

## Deconstructing Differences: Korach Re-examined Created by Noah Bardash and Sarah Sloan

- Program Type:
  - Peulat Shabbat
- Duration:
  - 60 minutes (workable time is 45 minutes)
- Group size:
  - Starting at 75 each, then splits into groups of 15-20
- Location(s) & set up:
  - B-side Migrash for Kinesthetic, Machane Gimmel for Cerebral
- 1 line description:
  - Using the story of Korach as a jumping-off point, this peulah aims to demonstrate the importance of inclusion & accepting of differences in a camp environment. Participating tzevet can choose between a more physically-focused activity or a cerebrally-focused activity.
- Goal(s):
  - Differences/diversity
  - Proactive w/ inclusion
  - Actions vs. values
  - Show & understand backgrounds
  - Identity (& identity w/ biblical figures)
  - Different. Connected. Responsible
  - Parashat Korach
    - Rebellion
    - Centralization of leadership
    - Outcome?
    - Movement, or one time event?
  - Choices
- Methods:
  - Kinesthetic and Cerebral
- Supplies/Materials/Resources:
  - People and this sheet of paper.
- Preparation & roles:
  - 8 Facilitators to be sent peulah before staff week and be briefed during the week before the peulat shabbat.
- Instructions for running the Peulah:

### **Part 1: The Privilege Scale Step-in Step-out.**

Instructions: (Staff members know which migrash they should be going to. The first program is done with the two different locations being groups.) If this statement is correct about you, step into the circle, if it is incorrect, step out.

- i. I have gone on vacation out of the state I live in.
- ii. I have traveled out of the country before.
- iii. No matter how far away my parking spot is, I know I can handle the walk.
- iv. My school/work gives me time off for Jewish holidays.
- v. I can walk hand in hand with my significant other at camp without being afraid of being harassed or judged by others.
- vi. I can look in the mainstream media and find people with my identities represented.
- vii. I grew up in a home owned by my family.
- viii. When I go to camp, most of the staff members have the same race as me.
- ix. At camp there are many people with the same sexual orientation as me.
- x. My family was never concerned about money when it was time to shop for camp.
- xi. I identity as a white.
- xii. I can use public restrooms without stares, fear or anxiety
- xiii. I have felt expected to live up to society's portrayal of how my assigned gender should act.
- xiv. Usually, people's assumptions about me are correct.

**Part 2: Following Step-In-Step-Out/Privilege Activity, break out into smaller groups of about 15-20 people.**

#### **Part 2A: Cerebral**

Instructions: Hand out numbered slips of paper to pre-assigned people who will be readers. Explain to them Once the whole group is seated and quiet, facilitator (who should be holding story #1) should start reading. **\*No introduction, jump right in.\***

A.) My name and my white skin allow me to pass as white, so a lot of times I don't face overt racism. There are definitely times when I benefit from being able to blend in as fully white—if you passed me on the street you would have no idea that I am a Latina American. Yet I want to be proud of and embrace my Argentinean culture and heritage publicly, and not feel judged for using Spanish. My school is mostly white so the easiest thing for me to do is just suck it up and blend in. Even though my friends know I'm Argentinian, I never feel like I can proudly display the fact that I am a Latino, just because there are so many negative stereotypes.

B.) I was born into a wealthy family and had a pretty privileged lifestyle growing up, being the daughter of a successful politician. One day though, my dad challenged the legitimacy and authority of our governor, and all of a sudden it seemed as though the whole world turned against us. My family lost the vast majority of our material wealth but also our social status. I feel like an outcast even in my community. It's hard to imagine that I could have lost the life that I had, but sometimes standing up to the man can backfire.

C.) I have two dads. For me, it's always been normal, but ever since my first day of kindergarten, when we would start talking about moms and dads in class, I've felt weird about it. I don't like sharing it because I don't want to make a big deal about it, but I sometimes wish people just knew. At the same time, though, I worry about what other people think. Even though most of the people I meet are tolerant and accepting, when

people talk about their moms & dads and ask me about mine, it sometimes triggers bad memories of being teased in elementary school. As much as I love my dads, life seems like it would be so much simpler if I was just like everyone else...

D.) I don't want to be seem overly sensitive in front of my friends so I usually just laugh it off or pretend I can't hear when it comes up. By "it," I mean the N-word. No one ever says it directed towards me, and I would like to think that no offense is meant, yet here in a place that seems so homogeneous, sometimes the N-word comes out of peoples mouths and it's really hard for me. I can't hide my blackness, and I am always aware of being the only black person in a group. Even with all the other factors that unite me with my peers: my favorite classes in school, my favorite video games, my favorite pro sports players, I somehow always find myself feeling "different" from the rest of the group.

E.) My dad is Jewish but my mom is Catholic, and we don't really observe many Jewish practices at home. I started coming to camp when I was twelve and was initially overwhelmed with all the Hebrew and Judaism. I wanted to fit in and pretended to be able to understand what was going on, but the reality was that a lot of the time I felt confused and jealous of my friends who went to Jewish day school and seemed to understand it all so quickly. That points to another issue though: my family can't afford day school. I wouldn't be able to come to camp if not for the generous financial aid program. Over time, I've caught onto many of the Jewish elements of camp and love the friends I have made here. The challenges provided by Hebrew and flaunting of wealth have become less problematic as time has gone on, which I'm happy about, but it was really problematic for a time. During my bat mitzvah years, I remember all my friends sharing stories about their extravagant parties. For me, learning a few lines of Torah was incredibly difficult and it seems like that was effortless for so many others.

E.) Honestly, I have no clue what's going on with my sexuality right now. I've had a couple boyfriends in the past, but I don't think that's something I want in my life right now. I went to college and was bombarded with tons of new ideas and new people. I've hooked up with women a couple times and I like it, although it's difficult for me to label my sexuality. While college has been an excellent safe place for me to experiment, I am hesitant to open up about my sexuality when I'm with my family or seeing my friends from home. I'm unsure of where I stand regarding my sexuality and often find myself wishing there were no stigma for not being 100% straight.

After the sixth story is read, facilitator should say something along the lines of:

We are all here because we want to create a fun and meaningful summer for our chanichim and for ourselves. While many see camp is a home away from home, it can often be very difficult for campers to feel comfortable with the norms and pressures that exist at camp.

[Mini-activity on inclusion from Tali Cohen's packet: Activity 9 or 10: Which one?](On one hand, there isn't much time, but I feel like the peulah needs some more meat)

Have participants turn to a partner & discuss: (5-10 minutes, gauge interest)

- Is there a particular story among these that you can relate to? Can be personal, of a friend, feel free to share as much as you are comfortable with. Talk about some of the associated difficulties that you have seen firsthand.
- Many of our chanichim feel “different” in some way or another. What can you, as a madrich, say & do to ensure that all chanichim feel comfortable, even if you don’t know the inner details of all of their lives?
- One form of inclusion that Ramah (especially Palmer) has done an **incredible** job of achieving is our Tikvah program—members of Tikvah are well accepted into the camp sphere and loved by the rest of camp. However, factors ranging from a high tuition to a prevalent hook-up culture sometimes make camp seem less inclusive than it should be. Think of ways that, both among staff and among chanichim, camp can be as inclusive of a place as possible.

#### Regroup:

- Ask participants to share their own responses or a response of their partner for the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> question (facilitator should bring up/emphasize the power of language, being *proactive* in having conversations & setting guidelines for what’s OK and what isn’t)
- Bring up how one of the stories represented that of Korach—albeit slightly modified. Korach had wealth & stature but challenged Moshe’s leadership. Korach is usually depicted as the antagonist in this story where “good” is represented by God and Moshe, but what happens when we look at him through a different lens? How do societal & camp norms affect how we view situations of interpersonal conflict? (E.g. what if a camper lashes out physically at another peer and that’s all the counselor sees, but it’s a result of more discreet bullying/mean remarks)
 

What is the privilege of being able to go to a summer camp? Do all of our campers have those same privileges, even though there is the same end result?

Invisible privilege
- Being 100% inclusive all the time is not easy, and sometimes words slip from our chanichim’s mouths that can have negative impacts without any bad intention. We are not going to erase all discomfort at being different, but we can make camp a more inclusive and welcoming place.

#### **Part 2 B: Korach and Moshe on their Feet: Kinesthetic**

##### **\*No introduction, jump right in.\***

- The facilitator will lead the participants through a guided meditation that puts them in role as Korach. The facilitator will paint a rosy picture of wealthy luxury. Korach is carried through the desert – he’s not a walker. Explain their privilege levels, and how high they are now.
- The facilitator will wake everyone up with harsh commands to move out of the way because this land is now being dedicated for private use by the Levites for priestly duties and no one is allowed to nap here. And when the participants stand up and make their way to the exterior of the space, the facilitator will command them to begin walking. A heavy walk with 40 years of goods and supplies taken from Egyptians after the escape/exodus.

- Moses and the Levites have come, and they need supplies for the offerings. The campers should be directed to heavy walk again around the space. This time they're pulling animals with them, animals they have raised from birth. Animals whose milk sustains their children and whose fur coats have been shorn and used to make coats and blankets to warm everyone in the cold winter night. Now it's time for a cold desert night.
- Invite everyone to lie down and rest. Close their eyes. Meditate them to sleep but remind them how cold they are and how the animal skins are the only thing keeping them warm. In their sleep guide them on a dream about how all their animals have been taken away for the sake of sacrifices to Hashem. Lay it on thick – the animals, your livelihood – gone for the service of god.
- The facilitator should then wake the participants up, get them heavy walking again in the heat of the desert with all their luggage. Except now, with no animals to bear the burden, there's even more to carry. And now command the participants to hustle to the front of the line, to see the tabernacle in person, to get a glimpse of what's happening with the animals. Hustle them until they sweat, and then announce that they are watching as levites are barbecuing the goats and sheep. And they're smiling and laughing. 99% of the people are suffering as wanderers in this desert. At least in Egypt we had food to eat. And the levites are sitting pretty? Who made them so special? Why can't everyone else share in their bounty? It's time Moses and Aaron heard from the 99%. Get the group to come up with two cheers to show how they are feeling as a whole at this very point in the process. Make them chant their cheers in unison.
- After a minute or two, the facilitator should let everyone have a break...take a nap. Get everyone to lie down and meditate them into relaxation but now, it's characterless. This will be a transition moment. As they are down put them to sleep. When they wake up they are no longer Korach. They are Moses.
- The facilitator should invite everyone to stand. You are 130 years old. You are carrying nothing, but the weight on your shoulders feels heavier than any luggage could. You have a voice in your head – a holy voice – that is constantly speaking to you, giving you direction. But you are distracted, you can't focus on that voice because of the swell of protests clamoring outside your tent. What are they protesting? Is it you? Is it god? You have to face them. You are the boss. You are in charge of making the law and keeping the order. Sometimes you hate your job, in part because someone always hates you for doing your job. You can't please all the people all the time. Who's unhappy now? You make your way out to see the person at the head of the protests. It's someone you know, your cousin, in fact. Korach, the rich man. Korach, the selfish loudmouth. Korach, the idiot. He had roused up people to speak out against your leadership, against what he terms as the 1%. Walk around Moses, look at all the people. Listen to their shouting. For days now there have been protests (describe the protests in detail, including the use of incense in trays brought before god for approval). The facilitator will now narrate the opening up of the earth and the swallowing of Korach and his followers. Close your eyes Moses. Hear how their screams of protest have become screams of death. Cover your

eyes Moses. Block out the sight of God's wrath. And now silence Moses. Keep your eyes covered Moses. Silence. No more protests Moses. Now listen Moses. Shema. Shema. Listen. Shema.

Discussion: In a round-table discussion (if there is time for participants to pair up, go for it, if not discuss as a whole group). Please facilitate the questions in your own way. Feel free to rearrange, or change language. Questions can be discussed in a general way, to everyday life outside of camp.

- i. How is everyone feeling? Casual check-in.
- ii. In what ways can you connect the feelings and actions of Korach or Moshe into our chanichim?
- iii. In what ways can you connect Korach or Moshe into ourselves as tzevet?
- iv. Do you feel as though a hierarchy is created within the chanichim structures? Is it healthy or unhealthy? Compare to the story.
- v. Do you feel as though a hierarchy is created within the tzevet structures within one edah? (I am not talking about the built in hierarchy, I am discussing amongst "same level" staff members.) Is it something that we think our chanichim can acknowledge? Is it healthy or unhealthy? Compare to the story.
- vi. What roles do chanichim have towards each other, and how can we as tzevet help facilitate healthy camaraderie amongst chanichim? When do we step in as tzevet?
- vii. What is the privilege of being able to go to a machane? Do all of our chanichim have those same privileges, even though there is the same end result?
- viii. Do you feel as though our camp has set clear guidelines for the following things:
  - a.) Identity
  - b.) Power
  - c.) Perceptions, Misperceptions, and Stereotypes
  - d.) Patterns of Appropriate Interaction

Do you feel as though these norms that we have socially constructed should be changed? Why or why not? How does it affect certain campers in one way, how does it affect them in others? How does it affect us as a staff?

### Part 3: Segue into program debrief:

Discussions should touch on (at least some) of the bulleted items under each question.

- i. Where do you think we started when we came up with this program?
  - Goal of promoting "little i" inclusion
  - Personal connections to the topic
- 2) Explain Jewish goal oriented programming.
  - Executed with kavanah, intention, in which each activity is done with the purpose of achieving a larger goal
  - Has inherent and authentic Jewish content
- 3) What "gift," if any, do you feel you're leaving with?
  - Increased awareness of diversity around us
  - See camp from a new/different perspective
  - New ideas of what a program at camp can be

- Get you thinking about possible future programs to promote inclusion/re-prioritizing inclusion as a programmatic goal
- Personal connection with Korach (person & Parsha)
- 4) What methods were used to further our programmatic goals and leave you with that gift?
  - Showing you why this matters by having people you know participate in the step in step out activity
  - Engage you in a way that made you more comfortable
- 5) What did you notice about the specific way the program was run – i.e. something the leader said/did not say, organization?
  - Engages multiple learning styles and personalities
  - Lack of introductions
  - Limited use of paper
  - Predetermined groups and prior notification

If you were to do this program again for another group (different audience) how might you adapt it? -> What we were talking about for roshim/question to leave people thinking about

- Final to-do list:
  - Print out papers
  - Prepare new facilitators.
- Rain plan:
  - Beit am Bet for Cerebral
  - Beit am Gadol for Kinesthetic.