Happiness vs. Pleasure

משנכנס אדר מרבים בשמחה

This Shabbos we will be bentching ראש חדש אדר ב'.

Ask the students: What do you think people want most in their life? What do you think people are running after in this world?

Get answers from the students such as...
Money
Fun
Pleasure
Fame
Success

Ask the students: Why do they want these things? What do these things give them?
Guide the students to answer: Happiness
So, essentially everyone really is running after happiness. That is what everyone wants most in this world.

Now there is a problem. When you look at the people who have the most of these things, they should be the happiest. However, we find it not to be so. In fact, it is very often the opposite. Those with money and fame are often the least happy. There are people who live in huge houses and seem to have everything that they could want, and yet they are still very unhappy.
So we see that these things are not the way to reach true happiness.

So why does everyone think that it will give them happiness if we see that it doesn't? Why is everyone chasing these dreams?

These things give us pleasure. People mistake pleasure for happiness.
THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND PLEASURE.

Ask the students: So what do you think is the difference between the feelings of happiness and pleasure?

Guide the students to answer: Pleasure is something that is fleeting and the feeling goes away soon after. Happiness is something that lasts much longer. You can get bored of something that gives you pleasure, while things that make you happy, will always make you happy.

Happiness vs. Pleasure

For example: How long does the pleasure of a really delicious piece of cake last? A special snack? What about a roller coaster ride? Pleasure fades shortly after the action takes place. What do you feel after the pleasure? You want to do it again. You want to reexperience that pleasure. Even more so, once you felt it once, you feel like you NEED it again. Pleasure is addictive.
What if you get that delicious cake every day? Does it have the same pleasure? What about the roller coaster ride? The pleasure is never as good as the first time. Pleasure fades with repetitions. It gets boring after a while.

Why are pleasures fleeting? Why can't they make us really happy?
There is a משל in the מסילת ישרים to a common peasant who marries a princess. He wants to make her happy so he buys the best things he could find. He buys her beautiful costume jewelry. It will not satisfy her because she is a princess who is used to beautiful diamonds.

The same is true with our נפש. Our נפש is like the princess because we have a נשמה which comes from ה', a צלם אלקים, and it cannot be satisfied with anything that comes from this world. Everything on this world is too cheap for it.

So what is true happiness? And how do we achieve it?
לשון הקדש is the language that ה' used to create the world. Each word contains the blueprint for the true essence of that word. In לשון הקדש, the word for the ultimate happiness is אושר. It comes from the same שרש as אישור - validation. From here we learn that a person is truly happy when he feels good about himself.

Ask the students: So.... what makes someone feel good about himself?
Guide the students to answer: Living a life of meaning is what makes a person feel good about himself. If someone lives for a purpose, he feels valid and good about himself.

Ask the students: What is our purpose in this world?
Guide the students to answer: Our purpose in this world is to be close to Hashem - To learn His Torah, to do His mitzvos and to emulate His מדות.

So... Let's go back to our previous examples. Let's say you bring a really special extra snack to school one day. You're really excited to enjoy it. Then you see another student in your class and realize that he/she didn't bring any snack that day. What will feel better for you? Giving some of your snack away or keeping it all to yourself? What will feel better for you tomorrow? What about the next day?

Happiness vs. Pleasure

There is an old children's book (The Best Night out with Dad) about a boy named Danny who is looking forward to his night out with his dad. They are planning to go to the circus and are really excited about it. On the line for the circus, they find themselves behind another boy and his father who are equally excited to see the circus. When it came to their turn in the line, the other father and son handed in their tickets and the ticket man looked at them and said that the coupons that they were using were expired. The father looked in his wallet, saw that he had no money, and with disappointment on their faces, pulled his son out of the line. They would not be able to see the circus tonight. Danny looked at his father, and they decided to give up their tickets to the other boy and his father. The story ends "They didn't see the circus, but to Danny, it was the best night out with Dad ever."

Ask the students: Why do you think Danny felt that way?

True story: 8 year old Dovid came home from school very upset. He told his mother that there was a boy in his class that the other boys were not treating nicely. His mother asked him if he would like to invite the boy over for Shabbos. Dovid happily agreed and called the boy to invite him over. The boy agreed, and Dovid went to bed feeling happy. About two hours after Dovid had gone to bed, he came downstairs. When his mother asked him why he wasn't sleeping yet, He put his hands on his chest and said, "I can't sleep. It feels too good over here."

What is that feeling?
That is the feeling of emulating Hashem. That is the feeling of being in touch with your נשמה. That is the feeling of living for a purpose. That is the feeling of validation/feeling good about yourself. That is the feeling of true happiness. That is the greatest feeling in the world.

Now that we are in אדר, the time for שמחה, let us focus on what true שמחה is and how to achieve it.

Attached is a recording of another inspirational story to share with your students about someone emulating Hashem and feeling true happiness.

Happiness vs. Pleasure

Name 3 examples of things that give someone pleasure?

- _____

What about pleasure is not so good?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How do we achieve happiness?

_____אישור =_____ אושר

Living for a purpose is what gives us validation. It's what makes us feel good about ourselves.

What is our purpose in this world?

- _____

  _____

What can you do to emulate Hashem and bring happiness into your life?

- _____

  _____

Happiness vs. Pleasure

Name 3 examples of things that give someone pleasure?

- food, new clothing, a fancy vacation...

What about pleasure is not so good?

1. it fades quickly
2. it's addictive
3. it gets boring with repetitions

What is happiness?

validation אישור = happiness אושר

How do we achieve happiness?

Living for a purpose is what gives us validation. It's what makes us feel good about ourselves.

What is our purpose in this world?

- Learning Torah, doing mitzvos, and emulating Hashem's middos

What can you do to emulate Hashem and bring happiness into your own life?

-