

פרשת
פינחס
Parashat Pinchas

*Bamidbar / Numbers 25:10-30:1, 1 Kings 18:46-19:21
Mark 11:27-12:37*

The Message from the Daughters of Zelophehad

In this week's Torah portion, the daughters of Zelophehad (בנות צִלְפָּחָד) were five sisters: Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, mentioned in *Bamidbar / Numbers 27*. They lived at the end of Israel's journey from Egypt as they prepared to enter the Promised Land, and who raised before Moshe and the community the case of a woman's right and obligation to inherit property in the absence of a male heir in the family. In *Bamidbar / Numbers 26* we are given the description of the census taken of all males over the age of 20. As part of the list of the various clans, we read that "*Zelophehad ... had no sons, only daughters*" (26:33). The daughters of Zelophehad made the following claim about their father who had died and not had any sons. The Torah states, *27:2 They stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the doorway of the tent of meeting, saying, 27:3 'Our father died in the wilderness, yet he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah; but he died in his own sin, and he had no sons. 27:4 'Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers.'* (NASB) The Torah, the Talmud, and the Zohar, refer to Zelophehad as having "*died in his own sin.*"

This is important because it demonstrates that he was not a part of the rebellion of the leaders who died in Parashat Korach. Having died in a state of rebellion would have disqualified him in receiving the inheritance. The Talmud and the Zohar equate him with the man executed for gathering sticks on the Sabbath, (*Talmud Bavli Shabbat 96b, Zohar 3:205b*) but Sifri Zuta says that it cannot be known if he was this man or not. (*Sifri Zuta on Bamidbar / Numbers 15:32*) The rabbis in the Talmud, Rabbi Joshua interpreted that they petitioned first the assembly, then the chieftains, then Eleazar, and finally Moshe, but Abba Chanan said in the name of Rabbi Eliezer that Zelophehad's daughters stood before all of them as they were sitting together. (*Talmud Bavli Bava Batra 119b*) What the daughters of Zelophehad did was a landmark in women's rights regarding the inheritance of land as compared to the surrounding cultures in that day. Human rights was a precious commodity, and in those days was very limited. The Torah in this week's reading, and elsewhere granted a very high level of human rights towards men, women, and even slaves. The story of these five women offers a compelling lesson for all those who believe that their destiny is fixed or that divine justice has abandoned them. This week's Torah portion encourages us to think differently about our life situations, and provides a message of hope for all who are faced with obstacles. The most important message being taught by Zelophehad's daughters was in demonstrating their resolve to take hold of a situation, to seek the mercy of God, and to continue in righteousness and holiness while waiting for the will of God for their lives. These women stood for righteousness and God himself approved them to have the right to inherit what was truly theirs. This speaks of the importance of our standing for righteousness sake. What these women did was so significant, they had faith and trusted in the promises of God, they were thinking of their future generations, and they believed they too may be used of God. With no father and no brothers to inherit a portion of the land, they would be left destitute. These women were single women. They could have behaved as victims being orphans with no brothers and no land. They could have gone from tent to tent complaining against Moshe, Aaron, and God. They could have rushed into marriage to solve their problem themselves. But they did not, instead, these women were God fearers who trusted that the Lord would provide for them. Here also lays the

proof text for the Lord God of Israel taking care of the orphan and the widow. We know throughout the Scriptures, the Lord God shows special concern for the widow and the orphan. We read over and over how the Lord makes special provisions for them, as He did for the daughters of Zelophehad. Let's discuss these things further in this week's Torah portion.

This week we are looking at *Bamidbar / Numbers 27:1-14*.

Bamidbar / Numbers 27:1-14

27:1 Then the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of He-pher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph, came near; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah and Hoglah and Milcah and Tirzah. 27:2 They stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the doorway of the tent of meeting, saying, 27:3 'Our father died in the wilderness, yet he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah; but he died in his own sin, and he had no sons. 27:4 'Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers.' 27:5 So Moses brought their case before the Lord. 27:6 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 27:7 'The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father's brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them. 27:8 'Further, you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. 27:9 'If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. 27:10 'If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. 27:11 'If his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his nearest relative in his own family, and

he shall possess it; and it shall be a statutory ordinance to the sons of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses.’ 27:12 Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go up to this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel. 27:13 ‘When you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was; 27:14 for in the wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to treat Me as holy before their eyes at the water.’ (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.) (NASB)

א ותקרבנה בנות צלפחד בן-חפר בן-גלעד בן-מכיר בן-
 מנשה למשפחת מנשה בן-יוסף ואלה שמות בנותיו מחלה נעה
 וקגלה ומלכה ותרצה: ב ותעמדנה לפני משה ולפני אלעזר
 הכהן ולפני הנשיאם וכל-העדה פתח אהל-מועד לאמר: ג
 אבינו מת במדבר והוא לא-היה בתוך העדה הנועדים על-
 יהוה בעדת-קרח פי-בחסאן מת ובנים לא-היו לו: ד למה
 יגרע שם-אבינו מתוך משפחתו כי אין לו בן תנה-לנו אחזה
 בתוך אחי אבינו: ה ויקרב משה את-משפטן לפני יהוה:
 פ [רביעי] ו ויאמר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: ז בן בנות
 צלפחד דברת נתן תמן להם אחזת נחלה בתוך אחי אביהם
 והעברת את-נחלת אביהן להן: ח ואל-בני ישראל תדבר
 לאמר איש פי-ימות ויבן אין לו והעברתם את-נחלתו לבתו:
 ט ואם-אין לו בת ונתתם את-נחלתו לאחיו: י ואם-אין לו
 אחים ונתתם את-נחלתו לאחי אביו: יא ואם-אין אחים לא-
 ביו ונתתם את-נחלתו לשארו הקרב אליו ממשפחתו וירש
 אתה והיתה לבני ישראל לחקת משפט כאשר צוה יהוה את-
 משה: פ יב ויאמר יהוה אל-משה עלה אל-הר העברים
 הנה וראה את-הארץ אשר נתתי לבני ישראל: יג וראיתה
 אתה ונאספת אל-עמיד גם-אתה כאשר נאסף אהרן אחיך:
 יד כאשר מריתם פי במדבר-צן במריבת העדה להקדישני
 במים לעיניהם הם מי-מריבת קדש מדבר-צן:

In this week's Torah portion, the daughters of Zelophehad (בְּנוֹת זְלֹפְחָד) mentioned in *Bamidbar / Numbers 27*, demonstrate for us that we are to stand for justice and truth. The Torah speaks of righteousness, holiness, justice, and the truth of God and these women demonstrate for us what it means to fear the Lord, to seek the Lord's will, and to pursue truth and justice in our lives. The pursuit of righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth in our lives is obligatory for all of God's children. This is why it is so important for us to study God's Torah and put it into practice.

The Rabbis have the following to say concerning these things.

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Behar 4:1

(Lev. 25:18, 23:) SO YOU SHALL CARRY OUT MY STATUTES.... [BUT THE LAND MAY NOT BE SOLD PERMANENTLY.] The Holy One said to him: Similarly I sold my people and returned again to reinstate them, as stated (Jer. 3:14:) TURN BACK, FAITHLESS CHILDREN, SAYS THE LORD; FOR I AM A MASTER TO YOU. It is also written (in Is. 52:3): [FOR] THUS SAYS THE LORD: YOU WERE SOLD FOR FREE, AND YOU SHALL BE REDEEMED FOR NO MONEY. You shall therefore not sell the land absolutely, since it is stated (in Lev. 25:23): BUT THE LAND MAY NOT BE SOLD PERMANENTLY, FOR THE LAND BELONGS TO ME. The land of Israel is dear to me because I have made it holier than all the < other > lands. You yourself know, when the land of Israel was distributed to the tribes, it did not pass from tribe to tribe. Rather [it was distributed] to each tribe separately. You yourself know. So look at how many lawsuits the daughters of Zelophehad brought, so that their inheritance would not pass from one tribe to another. Moreover the Holy One gave thanks for their words, as stated (in Numb. 27:7): THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD SPEAK WHAT IS RIGHT.... (Numb. 36:9:) THUS NO INHERITANCE SHALL BE TRANSFERRED FROM ONE TRIBE TO ANOTHER. Therefore, if a redeemer is found for it, fine;

but if not, whoever takes it acquires it until the Jubilee. Then on the Jubilee he releases it. Thus it is stated (in Lev. 25:41): THEN HE SHALL DEPART {IN THE JUBILEE} [FROM YOU], HE AND HIS CHILDREN WITH HIM. The Holy One said: When the year of the redemption draws near, I will redeem you, as stated (in Is. 63:4): FOR A DAY OF VENGEANCE WAS IN MY HEART, BUT THERE CAME MY YEAR OF REDEMPTION.

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Pinchas 10:2

(Numb. 27:7:) <THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD SPEAK WHAT IS RIGHT. YOU SHALL INDEED GRANT THEM POSSESSION OF AN INHERITANCE AMONG THE BROTHERS OF THEIR FATHER, > AND YOU SHALL TRANSFER TO THEM THE INHERITANCE OF THEIR FATHER. With reference to <normal> inheritance it is stated (in vs. 9): AND YOU SHALL GIVE <HIS INHERITANCE TO HIS BROTHERS>, but with reference to a daughter <it says> (in vs. 8): AND YOU SHALL TRANSFER. The Hebrew is slightly different here from what is written in vs. 7 There the word you is singular while here the you is plural, as in vs. 8. Thus she may TRANSFER an inheritance from tribe to tribe..

In Midrash Tanchuma, the rabbis parallel the Land not being sold permanently, to the children of Israel also not being sold permanently, where the Lord returns to reinstate them as His people. The quote from *Jeremiah 3:14* speaks of the Lord turning back the hearts of His people, just as the Land belongs to the Lord, His people also belong to Him. We are to keep these things in mind that the Lord desires for us to repent and turn from our wicked and unfaithful ways. We have been made holy by the Lord Himself. This is paralleled to the Land of Israel which was not meant to be passed from tribe to tribe. We were not created to be sold into sin. The idea of buying and selling is related not only to the Land, but to the people of God too. The year of jubilee

was given to provide release for the Land and release from debt. The year of redemption was also provided such that God's people could be redeemed as well. In *Luke 21:28*, Yeshua said "*But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*" (NASB) Yeshua speaks of seeing the signs in the heavens and the earth and of His return. Note how here in the Midrash the rabbis speak of the year of redemption, and of the people being saved by God. This is a prophetic word of a sort, in light of this week's Torah portion and the lesson for all those who believe that their destiny is fixed or that divine justice has abandoned them. *Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Pinchas 10:2* focuses upon the Hebrew text examining the words for the "*transfer*" of the land being in the singular or the plural, leading the reader to believe the Land may in fact be allowed transfer from tribe to tribe, with the future expectation of being released again in the Jubilee year. Being set free, both physically and spiritually, is what the Torah is all about.

The Talmud states the following:

Talmud Bavli Bava Batra 110b:4

The Gemara raises a difficulty: But perhaps it was the daughters of Zelophehad who said this, i.e., that they were entitled to an inheritance only because their father had no son. They thought that this was the halakha based on the custom at that time, but after God spoke to Moses, the Torah was given and a halakha was initiated that a daughter's right to inherit is equal to that of the son. The Gemara accepts this difficulty and states: Rather, it is clear that the source for this halakha is as we answered initially, i.e., as Abaya derived from the verse of: "If a man dies, and has no son, then you shall pass his inheritance to his daughter" (Numbers 27:8).

Note how the Talmud restates the woman's right to inherit land is equal to that of the son. This ruling the Lord had given through Moshe, women had equal rights as men in the Torah. This reveals to us that the Lord can use anyone and anybody as a model of faithfulness and virtue (i.e. Mary *Luke 1:26-38*, and Elizabeth *Luke 1:39-45*).



Sefer HaChinukh states the following concerning the text for this week:

Sefer HaChinukh 400:1

We are commanded to adjudicate matters of inheritance, that is, that we must rule in matters of inheritance according to the laws of the Torah, as it is written, “When a man dies and has no son, you shall pass his inheritance to his daughter. If he has no daughter, etc.” (Num. 27:8-9). The end of the section says, “And this shall be for the People of Israel as an eternal law, as HaShem commanded Moshe.” Do not think that the mitzvah means that a person must give his heirs his property in all cases, for HaShem did not wish to extract property from a person and give it to his heirs for as long as he is alive. That is the view of the secular scholars, but we are taught that the rights of the heir are entwined with the property of the estate, and when the rights of the estate owner are revoked by death, the rights of the heir become active, in the manner of the continuous chain that HaShem devised for this. Our Sages referred to this right of assertion of inheritance as ‘touching’ as in their statement, “Inheritance touches and continues” (Bava Batra 115b). This means that the heir and the estate holder are like two bodies in contact with each-other, such that when one departs the other take its place.

Sefer HaChinukh brings out this concept that the property of the estate is revoked upon the death of the owner. It is at this time the rights of the heir becomes active. It is interesting how all of these things work in relation to sin and redemption. Notice how dying to sin revokes the rights of the owner (sin), and the rights of the heir become active (Yeshua the Messiah). Is this the context that we find with Paul writing of dying in the Messiah as pertaining to our redemption? Yeshua spoke repeatedly to His disciples about taking up their cross and following him. He made it clear that anyone who wanted to follow him must deny himself and give his life to the Lord, the one giving up his

life for Yeshua's sake would find eternal life (*Matthew 16:24–25; Mark 8:34–35*). Indeed, Yeshua even went so far as to say that those who are unwilling to sacrifice their lives for the Lord cannot be His disciples (*Luke 14:27*). This is known as “*dying to self*” which is the first century definition of not walking in the ways of the world and turning from a life of sin. This is coupled to our trusting in the Lord and in His promises, just as these women did (the daughters of Zelophehad).

In regard to the Torah, the Apostle Paul wrote in *Romans 5:20* *The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. (NASB)* The first thing to understand is according to *Romans 7:7* and *7:12*, sin is not caused or encouraged by the Torah (Law). Paul asks, “*Is the law sin?*” and he answers his own question saying, “*No, never!*” (*Romans 7:7*). He later asserts, “*The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good*” (*Romans 7:12*). The conclusion is God's Torah does not encourage sin, it is not the cause of sin, God's Word is not responsible for sin. The responsibility for sin rests entirely with the sinner (lawbreaker), and not with the law maker. Consider the retail market to illustrate this point. Products are placed out for display so people may pick up, handle, and be looked at. Thieves however take advantage of this opportunity to steal. The owner of the store does not encourage this crime, the responsibility of theft is entirely upon the person committing the crime. Paul wrote that the Torah increases sin saying “*The law entered that sin might increase*” (*Romans 5:20*). An example for this situation may be found in Bereshit / Genesis when the serpent enticed Eve using God's mitzvah about not eating the fruit of a certain tree. Was this mitzvah given in order to get Adam and Eve to sin? Certainly not. If God had not made an exception about trees for food, and said of one tree, “*You shall not eat,*” then it would not have been a sin to eat of that tree (*Bereshit / Genesis 2:16-17, 3:2-3,11*). Once the mitzvah was given, it could be disobeyed, and there was a potential for sin. Later on when the Torah was given to Moshe, the opportunity for sin increased, as Paul replies to this by saying, “*Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more*” (*Romans 5:20-21*). The intent of the Lord was not to create various commands in order that there might be more sins to forgive. The effect of the Torah, if obeyed, was to increase righteousness, holiness, justice, and goodness (*Romans 7:12*). This is the purpose of

the Torah as the instruction from God. The Lord realizes we all fall short, and this is why Paul wrote, *“Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20-21)*. The plan the Lord put into place was to expose sin for what it is, where the aim of the Torah was not to increase sin, but to guide and direct man to repentance, and ultimately to bring about forgiveness. Paul also wrote in *Romans 7:8-11 Paul says, “Apart from the law sin is dead... Sin takes opportunity through the commandment... When the commandment came sin came alive and I died” (Romans 7:8-11)*. He says sin is invigorated by the Torah. If the Lord had not given us the Torah, could we live in a world that had no righteous, moral, and holy guide for life? Could we live where rape, robbery, and lies were not attributed to sin, so the rapists, robbers, and deceivers could live as they pleased to kill, steal, and destroy? Life in such a world would be impossible. The abolishment of the Torah is not the solution, as we find being taught in modern theologies today. If our government abolished the law of the land (criminal law), if there were no law and no conviction of criminals, society as we know it would be chaotic and out of control. A different way to think about this, cancer treatment using chemotherapy, the treatment is worse than the disease, and one’s health may get worse before getting better. In a similar manner, the God of Israel’s way of dealing with sin made the problem seem worse for a time, however the Lord had to allow sin to come to life in order to conquer it. This is similar to our criminal justice system, bring innocent until proven guilty. Paul wrote, *Romans 7:13 Paul says, “Through the commandment sin became exceedingly sinful” (NASB)*. Saying essentially that sin is intensified. The righteousness of God’s Torah reveals sin for what it is. Note how a room dimly lit may seem attractive, but when brightly lit, the dirt, cobwebs, cracks, peeling paint, mold, and inharmonious colors show up and the room no longer is habitable to live in. Many examples may be given to illustrate the importance of the Torah for our lives today. The Torah causes us to be removed from our comfort zone of sin and makes us intensely aware of our need of God’s lovingkindness. The Torah reveals to us how we have greatly violated His ways and directs us to the Messiah Yeshua as demonstrating the way to eternal life. This is why Paul wrote, *“that grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21)*. The Torah may seem like a disadvan-

tage, that through the Torah sin is invigorated and intensified. However, these things the Lord has turned into advantages because this places the Lord Himself in the central position to help in our solution.

- Sin was attributed to us do to rebellion, against God’s Word. This however paved the way for sin to be forgiven.
- Sin increased however the mercy of God (grace) abounded all the more.
- Sin was invigorated and sprang up in our lives, however sin is also able to be killed.
- Sin intensified and became exceedingly sinful, leading a person to seek the Lord God of Israel for a solution.

The Lord Himself provided the solution through the sacrificial system, and later through His Messiah Yeshua, each system by which are made effectual by faith. The promises of God are so great as to save us from the flames of fire, not being burned because the Lord is in our midst. Here we find the description of God as merciful and caring, who descends into the flames to take care of His people. This is why the Lord God of Israel is so concerned to care for the orphan and the widow.

The Midrash speaks of the salvation of God, but what is the meaning of salvation? Is it a place, a destination, or a state of mind? Modern theologies can be confusing at times since many people speak of “*being saved*,” while explanations being given only to getting out or Hell. A concise definition may be found in Parashat Beshalach from *Shemot / Exodus 14:13*, when the Israelites came out of Egypt and reached the Red Sea, Moshe told them to “*stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.*” In this case, the Lord provided deliverance for Israel from the armies of Egypt. John wrote of salvation in his epistle in the following way:

1 John 5:10-12

5:10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the



testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 5:11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (NASB)

This passage reveals to us that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son, Yeshua the Messiah. John is saying here the way to possess eternal life is to possess God's Son. The question is, how can a person possess the Son of God and obtain this eternal life? The New Testament text states (*Romans 5:8*), God demonstrated His love for us through the death of His Son. The Torah reveals to us all men are sinful, meaning to miss the mark, and so the Lord provided the way of repentance and sacrifice for atonement. Our sins separate us from God who is perfect and holy (righteousness and justice) and the Lord God of Israel must judge sinful man. This is the message we received from the wilderness journey, the people fell short and lost the inheritance. The daughters of Zelophehad (בְּנוֹת זֶלְפֶּחֶד) rose up in their faith and spoke to Moshe and the community about their rights to inherit property in the Promised Land. Both the Scriptures and the rabbis say that no amount of human goodness, human works, human morality, or religious activity can achieve atonement, it comes by faith and the mercy of God. This is why the Midrash states what it does saying, *"The men of old whom You did redeem, You did redeem not because of their works. You did redeem, You did redeem not because of their works. You did deal mercifully with them and thus did You redeem them."* (*Midrash Tehillim 119, Part 7*) This is the message of the gospel as it is being laid out in the Torah, and later on explained by the Apostles. First it is the gift of God's own Son (Yeshua the Messiah), and second it is a life lived by the power of God to overcome sin. This is the message of the Torah, and why the rabbis say, *"The Inclination to evil has no power in the presence of Torah."* (*Midrash Tehillim 119, Part 7*) Proof of this is given by the example of Yeshua, having died on the cross, and being raised from the grave to everlasting life. The power of life and death has been given to him. And the Scriptures say He gives this to those

who are His. Are you one of His? Are you living your life according to the word of God? This is the meaning of our faith in Yeshua. Taking hold of the Messiah is found by having faith and walking in His ways.



