

Numbers 30:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth;

Analysis

If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth; This verse begins the section on vows made by women, establishing principles of authority, responsibility, and covenant faithfulness within family structures. "Vow a vow" translates *neder* (נָדַר), a voluntary commitment to God beyond what the law requires. "Bind herself by a bond" uses *issar* (אָסַר), meaning an obligation or binding pledge—two terms emphasizing the serious, binding nature of religious commitments.

"Being in her father's house in her youth" establishes the social context: an unmarried young woman still under her father's authority. Hebrew family structure recognized the father as covenant head of his household, responsible before God for those under his care. The phrase "in her youth" (*bineureha*, בְּנוּעָרֶיהָ) refers to the period from childhood to marriage, during which a daughter remained under paternal authority.

This legislation protects both the seriousness of vows made to God and the integrity of family authority structures. Subsequent verses (30:4-5) explain that a father may nullify his daughter's vow upon hearing it, preventing rash commitments that might harm her future or violate his responsibility. This balances individual spiritual devotion with covenant community structures, recognizing that personal piety must function within God-ordained authority relationships, not in isolation from them.

Historical Context

Numbers 30 addresses vow-making within Israel's covenant community during the wilderness period (1445-1405 BCE). Vows were voluntary pledges to God, often made in times of crisis, celebration, or special dedication (Genesis 28:20-22, Judges 11:30-31, 1 Samuel 1:11). While not commanded, vows once made became absolutely binding (Deuteronomy 23:21-23, Ecclesiastes 5:4-5).

The regulations in Numbers 30 address potential conflicts between individual vows and family/marital relationships. In Israelite society, fathers and husbands bore covenant responsibility for their households. A woman's rash vow might obligate her to something that would prevent fulfilling family responsibilities or create financial hardship for those responsible for her support. The law therefore gives authority figures the right to nullify vows when first learned of, balancing personal devotion with household integrity.

This legislation demonstrates God's concern for both spiritual earnestness (vows are binding and serious) and social order (individual commitments must consider covenant responsibilities to others). For Israel in the wilderness, learning to balance personal piety with community obligations was essential preparation for settled life in Canaan. These principles protect against manipulative use of religious commitments to escape legitimate family responsibilities, while still honoring genuine devotion to God.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage balance individual spiritual devotion with family authority structures?
2. What principles guide when and how believers should make vows or commitments to God today?
3. In what ways does this legislation protect both the woman and the family from harmful consequences?
4. How should we understand biblical authority structures in family relationships in light of Christ's redemption?
5. What does this passage teach about the binding nature of commitments made to God?

Interlinear Text

וְאִשָּׁה	כִּי	תִּדְּר	נִדָּר	לַיהוָה	וְאָסַרְהָ	אָסְרָהּ
If a woman	H3588	also vow	a vow	unto the LORD	and bind	herself by a bond
H802		H5087	H5088	H3068	H631	H632
בֵּית	אֲבִיהָ	בְּנַעֲרֶיהָ:				
house	being in her father's	in her youth				
H1004	H1	H5271				

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