

Dear Chavraya,

Arrogance and pride are not the same thing. Over weaning pride can become arrogance in the way of the shadow side of life, as in regard to many virtues overdone, but that is not what pride is meant to be. Pride is necessary if we would fulfill our diverse callings as human beings. Arrogance is never a good, never helpful in fulfilling one's own rightful promise or in allowing others to do so. Evidence of arrogance is sadly and dangerously abundant in the land today. Arrogance does not make room for others, becoming a way of taking up more space than is rightfully one's own. It does not allow for equal standing of those who in the eyes of the arrogant one do not measure up, Arrogance is a denial of human equality.

Perhaps with a bit of counter intuitive irony, pride in its fullness is meant to be an expression of humility. To have pride in oneself is complete only if one honors and makes room for another's pride. Pride in each other allows each one to blossom in their humanity. Pride as self-respect, therefore, is the very antithesis of arrogance. So it is in the way of loving one's neighbor as oneself, as we are commanded, *v'ahavta l'rey'acha kamo'cha/you shall love your neighbor as yourself*. The underlying lesson is that we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We can't love others without loving ourselves, without recognizing our own humanity and decency, without recognizing our own right to a place and foothold in this world. Only when we become stuck in self-love, does pride become arrogance. In the positive and hopeful tension of the mitzvah to love our neighbor is the critical dynamic of self-love and love of others. So it is in the nature of pride, respect for oneself as the starting point of respect for others.

It is a lesson brought home with powerful imagery in this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Sh'lach L'cha*. Scouts have been sent out to search out the land ahead of the people's arrival. On their return, the scouts tell of a beautiful land, but one filled with fearsome giants. All but two of the scouts speak with despair and fill the people with fear, warning that they will not be able to enter the land. In summation, the scouts tell of what they saw and so reveal the inner landscape as well: *We saw giants there, the sons of Anak, descendants of the giants. We were in our own eyes like grasshoppers, and so, too, were we in their eyes/v'chen hayinu b'eyneyhem*. The order of seeing makes the lesson clear, how we see ourselves affects how others see us. The Kotzker Rebbe challenges us simply to be ourselves, *mah ichpat l'cha aych atah nireh b'enev acherim/why do you care how you are seen in the eyes of others?*

In our effort to truly fulfill the meaning of pride and insure a place for all in this world, so we do care and should care how others see us. We should not at all need or allow others to justify our place in this world. In proudly presenting ourselves for who we are in this world, it is our hope to move others to deeper understanding of human equality and thereby help to insure equality for all. Offering a subtle teaching of hope toward the transformation of arrogance into pride of place for all, the Torah describes those giants in the land as *anshei middot/people big in stature*. It is precisely this term, *anshei middot*, that is used to describe people of great moral stature, *middot* referring both to *measure* or *moral qualities*. So the ultimate measure of a person is not in their physical stature, not

in their wealth or power, not in the amount of space they fill. The nature of a person is in their pride, pride that begins within them self and flows out to include and honor others. Pride of self and others shimmers in the breathtaking beauty of a rainbow, light shimmering on teardrops gathered between heaven and earth. So on this Pride Shabbos, our rainbow flag beckons and Gladdens, meant to welcome all for who they are. So may that become the way of the world, not the way of arrogance, but of pride.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor