

# NUMBERS

## Chapter 36

### *Marriage of Female Heirs*

**36** The heads of the fathers' houses of the clan of the people of Gilead the son of Machir, son of Manasseh, from the clans of the people of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before the chiefs, the heads of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel. **2** They said, "The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for inheritance by lot to the people of Israel, and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters. **3** But if they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the people of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry. So it will be taken away from the lot of our inheritance. **4** And when the jubilee of the people of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry, and their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers." **5** And Moses commanded the people of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, "The tribe of the people of Joseph is right. **6** This is what the LORD commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad: 'Let them marry whom they think best, only they shall marry within the clan of the tribe of their father. **7** The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another, for every one of the people of Israel shall hold on to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. **8** And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the people of Israel shall be wife to one of the clan of the tribe of her father, so that every one of the people of Israel may possess the inheritance of his fathers. **9** So no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another, for each of the tribes of the people of Israel shall hold on to its own inheritance.'" **10** The daughters of Zelophehad did as the LORD commanded Moses, **11** for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to sons of their father's brothers. **12** They were married into the clans of the people of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's clan. **13** These are the commandments and the rules that the LORD commanded through Moses to the people of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at 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)