NUMBERS

Chapter 36

*Inheritance of Zelophehad’s Daughters*

**The family heads of the clan of Gilead son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, who were from the clans of the descendants of Joseph, came and spoke before Moses and the leaders, the heads of the Israelite families. 2 They said, “When the Lord commanded my lord to give the land as an inheritance to the Israelites by lot, he ordered you to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. 3 Now suppose they marry men from other Israelite tribes; then their inheritance will be taken from our ancestral inheritance and added to that of the tribe they marry into. And so part of the inheritance allotted to us will be taken away. 4 When the Year of Jubilee for the Israelites comes, their inheritance will be added to that of the tribe into which they marry, and their property will be taken from the tribal inheritance of our forefathers.” 5 Then at the Lord’s command Moses gave this order to the Israelites: “What the tribe of the descendants of Joseph is saying is right. 6 This is what the Lord commands for Zelophehad’s daughters: They may marry anyone they please as long as they marry within the tribal clan of their father. 7 No inheritance in Israel is to pass from tribe to tribe, for every Israelite shall keep the tribal land inherited from his forefathers. 8 Every daughter who inherits land in any Israelite tribe must marry someone in her father’s tribal clan, so that every Israelite will possess the inheritance of his fathers. 9 No inheritance may pass from tribe to tribe, for each Israelite tribe is to keep the land it inherits.” 10 So Zelophehad’s daughters did as the Lord commanded Moses. 11 Zelophehad’s daughters—Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah—married their cousins on their father’s side. 12 They married within the clans of the descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in their father’s clan and tribe. 13 These are the commands and regulations the Lord gave through Moses to the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.**

**36:1–13** Presents an interesting further development of the account of Zelophehad’s daughters (see 27:1–11). Since the Lord had instructed Moses that the women might inherit their father’s land, new questions arose: What will happen to the family lands if these daughters marry among other tribes? Will not the original intention of the first provision be frustrated? Such questions led to the decision that marriage is to be kept within one’s own tribe, so that the family allotments will not “pass from tribe to tribe” (v. 9). (CSB)

**36:2** Moses had ruled that daughters were entitled to inherit their father’s portion if he had no sons (27:1–11). (TLSB)

**36:3** *the inheritance of our fathers*. The leaders of the tribe of Manasseh, to whom the litigant women belonged, foresaw that an unrestricted application of this provision could destroy the established tribal borders. If such an heiress married a member of another tribe, her husband would become the owner of the land within another tribe’s inheritance. (TLSB)

**36:4** *jubilee of the people*. Year of Jubilee, when holdings acquired by financial transactions were to be returned to the former owner (Lv 25:8–34). This would not restore the property to the original tribe, however. (TLSB)

**36:6** *whom they think best*. These women had a choice in finding husbands. (TLSB)

*Marry within the clan*. To keep borders of tribal allotments intact. (TLSB)

**36:10** *Zelophehad’s daughters did as the Lord commanded.* The book of Numbers, which so often presents the rebellion of God’s people against his grace and in defiance of his will, ends on a happy note. These noble women, who were concerned for their father’s name and their own place in the land, obeyed the Lord. (CSB)

**36:11** *married to sons of their father’s brothers*. Not necessarily first cousins; “brothers” here could mean members of Manasseh generally. (TLSB)

**36:13** *commandments* … *rules*. Summarizes the directives that up to this point Moses had given to the Israelites after their arrival in the plains of Moab. Before his death, he had more to say to his people (cf Dt). (TLSB)

**Ch 36** For each tribe to retain its territory, God commands that Zelophehad’s daughters choose husbands within their own tribe. Numbers ends with a brief summary statement that all regulations therein came by God’s hand. In Christ, God cares for each individual. He willingly bends an ear to hear even the most routine request and acts on each person’s behalf with righteousness and mercy. • Lord, You lovingly guided Your people Israel. You also found me in my sin and saved me through the precious blood of Your Son. Preserve me in the one true faith. Amen. (TLSB)