

# CHAPTER 30

## INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 30

Mention being made, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, of vows to be performed to the Lord, besides the sacrifices directed to; here some account is given of them, and men are charged to fulfil, and not break them, (<sup>(-0810)</sup>Numbers 30:1,2) but as to women, if a maid, being in her father's house, made a vow in his hearing, and he silent at it, her vow stood; but if he disapproved of it, it was null and void, (<sup>(-0810)</sup>Numbers 30:3-5) and so a wife, when she vowed a vow in the hearing of her husband, and he said not ought against it, it was valid; but if he objected to it, it stood for nothing, (<sup>(-0810)</sup>Numbers 30:6-8), likewise a widow, or one divorced, that made a vow in her husband's house, before he died, or she was put away from him, and he did not contradict it, it remained in force and to be fulfilled; but if he made it void, it stood not, and she was forgiven, (<sup>(-0810)</sup>Numbers 30:9-12) it being in an husband's power to confirm or make null a vow or oath, made by his wife to afflict her soul; but if he made any void after he heard them, and had been silent, he himself was to bear her iniquity, (<sup>(-0810)</sup>Numbers 30:13-16).

**Ver. 1.** *And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes*, etc.] Or the princes of them, who could more easily be convened, and who used to meet on certain occasions, and on whom it lay to see various laws put in execution:

*concerning the children of Israel*; how they ought to conduct and behave in the following case, it being an affair which concerned them all:

*saying, this is the thing which the Lord hath commanded*; relating to vows. Aben Ezra is of opinion that this was delivered after the battle with Midian, of which there is an account in the following chapter, and is occasioned by what was said, to the tribes of Gad and Reuben, (<sup>(-0824)</sup>Numbers 32:24,25)

*do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth*; to which they replied, *thy servants will do as my lord commandeth*; upon which the nature of a vow, and the manner of keeping it, are observed; but the occasion of it rather seems to be what is said towards the close of the foregoing chapter,

(Numbers 29:39), that the various sacrifices there directed were to be offered in their season, besides the vows and freewill offerings; and when these were ratified and confirmed, and when null and void, and to be fulfilled or neglected, is the principal business of this chapter.

**Ver. 2.** *If a man vow a vow unto the Lord*, etc.] Which must be in a thing that is lawful to be done, which is not contrary to the revealed will and mind of God, and which may tend to the glory of God, the honour of religion, the service of the sanctuary, the good of a man's self or of his neighbour; or in things purely indifferent, which may, or may not be done, without offence to God or man; as that he will not eat such a thing for such a time, or he will do this or the other thing, as Jarchi observes; who moreover says, that he may forbid himself what is forbidden, and forbid what is free and lawful; but he may not make free or lawful what is forbidden, that is, he may not vow to do a thing which is contrary to the law of God, such a vow will not stand: and he was to be of such an age before he could make a vow that would be valid; according to the Targum of Jonathan, he must be thirteen years of age; it is said in the Misnah <sup>f443</sup>,

“a son of twelve years and one day, his vows are examined; a son of thirteen years and one day, his vows are firm, and they examine the whole thirteenth year before that time; although they say we know to whose name (or on whose account) we vow or consecrate, their vow is no vow, nor their consecration no consecration; but after that time, though they say we know not to whose name (or, on whose account) we vow or consecrate, their vow is a vow, and their consecration a consecration:”

*or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond*; to his vow adds an oath for the greater confirmation of it, and to lay himself under the greater obligation to perform it:

*he shall not break his word; or profane it* <sup>f444</sup> but punctually perform it; men should be careful how they vow, and not rashly do it; but when they have vowed, they ought to perform; (see <sup>2184</sup> Ecclesiastes 5:4,5 <sup>1821</sup> Deuteronomy 23:21-23):

*he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth*; it is not in his power to revoke his vow or make it null: the Misnic doctors <sup>f445</sup> say, a man can loose all vows, excepting his own. R. Judah says, not the vows of his wife, nor those which are between her and others; that is, as one of the

commentators <sup>f446</sup> explains it, such vows which are not made to afflict, or respect not fasting; but according to the Targum of Jonathan, though a man cannot loose his vows, or free himself from them, yet the sanhedrim, or court of judicature, can, or a wise man that is authenticated thereby, as Jarchi says, or three private persons; but these are such traditions; which make void the commandment of God, as our Lord complains, (~~4050~~ Matthew 15:1-9)

**Ver. 3.** *If a woman also vow a vow unto the Lord*, etc.] Who has not passed thirteen years, as the Targum of Jonathan:

*[and] bind [herself] by a bond*; lay herself under obligation to perform her vow by an oath: being in her father's house; unto the twelfth year, as the same Targum; that is, that is under his care, tuition, and jurisdiction, whether she literally, or properly speaking, is in the house or no at the time she vows; so Jarchi interprets it of her being in the power of her father, though not in his house, she being not at age to be at her own disposal, but at his: wherefore it is added,

*in her youth*; which, as the same writer explains it, signifies that she is

“neither a little one, nor at age; for a little one's vow is no vow, and one at age is not in the power of her father to make void her vow: who is a little one? our Rabbins say, one of eleven years of age and one day, her vows are examined, whether she knows on whose account she vows and consecrates, or devotes anything; one vows a vow that is twelve years and one day old, there is no need to examine them.”

He seems to refer to a passage in the Misnah <sup>f447</sup>,

“a daughter of eleven years and one day, her vows are examined; a daughter of twelve years and one day, her vows are firm, but they are to be examined through the whole twelfth year.”

**Ver. 4.** *And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul*, etc.] Her vow, which is binding upon her, or her vow and an oath annexed to it; which makes it still more strongly binding; and this he hears himself, or it is reported to him by others: and her father shall hold his peace at her; shall not reprove her for it, nor contradict her in it: then all her vows shall stand; be they what, or as many as they may:

*and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand*; his silence being to be interpreted as approving of them, and consenting to them.

**Ver. 5.** *But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth*, etc.]

Disapproves of her vow, and expresses his dislike of it, and declares it null and void; which, if done at all, is to be done on the same day he hears it, and not on another day, as Aben Ezra observes; not the day following, and much less on a third or fourth day, etc. and it might be done on a sabbath day<sup>f448</sup>:

*not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she bound her soul, shall stand*; but become null and void, she being at the control of her father, and having nothing in her own power, and at her own disposal, to vow or consecrate, but wholly in the power and at the disposal of her father:

*and the Lord shall forgive her*; the breach of her vow, it shall not be imputed to her as a sin:

*because her father disallowed her*; so that it was no fault of hers that it was not fulfilled; though she might be blameworthy to make one, without previously obtaining his consent, and making it rashly without his previous knowledge, she not being at her own hands; and in this respect may be said to be forgiven by the Lord, which supposes some fault committed.

**Ver. 6.** *And if she had at all an husband with whom she vowed*, etc.] Or “when her vows were upon her”<sup>f449</sup>, was either betrothed or married to a man:

*or uttered ought out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul*; uttered anything, either with or without premeditation, either with thought and deliberation, or rashly and imprudently, as the word signifies, yet in such a manner that it was binding upon her.

**Ver. 7.** *And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it*, etc.] The vow she made, and by his silence consented to it:

*then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand*; or she be under obligation to perform them.

**Ver. 8.** *But if her husband disallow her on the day that he heard it*, etc.] Expresses his dislike of it; and this he does as soon as he hears it, at least

that same day; according to the Jews <sup>f450</sup>, within the space of twenty four hours:

*then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect*; by contradicting it, and forbidding the performance of it; or however by declaring to her, or to others, that it is not agreeable to his mind and will that it should be fulfilled:

*and the Lord shall forgive her*; excuse her performance of the vow, and not impute sin to her on that account, nor punish for the breach of it, she being under the cover of her husband, and obliged to submit to his will. According to Jarchi, the Scripture speaks of a woman that vows to be a Nazarite; her husband hears and makes it void; but she does not know it, and transgresses her vow, and drinks wine, and is defiled with the dead, so that she has need of forgiveness, though it is made void; and if vows made void, he adds, have need of pardon, much more those that are not.

**Ver. 9.** *But every vow of a widow*, etc.] The Scripture speaks, as Jarchi says, of a widow from marriage, or that has been married, but a widow from espousals (or that has been only espoused), the husband dead, the power is transmitted, and returns to the father; and with respect to such a case, it is said in the Misnah <sup>f451</sup>

“if the father (of such a betrothed person) dies, the power is not transmitted to the husband; but if the husband dies, the power is transmitted to the father; in this case, greater is the power of a father than of an husband; in others, greater is the power of an husband than of a father, because an husband makes void (the vow of) one at age, but a father does not make void (the vow of) such an one:”

*and of her that is divorced*: from her husband on some account or another; now in each of these cases, the one being loosed from the law of her husband by death, and the other by a bill of divorce, if they vowed,

*the vows wherewith they have bound their souls shall stand against her*; against either of them, they having none over them to disapprove of, contradict, and make void their vows.

**Ver. 10.** *And if she vowed in her husband's house*, etc.] Before his death, in his lifetime, or before divorced: the Targum of Jonathan adds, by way of

explanation, “and not at age for marriage”, understanding it of a betrothed, and not a married person; but Jarchi says, the Scripture speaks of a married one, which seems most likely:

*or bound her soul by a bond with an oath*; to fulfil her vow, to abstain from this, or to do that or the other thing.

**Ver. 11.** *And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her, and disallowed her not*, etc.] Heard her make her vow, and bind it with an oath, and was silent at it, which was consenting to it, and did not contradict her, nor show any displeasure or resentment at her on account of it; the Targum of Jonathan adds,

“and died before she was at age;”

but what follows held good equally of one that was at age for marriage, and actually married to him:

*then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand*; be ratified and confirmed, and she be under obligation to make them good.

**Ver. 12.** *But if her husband hath utterly made them void on the day he heard them*, etc.] Declaring they were contrary to his mind and will, he disapproved of them, and forbid the carrying them into execution:

*then whatsoever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand*; though her husband be dead, or she be divorced from him:

*her husband hath made them void, and the Lord shall forgive her*: she will neither incur his displeasure for not fulfilling her vow, nor have any punishment inflicted on her: the Targum of Jonathan is,

“if her husband makes them void, and she knows it not and transgresses, it shall be forgiven her by the Lord.”

**Ver. 13.** *Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul*, etc.] By fasting, as Aben Ezra observes; as when a vow was made, or a person bound herself by an oath to abstain from such and such food, or to fast on such a day; to keep a fast which was not appointed, to set apart a day for fasting, besides the grand and general fast on the day of atonement: Jarchi from hence gathers, that a man only makes vows of afflicting the soul, or

vows of fasting; but this is not said by way of limitation and restriction, but by way of amplification and illustration, giving a particular instance, by which others may be judged of:

*her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void*, just as he pleased; and this power an husband had, to prevent confusion in the family, and trouble in the affairs of it, by vowing abstinence from such and such food, or from such and such liquor, and the like; and to prevent running into expenses he was not able to answer, by vowing and dedicating, this and the other to holy uses, for sacrifices, and repairs of the temple, and the like.

**Ver. 14.** *But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day today*, etc.] Said not one word to her day after day, neither on the day he heard her vow, nor the day following:

*then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds, which are upon her*; by his silence:

*he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her, in the day that he heard them*; for not to contradict them was to confirm them.

**Ver. 15.** *But if he shall any ways make them void, after that he hath heard them*, etc.] Some way or other expressing his dislike of them; not at the time he heard them, but some time afterwards; one day after, as the Targum of Jonathan:

*then he shall bear his iniquity*: be accountable for the breach of the vow, the sin shall be reckoned to him, and he shall bear the punishment of it, because he ought to have declared his disapprobation of it sooner; and it may be, his doing it when he did was only in a spirit of contradiction, or through covetousness; and it would have been more advisable to have let the vow stand, and therefore acted a criminal part, and so was answerable for it; the Targum of Jonathan explains it,

“her husband or her father shall bear her iniquity,”

supposing her not to be at age: Aben Ezra gives the reason of it, because she is in his power.

**Ver. 16.** *These are the statutes which the Lord commanded Moses between a man and his wife*, etc.] Relating to vows made by the wife, and

confirmed or disannulled by the husband: Aben Ezra adds, if she is at age or in puberty, understanding it of a married and not a betrothed wife:

*between the father and his daughter*; if she is not at age, as the same writer observes; for if she is at age he has nothing to do with her vows:

*[being yet] in her youth*; not at age, being not twelve years and one day old:

*in her father's house*; in his power and jurisdiction, and at his disposal, and so could make her vows void or firm, as he pleased: this power of ratifying or disannulling vows an husband had over his wife, and a father over his daughter, to prevent imprudent and extravagant vows, and the too frequent use of them, the consequences of which might be bad in families.