



It's fashionable these days to talk of discrimination against women or, if you wish, the inequality that women face in the modern world. But, in truth, our Torah talked of this issue some 3000 years ago, at least concerning the laws of inheritance.

For the daughters of Tz'lofchad came before Moshe, not only pleading for an inheritance because their father died leaving no sons; but more so, in their wisdom, they presented Moshe with a halachic quandary. Their father had sinned when he collected wood on Shabbat, but did not forfeit his inheritance because his offence was private (in contradistinction to the Korach rebels). Moreover, knowing that he was doomed to die in the wilderness (along with that generation), Tz'lofchad exposed himself to the ultimate penalty in order to signal to the people that, despite their fate in the desert, they were still to keep the Mitzvot. For that "merit", the "sinner" would still warrant an inheritance (Shabbat 96, Tosefot Bava Batra 119).

Yes, these wise women, each recorded by name, spoke up before the elders and the entire congrega-

tion. They knew Halacha and they earned an honorable mention in the Torah, even to the point that G-d afforded them the privilege of being the catalyst for the pronouncement of the laws of inheritance (Rashi).

This is discrimination? **MP**