



“This is the Story...”

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Week 10: Give Them Land, Amend the Law

Numbers 27:1-11

Intro Video: https://youtu.be/KZhsz_jXw4

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God’s work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision and living out God’s commandments in shalom community.

- **Key verses:** Numbers 27:7-8

Tell the story: We come now to a story of just one of the things the people of God needed to figure out: land allotment. Land is to be divided out between clans and passed from generation to generation through the male line. A man named Zelophehad, from the tribe of Joseph, had died. He had no sons, so by law his name and land would die instead of being passed on to his five daughters. These daughters, named Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah, bravely stood before the leaders and asked for a change in the law. Moses took their case to God, who said they were in the right. The law was changed. Learning to be the people of God meant wrestling with the rules and being open to changing them.

- Read Numbers 27:1-11
- Read page 65 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Notice who all the sisters had to stand before to plead their case. How do you think they felt?
 - These women are all named (here and in Numbers 26:33). That is not common in the Bible. Say their names out loud.
- **Background information:**
 - Women did not have many rights in the ancient world. The fact that these sisters could plead their case - and that they got the law changed - is a big deal! Even in modern times, many women have not been able to inherit property.
 - In verse 3, the daughters say that their father was not one of those who gathered against the Lord “in the company of Korah.” This refers to an uprising detailed in Numbers 16. Their father’s “offense” was most likely the same as all the adults who didn’t believe that God could bring them into the promised land - a much more minor offense than being part of the rebellion.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - Bryan Moyer Suderman has written an excellent song called “Daughters of Zelophahad,” in which he uses the phrase, “It’s time to look again.” This story reminds us that boundaries and rules are negotiable. Sometimes, we need to look again to see if they still

are helping us to live in the way of God. See what that concept sparks in your imagination. What do we need to look at again in our current time?

- Do you think this change in the law brought the ways of the people of God closer to God's dream for them?

Microsong: "Give Them Land, Amend the Law" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/2lCdv6-Wtnk>)

Five sisters come and ask for land when Israel divides up Canaan. God says "What they ask is right. Give them land; Amend the law."

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/8hKf5GLGi5w>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.

Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood
and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh

A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is
saved from famine.

God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.

Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Ahhhhhhhhhh.

The people complain. God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"

God loves every one of us, it's true, and God loves the universe.

God loves every one of us, it's true, and God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!