

# Joshua 17:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

## Analysis

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**But Zelophehad, the son of Hepher...had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah**—This verse references a landmark case in Israelite inheritance law, first presented in Numbers 27:1-11. Zelophehad died during the wilderness wandering, leaving five daughters but no sons. Under standard patrilineal inheritance, his family line would have been extinguished and his portion absorbed by other clans.

The naming of all five daughters—Machlah, Noach, Choglah, Milkah, and Tirtzah—honors their courage and faith in approaching Moses, Eleazar, and the tribal leaders to request their father's inheritance. Their Hebrew names carry meanings: Mahlah ("sickness" or "infirmity"), Noah ("movement" or "rest"), Hoglah ("partridge"), Milcah ("queen"), and Tirzah ("pleasantness"). These women become models of faithful persistence in claiming covenant promises, foreshadowing how gentile women (Ruth, Rahab) and later all believers would be included in God's inheritance through faith.

## Historical Context

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The case of Zelophehad's daughters established revolutionary precedent in ancient Near Eastern property law, which typically excluded women from inheritance.

God's ruling (Numbers 27:7) declared their claim just, modifying inheritance law to preserve family portions. A supplementary ruling (Numbers 36:6-12) required them to marry within Manasseh to keep land within the tribe. This balance between women's rights and tribal integrity showed remarkable legal sophistication. The daughters' successful petition demonstrates that Israel's law was not arbitrary tradition but derived from divine revelation that could address new situations. Their story appears three times in Torah (Numbers 26:33; 27:1-11; 36:1-12) and twice in Joshua (17:3-6), indicating its theological significance.

## Related Passages

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. What does God's response to Zelophehad's daughters teach about His concern for justice beyond traditional social structures?
2. How do these women's faithful persistence in claiming their inheritance model the way we should approach God with requests rooted in His promises?
3. In what ways does this account foreshadow the gospel truth that inheritance in God's kingdom depends not on gender or social status but on covenant relationship?

## Interlinear Text

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|                |             |                         |                |
|----------------|-------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| בָּנֵי יִם     | אֶלְעָזֶר   | בָּנֵי יִם              | וְלֹא־לְפָנָיד |
| But Zelophehad | had no sons | of Hepher               | had no sons    |
| H6765          | H1121       | H2660                   | H1121          |
| of Gilead      | had no sons |                         |                |
|                |             | H1568                   | H1121          |
| of Machir      | had no sons | of Manasseh             | had no sons    |
| H4353          | H1121       | H4519                   | H1121          |
|                |             | H3808                   | H518           |
| but daughters  |             | and these are the names | but daughters  |
| H1323          | H428        | H8034                   | H1323          |
|                |             |                         | H4244          |
| and Noah       | Hoglah      | Milcah                  | Mahlah         |
| H5270          | H2295       | H4435                   |                |
|                |             | H8656                   |                |
| וְתִרְצָה:     | מִלְכָה     | מִלְכָה                 | וְתִרְצָה:     |
|                |             |                         |                |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Numbers 27:1** (Parallel theme): Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah.

**Numbers 26:33** (Parallel theme): And Zelophehad the son of Hepher had no sons, but daughters: and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.