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Personal Vows
27: 1-8

Personal vows DIG: What do you see as the purpose of these mitzvot concerning vows? Why do you think it was necessary to set a monetary value on people dedicated to God?

REFLECT: What is something you have personally given to the Lord? Have you ever wanted it back? At what cost? How is this similar to things dedicated here in this chapter?

God in His grace made a way for all people, whether rich or poor, to participate fully in worshipping Him. In this case fulfilling their vows.

The custom of pledging one's valuation in silver to the Sanctuary goes back to the actual dedication of oneself, or one's child, to Tabernacle/Temple service. In **First Samuel** we read that **Hannah vowed** that if **YHVH** granted **her a son she** would bring **him** to **Shiloh**, where he would remain in service all **his** days. When **Samuel** was born, **she**, indeed, devoted **him** in this way. Pledging the equivalent of one's life, according to the scale established in **the Torah**, served two purposes; first, the spirit of the ancient tradition was satisfied, and second, in practical terms, the Tabernacle received the necessary funds.[542]

In pagan cultures, a person might vow himself or his children as a human sacrifice or into lifelong service to their god. The Torah does not make allowance for this type of vow. Human sacrifice is completely outside of the parameters of **God's** dealings with humanity. However, it was a cultural norm that was very common in neighboring Gentile nations.

The Torah has already spoken of child sacrifices made to **Molech**. **You are not to let any of your children be sacrificed to Molech, thereby profaning the name of your God; I am ADONAI (18:21). If someone from the people of Isra'el or one of the foreigners living in Isra'el sacrifices one of his children to Molech, he must be put to death; the people of the land are to**

stone him to death (20:2). In **Second Kings** there is a disturbing story of a battle between **Judah** and a **Moabite**/Edomite coalition. The armies of **Judah** were badly crushing **the Moabites**, fencing in **their** army until **the king of Mo'ab** finally cried out to **his** despicable god by sacrificing **his son** as a burnt offering **(Second Kings 3:27)**.



In the book of **Judges**, **Jephthah** was at war with **the Ammonites** when **he** made **a** foolish **vow** to **ADONAI**. **He** said: **If you will hand the people of 'Amon over to me, then whatever comes out the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the people of 'Amon will belong to ADONAI; I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering (Judges 11:30-31).** Tragically, **his daughter** came out the door of **his** house to meet **him**. The thought of sacrificing **his** only beloved **daughter** never entered **Jepthath's** mind. This is indicated by the Hebrew gender, and could be translated "whatever comes out." Human sacrifice was strictly forbidden by the Torah in passages such as **Leviticus 18:21** and **Deuteronomy 12:31**. It is almost certain that **Jephthah** was familiar with such passages because when **he** negotiated with the Ammonites **he** demonstrated that **he** knew **God's Word**. Animals were kept for safety overnight in the lower front of the home **(Luke 13:15)**, below the living area. **Jephthah** was willing to offer any of **his** prized animals to **God**. But while sacrifice to **God** is good, it is never good to try to manipulate **God** – even if will be to **God's** honor. **God** is not to be controlled. **God's** will is to be sought and when things don't turn our as we had hoped, we can always trust **God**.

Jephthah declared: **I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it (Judges 11:35c)**. At the same time, on the sake of principle only, there was something wonderful about the spirit of **Jephthah's** willingness to keep **his vow**,

even when it cost **him** something. In the specific **vow, he** was foolish and should not have kept it, but the tenacity of character that says: **I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it**, is glorious and should be the word of every follower of **Yeshua Messiah**.[543]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for always being **Almighty** and loving. No one should never bargain with **You** that if they do something – **You** will give them something. Even if what they want is to **Your** honor. Thank **You** for **David's** story of **his** trials and fleeing from Sha'ul when **David** had been anointed as king. **David** never bargained with **You** for victory. **His** heart was focused on pleasing **God**, no matter the circumstances. In the wilderness **he** wrote: **O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You . . . Since Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You (Psalms 63:1** and **3).***

***David** loved **God** even when facing death. **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me: Your rod and Your staff comfort me (Psalms 23:3).** May we always call out to **You Father God** for help, trusting in **Your Almighty** power and **Sovereign** love. May we remember that trials on earth are only for a short time (**Romans 8:18**). **Your** love is eternal and **You** use trials to polish **Your** children and bring **You** glory and honor. **These trials are so that the true metal of your faith (far more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire) may come to light in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua (1 Peter 1:7).** In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Though well intentioned, this was a foolish vow. But, first, it could be annulled by one's father or husband **(Numbers 30:5-8)**. And secondly, if **a vow** like **Jephthah's** was made, **the Torah** offered a value system for a person's life whereby that person could be redeemed. In essence, the valuation price needed to be paid to "deconsecrate" the person on whom the vow had been made, whether it was made on oneself or another. Sacrificing a human being was, and is not, a possibility; therefore, the person must be redeemed.

The Torah sets the valuations. They are constant whether the vowed person is strong or weak, sick or healthy, Hebrew or Gentile. Adjustments are made based on gender, age, and the financial status of the person responsible for paying **the vow**. **Give to ADONAI an amount equal to the value of a human being, the value you are to assign to a man between the ages of twenty and sixty years is**

to be fifty shekels of silver [one-and-a-quarter pounds], with the sanctuary shekel being the standard, if a woman, thirty shekels. If it is a child five to twenty years old, assign a value of twenty shekels for a boy and ten for a girl; if a baby one month to five years of age, five shekels for a boy and three for a girl; if a person past sixty, fifteen shekels for a man and ten for a woman. If the person is too poor to be evaluated, set him before the priest, who will assign him a value in keeping with the means of the person who made the vow (27:2b-8). ADONAI in **His** grace made a way for all people, whether rich or poor, to participate fully in worshipping **Him (5:7-13)**. In this case fulfilling their **vows**.

That **women** were financially valued as less than men should not be interpreted as chauvinistic. After all, a child under five is assigned a lesser redemption price value than a child over five, yet we would not deem our six-year-old intrinsically more valuable than our four-year-old. Rather, the valuation prices are based upon a person's value as a slave or laborer. **A man** in **his** prime, between the ages of **20** and **60 years old**, is generally able to produce more in terms of manual labor than an older or younger **man**. The same principle holds true between genders. If a person was too poor to pay the valuation price, the priesthood was to interview the person responsible for paying it and find out what they could afford. It was not possible to leave it unpaid, therefore the price needed to be set, regardless of how low. Paying the valuation price was not optional. The person making **the vow** needed to pay the price according to **the Torah's** fee schedule.[544]