

# NUMBERS

## Chapter 27

### *The Daughters of Zelophehad*

**Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, from the clans of Manasseh the son of Joseph. The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 2 And they stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the chiefs and all the congregation, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, saying, 3 “Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah, but died for his own sin. And he had no sons. 4 Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father's brothers.” 5 Moses brought their case before the LORD. 6 And the LORD said to Moses, 7 “The daughters of Zelophehad are right. You shall give them possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers and transfer the inheritance of their father to them. 8 And you shall speak to the people of Israel, saying, ‘If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. 9 And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. 10 And if he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. 11 And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the nearest kinsman of his clan, and he shall possess it. And it shall be for the people of Israel a statute and rule, as the LORD commanded Moses.’”**

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** The LORD said to Moses, “Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. **13** When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, **14** because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes.” (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.) **15** Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, **16** “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation **17** who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” **18** So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. **19** Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. **20** You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. **21** And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation.” **22** And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, **23** and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the LORD directed 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** *invest him with 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)