

## June 6

**Scriptures:** Read Numbers 30 & 31

**Key Verse:** "... Your servants have taken a count of the men of war who are under our command, and not a man of us is mission." (Numbers 31:49)

### Overview

Chapter 30 is the only Old Testament passage dealing with women's vows. It begins by speaking of a man's vow, which was very solemn and binding (30:2). Upon entrance into the Promised Land, many people would surely make a vow of some of their substance in gratitude to the Lord. Therefore, they were strongly cautioned here that it was very serious, for "it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay" (Eccl. 5:2-5).

Women who were either still in their father's households or who had a husband were to come under that man's authority, and if she made a vow it was binding only if her father or husband agreed. A vow of a widowed or a divorce woman, however, was binding like men.

These laws were given for the welfare of the family, showing the importance of unity within the home, for many disputes could arise if there was an uncertain order of authority. Even the New Testament teaches that the husband is to be the head of the home. This does not lower the position of women, but clarifies the responsibilities within the home. When these divinely given guidelines are followed, there is much more peacefulness within a home. Strife could arise in a family if an Israelite woman made a rash vow involving a large sum of money or land, for it was really the father or husband, as the main bread-winner of the family, who would, in the end, be responsible to pay it. For this reason, her vow was validated only if he gave it his blessing, but if he did not, he would be responsible to bear the guilt, meaning he would be obliged to meet all the ceremonial and legal requirements involved in the sin of breaking a vow, as though it were his own.

In chapter 31, we read of Moses' final involvement in a holy war, and it was against the Midianites (31:2). They were descendants of Abraham (Gen.25:1-2) but had lost any knowledge of the true God and were idolatrous pagans. They (with the advice of Balaam had been responsible for scheming the seduction of the Israelites who fell into terrible sin and "played the harlot" by idolatry and immorality, wherein 24,000 had died due to God's judgment (25:9). God therefore judged Midian, ordering Israel to take vengeance upon them. With the Lord before them, represented by Phinehas the priest and the holy articles and led by the trumpeter (31:6; 10:9), the 12,000 soldiers went to war and had a tremendous victory. There was not even one Israelite fatality (31:49), but every Midianite on the battleground was killed, including the five kings and Balaam the sorcerer (31:7-8). The soldiers all realized this was because the Lord was with them and, out of gratitude; they all contributed and brought an enormous offering (31:50-52). The amount of spoil taken from the Midianites was amazing; it not only enriched the soldiers, but all the people and the Tabernacle as well. King David later used these guidelines as a permanent ordinance in Israel (1 Sam.30:24-25).

Among the spoil were women and children. Moses was enraged to see the immoral women who had led in Israel's seduction and ordered them killed along with all the boys. Only the virgin girls were spared. This seems extremely harsh and cruel to us, but we are living in a different day and age, and we must understand that God has reasons. His ways are often beyond our comprehension, but we can be confident that He is just. If the women had been allowed to live among them, the Israelites could have again been easily led into corruption. If the boys had been allowed to live them, they could have taken the rightful inheritance of the land that God was giving only to the children of Israel.

Everything that came back after having contact with the Midianites required ceremonial cleansing, be it the soldiers, or the spoil (31:19-24). Contact with sin is contamination, and God, required that there be no compromise for his children with the sinful things of this world. He requires that of us today, too. Uncleanness prevents quality communion with Him.

### **Prayer**

O Lord, we do not understand all Your ways, but we do understand that You hate sin and will never become tolerant of it. In Your mercy, Lord, You sent Your Son Jesus to save us from our sins as You promised to do in the word spoken by the angel about His birth.