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The Five Daughters of Zelophehad 27: 1-11

The five daughters of Zelophehad DIG: How did Moses respond when approached by the five daughters of Zelophehad for an unprecedented inheritance question. What does this change of mitzvah tell us about God's view of women? How did those five women demonstrate their faith in the LORD?

REFLECT: Why is equity among believers important? In what areas is equity most important to you? Is there an area of your life where you yearn for equity? What does equity imply today? Is it biblical? What attitude toward women do you discern from the Torah, especially in light of this teaching?

The request of Zelophehad's daughters demonstrated their faith in the divine promises of YHVH.

Since **the** Promised **Land** belonged to **God** (see the commentary on **Leviticus, to see link click Eq – The Division of the Land**), the Jews couldn't divide it or dispose of it as they pleased. Maintaining **the inheritance** for generation to generation was important to each family and to **the tribes** to which the families belonged. As with other nations of that day, **Isra'el** was a strongly masculine society, and **fathers** left **their** property to **their sons**. **The** eldest **son** received two-thirds of **the inheritance** and **the** other **sons** divided the remaining third **(Deuteronomy 21:15-17)**. If **a man** didn't have **a son**, **he** left **his** entire estate to **his** nearest male relative, but not to **a daughter**. When **the daughter** was married, **she** received a dowry from **her father** and would no longer live in the family home. The dowry was **her inheritance**.[617]



The daughters request (27:1-4): The five **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, Milkah and Tirzah.** Believing this mitzvah of **inheritance** to be unfair, **they came forward and stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders and the whole assembly at the entrance to the Tabernacle,** beginning **their** proposal with a statement of facts: **Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among Korah's followers, who banded together against ADONAI.** In other words, **he** didn't die from divine judgement because **he** participated in a rebellion (see **Cn – Korah's Rebellion**). **But he died for his own sin** because **he** was part of the Exodus generation (see **Bv – The Sin of Kadesh-barnea**). Then **they** stated the background for **their** request**, their father left no sons.** This march to **the Tabernacle** by those **women** must have been incredible to those who were watching. In ancient **Isra'el**, that act was similar to the refusal of Rosa Parks, a black woman, to give up her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama, decades ago.[618]

Their question was this: **Why should our father's name be cut off from his clan,** and **his family** penalized **because he had no son?** To the Jews, possessing **land** was the foundation for building a family, earning an income, and having security and the necessities of life. **Give us property among our father's relatives.** Matters of **land** and **inheritance** were sacred in Semitic culture. The potential disappearance of one's **family name** was a matter of grave concern, often associated with divine judgment and possible social rejection.[619]

The request of **Zelophehad's daughters** demonstrated **their** faith in the divine promises of **YHVH**. **Moshe** commanded a **Second Census** (see **Ec – The Second Census: The New Generation of Hope**) to make sure that the yet-unconquered **land** would be divided up equitably among **the tribes**. **The five daughters** responded by requesting a portion of that **land**, thus demonstrating **their** faith that damned **their father's** generation.[620]

ADONAI's answer (27:5-11): Moses acknowledged **God's** ownership of **the Land**. This is why **he brought their case before the LORD** instead of using **his** own wisdom **(Numbers 9:8, 15:24; Exodus 18:19; Leviticus 24:12-13).** And **the LORD** replied: **What Zelophehad's daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father's relatives and give their father's inheritance to them (27:5-7).** The decision to allow **daughters** to inherit solved one problem but created another one, and the leaders of **the tribe of Manasseh** called it to the attention of **Moses** (see **Gn – A Review of the Inheritance of Women**). If **a daughter** who had inherited **her father's land** married to another **tribe**, this would take the land away from **the** original **tribe** and make it part of **her** husband's estate. At **the Year of Jubilee** (see **Leviticus Em – The Year of Jubilee**), it would not return to the original family, and this would rob a **tribe** of its property.

The solution was to require **daughters** who had an **inheritance** to marry men who belonged to **their** own **tribe**. This simple procedure would permit the **daughters** to marry but would at the same time keep the family property within **the** original **tribe**. So **they** obeyed the mitzvah and each one married **a cousin (36:11)**.[621]

The commandment of **Ha'Shem** gave the answer to the petition of the **five daughters** and laid down a succession of **inheritance** mitzvot in **four stages**. **Moreover, say to the people of Isra'el, "First, if a man dies and leaves no son, give his inheritance to his daughter. Secondly, if he has no daughter, give his inheritance to his brothers. Third, if he has no brothers, give his inheritance to the** next closest kinsmen, **his father's brothers. Fourthly, if his father had no brothers, ADONAI** showed **His** mercy once again when **He** allowed **the man's inheritance to be given to the nearest relative in his clan, so that he may possess it. This will be the standard for judgment to be used by the people of Isra'el, as ADONAI ordered Moshe (27:8-11).** The point seems to be that not only would those **women** receive **their property**, but **they** would also be able to transfer **it** to **their** heirs as well. It is as though **their**

father had had **sons**![622]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for always being loving and fair. Just as **Zelophehad's daughters** trusted in **Your** fairness so **they** could inherit land like **sons** did, so also I can always trust **Your** fairness and faithfulness. **Your love, ADONAI, is in the heavens,Your faithfulness up to the skies. (Psalms 36:5).** To receive an inheritance of heaven, trusting **You** as **Lord** and **Savior** is necessary **(Romans 10:9-11)**. **Yeshua** so graciously calls out to all in the crowd**:* ***Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and 'you will find rest for your souls' (Matthew 11:28-29).***

*Thank **You** so much for graciously sealing all who put their trust in you by **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** which guarantees **their** inheritance. **After you heard the message of truth – the Good News of your salvation – and when you put your trust in Him, you were sealed with the promised Ruach ha-Kodesh. He is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of His possession – to His glorious praise! (Ephesians 1:13-14).** What a fantastic heavenly **Father You** are! It is a joy to love and serve **You. And Yeshua]said to him: You shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37).** In holy **Yeshua's Name** and power of **His** resurrection Amen.*