

## **The Parable of the Prodigal Daughter Lk 15: 11-32**

I am sure you have all heard sermons on the Parable of the Prodigal Son many times, but have you ever thought about the Parable of the Prodigal Daughter?

A man had a son and a daughter. The son worked with his father on the family farm. Certainly he worked very hard, but he shared in the making of decisions about the running of the farm, its buildings, and the people, who lived and worked there. He also shared in the teaching of the farm workers and household servants. The daughter also worked very hard on her father's farm. She cleaned, cooked and served meals, made clothes and did the mending, cared for the old, and the ill, and sometimes also worked in the fields. But she had no say in any of the decisions that were made! Indeed she was rarely consulted about anything! Her father and brother, and sometimes her mother too, simply took her for granted. She rarely complained, or protested, but if they ever did pay any attention to her, it was only to denigrate her and make the situation worse.

One day she decided, she had had enough! She asked her father for her share of the inheritance. Her father was extremely annoyed and anxious about her request, but she insisted, so he gave his daughter her share of his property. The daughter promptly packed her possessions and left home. She travelled to a great city and spent her money studying with the best scholars and Rabbis. She worked very hard and became a respected, knowledgeable scholar. Eventually she was consecrated as a priest in a synagogue of the Diaspora and people came to hear her preach and teach.

Meanwhile, there were more problems on the family farm. Her mother had died, her brother's wife had divorced him for domestic abuse and finally the housemaids had left to work for the farmer across the road,

who was much more ethical and considerate in his attitudes. He paid them decent wages and treated them much better. The farmhouse was now in a state of crisis! The kitchen was in chaos and there was no food in the pantry. What was worse, everyone far and wide was talking about them! And needless to say, news of the daughter's academic and professional success had reached the farm. Eventually, the father and brother came to realise that they would simply have to change their attitudes and take drastic action.

So the father packed the saddlebags of a donkey with what he needed for the journey and travelled to the town where his daughter lived. On the way he contemplated about what he would say to her, and decided that he would say, "Daughter, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your father: treat me like one of your students." However, the daughter saw him in the distance and ran to greet him. The father made his confession and she flung her arms around him and kissed him. The daughter forgave him and agreed to return home with him.

After they arrived at the farmhouse, all the farm workers and neighbours gathered in its great kitchen and prepared a feast to celebrate the daughter's home coming. Her father presented her with a set of the best priestly vestments and sat her beside him at the head of the table, where she presided over the Passover feast and the local people asked her to be the priest at their synagogue, which had not had a rabbi or a priest for several years. So they spent the evening feasting and rejoicing, because the daughter, who had been oppressed and rejected, had been brought home and given dignity and equality.

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