not proud above any man neither in speech nor in deed, but in his heart alone is he proud, he is called an abomination, as is said: "Every one that hath a haughty heart is an abomination to the Lord … " - even though except for heart he is not haughty, he is called an abomination.

Remember!

- Channel pride into other positive emotions.
- Praise the deed, and also praise the doer.
- It's nice to be important but it's more important to be nice.
- Don't let pride make us upset or angry.
- Faith in the Creator helps eliminate pride.
- Recognizing the Creator's wisdom helps eliminate pride.
- Stay far away from pride.

Thanks

Thanks to the Creator for giving me the understanding to learn lessons from the above occurrences, and for His guiding hand in my life. Thanks to my dear wife for her constant support for nearly fifty years. Thanks to my sons and daughter for the enlightening discussions above and for their help producing this article. Google Translate has assisted me to produce this translation and I thank Google LLC.

הודות

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