



# THE PRODIGAL SON

*A Journey of Repentance and Redemption*

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*Written by*  
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## Introduction

The story of the Prodigal Son, found in Luke 15:11-32, is a profound parable that illustrates themes of repentance, forgiveness, and the unconditional love of a father. This booklet explores the significance of returning to God, the process of repentance, and the rich Hebrew vocabulary that enhances our understanding of this timeless story.

## The Journey of Return

When a person comes to their senses and returns to the Lord Jesus Christ, it signifies a moment of realization or awakening to their spiritual condition and the need for redemption. This process typically involves:

1. Repentance: Acknowledging one's sins and turning away from them.
2. Water Baptism: Following the instruction of Acts 2:38, being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins is essential for regeneration and the beginning of a new life. The power and authority of salvation and the blood of Jesus Christ are found in His name.
3. Baptism in the Holy Ghost and Fire: The promise

of receiving the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking in tongues, is essential for salvation and serves as a guide and helper in the believer's life.

For many, this journey marks a significant turning point, leading to a deeper relationship with God, spiritual growth, and a commitment to living according to His will. It is often accompanied by a sense of peace, purpose, and belonging within the Christian community.

### The Prodigals in the Pew

There are also those who may be considered “prodigals in the pew.” These individuals have not physically left the house of God but have emotionally and spiritually distanced themselves. They may attend church regularly, but their hearts, minds, and spirits have wandered.

- **Disconnected:** They are in church but not truly part of the church, the kingdom, the bride, or the body of Christ.
- **Carnal State:** They have become carnal and self-willed, backslidden in heart, and no longer engaged in their faith.
- **Lack of Submission:** These individuals may no longer submit to their pastor, struggle to accept correction or instruction, and have lost their

teachable spirit.

This state of being reflects a deeper spiritual issue, where the outward appearance of participation does not align with an inward commitment to God and His ways.

### Apostolic Pentecostal Prodigals in the Pew

Within the Apostolic Pentecostal context, there are those who may be considered prodigals in the pew who are not saved. These individuals have checked out spiritually while remaining physically present in the church. They may appear religious but lack a true relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **The Lost Coin:** Similar to the parable of the lost coin, these individuals are in the house but lost. They may participate in church activities but do not have a genuine connection to God.
- **Spiritual Disconnection:** They have not left the church physically, but in their hearts and spirits, they have distanced themselves from their faith, leading to a state of spiritual backsliding.

This situation highlights the importance of fostering authentic relationships with God and ensuring that participation in church life is accompanied by a sincere commitment to spiritual growth and

connection.

## The Prodigal's Return and Repentance

When the Prodigal Son returns to his father, he comes to his senses and acknowledges his sins. This moment of realization is crucial; it signifies true repentance. He recognizes his unworthiness and prepares to ask for forgiveness, demonstrating humility and a desire for reconciliation.

From a Jewish perspective, repentance (Teshuvah) is not merely about feeling remorse but involves a sincere commitment to change one's behavior and return to God. The act of returning to the father is not just a physical journey but a spiritual one, reflecting the deep yearning of the soul for connection and acceptance.

## Insights from Jewish Sages and Rabbis

1. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: He emphasizes the themes of forgiveness and the unconditional love of the father, drawing parallels to God's relationship with Israel. The father's willingness to forgive reflects God's mercy towards His people.

2. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel: He focuses on the spiritual journey of the son, highlighting the

importance of returning to one's roots and faith. The journey of the Prodigal Son illustrates the inner struggle and the eventual return to spiritual wholeness.

3. Rabbi Yitzhak Arama: He discusses the moral lessons of the parable, particularly the importance of repentance and the joy of returning to God. The father's embrace represents divine love and acceptance, regardless of past mistakes.

4. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov: He interprets the Prodigal Son as a metaphor for the soul's journey. The son's wandering symbolizes the soul's descent into the material world, while the return signifies the soul's yearning for spiritual connection and fulfillment.

## The Significance of the Ring and Robe

Upon the Prodigal Son's return, his father gives him a ring and a robe, both rich in metaphorical meaning:

### 1. The Ring:

- The ring symbolizes authority and belonging. In ancient Jewish culture, a ring was often a sign of a family's seal, representing identity and status. By placing the ring on his son's finger, the father reinstates him into the family and affirms his identity

as a beloved son. This act signifies that despite the son's past mistakes, he is welcomed back with full authority and honor.

## 2. The Robe:

- The robe represents dignity and honor. In biblical times, a robe was a symbol of status and protection. By clothing his son in a fine robe, the father not only restores his dignity but also signifies that he is covered by the father's love and grace. This act reflects God's desire to restore the dignity of those who return to Him, no matter their past.

## Metaphorical and Poetic Insights

1. The Journey of the Heart: The Prodigal Son's journey is a metaphor for the human experience of searching for meaning and fulfillment. His departure represents the allure of worldly pleasures, while his return symbolizes the heart's longing for true belonging and love.

2. The Embrace of Grace: The father's open arms serve as a poetic representation of grace and unconditional love. No matter how far one strays, there is always a path back to acceptance and forgiveness.

3. The Awakening: The moment the son "came to



his senses” can be seen as a metaphor for spiritual awakening. It reflects the realization that true fulfillment cannot be found in materialism but in a relationship with the divine.

4. The Cycle of Life: The parable illustrates the cyclical nature of life—falling, wandering, and returning. Each phase is essential for growth and understanding, leading to a deeper appreciation of love and forgiveness.

5. The Joy of Reunion: The celebration upon the son’s return symbolizes the joy of redemption. It serves as a reminder that every act of repentance is met with joy in heaven, reflecting the profound value of each individual in the eyes of God.

## Conclusion

The parable of the Prodigal Son continues to resonate across cultures and religious traditions, highlighting universal themes of redemption, forgiveness, and love. By understanding the Hebrew words and concepts associated with this story, as well as insights from Jewish sages and metaphorical interpretations, we can deepen our appreciation for its profound messages and apply them to our lives.

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