

# *Shiur L'Yom Shishi*<sup>1</sup>

[Friday's Study]

**READINGS:**     ***Torah Massei:***                     **Numbers 36:1-13**  
                  ***Haftarah:***                                 **Jeremiah 4:1-2**  
                  ***B'rit Chadasha:***                     **James 4:11-12**

*This is what the Holy One instructs concerning the daughters of Tzelofechad*  
[Numbers 36:6(a)]

Today's Meditation is Job 35:5-11;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #18, *Tzuri v'Goeli* [My Rock and My Redeemer]

With today's study we conclude our adventures in *Sefer B'midbar*. We have been journeying along with our ancestors through their prototypical odyssey between Sinai and the precipice of destiny for several months now. It has been a wild ride. Some moments were exhilarating. Others were excruciating. But all in all, at the end of the day, considering the kindnesses we have been shown by our Covenant Partner in Heaven and the powerful lessons we have learned about life and our reason for being alive at such a time as this, we would not change a thing.

And now, for the conclusion of the story.

## *The Daughters of Tzelofechad – Revisited*

The story with which the fourth *sefer* of Torah will fittingly conclude is the uplifting tale of five fatherless women who passionately love the Holy One, His Ways, and the precious land of Eretz Yisrael. What we will read is the second installment of the Torah concerning the daughters of a man who died in the wilderness along the way – a man named *Tzelofechad*.

You will recall that Tzelofechad was a member of the tribe of Menashe who had been redeemed from Egypt with the multitude under Moshe, but who had followed the majority to agree with the report of the 10 'spies' at K'desh Barnea, and had therefore died in the desert with the rest of his generation. As we have previously learned, Tzelofechad had no sons – but was blessed by the Holy One with 5 daughters<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information regarding the 'first chapter' of Torah's chronicle of the daughters of Tzelofechad, see the Rabbi's son's commentary in *Wednesday's Shiur* of Parsha *Pinchas*.

In chapter 27 of *Sefer Bamidbar* [in the middle of parsha *Pinchas*] we learned that these five women had a passion for Eretz Yisrael that warmed the heart of the Holy One, and that, therefore, though they were women and most societies in the world would have afforded them no rights of inheritance whatsoever, in the Promised Land of the Holy One it would be different, and they would be granted an inheritance in the Promised Land just as if they had been sons.

In Joshua 17 we will meet these tenacious women one final time, as they finally claim from Y'hoshua their appropriate shares among the tribe of Menashe<sup>3</sup>.

In today's aliyah something about Tzelofechad's daughters is bothering some of the elders of the tribe of Menashe. The elders of Menashe, therefore, come to Moshe with a *Torah question*. After all, as we learned recently, the tribe of Menashe is about to split in half. One half of the eligible husbands of Tzelofechad's daughters are about to forfeit any inheritance in Eretz Yisrael – where the daughters of Tzelofechad want to live – in favor of the hillsides of Moav<sup>4</sup>.

The elders of Menashe are looking ahead. They are thinking about the possible scenarios that might present themselves when the daughters of Tzelofechad *marry*. Depending on who these girls marry, the tribal allotment of Menashe will potentially increase – or decrease. So, they pose to Moshe two questions.

Here are the two questions the elders of Menashe pose to Moshe concerning the daughters of Tzelofechad:

**Problem No. 1:**

*If [Tzelofechad's daughters] are married to any of the sons  
of the [other] tribes of the children of Yisra'el . . .*

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<sup>3</sup> Joshua 17:1-6 explains: “*So [the lot] was for the rest of the children of Menashe according to their families: for the children of Avi-Ezer, and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Asri'el, and for the children of Shekhem, and for the children of Hefer, and for the children of Shemida: these were the male children of Menashe the son of Yosef according to their families. But Tzelofechad, the son of Hefer, the son of Gil'ad, the son of Makhir, the son of Menashe, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlach, and No'ah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirtzah. They came near before El'azar the Kohen, and before Y'hoshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, the Holy One commanded Moshe to give us an inheritance among our brothers: therefore according to the mitzvah of the Holy One he gave them an inheritance among the brothers of their father. There fell ten parts to Menashe, besides the land of Gil'ad and Bashan, which is beyond the Yarden; because the daughters of Menashe had an inheritance among his sons. The land of Gil'ad belonged to the rest of the sons of Menashe.*” [This] was the lot for the tribe of Menashe; for he was the firstborn of Yosef. As for Makhir the firstborn of Menashe, the father of Gil'ad, because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gil'ad and Bashan.

<sup>4</sup> According to verse 1 of chapter 37 the ones bringing up the issue are “the heads of the fathers' [houses] of the family of the children of Gil'ad, son of Makhir”. As we learned in Numbers 32:39-42, these descendants of Menashe settled their families in the area east of the Jordan, around Gilead. Deuteronomy 2:9-12.

The elders noted that if the daughters of Tzelofechad married men from another tribe the inheritance granted to them by the Holy One's decree would ultimately flow away from the tribe Menashe and vest in the tribe(s) of their husbands.

**Problem No. 2:**

*When the yovel [jubilee] of the children of Yisra'el occurs  
their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they belong:  
so will their inheritance be taken away  
from the portion of the tribe of our fathers.  
[Numbers 37:3-4]*

The elders noted further that when the *Yovel* [Jubilee] came about in 50 years, all or part of the land the Holy One allocated to Tzelofechad of Menashe might under certain circumstances actually wind up 'reverting' to the possession of men belonging to another tribe into which one or more of Tzelofechad's daughters married.

***Borrowing Trouble?***

What questions!

Have you ever wondered why the elders of the tribe of Menashe cared so much what would happen in future generations – or at some long distant yovel (jubilee) year - to the allotment of their deceased relative Tzelofechad? Weren't they just 'borrowing trouble' - and *tribal trouble*, at that?

Not one of these elders – or anyone in the camp except Kalev of the tribe of Y'hudah, and Y'hoshua of the tribe of Efrayim - had ever seen that portion of the land of Kena'an in which the half-tribe of Menashe in question would one day settle. It is not like these men would be personally affected by the problems they described to Moshe – they would likely be long dead before either of the problems they posited to Moshe presented themselves in any meaningful way.

So why did these men not just live and let live, and cross the bridge of what happens to the land Tzelofechad would have taken possession of had he lived when possession was a reality instead of just a promise.

Why did they not just love the Holy One, love their neighbor, forsake immoral behaviors and idolatry, sing *Que Sera Sera* [i.e. "Whatever Will Be Will Be"]<sup>5</sup> . . . and just let the Holy One make this inheritance thing 'happen'?

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<sup>5</sup> The reference is to the Oscar winning song written by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans in the 1950s and sung by Doris Day in the Alfred Hitchcock movie "The Man Who Knew Too Much". The chorus of the song goes: "*Que sera, sera, Whatever will be, will be. The future's not ours to see, Que sera, sera.*"

Why did they have to think so . . . *generationally*?

We are, of course, not specifically told the motivation of the elders of Menashe for bringing the matter up at this point in time.

Some might opine that the elders of Menashe were just mean-spirited capitalists motivated by inter-tribal jealousy at best and, at worst, blatant greed.

Others might speculate that they were chauvinistic ‘control freaks’ looking for a way to impose their macho masculine will on defenseless women like Tzelofechad’s daughters.

Still others might give them the benefit of the doubt, saying that they were probably just trying to rightly divide the word of truth, and were forward thinkers acting responsibly to assure peaceful resolution in advance of a potentially divisive situation.

Whatever we think about the motivation of the elders of Menashe, however, from the fact, the manner, and the timing of their asking the questions they asked, and the fact that the Holy One saw fit to include in the Torah those questions and the answers thereto which Moshe gave, we should understand if nothing else that *the promised land was never intended to be the inheritance of ‘B’nei Yisrael’ in a communistic sense of one for all, all for one, yours is mine, mine is yours, and share and share alike.*

*The land of Israel was never intended to be a commune. The land of Israel was, instead, ordained by the Holy One to be the inheritance of specific people in specific clans in specific tribes. The Holy One has divided the land of Israel, and allocated it according to the names of the men he brought forth out of Egyptian bondage.*

He has entrusted the land to the generations of those men, according to their tribes, their clans, and their paternal lineages.

When you look at a map of Israel therefore, or walk upon its soil, try to remember that in the Holy One’s eyes *every square inch is some specific person and family’s inheritance.*

### ***Posing Problems that Would Cross a Rabbi’s Eyes***

When I read of the presentation by the elders of Menashe to Moshe of their questions about the inheritance of the daughters of Tzelofechad I cannot help, but

think of the interlude of the song ‘*If I Were a Rich Man*’ from the musical ‘*Fiddler on the Roof*’, where Tevye the milkman posits that if he were rich:

*The most important men in town come and call on me –  
They would ask me to advise them  
Like a Solomon wise!  
“Pardon me, Rebbe Tevye . . .”  
“If you please, Rebbe Tevye . . .”  
Posing problems that would cross a rabbi’s eyes!*

Moshe may not be rich in the sense Tevye is talking about. But he is rich.

He was finally ready – after all these years of walking with the Holy One, and making mistakes - to be the right person to deal with rabbi’s-eyes-crossing problems. The daughters of Tzelofechad and the elders of the tribe of Menashe were all safe. d

He would offer legitimate, concrete solutions - not arguments, accusations, or emotionally charged rhetoric.

He would not throw out judgments or place blame. He would release wisdom.

Surprisingly, we are not told specifically by Torah that Moshe took this particular aspect of the daughters of Tzelofechad controversy to the Holy One<sup>6</sup>. Instead we are told that when the elders of Menashe posed the questions mentioned above Moshe made a pronouncement “in the Name” of the Holy One. Moshe ruled on this Torah controversy – concerning the daughters of Tzelofechad and others similarly situated - as follows:

***Let them be married to whom they think best;  
only into the family of the tribe of their father shall they be married.***  
\* \* \*

***Every daughter who possesses an inheritance  
in any tribe of the children of Yisra'el,  
shall be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father,  
that the children of Yisra'el may possess every man the inheritance of his fathers.***

***So shall no inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe;  
for the tribes of the children of Yisra'el shall cleave everyone to his own inheritance.***

[Numbers 37:8-9]

The daughters of Tzelofechad were, as aforesaid, *fatherless*. They had no “papa” to arrange or approve suitable marriages for them as was the case with the other young women of B’nei Yisrael. Notice that Moshe did not specify *by name* whom

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<sup>9</sup> Compare Numbers 27:5, where we are told in connection with the first controversy concerning the daughters of Tzelofechad that “***Moshe brought their case before the Holy One.***”

these fatherless young ladies should marry. He did not arrange their marriages. He said “let them be married *to whom they think best*” – BUT he narrowed the “pool” of potential suitors to men within the “family of the tribe of their father.”

### ***The Pool of Suitors***

Of whom would the pool of potential suitors authorized by Moshe’s decree consist? Numbers 27:1 tells us that Tzelofechad had been “*the son of Hefer, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir<sup>7</sup>, the son of Menashe*”. So that means that the “potential groom pool” for Tzelofechad’s daughters would be all the males of Machir’s line.

What do we know of Machir? Genesis 50:23 notes that Machir was Menashe’s firstborn - and perhaps only - son. He was born in Egypt. He sired children who Torah describes as “*born upon Yosef’s knees.*” This is a Hebraic idiomatic expression meaning that Machir’s children were adopted by, and lived with, their grandfather Yosef - as Yosef’s sons had been adopted by, and lived with, their grandfather Ya’akov.

Growing up with Yosef, the children of Machir would have instilled within them the passion for Eretz Yisrael that drove Yosef to call his brothers to his deathbed and compel them not to entomb him in Egypt but to instead put his bones in a coffin and take him to Israel in the day of their freedom. Here is the Biblical account:

*Yosef said to his brothers, "I am dying,  
but the Holy One will surely visit you,  
and bring you up out of this land to the land  
which he swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya`akov."  
Yosef then took an oath of the children of Yisra'el, saying,  
"The Holy One will surely visit you,  
and you shall carry up my bones from here."  
[Genesis 50:24-25]*

Though slavery in Egypt lasted for over 300 more years, Yosef’s bones were never buried there. The sons of Machir “born on Yosef’s knees” and their descendants kept Yosef’s dream alive. They kept his bones in a coffin in their slave camps – waiting for the opportunity of freedom to bury them in the promised land.

Generations came and went, and in at least some of Machir’s descendants, the

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<sup>7</sup> Machir is mentioned at the very close of Genesis. Genesis 50:23 notes that Yosef saw descendants born to him from both Menashe and Efrayim in Egypt, yet with a different phrase for each: "Yosef lived to see children of the third generation of Ephraim; additionally *the children of Machir son of Menashe were born upon Yosef’s knees.*"

dream lived on.

When they left Egypt on the night Egypt's firstborn were stricken they carried the bones of Yosef with them. **Exodus 13:19.**

They carried those old, dry bones all the way – and those old bones, in that old coffin, remained in the camp of Menashe all the way up to today's aliyah.

And they cried out to Machir's descendants – “We will accept *nothing less than Eretz Yisrael!*”

The question is, would any of those descendants *sh'ma*? Some we are told did not.

*The children of Machir the son of Menashe went to Gil`ad, and took it, and dispossessed the Emori who were therein.*

*Moshe gave Gil`ad to Machir the son of Menashe; and he lived therein.*  
[Numbers 32:39-40]

In case you have forgotten Gil`ad was in the land of Moav – just short of *Eretz Yisrael*. And it appears that the male descendants of Machir were willing to settle for Gil`ad, and sell out the inheritance in Eretz Yisrael for which the bones in the box at the center of their part of the camp cried out.

But not the daughters of Tzelofechad. They *sh'ma*-d the voice of Yosef.

In their spirits the fire of Yosef still burned. And they would not be denied their share of Yosef's inheritance in the Land of the Kena'ani.

### ***The Marriages of Tzelofechad's Daughters***

Tzelofechad's daughters had one more chance to “opt out” of the promised land.

They could choose as husbands men from Menashe who had decided to settle on the fertile hills of Moav.

Or they could choose as husbands men who, as did their common ancestor, had eyes only for Israel.

Which do you think they chose?

Which would YOU have chosen, Dear Reader?

Here is how Torah reveals what they chose.

*Even as the Holy One commanded Moshe,  
so did the daughters of Tzelofechad:  
for Machlah, Tirtzah, and Hoglah, and Milkah, and Noach<sup>8</sup>,  
the daughters of Tzelofechad, were married to their father's brothers' sons.  
They were married into the families  
of the sons of Menashe the son of Yosef;  
and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father.*

Way to go, young ladies! See you in the Promised Land!

***A Brief Look Back at Sefer B'midbar  
... Before We Move On to the Final Sefer of Torah***

At the beginning of our study of this 4<sup>th</sup> *sefer* of Torah I told you that when the Holy One called us out of Egypt He reconstituted us – making us into a people the likes of which the world has not seen. He made us ‘new creations’, transforming our psyches, individually and collectively, and redefining our identities from the outside in by the sheer power of His Words.

I explained that what happened at Sinai was not that He legislated over us, but that He *spoke forth prophetically over us what we were to become*.

And I explained that the *neshamah* [the breath we received from the Holy One as Adam received breath from the Holy One at Creation] within each one of us began to respond to our Divine Bridegroom’s prophetic words, and began to reshape our *nefesh* [soul], renew our mind, and conform our behavior accordingly.

The process had just been set in motion when *Sefer B'midbar* began.

We had just been given a new, radically different *calendar* by which to structure our lives.

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<sup>8</sup> According to Rav **Reuven Taragin** in his essay, “*Matot - Masei: What is the Final Episode of Sefer Bamidbar?*”, <http://www.nishmat.net/Parsha5759/ZK-Mattot-Masei-Taragin.html>, “in 1910 a team of archeologists from Harvard University made a startling discovery. Excavating in the region just north of Shechem in the region of the tribal land of Menashe, they unearthed a storehouse of jugs that bore inscriptions on them. The jugs, dated to the period of Jeroboam II, from the mid-eighth century b.c.e, some two-hundred years prior to the destruction of the First Temple, bore wine and olive oil, and were a form of taxation paid to the King of Israel. . . . One of the jugs bore the city name of *Noa*, and another the name *Hogla*. Noa and Hogla were two of the five daughters of Tzelofechad. The city of Tirza, likewise bearing the name of one of Tzelofechad’s daughters and found in this region, is mentioned in I Kings 15 and 16. The daughters of Tzelofechad were neither heads of state nor great warriors. Yet cities were named after them on account of the inspiration they provided. The "Shards of Shomron" find, as it is referred to (charsei Shomron), attests that even 600 years after their own time, the daughters of Tzelofechad were viewed by the Jews of the Kingdom Israel as worthy of commemoration.”



We had just been given a new and radically different *menu* defining what is and is not “food”, so that we can remain holy to the Holy One.

We had just been given a new and radically different *way of relating to the Creator of the Universe* – and to other human beings on the planet.

We had just been given a new and radically different way of approaching virtually every aspect of life on earth.

We were, by virtue of what happened at Sinai not the same people who came out of Egypt thirteen months ago.

We were overflowing with potential to change the world.

But alas as I told you when our study of *Sefer B'midbar* began, we knew nothing yet of life.

*Sinai* had been an incubator. For all thirteen months we were there we had been kept warm and safe and had been nourished with “mother’s milk” from El Shaddai. It was time for us to be weaned. And that weaning process has been what *Sefer B'midbar* was all about.

Through the trials, tests, and failures in the desert, we have learned that *only when we let the Torah mold our thought processes can we view the world in its true perspective.*

We learned through the story of the *chet ha-meraglim* [sin of the spies] that the land of Israel is very, very precious to the Holy One and that taking possession of it – at whatever risk we perceive - is a part of our destiny and purpose on earth which we choose to ignore at our peril.

We learned from the story of Korach and his ‘rebellion’ that men in our midst who seem wise in our eyes and who talk a great religious talk can prove to be some of the most deceptive and dangerous folks we will ever encounter.

We learned from the narrative of Balak and Bila’am that Torah requires us to divest ourselves of all preconceived ideas and beliefs, because when we see the world through our own eyes – or through a mixed lens of our own eyes and the eyes of the culture around us [or of the institutions of which we are a part] - we become susceptible not only to the deceptive siren song of the world’s anti-Semitic propaganda, but also to the distorting effects of our own passions and biases and

the corrupting influence of our own fleshly desires.

We learned from the story of the daughters of Tzelofechad that the Torah which the Holy One revealed to us on Mount Sinai requires us to think *generationally* - and to think in terms of *Divine Destiny and Purpose* - as opposed to focusing on immediate gratification, pleasure, comfort, and self-advancement.

We learned – if we have been listening - that only a mind conditioned to thinking from the Holy One's point of view, as revealed in the Torah, can ever view the world without distortion.

So let us recap. We learned from *Sefer Sh'mot* (the book of Exodus) that even after our miraculous deliverance from Egypt our redemption was far from 'done', but that, instead, we needed to 'work out our salvation' with fear and trembling<sup>9</sup> by following the Holy One's pillar of cloud and fire into a harsh, howling desert, and place ourselves totally in His care, before we could receive the Torah.

We have now learned from *Sefer Vayikra* and *Sefer B'midbar* that likewise, even after the marvelous gift of the Torah our redemption was still incomplete, and that we who had received Torah needed to be challenged and disciplined and tested, and confronted by hostile enemies from within and without, time and again, until we either died in the desert or developed spiritual *ears to hear* all the stunning final prophetic empowerment Moshe is preparing to proclaim over us in *Sefer D'varim* [the Book of Deuteronomy].

If Moshe had spoken the truths and teachings of *Sefer D'varim* to us at *Sukkot*, or at the *Red Sea*, or at *Sinai*, or at *K'desh Barnea*<sup>10</sup>, or even more recently at *Shittim*<sup>11</sup> we would simply not have had a sufficient frame of reference for them, and would not have been able to receive them in any meaningful way.

The book of Numbers has now concluded its chronicle of the 'way stations' of the wilderness. We now know how over the course of 38 ½ years the Holy One gave to our ancestors – and to us, if we will receive it - the frame of reference, and all the preparation our hearts and minds should need to receive the fullness of the revelation which *Sefer D'varim* entails.

If we have been listening and learning these past few weeks, we are now ready to receive the final prophetic empowerment in the strength of which we will enter into the rest the Holy One has planned for us.

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<sup>9</sup> See Philippians 2:12.

<sup>10</sup> See Numbers 14:1 ff.

<sup>11</sup> See Numbers 25:1 ff.

Good Sabbath Beloved – and, the Holy One willing, I will see you next week for the beginning of our next great adventure – the study of *Sefer D'varim*. Until then:

***Chazak! Chazak! Venischazeik!***

*Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened together!*

### ***Questions for Today's Study***

1. The concluding chapter of Sefer *B'midbar* returns to a very interesting subject - the daughters of Tzelofechad. Here we learn about the marriages of these 5 daughters of the Holy One.

[A] Let's review: From what tribe was Tzelofechad?

[B] In what passage have we met Tzelofechad's daughters before? Give the name of the parsha and the book, chapter and verse; then summarize what happened in that passage.

[C] Why were the elders of the tribe of Menashe concerned about who the daughters of Tzelofechad married?

[D] Write the names of Tzelofechad's daughters, and beside each name, write what that name means in English [**Hint**: use Smith's Bible Dictionary or Strong's Concordance].

[E] What was the Holy One's decree regarding whom these girls would marry?

[F] How did these girls respond to the Holy One's decree?

6. In the concluding verses of this week's Haftarah, Yirmayahu expresses a hope for not only the future reconciliation of Israel and B'nei Yisrael, but the eventual fulfillment of the Holy One's purpose and destiny for Ya'akov's seed.

***If you will return, Yisra'el, says the Holy One,  
if you will return to me,  
and if you will put away your abominations out of my sight;  
then you shall not be removed; and you shall swear,  
As the Holy One lives, in truth, in justice, and in righteousness;  
and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.***

[Jeremiah 4:1-2]

[A] According to Yirmayahu 4:1-2, what four things does the Holy One say B'nei Yisrael needs to do?

[C] According to Yirmayahu 4:2, if B'nei Yisrael does these things, what will happen?

7. In today's suggested reading from the apostolic Scriptures *Ya'akov* [James], the half-brother of Y'shua, discusses two possible heart attitudes we can have toward the Holy One.

*Don't speak against one another, brothers.  
He who speaks against a brother and judges his brother,  
speaks against the Torah and judges the Torah.  
But if you judge the Torah, you are not a doer of the Torah, but a judge.*

*There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.  
Who are you to judge another?*

**[James 4:11-12]**

[A] In James 4:11 what one important thing does the Holy One, through Ya'akov, tell us never to do?

[B] What do you think is the reason the Holy One is so adamant that we do not judge [i.e. moralize about, think of or discuss in abstract or emotional terms, criticize, condemn, vindicate, or pass judgment concerning] one another?

*May your life become a fountain of hope, joy, and peace  
For people struggling with the realities of living in a troubled world!*

### ***The Rabbi's son***

## ***Meditation for Today***

**Job 35:5-11** [The wise counsel of *Elihu*]

*Look to the heavens, and see.  
See the skies, which are higher than you.  
If you have sinned, what effect do you have against him?  
If your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him?*

*If you are righteous,  
what do you give him? Or what does he receive from your hand?*

*Your wickedness may hurt a man as you are;  
And your righteousness may profit a son of man.  
"By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; They cry for help  
by reason of the arm of the mighty.  
But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night,  
Who teaches us more than the animals of the eretz,  
And makes us wiser than the birds of the sky?'*