

Into the Promised Land
Joshua's Story
Lesson # 24 – “Making & Keeping Vows”
• HANDOUT •

► In this lesson, we will look at Numbers, Chapter 30, which completes the three-chapter-interruption in the narrative flow. The subject matter is about making and keeping vows. But these were not ordinary vows – they were vows made by women. This discussion serves as an extension of the daughters whose father had died without sons to inherit, and the women requested that they be allowed to inherit instead. The Lord had said yes to their request and set up laws to allow this, which we covered in Lesson #22. We should not miss the significance that women were making religious vows and pledges in ancient Israel, thus they were participating in the worship patterns of Israel. But, in this male-oriented culture, the men envisioned numerous complications that could arise when a woman made a religious vow. Was she really a free agent or could her vows impact her father, or her husband?

So, God sets up the rules regarding vows. This represents a gradual shift from the power of the patriarchy to a more equal relationship between women and men. Doing so shows us the heart of God and His loving protection toward women.

What the Lord Says About Taking Oath & Vows ...

Numbers 30:1-5 • Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the LORD commands: When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

"When a young woman still living in her father's house makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge and her father hears about her vow or pledge but says nothing to her, then all her vows and every pledge by which she obligated herself will stand.

But if her father forbids her when he hears about it, none of her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand; the LORD will release her because her father has forbidden her.

Q: In the Bible, just what is a vow or pledge?

The conditions of obligation differ between the man and the young, unmarried woman:
For the man there are no qualifiers – it is straightforward and binding.
But for the young unmarried woman who is still living in her father's house
there are several qualifiers .

Q: What are the obligations outlined in this passage for making a vow or pledge to the Lord?

If it is a man:

If it is a young woman who is still living under her father's protection:

Q: What is the reason for creating these qualifiers for the young unmarried women still living at home under her father's authority?

What about a woman who makes vows and pledges and then becomes married?

Numbers 30:6-8 • "If she marries after she makes a vow or after her lips utter a rash promise by which she obligates herself and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her, then her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand.

But if her husband forbids her when he hears about it, he nullifies the vow that obligates her or the rash promise by which she obligates herself, and the LORD will release her.

Q: What is significant about the vows and pledges of a woman when she marries?

Q: With the subject of vows and pledges, how does the father's obligation toward his daughter compare to a husband's obligation toward his wife?

What about the vows and pledges of a widow or divorced woman?

Numbers 30:9 • Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her.

Q: What does this simple statement regarding widows and divorced women tell us about their standing within the community?

What about a woman who makes vows and pledges after she is married?

Numbers 30:10-15 • "If a woman living with her husband makes a vow or obligates herself by a pledge under oath and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her and does not forbid her, then all her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand.

But if her husband nullifies them when he hears about them, then none of the vows or pledges that came from her lips will stand. Her husband has nullified them, and the LORD will release her. Her husband may confirm or nullify any vow she makes or any sworn pledge to deny herself.

But if her husband says nothing to her about it from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or the pledges binding on her. He confirms them by saying nothing to her when he hears about them. If, however, he nullifies them some time after he hears about them, then he is responsible for her guilt."

Q: What is the basic difference between the woman here in this passage and the woman depicted in verses 6-8?

Q: What would be a good example in scripture of a married woman who pledged a vow to the Lord?

Numbers 30:16 • These are the regulations the LORD gave Moses concerning relationships between a man and his wife, and between a father and his young daughter still living in his house.

Q: What does this summary statement ultimately tell us.

By the time we get to the New Testament, under the leadership of the Scribes and Pharisees the issue of Vows and Oaths had become extremely complicated ...

Q: In the New Testament, what did the Pharisees teach?

Q: How did the teaching of the Pharisees compare to what Jesus taught on the subject?

There Will be One Last Campaign for Moses
God commands Moses to have Israel take vengeance on the Midianites
for their part in the seduction of Israel into sexual immorality and idolatry.
This is where we pick up the story next time ...



Next Time • Lesson #25
“A Last Campaign for Moses”

