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 chidren 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 is 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 time 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, I compared others unfavourably.

And what happened? I went to the bank to collect a cheque. The clerk behind the counter wrote, "It’s nice to be helpful." This happened during a time when I was a department head because I felt I couldn’t cope with the challenges of authority.

I once saw in a shop window, a small helicopter. I didn’t buy the toy but learnt that there is no need to get upset or angry. Though this matter is not directly connected with pride, I have included it because pride can cause us to be upset or angry, and so take care.

Part 2: Lessons from faith

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

4) A lesson from an executive toy

This too happened during a time when I was a head of department. I once saw in a shop window, a small helicopter with an executive message in English: If you, as an executive, are about to get angry press this button and watch the helicopter fly two inches (5 cms.). I didn’t buy the toy but learnt that there is no need to get upset or angry when progress is not as I wanted. Though this matter is not directly connected with pride, I have included it because pride can cause us to be upset or angry, and so take care.

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.dnafth.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 retrieve 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 in our abilities as stated above.

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 that a ray of light travels 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 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minimal_surface.)

Note: According to the Book of Proverbs, "A wise son gladdens his father...", and one may learn from this that it is appropriate to be glad of others. I don’t think there is a verse in the Bible about being proud of others.
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 it 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 the King who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt.

- 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 has a haughty heart is an abomination to the Lord ..." - even though that except for heart he is not haughty, he is called an abomination.

**Briefly:**

- 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:**

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