

Numbers 30:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her.

Analysis

The exception that widows' and divorced women's vows stood binding ('But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced...shall stand against her') recognized their independent status without male oversight. This demonstrates biblical law's nuance—general patriarchal oversight had exceptions for women without husbands. Such women bore direct accountability before God for their vows, without male mediation. This reveals that biblical patriarchy was never absolute but adapted to varying circumstances while maintaining accountability structures.

Historical Context

Widows and divorced women in ancient Israel had greater independence than married women, owning property and making contracts. Scripture frequently mentions God's special concern for widows, commanding their protection (Exodus 22:22, Isaiah 1:17). The New Testament continued this emphasis (James 1:27, 1 Timothy 5:3-16). The early church developed widow-support systems recognizing their unique social position. This verse's acknowledgment of their independent vow-making capacity reflects their social-legal status.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Scripture's concern for widows and other vulnerable people reflect God's character?
2. What does the variation in authority structures (married vs. widowed) teach about applying biblical principles contextually?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר	כִּי	לֹא	וְגַרְוִשׁ	הָ	אֲלָמָן	הָ	יְגַדֵּד				
But	every	vow	of	a	widow	and	of	her	that	is	divorced
H5088		H490			H1644			H3605		H834	
אָסַב	הָ	עַל	נֶפֶשׁ	הָ	עַל	יְמִ	עַל	יְמִ	עַל	יְמִ	עַל
wherewith	they	have	bound	H5921		their	souls	shall	stand	H5921	
H631					H5315			H6965			

Additional Cross-References

Romans 7:2 (Parallel theme): For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

Luke 2:37 (Parallel theme): And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.