

Lesson on Tefillah

- Teacher asks students to list some of the various things we daven for in Shemoneh Esrei and where do we daven for them....

Answers may include:

- Health (rephaeinu)
- Intelligence / Good judgment (ata chonen)
- Parnasa (bareich aleinu)
- World Peace (sim shalom)
- Forgiveness (slach lanu)
- Etc... all the rest of the brachos...

- Teacher then asks students to list some of the various things that we (this could mean humans in general, or Jewish people, or those specific students in the class, etc) could want / need but that *aren't* explicit in Shemoneh Esrei...

Answers may include various categories of things:

- School issues level
  - Good grades on test
  - Win the sports game
  - New gadget / device
  - Make friends
  - Etc... student centric things
- Jewish issues / Global issues level
  - Children follow in a Torah path
  - Fertility issues
  - Shidduchim
  - Financial security
  - Etc... adult centric thing
- Teacher explains that almost all of the things we might want / need that don't appear to have an explicit bracha in Shemoneh Esrei can really be found hinted to in the brachos, and those hints can indicate when you should have kavana for that particular thing you need. (I.e Shidduchim - "vekabetzeinu yachad me'arbah kanfos haaretz" - gather me and my bashert together from wherever we may be in the world, Fertility issues - Ata gibor is about the 4 keys Hashem has exclusive control over..., etc)

*(...And all of this isnt even talking about the many brachos and topics relating to Geulah, Yerushalayim, kedusha, the Beis Hamikdash, etc... teacher should use these more abstract examples only if students bring it up in their responses...)*

- Teacher poses a question to the class... what about Happiness? Isn't that something we all want really badly? So why isn't that on the Shemoneh Esrei brachos list - a Happiness bracha?
- Probably everyone's immediate answer is that all of those other things that are on the list will make us Happy when we get them so we don't need a specific bracha about Happiness on its own...

Let's look at what Rav Sacks says about Happiness...

**Source 1a:** Rav Sacks *Studies in Spirituality* (Koren, 2021), p. 12.

**“Happiness is largely a matter of satisfying needs and wants. ... Happiness is largely about how you feel in the present.”**

**Source 1b:** Rav Sacks, *Morality* (Basic Books, 2020), p. 103.

**“...Happiness, or blessedness – the terms are almost interchangeable...”**

THOUGHT QUESTION TO STUDENTS

- Do YOU agree with the statement in Source 1a in general? Why? Why not?
- What does Rav Sacks mean when he says that Happiness is equivalent to Blessedness?
- Does the approach of pursuing Happiness through attaining our other Shemoneh Esrei wants/needs seem to hold up with these sources?

**Source 2a:** Rav Sacks, *Celebrating Life* (Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 14-15

**“Kohelet...the man who had it all and discovered it was not enough. ...Palaces, gardens, wives, wealth – all promised happiness. None delivered. The more wealth, the more worry. The more**

**knowledge, the more weariness of the spirit. In the end all he could say was, ‘Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless.’**

**We recognize Kohelet. He is the billionaire with the private jet, the apartment of Fifth Avenue, the holiday home in Cap Ferrat, the Armani suit and the expensive wife, who discovers that it all adds up to less than the sum of the parts. The route to happiness turns out to be harder than taking the waiting out of wanting....”**

**Source 2b:** Rav Sacks, “Happiness is to Be Found in Being, Not in Having,” Covenant and Conversation, Oct. 25, 2008

**“Kohelet is a victim of affluenza. He has everything: houses, servants, gardens. He is... the richest man on earth. Yet it does not bring him happiness. The more he has, the more pointless it all seems...”**

#### THOUGHT QUESTION TO STUDENTS

- How does Rav Sack’s approach to happiness differ in these sources compared to Source 1a “Happiness is ...satisfying our needs...” and Souce 1b “Happiness [is] Blessedness...”?
- Do YOU think that things like “wealth” and “knowledge” are “meaningless”? That “houses, servants, garden” are “pointless”?
- Do YOU think “wealth” and “knowledge” and “houses, servants, gardens” more often lead a person to greater happiness or less happiness?

**Source 3:** Rav Sacks, “Happiness is to Be Found in Being, Not in Having,” Covenant and Conversation, Oct. 25, 2008

**“...At first, the knowledge that he will die threatens to rob Kohelet of all meaning. What use is wealth, power, wisdom, success, if one day we will no longer be here to enjoy them?”**

**... But... At some stage he has an insight that changes his life. What would happen if we did not die, if we were truly immortal? We would never experience joy or exhilaration. We would feel no need to have children, or to leave a mark on the world. We would never even love. Lacking nothing, we would feel nothing....**

**“...The prospect of death threatens to rob him of all happiness, until he realises that mortality is the very condition of our happiness. Because life is short, every moment is precious. That is the knowledge most of us are only taught through pain or crisis or loss. Happiness lies in being, not in having.”**

**THOUGHT QUESTION TO STUDENTS**

- How does the reality of death actually bring Kohelet to experience life with much more meaning, appreciation, and Happiness?
- How can WE similarly use this attitude to bring greater Happiness and meaning to OUR life?

**Source 4a:** Rav Sacks, *Morality* (Basic Books, 2020), p. 103.

**“...Happiness... means living in accord with the word and will of God, which is how the Bible construes the moral life. It means doing well, living in harmony with the fundamental values embedded in the universe by its Creator.”**

**Source 4b:** Rav Sacks, *Celebrating Life* (Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 14-15

**“...There is no other book in the Bible that uses the word ‘I’ so many times as... [Kohelet]. Kohelet’s problem was that he kept thinking about himself. It made him rich, powerful, a great success. As**

**for happiness, though, he did not have a chance. Happiness lives in the realm called Not-I.”**

THOUGHT QUESTIONS TO STUDENTS

- What two additional layers of Happiness does Rav Sacks raise with Source 4a and Source 4b?
- Considering these two new approaches, is Happiness something you can explicitly daven for in a Shemoneh Esrei bracha?

HOMEWORK Article on Happiness from Rav Noach Weinberg on Aish.com <https://aish.com/48968901/>

- Read the article. Then Choose 1 of the 3 Happiness Exercises that he lists in the article and try it out for 1 week. Keep a record of your thoughts and feelings as you carry out the exercise you chose.

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Shabbos

*We will continue our Lessons on Tefillah with learning the meaning of the words, the structure of Tefillah, the Halachos...etc..*