

Numbers 26:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Zelophehad the son of Hepher had no sons, but daughters: and the names of the daughters were Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah (אֶלְפְּחָד)—This verse's placement within dry genealogy is stunning: it disrupts male-lineage recording to memorialize five women by name. Their case (Numbers 27:1-11) challenged Moses and required direct divine judgment, establishing that covenant inheritance flows through daughters when sons are absent.

The daughters' names carry meaning: Mahlah ('sickness'), Noah ('movement'), Hoglah ('partridge'), Milcah ('counsel'), Tirzah ('delight'). Together they represent completeness—from sickness to delight, weakness to beauty. Their faithfulness preserved their father's name (שֵׁם, shem) when he had no male heir, demonstrating that covenant loyalty, not gender, determines inheritance. This Old Testament text thus prophetically affirms women as covenant bearers, anticipating Galatians 3:28.

Historical Context

Zelophehad died in the wilderness, possibly in Korah's rebellion era but not for that sin (Numbers 27:3). His daughters' petition came during this very census period, making their mention here a legal record. Their courage to approach Moses publicly, challenging patriarchal norms, led to landmark legislation (Numbers 36) ensuring daughters' inheritance rights while preserving tribal land integrity.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do Zelophehad's daughters model godly assertiveness in challenging unjust systems while respecting proper authority?
2. What does this passage teach about God's concern for preserving the 'name' and legacy of the faithful, even through unconventional means?
3. How might these five women typologically represent the Church—born from 'sickness' and 'the pit' yet becoming God's 'delight' and receiving full inheritance in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וְיֵדֶנְתֶּם	בְּתֵי	לְזִקְנֵת	בְּתֵי	לֹא	בְּנֵי	אֶלְפְּתִּיחָה
And Zelophehad	had no sons	of Hepher		H3808	H1961	H0
H6765	H1121	H2660				had no sons
						H3588
H1121						
מִתְּחִלָּה	אֶלְפְּתִּיחָה	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	מִתְּחִלָּה
אָם	בְּנֵי	וְתִשְׁמַם	וְתִשְׁמַם	וְתִשְׁמַם	וְתִשְׁמַם	אָם
H518	but daughters	and the names	but daughters	And Zelophehad	were Mahlah	
	H1323	H8034	H1323	H6765	H4244	
וְתִרְצָחָה	מִלְכָה	הַסְגָּלָה	וְתִרְצָחָה	מִלְכָה	הַסְגָּלָה	וְתִרְצָחָה
and Noah	Hoglah	Milcah	and Tirzah			
H5270	H2295	H4435	H8656			

Additional Cross-References

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.

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