

Among the early Hebrews, as well as among many other nations of antiquity, **custom decided that the next of kin should enter upon the possession of the estate of a deceased person**. The first-born son **usually assumed** the headship of the family, and succeeded to the control of the family property (**see Primogeniture**). When there were no sons, the dying man would appoint a trusted friend as his heir, sometimes to the exclusion of a near relative. Thus, **Abraham**, when he despaired of having children himself, was about to appoint his slave **Eliezer as his heir, although his nephew Lot was living**.

Even when there were children, it was within the right of the father to prefer one child to another in the disposition of his property. Sarah, not wishing Ishmael to share in the inheritance with her son Isaac, prevailed upon Abraham to drive Hagar and her son out of her house (Genesis 21:10); and Abraham later sent away his children by concubines, with presents, so that they should not interfere in the inheritance of Isaac (Genesis 25:6).

Jacob, however, as it appears, made no distinction between the sons of his wives and those of his concubines (Genesis 49:), **and included his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh among his heirs (Genesis 48:5-6)**. **There could have been no question in those days of a widow inheriting from her husband, since she was regarded as part of the property which went over to the heirs, as is shown by the stories of Ruth**.

Nor could there have been a question about daughters inheriting from their father, since daughters were given in marriage either by their father, or by their brothers or other relatives after the father's death, thus becoming the property of the family into which they married. The legal status of a daughter in Jewish law changed very materially from patriarchal times to the Talmudic era. In the former period the daughter had no appreciable legal rights; she was merely a member of her father's household, and as such was, in common with the other members of the household, subject to the power of her father, who was accountable to no one for his treatment of her.

For the next two days we will employ the method of Inductive Bible Study. It has a sequence of three components: observation, interpretation, and application.

1. **Observation** answers the question, What does it say? What is the actual content in the text?

2. **Interpretation** answers the question, What does it mean? Our task is to discover the original intent and meaning of the author.
3. **Application** answers the questions, What does it mean to me and how does it apply to my life.

Observation always comes first. Before we consider what a text means, we must ask what it says. Reading and rereading the text will answer most of the following questions: **who, what, when, where, why, and how.**

Interpretation: The ultimate interpretation question is: **What did God mean by what He said? Every verse in the Bible means only one thing, what the original author intended.**

Application answers the question, how does this passage apply to me? The goal of Bible is not just to gain information but to also experience transformation. **Therefore, interpreting the Bible then includes the six observation questions, the six interpretation questions, and the necessary application of those principles to our daily lives.**

Numbers 27:1 (ESV) Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, from the clans of Manasseh the son of Joseph. The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

Numbers 27:2 (ESV) And they stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the chiefs and all the congregation, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, **saying,**

Numbers 27:3 (ESV) "Our father died in the wilderness. **He was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah, but died for his own sin. And he had no sons.**

Numbers 27:4 (ESV) Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? **Give to us a possession among our father's brothers.**"

We noted earlier that among the early Hebrews custom decided that the next of kin should enter upon the possession of the estate of a deceased person. The first-born son usually assumed the headship of the family, and succeeded to the control of the family property.

Numbers 27:5 (ESV) Moses brought their case before the LORD.

Numbers 27:6 (ESV) And the LORD said to Moses,

Numbers 27:7 (ESV) *"The daughters of Zelophehad are right. You shall give them possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers and transfer the inheritance of their father to them.*

Numbers 27:8 (ESV) *And you shall speak to the people of Israel, saying, 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter.*

Numbers 27:9 (ESV) *And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers.*

Numbers 27:10 (ESV) *And if he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers.*

Numbers 27:11 (ESV) *And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the nearest kinsman of his clan, and he shall possess it. And it shall be for the people of Israel a statute and rule, as the LORD commanded Moses."*

The only stipulation was that the women had to marry within their own tribe.

Numbers 36:5 (ESV) And Moses commanded the people of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, "The tribe of the people of Joseph is right.

Numbers 36:6 (ESV) This is what the LORD commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad: 'Let them marry whom they think best, only they shall marry within the clan of the tribe of their father.

Numbers 36:7 (ESV) The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another, for every one of the people of Israel shall hold on to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

Numbers 36:8 (ESV) And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the people of Israel shall be wife to one of the clan of the tribe of her father, so that every one of the people of Israel may possess the inheritance of his fathers.

Numbers 36:9 (ESV) So no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another, for each of the tribes of the people of Israel shall hold on to its own inheritance."

Numbers 36:10 (ESV) The daughters of Zelophehad did as the LORD commanded Moses,

Numbers 36:11 (ESV) for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, ***were married to sons of their father's brothers.***

Numbers 36:12 (ESV) ***They were married into the clans of the people of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's clan.***

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