

210623-4 Nu 36, The Matter of Zelophedhad's Daughters Revisited—CThurman

In chapter 35 it is understood that Israel shall come to possess all of the land on both sides of the Jordan River. These lands were the former possession of several gentile nations and these nations had built a number of cities and villages there. Each tribe of Israel shall receive an allotment of land. These allotments will vary as to how many cities they will have. Of these cities the LORD commands Israel to give forty-eight cities to the Levites. The Levites are the sons of Aaron, Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. The tribes of Israel having more cities will give more cities to the Levites, and the tribes with fewer will give less. But they shall all give something. What cities these tribes gave and how many cities each gave is recorded in Joshua chapter 21. (refer to p.600)

Of these forty-eight cities there shall be six cities called cities of refuge. These are cities specifically designated to shelter any that has been involved in the accidental death of another. To these cities the manslayer shall flee for refuge from the avenger of blood. When he arrives to the city he must immediately stand in the entrance and declare his cause in the ears of the elders. (cf. Jos.20.4)

Again, isn't there an interesting parallel here between the Levites judging the causes of the children of God and the saints judging things that pertain to this life? [comp. Nu.35.7, 24; cf. 1Co.6.1-6])

Then the elders will give the manslayer a place among them until he can receive judgment. If it is determined that the manslayer is guilty of murder he will be delivered to the revenger of blood to die. If he is innocent he is granted shelter for as long as he remains within the boundaries of this city until the death of the high priest. If he ventures beyond the walls of this city before then, he is subject to the revenger of blood. Once the high priest has died the manslayer may return to his possession again. The avenger of blood may not touch him.

Now, there shall be three cities of refuge on the west of the Jordan River and three on the east. On both sides these cities shall be located in the south, centrally, and in the north.

In this last chapter of the Book of Numbers the issue of a father's land inheritance needs to be readdressed. It was decided in chapter 27 that a daughter may

inherit her father's land when he has no sons. If there are no daughters then the father's brothers shall receive it. And if he has no brothers the nearest of kin on his father's side shall receive it. (cf. Nu.27.8-11) After some further consideration a problem needs to be resolved. As it stands presently, that the daughter may inherit the land, that if they marry husbands of other tribes the inheritance of one tribe could be diminished and another increased. So this chapter resolves that problem.

1 ¶ And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel:

So, the ½ tribe of Manasseh, which shall have their land grant on the eastern side of the Jordan River, came to realize that there is a potential problem on the horizon that needs to be decided now.

Nu 33:54 And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit.

Deu.19.14 ¶ Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

This was a problem that affected every tribe, though evidently only the chief of the fathers of Manasseh understood its long-reaching effects and needed some clarification.

Not all of us in this congregation necessarily understand the long-term effects of some doctrinal and practical questions. Though the decisions we make affect us all, not everyone has the same depth of interest or can perceive the issue as well as some others. Them that are 'closest' to the heart of the matter (how it touches, what it will do, how it will change the church), will be the more interested than others to ensure we are making

as good a decision as we can given our present understanding. There are some brothers and sisters here like this. These brothers and sisters have a perception and an understanding that serves to help the entire congregation. So, the chiefs of the fathers of the tribe of Manasseh came and brought this to Moses and before the chiefs of the fathers of all of Israel.

2 And they said,

These of the ½ tribe of Manasseh, having their land inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

The LORD [יהוה, Jehovah] commanded my lord [את־אֲדֹנָי, eth-adō-nee, referring to Moses (so much like Ps.110.1)] to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord [Moses] was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters.

Beginning in v.3) the chiefs of Manasseh shows how the decision made earlier (ch.27) will end if it is allowed to stand as it is, without some amendment.

3 And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers,

So, that land which Manasseh received by lot, as all of the other tribes also received their land, shall be removed from the tribe of Manasseh, in this example, and become the property of the tribe whose husband this daughter marries. And this is so for every tribe.

and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance.

4 And when the jubile of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.

In this case, when any of Manasseh's daughters should receive the land inheritance of their father because he had no sons, and they take an husband that is of another tribe, then the land will be removed from the tribe of Manasseh's to the tribe to which her husband belongs. Even in the time of Jubile the land won't be restored the original tribe, but will remove it to the tribe of her husband. So in this example Manasseh's inheritance is diminished. The inheritance is from the LORD. It should not be removed from tribe to tribe.

5 ¶ And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well (referring to Manasseh).

The daughters of Zelophehad said well.

*Nu.27.6 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
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.*

The daughter's concern was the loss of their father's allotment of land, but they did not understand the whole issue. They receive their request, but now because to preserve the land to the tribe it was originally allotted to a requirement is laid upon them.

With every asset is a corresponding liability. To this day I am still learning this. The larger the purchase the greater the liability. Buying any piece of machinery, car, mower, tiller, chainsaw, motorcycle all come with requirements. You have to learn all about it, how to maintain it and how to properly operate it. It is a liability. These daughters of Zelophehad received the asset and now have a liability.

6 This is the thing which the LORD doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry.

Daughters of Zelophehad, this is the word of LORD, Because you have received your father's land inheritance you may take husbands that are of the tribe of Manasseh.

Sometimes, perhaps more often than not, we do not realize the full import of what we might be asking for. Parents see this in their children all of the time. They know that the child doesn't have any idea what they are asking for. Sometimes the parent simply has to say no, because the child simply is not ready or because they know there is potential for the child to be injured. Sometimes the parent lets them have it and the child finds out that they didn't really want what they were asking for after all.

7 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.

shall keep himself, יִדְבֶקֶוּ, Hiphil (causative act.) fut. of דָּבַק, da-vaq, tss. *to cleave* (Ge.2.24); *to join together* (Job 41.23), *to follow hard* (Ps.63.8), *to be stuck* (Ps.119.31), *to abide fast* (Ru.2.8), *to keep fast* (Ru.2.21), *to follow close* (Jer.42.16).

Every one – meaning every Israelite, man and woman, is *to join himself, to cleave to* their inheritance. Fathers having no sons, but only daughters, would only allow their daughters to marry in the tribe. Such daughters would seek for them only husbands of the same tribe. They were to marry only in the tribe.

So Christians should marry only in the Lord. A Christian man or woman should never seek to marry anyone that doesn't share in the same heritage, lot, part, inheritance of Christ. Marriage has trouble as it is between Christians (1Co.7.28b), how much more when we bind ourselves to the unbelieving, to them that are yet dead in trespasses and sins (cf. Eph.2.1), to them that are in spiritual darkness (cf. 2Co.6.14), to them that subject to the direction of prince and power of the air that now works in the children of disobedience (cf. Eph.2.2).

[T]he Christian must wed a fellow Christian. From earliest times God has commanded that “the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be numbered among the nations” (Nu. 23.9). His law unto Israel in connection with the Canaanites, was, “Neither shalt thou make marriages with them: thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son” (Deut. 7:3 and cf. Josh. 23:12). How much more, then, must God require the separation of those who are His people by a spiritual and heavenly tie than those who occupied only a fleshly and earthly relation to Him. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2Cor. 6:14) is the clarion order to His saints of this dispensation. *Partnership* of any kind of one who is born again with one in a state of nature is here prohibited, as is evident from the terms used in the next verse [2Co.6.14-16, added] – “fellowship, communion, concord, part, agreement.”” *Exposition of Hebrews*, Arthur Pink, p.1128

8 And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers.
9 Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance.

For a daughter of Israel to do otherwise must have meant a forfeiture of the inheritance. The inheritance would default to her father’s brothers, uncles, or next of kin, in that order.

10 Even as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad:
11 For Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their father’s brothers’ sons [so, cousins]:
12 And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father.

By the Law this was as close as marriages were allowed. (cf. Lev. 18.6-18) In our day there are laws regulating marriages between first cousins, and these vary from state to state.

13 *These are the commandments and the judgments, which the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses unto the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.*

Remember that the phrase '*plains of Moab*' is the name given for these plains. This is not the land of Moab. It used to be Moab's, but they lost it to the Amorites in war. (cf. Nu.21.26) Israel gained this land as their when they fought against the Amorites. (cf. Nu.21.25, 31) This area is now the land of Israel on the east side of the Jordan River, which is the inheritance of the tribe of Reuben. (cf. Deu.3.8, 12)

Since the children of Israel came into the plains of Moab all that has been commanded them falls between the issue raised by the daughters of Zelophehad and the need for clarification by the chief fathers of the tribe of Manasseh, chs. 27-36.

Ch.27 – Zelophehad's daughters complain that fathers with no sons receive no inheritance of land.

Chs. 28, 29 – The LORD establishes the twice-daily burnt offerings, the weekly burnt offerings, the monthly burnt offerings, and the two annual burnt offerings.

Ch.30 – The establishment of vows.

Ch.31 – How to divide the spoils of war among them.

Ch.34 – Where to set the boundaries of the nation of Israel.

Ch.35 – The LORD commands Israel to give to the Levites (Aaron, Kohath, Gershon & Merari) forty-eight cities; six of which are cities of refuge.

Ch. 36 – How every tribe is to keep himself to his own land inheritance.

The LORD has allowed us to complete this study of the fourth book of Moses.