

He shall skin the Elevation/Burnt Offering and cut it into pieces. (1:6)

Arrogance may not be the prime motivation for sin, but a sinner is certainly arrogant. His pretentiousness is the result of an exacerbated self-opinion, which allows him to act injudiciously. A more pronounced sense of self will provoke even greater and more audacious sin, while the sinner thinks that, as a result of his self-perceived greatness, he may act with impunity. One who is humble is careful concerning what he says and how he acts. Hence, his indiscretion is less common and certainly less pronounced. Having said this, the question is: What motivates the arrogance? Every individual knows “himself.” He knows the truth. He might not want to accept it, but the truth about himself is blatant and unambiguous. Why, then, does he permit himself to think that he is so great that he may act as he pleases?

Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita, quotes the *Yalkut HaGershuni* in the name of the *Arvei Nachal* with an illuminating explanation for this phenomena. Once, *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, the venerable *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mir Yerushalayim, was asked to speak at a *sheva brachos*, festive meal, in honor of the wedding of one of his close students. *Rav Chaim* was not only a brilliant *Talmudic* scholar, but his penetrating insight into the human psyche, coupled with his vast knowledge of all the literary sources concerning ethical character refinement, also made him an accepted leader and mentor to those studying and seeking self-improvement. It was, therefore, surprising to hear him begin his speech with a self-commentary of his greatness. “I am one of this generation’s greatest *tzaddikim*, righteous persons. Perhaps, I might even be the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah giant of this generation. I am a brilliant scholar and faithfully observant.” Hearing such utterances from the mouth of *Rav Chaim* frightened all of the guests. While everything that *Rav Chaim* said was probably true, it was totally uncharacteristic of him to talk about himself – certainly not with such glowing accolades. The people were momentarily ashamed that they were party to the great *Rosh Yeshivah’s* seeming debasement.

As the *Rosh Yeshivah* continued, the people cringed: “It is impossible for me to ignore the fact that I do have shortcomings, but, *b’sach ha’kol*, in sum total, in a general sense, I am in good shape.” The *Rosh Yeshivah* stopped for a moment, allowing for his words to sink in, and then he declared, “This is how everyone thinks of himself!”

The *Yalkut HaGershuni* continued, explaining that everyone realizes that he has good and bad qualities. Deep down he thinks highly of himself, comparing himself to some of the great Torah giants of his time. He concedes, of course, that he has deficiencies – after all, who is perfect? At the end of the day, however, when he tallies up the sum total, he determines that he is doing well.

Arrogance is based upon one’s obsession with *sach ha’kol*, the sum total. The individual is not interested in breaking down the various components of his essence. One who seeks to free himself of the negative *middah*, character trait, of *gaavah*, arrogance, should follow the message of the

pasuk. He shall skin the *Olah* and cut it into pieces. Let him peruse each *mitzvah* to see if he truly executes it according to *halachah*. Are his *Tefillin* in perfect condition? Does he have the proper *kavanah*, intention/devotion, when he prays? Is he certain that his *Shabbos* observance is up to speed? Does he check that everything that enters his mouth maintains impeccable standards of *kashrus*? If every aspect of his “broken down” service to Hashem is perfect, then he is in good shape. Otherwise, what reason does he have for being arrogant?

We observe Torah and *mitzvos*, but are we truly observant in accordance with Hashem's demands, or are we just getting by? We must stop looking at the sum total and begin taking everything in our religious observance apart, much like a doctor in search of a diagnosis. The patient on the whole seems fine, but he still feels a bit sluggish. Why? Perfect health, both physical and spiritual is not based on *sach ha'kol*, the sum total. Every aspect of a person's physical and spiritual self must be fine-tuned and in perfect shape, or else the patient does not receive a clean bill of health.