

Faith A.M.E. Zion Church  
Bible Study – July 1, 2020  
Rev. Cherlyn W. Tribble  
Say Her Name: The Daughters of Zelophehad  
Numbers 26:33; 27:1-8

Objectives: 1) To bring to light an obscure and infrequently read text about women who were not only named, but who spoke up to request that the law be justly applied to them, 2) To highlight the exceptions that are made that often exclude women from taking their rightful place in society and in the Church, and 3) To examine our complicity, engagement or even apathy in regards to practices that both prevent women from fully realizing and carrying out their calling in the Kingdom, and prevent them from being recognized in times of danger and even death.

The book of Numbers, written by Moses and focusing on the struggles of the Israelites wandering in the from Egypt. Numbers is included in the canon as the fourth book of the Pentateuch, as the first five books are called in Christianity, also known as “The Law,” and as the Torah in Judaism. Even though Numbers was written after Leviticus, it provides accounts of some events that occurred chronologically after those in Exodus. Its name is supposedly derived from two censuses or “numberings” of Israelite men who were eligible to participate in warfare.

The first census or “numbering” takes place prior to the Israelites leaving Mount Sinai in chapter 1. The second takes place after the plague of death, in chapter 26 prior to entering the land of Canaan. The account of The Daughters of Zelophehad is fully given over the course of several chapters in the book of Numbers. It begins in Numbers 26, where the author is giving a description of the second census. What is interesting is that even though Zelophehad does not have any sons, his daughters are listed by name. We found out later that this is because of them being in position to receive an inheritance that is normally reserved for the sons of men. This teacher would like to suggest that these women’s names are mentioned because they were fit for warfare as well, albeit for a different type of warfare.

There are 93 women whose spoken words are recorded in the Bible, with only 49 of them being named. Women’s names represent between 5.5 and 8 percent of the total number of names mentioned in the Bible. The approximately 14,056 words spoken by these women collectively amount to about 1.1% of the total words spoken in the Bible (King James Version). On a humorous note, this doesn’t represent the presumption that women talk more than men.

Five of the women whose names are listed in the Bible are the Daughters of Zelophehad: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. Say their names...

- I. Who is Zelophehad? (Numbers 26:33)
  - A. A man of the Tribe of Manasseh, which includes about 52,700 people at time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> census
  - B. Part of one of the ten “Lost Tribes of Israel”
  - C. Name possibly means “dark shadow” or “first-born”
  - D. Son of Hepher, son of Gilead, (sometimes noted as a son of Manasseh?)
  - E. “Died in his own sin” meaning that he did not take part in the revolt of Korah, but was guilty of violating The Law, as were all Hebrews

- II. Who Are the Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 26:33)
  - A. Mahlah – “to move” in Hebrew, “to dance” in Modern Hebrew
  - B. Noha – “to move” in Hebrew (Different spelling is noted)
  - C. Hoglah – “to circle” in Hebrew
  - D. Milcah – “to walk” in Hebrew
  - E. Tirzah – “to run” in Hebrew
- III. Significance of the Daughters’ Names
  - A. All five names are related to the concept of movement
  - B. All of the verbs associated with the names are related to the concept of initiating or being active
  - C. Some current Jewish settlements in the Jordan Valley region bear some of their names
    - 1. Mehola and Tirzah (located near the city of Beit She’an in the northern part of the Jordan Valley)
    - 2. Bet Hogla (located near the city of Jericho in the southern part of the Jordan Valley)
- IV. The Case of the Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-8)
  - A. Inheritance of their father’s land
  - B. The Talmud indicates that their case had already been heard by their assembly, the chieftains, and Eleazar, with unsatisfactory results
  - C. Moses, the judge (this matter finally coming to Moses would be consistent with the advice that Jethro had given to him about the necessity of delegating decision-making to others in order to avoid becoming overwhelmed by all of the matters of the people)
  - D. Daughters appear to state their case (vs. 1-2)
    - 1. Father’s death (vs. 3)
    - 2. Not guilty of something that should be grounds for land being taken away from his family (vs. 3)
    - 3. Not having a son is not a reason for withholding inheritance from children, daughters should be rightful heirs (vs. 4)
  - E. Moses hears case and deliberates (vs. 5)
    - 1. Does research by taking the matter to God (vs. 5)
    - 2. God answers Moses (vs. 6-10)
      - a. Daughters of Zelophehad are right (vs. 7)
      - b. Give them possession of their rightful inheritance (vs. 7)
      - c. Pass the inheritance directly to the daughters (vs. 7)
      - d. Tells Moses to clarify the meaning of the law to the people that if a man without a son dies, the man’s inheritance will pass to his daughter (vs. 8)
      - e. If the man has no children, then the inheritance will be passed to his brother(s) (vs. 9-10)
- V. Current Application
  - A. Women’s names are frequently not called and/or considered for matters of importance
    - 1. Leadership positions in Church, corporate, politics
    - 2. Decision-making roles in leadership positions, i.e. pulpits, committees, offices
    - 3. Women’s numbers in the world equal and often exceed that of men
  - B. Black women’s names are frequently not called when they are at risk or have been killed
    - 1. Kidnappings not highlighted in media as much as those of White women
    - 2. Names often not called when police abuse/murders are mentioned
  - C. Silencing of women is perpetrated by laws or lack thereof
    - 1. Women’s bodies’ concerns

- 2. Property ownership
- 3. Equal pay
- VI. Lack of male support and advocacy
  - A. Lack of acceptance
  - B. Limited or absence of mentoring
  - C. Jealousy
  - D. Sabotage
  - E. Reluctance of extending collegiality
  - F. Inability or reluctance to being empathetic
- VII. Lack of female support and collegiality
  - A. Lack of acceptance
  - B. Competition
  - C. Jealousy
  - D. Sabotage
  - E. Fear
- VIII. What is your role?
  - A. Complicity
  - B. Complacency
  - C. Apathy
  - D. Disengagement
- IX. **Say her name!!**
  - A. Pray to God for females by name, including wives, daughters, mothers, nieces, female cousins, etc. (God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah, Hagar, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah)
  - B. Expand your study of the Bible to women of the scriptures
  - C. Suggest women's and girls' names for various roles and opportunities
  - D. Suggest females' names to receive equipping educations for access to leadership in all disciplines and arenas
  - E. Support females receiving training in non-traditional roles, i.e. STEM, theological education, law, politics
  - F. Speak up and speak out when men and/or women degrade or diminish women's abilities by speaking of women's weaknesses, lack of emotional or physical stamina, intellectual capabilities, etc.
  - G. Don't allow female victims to be ignored and/or forgotten!