

Torah Portion Mattot/Massei  
Numbers 30:2(1) – 36:13

In this portion of scripture God deals with the troublesome problem of vows or oaths, promises, made to him by individuals.

It is a follow-up on the instructions already given regarding vows found in Leviticus 27:1-34 and Numbers 6:1-27.

This section of scripture, along with the scriptures above, show the importance of keeping our promises made before God. Whether the vow be a positive vow or a negative vow; withholding something from oneself.

In the matter of women and their vows we learn that God is all about a harmonious and peaceful family life. Women, throughout the ages, have been known to make rash vows more quickly than men. Here, the father of the household or the husband is given the authority to annul the vow of a woman upon hearing it. However, if the father or husband does not annul the vow the day that he hears it then the vow taken by a woman is to stand.

In verse 30:15 we find that if a father or husband tries to annul a vow after the day has passed when he heard the vow, then he is responsible for the sin of the woman. What do we learn from this? With authority comes great responsibility!

God does not want discord in the family. You cannot have a husband vowing one thing and the wife vowing something opposite from the husband. This would be chaos and confusion and a divided house. A house divided cannot stand. There must be unity. Likewise, you cannot have a peaceful home if the children, specifically daughters here, vow one thing where the father has vowed something else.

In the New Testament we find that Yeshua has a lot to say about vows. We are commanded to “not swear falsely”. Many people think that when Yeshua said “let your yes be yes and your no be no” and “do not swear at all”, that He was condemning the practice of oath taking.

What they misunderstand is not that He said we should not take vows, instead He was affirming what His Father had already instructed in the Old Testament regarding vows. Rash vows should never be taken. A person should consider every word, carefully, that comes out of their mouths. God expects you to honor your words. The command is not to “swear falsely”. It is best to guard ones tongue and never make a promise, than to make a promise and not keep that promise.

We must keep our words no matter how difficult. Do not take rash or hasty vows, oaths or promises, for if they are broken, we stand guilty.