

Numbers 36:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

Analysis

So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.¹ This verse establishes the principle that tribal inheritances should remain within their designated tribe. The Hebrew 'nachalah' (נְחַלָּה, inheritance) refers to the permanent possession God allocated to each tribe. The concern was that if Zelophehad's daughters married outside Manasseh, their inheritance would transfer to another tribe when their sons inherited. God's solution required them to marry within their tribe, balancing individual rights (women's inheritance) with corporate good (tribal integrity). This shows God's law addresses both personal and communal concerns. The tribal land divisions represented God's specific provision for each group, not to be confused or lost. This anticipates believers' distinct rewards and callings within the one body of Christ.

Historical Context

This regulation supplemented the earlier ruling about Zelophehad's daughters (Numbers 27). The issue arose as Israel prepared to divide the land, when tribal leaders of Manasseh raised concerns about inheritance transfer. The solution required female heirs to marry within their tribe to preserve land allocation. The Jubilee year provisions (Leviticus 25) also protected tribal inheritances from permanent alienation. Archaeological evidence shows ancient Israel maintained tribal territories until the exile, though boundaries shifted over time. The tribal

land system differed from ancient Near Eastern feudalism by granting land to family units rather than centralizing under king or temple. Joshua 17:3-4 records the daughters actually receiving their inheritance. Later marriage records (1 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah) show Israelites generally married within tribes. The principle of maintaining distinct inheritances while belonging to one covenant people continues in the church's unity-in-diversity.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's solution to the inheritance question demonstrate His concern for both individual justice and community well-being?
2. What does the preservation of tribal inheritances teach about respecting the distinct gifts and callings God gives to different groups within His people?

Interlinear Text

מִטַּהַר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי כִּי בְּנֵי אֶתְנָהָר בְּנֵי אֶתְנָהָר
H3808 remove So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel from tribe
H5437 H5159 H1121 H3478 H4294

מִטַּהַר בְּנֵי אֶתְנָהָר בְּנֵי אֶתְנָהָר בְּנֵי כִּי מִטַּהַר
H413 from tribe H3588 for every one So shall not the inheritance from tribe
H4294 H376 H5159 H4294

יְהִי אָבֶת לְאָבֶת כִּי בְּנֵי אֶתְנָהָר בְּנֵי אֶתְנָהָר
of his fathers shall keep of the children of Israel
H1 H1692 H1121 H3478

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 21:3 (Parallel theme): And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

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