

Numbers 30:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void.

Analysis

Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void—The comprehensive statement **every vow** (כָּל־נֶדֶר kol-neder) and **every binding oath to afflict the soul** (כָּל־שְׁבָעַת kol-shevu'at isar le'anut nafesh, oaths involving self-denial/fasting) establishes husband's comprehensive authority—he could **establish** (יְקִימֵנּוּ yeqimennu, confirm/make stand) or **make void** (יַפְרֵנּוּ yeferenu, annul/break) any oath.

The phrase **afflict the soul** specifically refers to oaths involving fasting, self-denial, or ascetic practices. This authority prevented wives from imposing harmful austerity that might damage health or family wellbeing. The principle extends beyond ancient patriarchy: proper spiritual authority should protect individuals from self-destructive 'spiritual' commitments. Paul warns against ascetic extremism that has 'appearance of wisdom' but lacks true value (Colossians 2:20-23).

Historical Context

Fasting and self-affliction were common religious practices in ancient Israel (Leviticus 16:29,31; 23:27,32). While spiritually beneficial when properly motivated, extreme asceticism could damage health and family functioning. Husbandly authority to annul self-affliction vows protected against religious extremism under guise of piety.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does husbandly authority over 'affliction of soul' vows guard against self-destructive religiosity masquerading as spirituality?
2. What does the balance between personal religious freedom and protective authority teach about healthy spiritual community?
3. How can you discern between biblical self-discipline and harmful asceticism that 'afflicts the soul' beyond God's intentions?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	נִדְרֵי	וְכָל	שְׁבָעָה	תְּ	אֶסֶר	לְעַנֹּת	נַפְשׁ
H3605	Every vow	H3605	oath		and every binding	to afflict	the soul
	H5088		H7621		H632	H6031	H5315
וְאִישׁ הָ	יְקִימָהּ	נָוָה	וְאִישׁ הָ	יַפְרִינָהּ:			
her husband	may establish		her husband	may make it void			
H376	H6965		H376	H6565			

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 11:3 (Parallel theme): But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.