

# Daughters of Zelophehad

After dealing with tribal structures, Moses is faced with an unusual petition. From the five daughters of Zelophehad, a man who has died leaving no sons. Mahla, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.

The Land of Israel will be allocated according to tribes and the males within them. These five unmarried women come to Moses and complain that their father's name will disappear if land is only allocated to men. The phrase "he died for his own sin" comes after their saying he was not part of any rebellion. His death was natural. So why should his daughters be "punished"? It strikes me as incredible that they had access and the right to bring their plea. Even nowadays in many parts of the world they have no such option and even where they do, their claims are almost always dismissed in favor of males.

This is another case where Moses takes it to God directly because clearly, he needs elucidation.

The reply is that they have a good case and should be granted their wish and that this should be a precedent for future allocations.

What is not said here but will be mentioned later in the Book of Numbers, is that the tribe of Menashe came to appeal. Because if the women married out of the tribe this would decrease the Menashe allocation in favor of another Tribe. Moses's conclusion was that the women should only marry within their tribe to ensure tribal integrity. In fact, marrying out of one's tribe was not allowed for many years after. The prophetic festival of the 15th of Av celebrated lifting the ban is mentioned in Mishna Taanit.