

# Pre-Experience Series Introduction

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## HOW HAKHEL SAVED JUDAISM

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*Thunder booms. Lightning flashes. A powerful shofar blast pierces the dawn sky and steadily shoots through the air, its deep sound stretching on continuously. A nation gathers around a fiery mountain, thick, heavy clouds resting at its peak amid a rush of smoke. The mountain quakes. The people tremble. And the persistent sound of the Shofar grows stronger.*

*The G-dly revelation is visual and palpable, and every one of the men, women, and children standing at the foot of Har Sinai feels a rush of strength and motivation to dedicate their lives to Hashem and the Torah. It is in this surreal atmosphere that the Torah is given to the Jewish nation, to give guidance and instruction on how to serve Hashem for all of eternity.*

*As the years of wandering in the desert go by, many people who witnessed this momentous time perish. A new generation is born, made up of their children. The devotion of this new generation cannot compare to that of their parents, who experienced the revelations of the giving of the Torah and witnessed the wonders with their own eyes. At the end of the 40-year journey, few people remain from that era.*

*The time to enter the land of Israel draws near, and Moshe, the faithful leader of the Jewish people, reaches his final day on earth, and he realizes something huge. The entire Judaism faces existential uncertainty: Will the passion for Torah last after Moshe's passing? What will happen as the generations go by, and get increasingly removed from the generation that experienced the giving of the Torah in person? **Will the Jewish nation endure?!***

It is on his final day on earth that Moshe reveals the secret to renewing our inspiration and commitment to the Torah: the mitzvah of Hakhel. This is his "last will and testament" to keep Judaism going throughout the generations to come.







# Menu & Buffet Decor

## CHOCOLATE FOUNTAIN AND S'MORES BAR

- ❑ Semi-sweet baking chocolate
- ❑ Fruit
- ❑ Marshmallows
- ❑ Graham crackers
- ❑ Pretzels
- ❑ Mini donuts
- ❑ Assorted cookies
- ❑ Drinks

For something really unique and different, put the serving bowls *under* the tablecloth and nest the food inside the bowls over the tablecloth!



Pre-made fruit kebabs, or DIY style? How about both?!



Use coordinating serving dishes to give your table a themed look.

Fresh flowers in colors that match your dishes brighten the table and tie everything together.

Dazzle your guests by leveling your platters with glass bowls.



Mini chalkboards give a more rustic look.



Give dimension to the table by putting upside down bowls (or even shoeboxes!) under the tablecloth.



Tiered trays add elegance and pizzazz.



# MC's Step by Step Guide

*The bolded text is a suggested script for the MC and is not meant to be used word-for-word. You are encouraged to use your own words and thoughts. Additionally, throughout the script, different supplies will be referenced. These are listed earlier in the guide.*

## Light Refreshments

As you welcome your guests, participants will have the opportunity to socialize and enjoy the buffet.

## Welcome

The MC formally welcomes participants, invites them to take a seat, and introduces the theme *Essence: A Question of Identity* by starting off with a question.

**Who here could answer this question for us: How would you describe yourself?**

The MC has a volunteer share their answer, and then explains the goal and process of the event:

**People spend a lot of time trying to find themselves these days. And yet, so many suffer miserably from**

some sort of an identity crisis. For example, an unexpected change in someone's life can leave them confused about who they are and what they have to offer to the world. Imagine a nurse who is fired from her job: she suddenly questions her whole purpose in life. Imagine a teacher who is let go: her whole sense of self-worth withers away.

Tonight we are going to be exploring the concept of identity and how it plays an essential role in adopting the Moshiaich Mindset. We are going to get a better understanding of ourselves and others, as well as a whole new perspective on life that will hopefully enable us to live a more Moshiaich-oriented life.

**What will be the general process? We will first explore the general**

## THE MINDSET AT PLAY

At the beginning of the Core Knowledge, we discussed the conventional mindset on identity—that we invoke our understanding of who a Yid truly is occasionally, when necessary.

Let us contrast this conventional mindset with the Moshiach Mindset:

### Excuse vs Motivation

**Conventional Mindset:** My inherent connection with Hashem can be my best empowerment after I mess up. At the end of the day, my connection is not dependent on my actions.

**Moshiach Mindset:** My inherent connection with Hashem is my greatest motivator to succeed. It is completely below me to betray my own identity in the first place.

### The Down Day vs Regular Day

**Conventional Mindset:** When I am in a dark place, having a down day, I will invoke my feelings of essence and realize that I am a piece of Hashem and inherently valuable.

**Moshiach Mindset:** When I am satisfied with how my morning went, coasting along with the expected success of my afternoon activities, I still deeply identify with my *neshama* and align my thoughts accordingly.

### Stranger vs Colleague

**Conventional Mindset:** When an occasional man in ragged clothes with a Yalmulka on his head and a Pushkah in his hands is expressing erratic and annoying behavior, I recall that he too is a piece of Hashem and I decide to see past his external appearance.

**Moshiach Mindset:** Even on a daily basis, when my co-worker simply rubs me the wrong way, I choose to perceive her for her essence and not get distracted by those irritating quirks.

### Achievements vs Existence

**Conventional Mindset:** I emphasize spiritual growth. The highlight of my journey is *cheshbon hanefesh*, where I take stock of my accomplishments and resolve to rectify my faults. I am motivated by my past accomplishments.





# Debate Questions

- 1. We all play many roles and can choose to identify with any one of them. Does how we choose to identify ourselves impact our actions? Bring an example to support your answer.**

## **Perspectives before learning the Core Knowledge:**

- No, because your actions are separate from who you identify yourself as. You can identify primarily as a daughter, for example, but you will still play all your other roles, and it won't make a practical difference.
- Yes, because our thoughts influence our actions. If you identify yourself primarily as a mother, for example, you will spend more time thinking about your children and planning things for them than if you identify yourself by another role.

## **Perspectives after learning the Core Knowledge:**

- No, because you can choose to identify as something but not do anything about it. For example, it is possible for someone to identify as a Jew, but not observe Torah and Mitzvos. You need to make sure to actually work to express your identity for it to impact your actions.
- Yes, because when you truly identify yourself as something then you want to live in line with this identity. For example, when you identify yourself as your *neshamah* you will want to live a more G-dly life, and this will influence the choices you make.

- 2. Bayla and Menachem are discussing Rochi's upcoming five year old birthday. "I want to throw a huge party in honor of Rochi's birthday!" Bayla exclaims.**

Menachem turns to Bayla in confusion. "But Bayla, don't you think it's better to save the celebration for when Rochi does something special, like when she starts *davening* from a *Siddur*? I'm not sure we should make such a big deal about her birthday..."

What are your thoughts? Should they make a big deal about Rochi's birthday or save the celebration for a major accomplishment? Explain your position.

## **Perspectives before learning the Core Knowledge:**

- No, a birthday doesn't celebrate any accomplishments or achievements. We should better be celebrating those.
- Yes, it is a good time to demonstrate to your child that they are loved and we are happy they exist in our lives.