



Numbers 27:1-11

(1) Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and these were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. (2) And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying: (3) "Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the LORD, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons. (4) Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers." (5) So Moses brought their case before the LORD. (6) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (7) "The daughters of Zelophehad speak *what is* right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father's brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them. (8) And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. (9) If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. (10) 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 relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it.'" And it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

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Numbers 27 is the appeal of Zelophehad's five daughters to Moses in regard to their inheritance. Their father had died without any sons, and [under the law](#) of the time, his daughters were left without an inheritance. The commentators who go into this say that such an appeal was virtually unheard of because at that time a woman's station in society was only slightly higher than a child's. The child was always on the lowest social level, which is one reason why [Jesus](#) said we have to become as a child. All of society revolved around men.

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Moses does three remarkable things. He not only hears the appeal of these ladies, he humbly admits that he did not know the answer. He takes it to [God](#), and God not only hears it, He gives the ladies more than what they asked for, as all they had asked for was the land. God says, in effect, "Not only can you have the land, but you have the right to pass it on just as if you were Zelophehad's sons." It came under their power completely.

The point is that no leader under God can afford not to listen with fullest attention to the appeals of the lowly or to their counsel. He cannot afford to be in an attitude in which he will not listen to the people that he is supposed to be leading. It is a very important lesson and principle of law that comes out of Moses' humility, meekness, and willingness to hear, whereas other leaders of his day would likely have not even allowed those women to come into their presence.

There are only two cases in the life of Moses in which a woman came before him for either a judgment or in accusation. This was one of them, and the other one was his sister, Miriam. We know what happened to Miriam. It makes for an interesting contrast.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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