

Text and Tools For Change

Source Sheet by Micah Buck

במדבר כ"ז:א'-י"א

(א) וַתִּקְרַבְנָה בָּנוֹת צֶלְפַּחַד בְּיַחְפָּר בֶּן־גִּלְעָד בֶּן־מְכִיר בֶּן־מְנַשֶּׁה לְמִשְׁפַּחַת מְנַשֶּׁה בֶּן־יוֹסֵף וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בָּנֹתָיו מַחֲלָה נָעֵה וְחֹגְלָה וּמִלְכָּה וְתִרְצָה: (ב) וַתַּעֲמִדְנָה לְפָנַי מִשָּׁה וְלִפְנֵי אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וּלְפָנַי הַנְּשִׂאִים וְכָל־הָעֵדָה פָּתַח אֹהֶל־מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר: (ג) אָבִינוּ מֵת בַּמִּדְבָּר וְהוּא לֹא־הָיָה בְּתוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַנוֹעֲדִים עֲלֵהּ בְּעֵדַת־קָרָח כִּי־בַחֲטָאוֹ מֵת וּבָנָיִם לֹא־הָיוּ לוֹ: (ד) לָמָּה יִגְרַע שֵׁם־אָבִינוּ מִתּוֹךְ מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ כִּי אֵין לוֹ בֶּן תְּנַהֲלֵנוּ אַחֲזָה בְּתוֹךְ אַחֵי אָבִינוּ: (ה) וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מִשְׁפָּטָן לְפָנַי ה': (ו) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (ז) כֵּן בָּנוֹת צֶלְפַּחַד דְּבַרְתָּ נָתַן תִּתֵּן לָהֶם אַחֲזֵת נַחֲלָה בְּתוֹךְ אַחֵי אֲבִיהֶם וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ אֶת־נַחֲלַת אֲבִיהֶן לָהֶן: (ח) וְאֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר לֵאמֹר אִישׁ כִּי־יָמוּת וּבֶן אֵין לוֹ וְהַעֲבַרְתֶּם אֶת־נַחֲלָתוֹ לְבָתּוֹ: (ט) וְאִם־אֵין לוֹ בֵּת וּנְתַתֶּם אֶת־נַחֲלָתוֹ לְאֶחָיו: (י) וְאִם־אֵין לוֹ אַחִים וּנְתַתֶּם אֶת־נַחֲלָתוֹ לְאֶחָי אָבִיו: (יא) וְאִם־אֵין אַחִים לְאָבִיו וּנְתַתֶּם אֶת־נַחֲלָתוֹ לְשֹׂאָרוֹ הַקָּרֵב אֵלָיו מִמִּשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ וַיִּרַשׁ אֹתָהּ וְהִיְתָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחֻקַּת מִשְׁפָּט כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: (יב)

Numbers 27:1-11

(1) The daughters of Zelophehad, of the family of Manasseh—son of Hephher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph—came forward. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. (2) They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chieftains, and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and they said, (3) “Our father died in the wilderness. He was not one of the faction - Korah’s faction - which banded together against the Eternal, but died for his own sin; and he has left no sons. (4) Let not our father’s name be lost to his

family just because he had no son! Give us a holding among our father's kinsmen!" (5) Moses brought their case before the Eternal. (6) And the Eternal said to Moses, (7) "The plea of Zelophehad's daughters is just: you should give them a hereditary holding among their father's kinsmen; transfer their father's share to them. (8) "Further, speak to the Israelite people as follows: 'If a man dies without leaving a son, you shall transfer his property to his daughter. (9) If he has no daughter, you shall assign his property to his brothers. (10) If he has no brothers, you shall assign his property to his father's brothers. (11) If his father had no brothers, you shall assign his property to his nearest relative in his own clan, and he shall inherit it.' This shall be the law of procedure for the Israelites, in accordance with the Eternal's command to Moses."

1. What is the driving concern/value expressed by Zelophehad's daughters? What does justice look like to them in this text?
2. What strategic choices do they make in this incident?
3. How does Moses respond to their sense of injustice?

ספרי במדבר קל"ג:א'

ותקרבנה בנות צלפחד – כיון ששמעו בנות צלפחד שהארץ מתחלקת לשבטים ולא לנקבות, נתקבצו כולן זו על זו ליטול עצה. אמרו: לא כרחמי ב"ו רחמי המקום! ב"ו רחמיו על הזכרים יותר מן הנקבות, אבל מי שאמר והיה העולם אינו כן, אלא על הזכרים ועל הנקבות, רחמיו על הכל, שנאמר (תהלים קמה) טוב ה' לכל ורחמיו על כל מעשיו:

Sifrei Bamidbar 133:1

(Bamidbar 27:1) "And there drew near the daughters of Tzelofchad": When the daughters of Tzelofchad heard that the land was to be apportioned to the tribes and not to females, they gathered together to take counsel, saying: Not as the mercies of flesh and blood are the mercies of the Eternal. The mercies of flesh and blood are greater for men than for women. Not so

the mercies of the One who spoke and brought the world into being. God's mercies are for all genders (equally). God's mercies are for all! As it is written (Psalms 145:9) "The Eternal is good to all, and God's mercies are upon all of God's creations."

* The Sifrei on Bamidbar is a work of Midrash composed sometime around 200 CE,

1. What is the driving concern/value expressed by Zelophehad's daughters? What does justice look like to them in this text?
2. What strategic choices do they make in this incident?
3. This text was composed long after the Biblical account. What choices did the writers of this midrash make when composing this text? Is there a different point of view here than we see in the Biblical text?

ילקוט שמעוני, במדבר, כ"ז, ב'

ותקרבנה בנות צלפחד חמשתן אמרו חמשה דברים, הראשונה אמרה אבינו מת במדבר. השניה אמרה והוא לא היה בתוך העדה הנועדים על ה' בעדת קרח. השלישית אמרה כי בחטאו מת הוא המקושש, הרביעית אמרה ובנים לא היו לו. החמישית אמרה למה יגרע שם אבינו מתוך משפחתו וכל הפסוק.

Yalkut Shimoni, Bamidbar 27:2

"And they stood before Moses," (Num 27:2) Each of the five daughters presented one of the five pleas. The first said, "Our father dies in the wilderness," The second said, "He was not one of the faction of Korach." The third said, "but he

died in his own sin." The fourth: "He had no sons." The fifth: "Why should our father's name be lost to his family?"

* The Yalkui Shimoni is a compilation of midrashic comments on the Tanakh, many of which are pulled from other collections. It was probably composed early in the 13th century.

1. What detail does this text add to the Biblical narrative?
2. What strategic choices do Zelophehad's daughters make in this version of the text, in which each of them speaks separately? What values might be behind those choices?

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