



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

**KORACH**

## **Korach took himself**

The sidra opens with a strange word, VAYIKACH KORACH, “And Korach took”. What he took is not stated.

Some versions say, “Korach took men”.

The Targum Onkelos says, “Korach separated himself” – he betook himself to the other side of the situation and mounted a mutiny against Moshe.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 109b) says he took upon himself a bad deal, getting saddled with a rebellion which he had no chance of winning.

The d'rash, the homiletical view, also deserves to be mentioned, that what was wrong with Korach was his character. He was a taker and not a giver. He wanted everything for himself, without a thought to what he could contribute to the wellbeing of the community.

## **When the dog barks**

Nobody likes Korach, but what about his henchmen Datan and Aviram?

Korach was out for title and position. He had no time or respect for Moshe and Aharon, and if they stood in the way of his personal advancement and advantage, they had to go.

But there is no evidence that Datan and Aviram wanted to take over the running of the community, and if they did there would have been major conflicts between themselves and Korach.

What Datan and Aviram wanted, according to the interpretation of the Maharal, was plain mischief. They enjoyed seeing the community abuzz with contention, with people taking sides and criticising one another.

The Book of Mishlei likens the person who makes quarrels and stirs things up to a dog: “Like a man who grabs hold of a dog’s ears, so is the person who gets involved in other people’s quarrels” (26:17).

It’s probably not fair to the dog to mention him in a negative connection, since dogs are usually friendly and loyal, but according to the Midrash the dog is an appropriate simile since anything can set a dog off barking and when one barks the others join in.

**-OZ**

**Y’HI ZICHRO BARUCH**