

## THE PETITION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD

*Num 26:33 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.*

Zelophehad had five daughters who it appears were unmarried virgins. Let us call them the five wise virgins. Zelophehad means “firstborn”. Certainly, the name of their father may have influenced his daughters. Never underestimate the power of a name to shape one’s destiny. I always advise saints to choose the names of their children with prayer and wisdom. The best reminder parents can give their children, when the parents are long dead, is the name/s you choose; it will still guide and influence them from beyond the grave. “And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying” (Numbers 27:2). These were clearly very brave virgins. Never before do we read of women seeking an official audience before Moses and leadership of Israel before the Tabernacle of the Lord with the entire congregation assembled. We can never hope to receive the great promises of God unless we are willing to risk our reputations and dream big dreams. “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 1:8). Those who see the face of God have no fear of the face of a Moses, Aaron, Eleazer etc.

*Num 27:3 Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons.*

Here is their first argument; their father was a good man. He did not join in the rebellion of Korah. Zelophehad was faithful to the God of Israel. This, they argued, was a good reason for their father to have an inheritance in the Promised Land. Why should Zelophehad be punished for having five daughters? Never in the history of God’s dealings with his people was such a bold petition made before the presence of the Lord. Are there any sisters listening to me today? Will you dare to become sisters of the five daughters of Zelophehad and make bold petitions to our Lord Jesus Christ? We can only imagine the shocked stares on the bearded faces that looked grimly and with disapproval at the daughters of Zelophehad. Maybe they waited for the earth to open up or hail stones to fall from heaven and destroy these defiant women. Some may have even remarked that this is what happens when women don’t marry and have men to keep them in order. These five virgins did not care! They were feminists before the word was invented. They fought for women’s rights. Let

me give you a definition of feminism from the *Cambridge Dictionary*: “a person who believes in feminism, and tries to achieve change that helps women to get equal opportunities and treatment”. In this sense we should all be feminists. Amazing things happen when sisters unite for a holy purpose. Remember that women were united and prayed fervently before the Holy Spirit fell on the Day of Pentecost. “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (Acts 1:14).

**Num 27:4** *Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father.*

Indeed! What courage, what boldness and what indisputable logic! This should be the sisters’ rallying cry: “Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father”. What a holy passion! Why did their father leave Egypt? Why did he suffer for 40 years in the wilderness? The answer is simple, yet beyond words can express – to inherit the Promised Land! Why did we leave sin, our families and other pleasures this world promised? To inherit the heaven that the Lord Jesus Christ promised us. “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14, 2,3). Contrast the holy passion for God’s promises with that of Esau. “Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright” (Gen 25:34). If God hated Esau for despising his promises, he certainly loved the daughters of Zelophehad for their zeal for his promises.

**Rom 9:13** *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

Why don’t we bow our heads and close our eyes for a moment and pray the prayer of the daughters of Zelophehad! “Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father”. Once again, keep in mind that the children of Israel had not yet inherited the Promised Land. They were still roaming around in the wilderness, but the daughters of Zelophehad had unshakeable faith, unlike many of the men, that they would inherit the land, and they wanted to secure a portion for themselves – the portion that belonged to their father. Jesus, give us daughters like these five virgins! Let us go before the Lord and secure a portion of the New Jerusalem for us! The daughters of Zelophehad surely have earned themselves a place in the biblical hall of fame that states, “These all died in faith, not having received the

promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13). We can be certain that Zelophehad was beaming with pride when God told him about the request of his daughters in heaven. They fulfilled the great command which says, “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Deut 5:16).

In conclusion, let us note the blessed consequences the petition of these five wise virgins unleashed upon Israel. They changed the history of Israel.

***Num 27:7** The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them.*

***Num 27:8** And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.*

They struck a blow for all women in Israel. They must have become famous instantly. Their names became household names and the women of Israel blessed their memory for generations to come. Sisters, your boldness and prayers can change the course of spiritual and secular history. Why didn't anyone think to make this petition before? That is the question. Women until then accepted the fact that they could not inherit land because they were born as females and not males. Don't accept limitations – take your petition to Moses and let him talk to God. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim 2:5). The daughters of Zelophehad knew they could not fight like men over the Anakim and other giants awaiting them in Canaan, but they fought with their prayers, and God granted them their inheritance before they even reached the Holy Land. Hallelujah! Victory is not through masculine prowess in battle, but the Lord. “But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen” (Hosea 1:7). These women could not bear the thought of every family having their plot of inheritance except for them because their father had no son. Not least, the petition of these women extended a blessing for other males who were not the sons of their fathers, but related in various ways.

***Num 27:9** And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren.*

***Num 27:10** And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren.*

***Num 27:11** And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it: and it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the LORD commanded Moses.*

The above shows that we men ought to encourage our sisters to make bold petitions before the Lord. Many blessings will come our way too. Now the brothers of the fathers, uncles and cousins etc., could inherit land because of the petition of the daughters of Zelophehad. Thank God there are sisters who come together regularly to pray for us! Thank God they make bold requests which bless men and women. Let us pray the Lord will give the spirit of the daughters of Zelophehad to our sisters.