NUMBERS

Chapter 27

*Zelophehad’s Daughters*

**The daughters of Zelophehad son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, belonged to the clans of Manasseh son of Joseph. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. They approached 2 the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders and the whole assembly, and said, 3 “Our father died in the desert. He was not among Korah’s followers, who banded together against the Lord, but he died for his own sin and left no sons. 4 Why should our father’s name disappear from his clan because he had no son? Give us property among our father’s relatives.” 5 So Moses brought their case before the Lord 6 and the Lord said to him, 7 “What Zelophehad’s daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father’s relatives and turn their father’s inheritance over to them. 8 “Say to the Israelites, ‘If a man dies and leaves no son, turn his inheritance over to his daughter. 9 If he has no daughter, give his inheritance to his brothers. 10 If he has no brothers, give his inheritance to his father’s brothers. 11 If his father had no brothers, give his inheritance to the nearest relative in his clan, that he may possess it. This is to be a legal requirement for the Israelites, as the Lord commanded Moses.’ ”**

**27:1–11** The daughters of a man who had no son (see 26:33) were concerned about their rights of inheritance and the preservation of their father’s name in the land (v. 4). Their action in approaching Moses, Eleazar and the leaders of the nation was unprecedented, an act of courage and conviction. (CSB)

**27:1** *daughters of Zelophehad*. Five unmarried women having no brothers (v 3). (TLSB)

*Noah*. Hbr spelling differs from the man Noah in Gn 6–9. (TLSB)

**27:2–3** They bring a precedent-setting request before Moses regarding the distribution of the land of Canaan. (TLSB)

*Our father died*. Their father had no male heirs (26:33). They asked whether their father’s allotment of tribal land would be lost to their family. (TLSB)

*died for his own sin*. Supported Korah’s rebellion. (TLSB)

**27:3** *he died for his own sin.* A particular case from among those who died in the desert (see 26:64–65). These pious women had a sound understanding of the nature of the desert experience and a just claim for their family. (CSB)

**27:4** When a daughter married, the husband’s name and clan received property rights. (TLSB)

**27:5–11** Decisions were based on preserving families and inheritance to keep clans, tribes, and nations strong. On the place of women in Israelite society. (TLSB)

**27:5** *Moses brought their case before the Lord*. This verse indicates how case law might have operated in Israel. The general laws would be proclaimed. Then legitimate exceptions or special considerations would come to the elders, and perhaps to Moses himself. He then would await a decision from the Lord. In this case, the Lord gave a favorable decision for these women. Ch. 36 provides an appendix to this account. (CSB)

**27:11** *statute and rule*. The general rule for the division of the land was amended. In such cases, the inheritance was to remain within the smaller family unit. No individual was to acquire large estates. This ordinance was in keeping with the provision of the Year of Jubilee (Lv 25:8–34). (TLSB)

**27:1–11** Contrary to many grievances presented in Numbers, the daughters of Zelophehad approach Moses with humble demeanor to seek his counsel. The Lord hears their request and answers with grace and mercy. The prayer of the upright pleases God (Pr 15:8). He has our good at heart in all His teaching. • Lord, grant us both boldness and humility in our prayers, that we may enjoy Your blessings and prosper before You. Keep our families strong in Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

*Joshua to Succeed Moses*

**12 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go up this mountain in the Abarim range and see the land I have given the Israelites. 13 After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, 14 for when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin, both of you disobeyed my command to honor me as holy before their eyes.” (These were the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin.) 15 Moses said to the Lord, 16 “May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community 17 to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.” 18 So the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. 19 Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. 20 Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. 21 He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in.” 22 Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly. 23 Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the Lord instructed through Moses.**

**27:12–23** The juxtaposition of the story of Zelophehad’s daughters’ request for an inheritance in the land (vv. 1–11) and the Lord’s words to Moses about his own exclusion from the land (vv. 12–14) is touching. Provisions are made for exceptions and irregularities in the inheritance laws, but there is no provision for Moses. His sin at the waters of Meribah at Kadesh (20:1–13) was always before him. (CSB)

The appointment of Joshua, as well as the events recorded in chs 28–36, took place before “that very day” that Moses complied with the command to “go up this mountain” to “be gathered” to his people (Dt 32:48–52). The mention of his impending death alerted Moses to the need of appointing his successor. (TLSB)

**27:12** *Abarim*. One peak of this mountain range was Mount Nebo. (TLSB)

**27:16** *appoint a man.* Moses’ reaction to this reassertion of his restriction is a prayer for his successor. (CSB)

**27:17** *go out* … *come in*. Acting as a shepherd over all the affairs of the state. (TLSB)

*as sheep that have no shepherd*. Wild and vulnerable. (TLSB)

**27:18** *Take Joshua.* As Moses and Aaron needed to determine the true successor of Aaron before his death (20:22–29), so the true successor of Moses also needed to be established. Joshua and Caleb were the two heroes in the darkest hour of Israel’s apostasy (chs. 13–14). It was fitting that the Lord selected one of them (cf. Ex 17:9–14; 24:13; 32:17; 33:11). (CSB)

Joshua, though primarily a military and political leader, was thoroughly guided by the Lord and His Word. (TLSB)

**27:19** *you shall commission him in their sight*. Lit, “You shall command him before their eyes,” charging him with duty. (TLSB)

**27:20** *Give him some of your authority.* The transition from Moses’ leadership to that of any successor would be difficult. The change would be smoother by a gradual shift of power while Moses was still alive. (CSB)

Chem: “God says to Moses … the authority with which you have hitherto been adorned you will give to your successor, so also is authority publicly given before the church to him upon whom the hands are laid” (*LTh* 2:705–6). (TLSB)

**27:21** *Urim*. God had communicated with Moses face-to-face (Ex 33:11; Dt 34:10). Moses’ successor likewise was to act at God’s word. But the will of the Lord was to be revealed to Joshua through Eleazar and the Urim. (TLSB)

**27:12–23** Death is near for Moses, who desires that God would provide a new leader. Otherwise, the people would wander like “sheep that have no shepherd” (v 17). In His mercy, God raises up Joshua, one of the two spies who returned from the Promised Land with a favorable report (cf v 18; 14:6–9). Today, pray that the Lord would bless the leaders of your congregation, your church, and its institutions. Pray that He will raise up a new and faithful generation focused on the Word of life. He is always ready to provide for His beloved flock through our Good Shepherd, Jesus. • Lord, we are sinful sheep. By Your Spirit, raise up faithful leaders to guide us through Word and Sacrament. Amen. (TLSB)