

Research on: the story of Zelophehad's Daughters

Zelophehad the son of Hopher had no sons, but daughters (Num. 26:33)

“ Since Zelophehad left no male heirs, his five daughters sought an alteration in the inheritance laws to enable them to keep his landed property. While this was not generally permitted in the ancient Near East, an exception was made in this case. According to Numbers 36, the heiresses were, however, expected to marry only within their father's tribe” (Words of Current Interest, CSS, 1973).

Numbers 26:33

33 And Zelophehad the son of Hopher had no sons, but daughters:

“Zelophehad... had no sons, but daughters. This is mentioned here because the case was to come prominently before the lawgiver and the nation (cf. Numbers 27:1; Numbers 36:1; 1 Chronicles 7:15)” (Pulpit Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

Numbers 27:2, 3 (to ;), 4-7

2 And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying,

“By the door of the tabernacle of the congregation - The place of solemn assembly of the elders. The daughters of Zelophehad made their suit to the princes, the heads of tribes and of families, who were making the census under the superintendence of Moses and Eleazar” (Barnes' Notes, www.biblehub.com).

“And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes, and all the congregation,.... Who were now sitting in court, to hear and try causes brought before them; here were Moses the chief magistrate, Eleazar the high priest, the princes of the several tribes, and the representatives of the whole congregation, or it may be the seventy elders; a very grand and august assembly, before whom these ladies appeared, and from whom they might expect to have justice done them:

“by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; near to which this court was held, both for the convenience of the people, to apply to in case of need, when they came thither to worship, and of Moses, to seek the Lord in case of any difficulty that might arise, as now did” (Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, www.biblehub.com).

3 Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah;

“The five daughters of Zelophehad considered themselves as left destitute, having neither father nor brother to inherit any land. Their believing expectation that the word of the Lord would be performed in due season, and their desire of an interest in the promised inheritance; and the modest, candid manner in which they asked, without secret murmurs or discontents, are a good example. They ask for a possession in the land of Canaan. Herein they discovered, 1. Strong faith in the power and promise of God, concerning the giving of the land of Canaan to Israel. 2. And earnest desire of a place and name in the land of promise, which was a type of heaven. 3. Respect and honour for their father, whose name was dear to them now he was gone. He never had done any thing that might bar his children's claim” (Matthew Henry’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not ... in the company of ... Korah—This declaration might be necessary because his death might have occurred about the time of that rebellion; and especially because, as the children of these conspirators were involved along with their fathers in the awful punishment, their plea appeared the more proper and forcible that their father did not die for any cause that doomed his family to lose their lives or their inheritance” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“Korah: Rebellion (from Wikipedia)

[Numbers 16:1-40](#) indicates that Korah rebelled against Moses along with 249 co-conspirators and were punished for their rebellion when God sent fire from heaven to consume all 250 of them. Korah's [Reubenite](#) accomplices, [Dathan](#) and [Abiram](#), were also punished when God caused the ground to split open beneath their feet swallowing them, their families, anyone associated with Korah, and all their possessions. [Numbers 16:41](#) Furthermore, the Israelites who did not like what had happened to Korah, [Dathan](#), and [Abiram](#) (and their families) objected to Moses, and God then commanded Moses to depart from the multitude. God then smote 14,700 men with plague, as punishment for objecting to Korah's destruction.

“Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not” (as of [Numbers 26:11](#))”

4 Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us *therefore* a possession among the brethren of our father.

“Give unto us a possession among the brethren of our father—Those young women perceived that the males only in families had been registered in the census. Because there were none in their household, their family was omitted” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son.... Or be withdrawn, and his family lose their part and share on that account; this they thought was unreasonable: according to the Targum of Jonathan, to prevent the name of their father being lost, and his part in the land, their motion was, that their mother might marry their father's brother, according to the law in [Deuteronomy 25:5](#), with which Jarchi agrees; but it does not appear that that law was as yet in being; though how otherwise the name of their father would be preserved, than by raising up seed in that way, is not easy to say; except, as some think,

it was done by a son of one of those heiresses, or by the first son of everyone of them, being called after the name of their grandfather Zelophehad, or their mother's grandfather Hephher; though the Jews (t) commonly by the "name" understand no other than the "inheritance", which seems to be confirmed by what follows" (Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, www.biblehub.com).

5 And Moses brought their cause before the LORD.

"Moses brought their cause before the Lord. Presumably by going into the tabernacle with this matter upon his mind, and awaiting the revelation of the Divine will (cf. [Exodus 18:19](#); [Numbers 12:8](#))" (Pulpit Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

"i.e. Into the tabernacle, where God was pleased to speak with Moses upon occasions, [Exodus 25:22](#) [Numbers 7:89](#). For it was a hard case; and though their plea seemed reasonable, yet Moses showed his humility and modesty, that he would not determine it himself without God's particular direction" (Matthew Poole's Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

6 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

"And the Lord spake unto Moses,.... From off the mercy seat, where he consulted him, and from whence he promised to commune with him about any difficult matter that came before him, [Exodus 25:22](#), saying; as follows" (Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, www.biblehub.com).

7 The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them.

"**Thou shalt surely give them . . .** —The pronoun *them* is in the masculine gender in the Hebrew. Either the reference must be to the sons of Zelophehad's daughters, or the daughters must be regarded in the light of sons" (Ellicott's Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

"The case was important; and as the peculiarity of daughters being the sole members of a family would be no infrequent or uncommon occurrence, the law of inheritance, under divine authority, was extended not only to meet all similar cases, but other cases also—such as when there were no children left by the proprietor, and no brothers to succeed him. A distribution of the promised land was about to be made; and it is interesting to know the legal provision made in these comparatively rare cases for preserving a patrimony from being alienated to another tribe" (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“The revelation of this Science includes the explanation that we are each made in God’s image (see [Gen. 1:27](#), cit. 1), along with a call for balance and equal opportunities among men and women.

This point can be seen in the story of Zelophehad’s daughters in the book of Numbers (cits. 8, 9). In this short narrative, Zelophehad had no sons at the time of his passing. Zelophehad’s daughters petitioned Moses to let them keep their father’s inheritance, asking why the family should be punished because Zelophehad didn’t have any sons.

Moses took the problem to God, and it was God who broke the injustice in this story—establishing the equality recorded in Genesis 1:27. According to civil law at that time, Zelophehad’s land and possessions would have gone to his brothers or his uncles, since he had no male heir. What a blessing resulted from turning to God for the answer—the daughters were allowed to keep what was their father’s!

Christian Science establishes equality among God’s sons and daughters.

Not only does Christian Science insist upon equality among God’s sons and daughters, but it provides protection from unjust laws. This protection extends to everyone, since we are all spiritual reflections of God.” (*Who are we?*, Brian Hall, CSS, February 28, 2011).

Article on this subject to look up and study:

“*Modern Daughters of Zelophehad*,” Barbara Blech Dunbar, Christian Science Sentinel, June 14, 1982).