

Portion Pinhas Bamidbar - Numbers (25.10-30.1)

After God's servant Balaam is asked by the King of Moab Balak to curse the Hebrews, Balaam stays loyal to God and blesses the Hebrews instead. Afterwards the Hebrews settle in Moab and the Hebrew men begin to marry Moabite women and bow to their god. Angered, God orders the hanging of all the sinning Israelites. Pinchas the priest kills the final Israelite and Midianite woman and the total dead is 24,000. God then to Moses, "The priest Pinhas obeyed Me well. Therefore I shall give to him everlasting priesthood. Now take a new counting of all the sons of Israel from 20 years old and up according to their father's tribe."

After the families are counted and numbered God says to Moses, "Divide the land according to the number of people within a tribe. This shall be their family land inheritance and be known by the father's name. To the tribes that are large you shall give a large piece of land and to the small tribes a small one." During the dividing of land the 5 daughters of Tzelophechad came to the Tent of Appointed Meeting and said to Moses, "Our father died in the wilderness. He did not go against God with Korach but died naturally. He had no sons. Why should the name of our father disappear just because he did not have a son? Please give us land too." Moses asks God what to do. God answers, "The daughters of Tzelophechad speak justly. Give them their father's inheritance. Then tell the rest of the sons of Israel that if a father has no son that his land and possessions shall be given to his daughter. If there is no children, give the inheritance to his brothers or closest kin. This shall be the law of all Israel."

God then says to Moses, "Go to the Mountain of Transitions and look at the promised land. After you see Israel it will be your time to die for you acted against Me at the waters of contention at Kadesh when you did not make Me holy in front of the Israelites." Moses responds, "Let God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a new leader for the community of God so they shall not be like sheep who have no shepherd." God says to Moses, "Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man to whom there is spirit, and announce him leader in front of the entire community so everyone will obey him. Afterwards make sure the Israelites bring offerings to Me in each season of Appointed Meeting of each festival, including Passover, the Sabbath, the New Moon, the Festival of Weeks and the Day of Atonement. Each offering, whether of animal sacrifice, flour, incense, wine or human rest, will express your obedience to God." And Moses did exactly as God commanded.

Questions: 1) Moses asks God to appoint a leader for the Israelites. Name 3 qualities of a great leader. 2) Name one offering you would like to give God to express your obedience to God. 3) The daughters of Tzelophechad are given rights to their dead father's land. How was this ruling important for women then and now?

Illustration Ideas: the killing of the sinning Israelites...the daughters asking Moses for their father's land...Moses learning it was time for him to die...Moses asking for a new leader..Moses appointing Joshua leader in front of the community...Joshua becoming the leader...Moses reminding the Israelites of the festival offerings