

5785 – Numbers 25-29 – Pinchas (Phineas)

WOMAN WARRIOR¹

If a man dies and he has no son, you shall pass on his estate to his daughter (Numbers 27:8)

Not much is known about the lives of Machlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. But at a defining moment in the history of Israel, these five sisters, daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, profoundly influenced our approach to the world in which we live.

Zelophehad was of the generation born in Egyptian slavery, liberated by the Exodus, and granted the land of Canaan as Israel's eternal heritage. Although that generation did not merit to take possession of the land themselves, when their children crossed the Jordan River to conquer it, they did so as their fathers' heirs. Each family received its share in the land in accordance with its apportionment among the 600,000 members of the generation of the Exodus.

Zelophehad had five daughters but no sons. The laws of inheritance, as they were initially given in the Torah, which recognized only male heirs, made no provision for his share to be claimed by his descendants. **Machlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah refused to be reconciled with this**, and approached Moses with the petition:

Why should our father's name be eliminated from his family because he has no son? Grant us an estate amongst [the heirs of] our father's brothers (Numbers 27:4).

Moses presented their argument to G-d, who responded: "**The daughters of Zelophehad speak rightly**. Give ... their father's estate to them" (Numbers 24:7). G-d then instructed Moses to include the following clause in the Torah's laws of inheritance: "If a man dies and he has no son, you shall pass on his estate to his daughter."

TWO GENERATIONS

The Exodus and the conquest of the Land of Israel—the two events that framed the 40 years in which we were forged as a people—represent the two primary endeavors of life. *Mitzrayim*, the Hebrew word for "Egypt," means "confines" and "limitations." **Thus, "going out of Egypt" represents the liberation of the soul from all that confines and inhibits its true self and will.** "Conquering and settling the land of Canaan" represents the conquest of the material world and its development as a "home for G-d"—as an environment receptive to and expressive of the goodness and perfection of its Creator.

The generation of the Exodus succeeded in the first endeavor but failed in the second. **They extricated themselves from the pagan culture and slave mentality in which they were immersed, refining their souls to the point of worthiness to receive the Truth of Truths directly from G-d at Sinai.** But they spurned the task "conquering and settling the land." Living in a spiritual paradise in the Sinai Desert, they were loath to abandon it in favor of grappling with the materiality of the world and laboring to transform the "land of Canaan" into the "Holy Land." It was therefore decreed that this generation would live out their lives in the desert leaving it to their children to settle the land in their stead.⁽⁷⁾

On the individual level, each of us faces these two tasks throughout our lives: the endeavor to liberate and actualize our soul's spiritual potential, and the challenge to make our material life and environment a holy and G-dly place. **We each must struggle to make the transition from a childhood and youth devoted to self-development and self-perfection to a life of productive involvement with the outside world.**

A DIFFERENT CONQUEST

But **people are different from one another**. In the words of the Talmud, **"Just as their faces are different, so are their characters different."**⁽⁸⁾ There are bold characters and meek characters, aggressive natures and passive dispositions. There are those of us who revel in a challenge, and those who are all but devoid of the warrior instinct and the zeal for confrontation.

Therein lies the deeper significance of the laws of inheritance as commanded by G-d in response to the petition by the daughters of Zelophehad. "If a man ... has no son"—if a person ascertains in their own self a lack of "male" aggressiveness and combativeness they might deduce from this that they have no role to play in the "conquest of the land." Such a person might be inclined to devote all their energies to the refinement of their inner self and leave the task of sanctifying an unholy world to the warrior types, to those with "sons" in their temperament and character.

Says the Torah: **conquering and settling the land is not an exclusively "male" endeavor**. Every soul has a "portion in the land"—a corner of the material world it is empowered to possess, civilize, and sanctify. Indeed, this is a task which often calls for aggressiveness and confrontation; but there is also a "feminine" way to transform the materiality of our lives into a "Holy Land."

"If a man ... has no son, you shall pass on his estate to his daughter." The very fact that a person is by nature disinclined toward the aggressiveness of the "male warrior; indicates that they have been granted the

¹ Yanki Tauber, *The Inside Story, Numbers*, (Meaningful Life Center), pp. 214-217.

capacity to transform their surroundings via their "daughter-by employing the passive, compassionate, non-confrontational side of their soul.

This is the law of life revealed by the daughters of Zelophehad: **Not all conquests are achieved by overpowering one's adversary.** At times, receptiveness and empathy are more effective in overcoming the hostility of an adversarial world and transforming its nature. **The absence of a "male heir" in the soul may in fact indicate the presence of a "feminine" self no less capable of claiming the soul's portion in the world and transforming it into a home for G-d.**⁽⁹⁾

(7) See essays for *parashah Shelach*, pp. 63-89 above.

(8) *Midrash Tanchuma, Pinchas* 10.

(9) Based on *Torat Menachem Hitva'aduyot* 5715, vol. 2, pp. 208-212.

1. *Not much is known about the lives of Machlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.*

a. Numbers 27:1

¹The daughters of Zelophehad son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Makir, **the son of Manasseh, belonged to the clans of Manasseh son of Joseph.** The names of the daughters were Machlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah.

2. *Zelophehad had five daughters but no sons. The laws of inheritance, as they were initially given in the Torah, which recognized only male heirs, made no provision for his share to be claimed by his descendants. Machlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah refused to be reconciled with this, and approached Moses with the petition:*

Why should our father's name be eliminated from his family because he has no son? Grant us an estate amongst [the heirs of] our father's brothers (Numbers 27:4).

a. Genesis 18:22-33

²²The (two) men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. ²³Then Abraham approached him and said: **"Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"** ²⁴What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? ²⁵**Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"** ²⁶The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

²⁷Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes,

²⁸what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?" "If I find forty-five

there," he said, "I will not destroy it" ... ²⁹"For the sake of forty, I will not do it." ... ³⁰"I will not do it if I find thirty there" ... ³¹"For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it" ... ³²"For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it." ³³When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

b. Exodus 32:7-14

⁷Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because **your** people, **whom you brought up out of Egypt**, have become corrupt. ⁸They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' ⁹"I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

¹¹But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "LORD," he said, **"why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"**

¹²Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac **and Israel** (*not Jacob*), to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'"

¹⁴Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

c. Jeremiah 12:1-13

¹You are always righteous, LORD, when I bring a case before you. **Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper?** Why do all the faithless live at ease?

²You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit. **You are always on their lips but far from their hearts.**

³Yet you know me, LORD; you see me and test my thoughts about you. Drag them off like sheep to be butchered! Set them apart for the day of slaughter! **How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered?** Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, "He will not see what happens to us." ⁵**If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how**

will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan? ⁶Your relatives, members of your own family—even they have betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you ...

d. Habakkuk 1:1-4

¹The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received. ²How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? ³Why do you make me look at injustice? **Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?** Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.

⁴Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted. ⁵"Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. ⁶I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people ... ⁷They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor ...

e. Mark 7:24-30

²⁴Yeshua left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Yeshua to drive the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷"First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

²⁸"Lord," she replied, "**even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.**" ²⁹Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

f. Luke 22:39-43

³⁹Yeshua went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." ⁴¹He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴²"**Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.**" ⁴³An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.

3. **Thus, "going out of Egypt" represents the liberation of the soul from all that confines and inhibits its true self and will. "Conquering and settling the land of Canaan" represents the conquest of the material world and its development as a "home for G-d"—as an environment receptive to and expressive of the goodness and perfection of its Creator.**

a. "Going out of Egypt" is the quintessential expression of redemption/salvation/deliverance. But, the "conquering and settling of the land of Canaan" **is a part of the process too**—the part that involves walking in God's ways.

1) Deuteronomy 10:12

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you ... but **to walk in all His ways, and to love Him ...**"

2) Deuteronomy 11:22

"For if you will diligently keep all this commandment ... loving the Lord your God, **walking in all His ways**, and holding fast to Him."

3) Micah 6:8

"He has told you, O man, what is good ... **to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.**"

4) Sifre Devarim 49 (on Deuteronomy 11:22): Interprets "walk in His ways" as imitating God—just as He is merciful and gracious, so you should be merciful and gracious.²

5) Sotah 14a

R. Hama son of R. Hanina further said: What means the text: Ye shall walk after the Lord your God?⁽⁴⁾ Is it, then, possible for a human being to walk after the Shechinah; for has it not been said: For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire?⁽⁵⁾ But **[the meaning is] to walk after the attributes of the Holy One**, blessed be He. As He clothes the naked, for it is written: And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them,⁽⁶⁾ **so do thou also clothe the naked**. The Holy One, blessed be He, visited the sick, for it is written: And the Lord appeared unto him by the oaks of Mamre,⁽⁷⁾ **so do thou also visit the sick**. The Holy One, blessed be He, comforted mourners, for it is written: And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son,⁽⁸⁾ **so do thou also comfort mourners**. The Holy one, blessed be He, buried the dead, for it is written: And He buried him in the valley,⁽⁹⁾ **so do thou also bury the dead**.

(4) Deut. XIII, 5.

(5) Ibid. IV, 24.

(6) Gen. III, 21.

(7) Ibid. XVIII, 1. **Since the preceding verses deal with Abraham's circumcision, it is deduced that the occasion was when he was recovering.**

(8) Gen. XXV, 11.

(9) Deut. XXXIV, 6.

- 6) Midrash Tehillim (Psalms) 23:3
Interprets “He leads me in paths of righteousness” as **God guiding people to imitate His just and righteous behavior.**³
- 7) Matthew 5:48
“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
a) Also a call to imitate God’s character.
- 8) 1John 2:6
“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Yeshua did.”
- 9) Ephesians 5:1-2
“Therefore, **be imitators of God**, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Messiah loved us ...
4. *The generation of the Exodus succeeded in the first endeavor but failed in the second. They extricated themselves from the pagan culture and slave mentality in which they were immersed, refining their souls to the point of worthiness to receive the Truth of Truths directly from G-d at Sinai. But they spurned the task "conquering and settling the land."*
- a. How many times is the word “idol,” “idols,” “idolatry,” “idolater” or “idolaters” mentioned in the Gospels?
1) Zero
- b. How many times are these terms used in the Apostolic letters?
1) Thirty—not including the times when “sexual immorality” is used of people who engaged in sexual encounters with the male and female prostitutes at pagan shrines.
- c. Colossians 3:5-11
⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: **sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.** ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Do not lie to each other, **since you have taken off your old self with its practices** ¹⁰**and have put on the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Messiah is all, and is in all.
- d. 1John 5:20-21
²⁰We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in

him who is true by being in his Son Yeshua the Messiah. He is the true God and eternal life. ²¹Dear children, **keep yourselves from idols.**

e. Revelation 9:20-21

²⁰The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; **they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood**—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. ²¹Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

5. On the individual level, each of us faces these two tasks throughout our lives: the endeavor to liberate and actualize our soul’s spiritual potential, and the challenge to make our material life and environment a holy and G-dly place. **We each must struggle to make the transition from a childhood and youth devoted to self-development and self-perfection to a life of productive involvement with the outside world.**

a. 1Corinthians 13:8-12

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. **When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.** ¹²For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

b. 1Corinthians 14:20

Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but **in your thinking be adults.**

c. Hebrews 5:11-14

¹¹We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. ¹²In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴But **solid food is for the mature**, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

d. James 1:2-4

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your

faith produces perseverance. **“Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

6. *Says the Torah: conquering and settling the land is not an exclusively "male" endeavor.*

a. Joshua 6:25 (Heb 11:31; Jam 2:25)

²⁵But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute (*or* innkeeper), with her family and all who belonged to her, because **she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho**—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

b. Judges 4:4-10

⁴Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidot, **was leading Israel at that time.** ⁵She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. ⁶She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. ⁷I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'" ⁸Barak said to her, "**If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go.**" ⁹"Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for **the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.**" So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. ¹⁰There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him.

c. Judges 4:17-22

¹⁷Sisera ... fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite. ¹⁸Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. ¹⁹"I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. ²⁰"Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'" ²¹But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. **She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.** ²²Just then Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple—dead.

d. Israeli politician Golda Meir and her family immigrated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she became an active Zionist. From the 1940s through the 1960s, Meir worked for the Israeli government in various roles including as Minister of Labor and Foreign Minister. In 1969, party factions appointed her as **the country's fourth Prime Minister**, thereby also becoming the world's third woman with that title. She died in Jerusalem on December 8, 1978.⁴

e. Bruriah—daughter of the martyr R. Hananiah ben Teradion, and wife of R. Meïr; born in the first quarter of the second century, she lived at Tiberias after the Hadrianic persecutions. Her traits of character, gleaned from Talmudic passages, show her to have been a helpmate worthy of her great husband, and to have possessed a personality corresponding to the emergencies of the troublous times following upon the failure of Bar Kochba's insurrection. They betray intellectual qualities and attainments as well as womanly tenderness and stanch virtues. It is said that she studied three hundred Talmudic subjects daily (Pes. 62b), and **R. Judah endorsed a decision of hers, on a question about clean and unclean, in which she went counter to the view of "the wise" ("chachamim")** (Tosef., Kelim [Vessels], B. M. i. 6).⁵

f. Acts 18:1-4

¹After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²There he met a Jew named **Aquila**, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy **with his wife Priscilla**, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

Acts 18:24-28

²⁴Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Yeshua accurately ... ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When **Priscilla** and **Aquila** heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. ²⁷When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Yeshua was the Messiah.

4 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Golda-Meir>

5 <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3174-beruriah>