

The Book of Numbers

Lesson 18: Inheritance, a New Leader, and the Offerings -- Numbers 27:1-29:40

Some of the most important moments in Scripture begin not with an army or a king but with a few ordinary people who dare to ask. So it is here. Five sisters, the daughters of a man named Zelophehad, walk to the front of the assembly. Their father has died in the wilderness, leaving no sons, and under the customs of the day his name and his portion seem destined to vanish. So Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah stand before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, before the leaders and the whole congregation at the door of the tabernacle, and they make their case. Give us a possession among our father's brothers. It is a brave thing to ask, and what happens next is remarkable: Moses brings their cause before the LORD, and God says, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right.

From there the chapter widens out. God shows Moses the land from a mountain he himself will not enter, for Moses too must answer for the waters of Meribah. And rather than leave the congregation leaderless, Moses asks God to set a man over them so that the people of the LORD will not be as sheep without a shepherd. God names Joshua, a man in whom is the Spirit, and Moses lays his hands on him before all the people. A new shepherd is given so the flock will not scatter.

Then in chapters 28 and 29 the rhythm slows into a calendar. Day by day, the morning and evening lambs. Week by week, the Sabbath offering. Month by month, the new moon. And then the great feasts of the year, Passover, the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, each with its appointed sacrifices. It can read like a long liturgical to-do list, but underneath it beats a steady heart: a people whose whole year is ordered around drawing near to God, who set their clocks by worship.

These chapters are full of things that may feel far from your Tuesday. Ancient inheritance law, the commissioning of a leader you have never met, a sacrificial calendar long since fulfilled and set aside in Christ. Yet every line speaks to you. The God who heard five sisters still cares about justice for those the world overlooks. The God who gave Israel a shepherd has given us the Good Shepherd. And the God who taught Israel to order their days around worship still calls you to a life and a week shaped by drawing near. Listen closely, and you will hear the gospel humming under the old law.

Group Discussion: When have you seen God's people listen to and make room for someone who easily could have been overlooked, and what did that teach the whole community about the heart of God?

Personal Reflection: If someone mapped out your week by what you actually order your time around, what would they conclude you worship? What is one rhythm of drawing near to God you want to recover?

Read Numbers 27:1–29:40

Study Questions

1. Read Numbers 27:1–11. The daughters of Zelophehad bring their case, and the LORD declares they speak right, then establishes a lasting statute. What does God's response reveal about His justice and His care for those who might otherwise be left without a portion or a name?
2. These five sisters had to summon courage to stand before Moses, the priest, and the whole assembly to ask for what was right. Where in your own life might God be calling you to speak up, respectfully and in faith, rather than stay silent?
3. Read Numbers 27:12–17. Moses, knowing he will not enter the land, asks God to appoint a leader so the congregation will not be as sheep without a shepherd. What does this concern reveal about God's care for His people and about the necessity of God-given leadership among them?
4. Moses thinks of the people's need for a shepherd even as he faces his own death outside the land. How does his selflessness challenge the way you handle disappointment and the way you think about those who will come after you?
5. Read Numbers 27:18–23. God chooses Joshua, a man in whom is the Spirit, and Moses commissions him publicly by laying on hands before Eleazar and the congregation. How

does this orderly, God-directed transfer of leadership instruct us about how God provides for and orders His people, and how does Joshua the shepherd point us forward to Christ our Good Shepherd (John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20)?

6. A faithful shepherd makes all the difference to a flock. Who are the shepherds God has used in your life, and how are you supporting and praying for those who lead you in the Lord now?
7. Read Numbers 28:1–8. The daily morning and evening burnt offerings frame Israel's entire day in worship, every day without fail. What does this unceasing daily offering teach about God's desire for steady, ongoing communion with His people rather than only occasional attention?
8. Israel began and ended each day at the altar. What would it look like for you to bookend your own days with God, and what tends to crowd that out?
9. Read Numbers 28:16–29:40, the calendar of Sabbath, new moon, and festival offerings. The New Testament teaches that these were a shadow of things to come, the substance belonging to Christ (Colossians 2:16–17), so they are not bound on Christians, and the land promise itself is fulfilled in Christ and in the heavenly inheritance (Galatians 3:16, 29; Hebrews 11:13–16; 1 Peter 1:3–4) rather than in a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel. How do the feasts find their fulfillment in Christ, and how does the New Testament church now worship under the new covenant on the Lord's Day with the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26)?

10. These chapters show a people whose calendar was built around worship. Name one concrete way Jesus is reshaping your weekly and daily rhythms so that drawing near to God, with His people on the Lord's Day and with Him each day, is becoming the true center of your time.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Numbers 36:1–12, the follow-up ruling on the daughters of Zelophehad that secures their inheritance within their tribe, showing God's thorough justice.; John 10:1–18, Jesus the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, the fulfillment of the shepherd Israel needed.; Hebrews 13:20–21, Christ the great Shepherd of the sheep brought back from the dead, equipping His people to do His will.; Colossians 2:16–17, the feasts and holy days as a shadow of things to come, the substance belonging to Christ.; Galatians 3:16, 29, the promise to Abraham fulfilled in Christ, with all who belong to Him counted as heirs of the true inheritance.

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