



A Torah Study Guide
for the Young
& Young at Heart

PARASHAT
MATOT
פרשת מטות

Numbers 30:2-32:42

by
Ya'acov Natan Lawrence
& his kids

Note to the adult teacher: It will be necessary for you to give the scriptural context and background for each of the points listed below.

Great Discoveries in This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion)

- 30:2[1] Vows and Oaths to YHVH; Vows of Minors and a Married Woman
- 31:3 The Battle Against Midian—Revenge for the Balaam Affair
- 31:13 Moses Rebukes the Military Leaders for Sparing the Female Midianites
- 31:21 The Laws of Koshering War Spoils and Utensils
- 31:25 The Division of War Spoils
- 32:1 Reuben and Gad's Request to Be Granted an Inheritance on the East Bank of the Jordan
- 32:6 Moses Objects to the Request for Fear the Eastern Tribes Leave the Other Tribes
- 32:16 The Eastern Tribes Promise to Send Soldiers to Help the Rest of the Tribes
- 32:20 Moses Changes His Mind

Exploring This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion):

1 Vows and Promises

Numbers 30:2 says, "When a man makes a vow to YHVH, or formerly obligates himself by swearing an oath, he is not to break his word but is to do everything he said he would do." A vow is a solemn or formal promise to do a specific thing.

Now the word for "vow" is a Hebrew word that means a promise or contract one makes to YHVH. It does not specifically refer to promises made between people. In English, the word "vow" has a wider range of meanings. Let's explore this idea a little.



A vow is a formal promise such as what a man and a woman say to each other during their wedding ceremony. They exchange vows, they sign a piece of paper that has promises written on it,



and they do so in front of a bunch of people called witnesses. Another type of vow would be a contract. A contract is a formal or official agreement people make to purchase something such as a car, a house or a piece of property. It can be an agreement that one person makes with another person to do something for a certain amount of money such as a carpenter agreeing to build someone a house. Often these agreements are put on a piece of paper called a contract where each person signs their name. This becomes a legal document backed by the laws of the land. These are examples of formal agreements called vows that adults make between each other all the time.



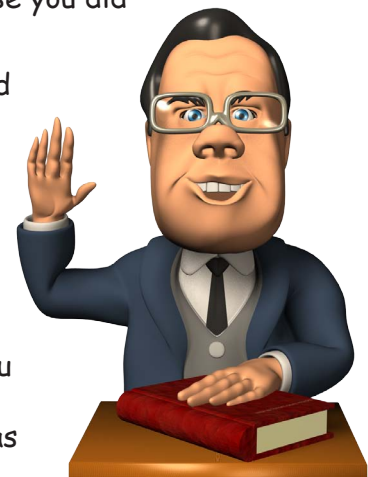
A promise, by contrast, is telling someone that you will do something or that something will happen, but we don't necessarily put it in writing. Not many of us make vows to YHVH, and not too many young people sign contracts to buy cars or build houses, but we make promises all the time. Let's explore the subject of making promises to see what the Bible says about it.

-  (a) Have you ever made a promise to someone that you did not keep? Does your conscience bother you because you did not keep your word?
-  (b) Has someone ever made a promise to you that they did not keep? How did it make you feel? Has someone told you they would do something for you or with



Do good words or bad words come out of your mouth??

you and you got all excited about it, only to find out they didn't really mean what they said. Perhaps something "more important" came up and they weren't able to keep their promise to you? Were you disappointed and hurt? Did you feel betrayed because something else was "more important" in their eyes than keeping their word to you?



The word for promise in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) is the Hebrew word "dabar." Interestingly, this is the same general Hebrew word for "word" or "thing." Now in English we have one word for "promise" and another word for "word" and still another word for "thing." But in Hebrew, the word "dabar" has all three meanings. This may seem confusing to our Western minds. After all, if you use the word "dabar" how would the person to whom you were speaking know if you meant "word," "promise" or "thing"?


In defining or explaining the meaning of the word "promise" in Hebrew and showing you how it is the Hebrew word "dabar," we have just learned about everything we need to know about the biblical concept of a promise! How did we do that you ask? The answer is simple. Every word you speak out of your mouth—whether to YHVH, to yourself or to another person—should be the truth and should be as real and truthful as if the thing you just spoke were about to actually come to


pass right in front of you. In other words, our words should equal reality or the thing we are saying should equal the truth, which should equal a promise. In a mathematical equation, it would look like this:


YOUR WORD = THING = PROMISE

When we speak a **word** and tell someone that we will do something, then what we said should be the **thing** that will come to pass, and therefore, our **word** becomes a **promise** for the **thing** to come to pass. See, I told you it was very simple!



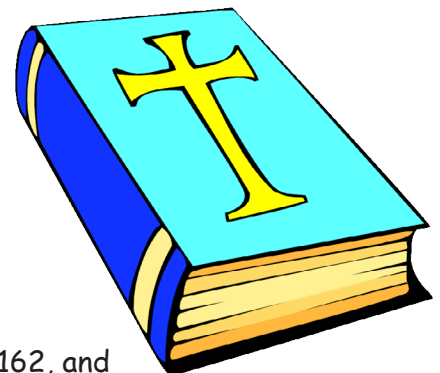
 (c) Can you think of an example of giving your word to someone about something you promised to make, do, give to them? If you tell them you are going to do something, shouldn't your word be so good to them (that is they can trust you that much) that they know for sure that you will make the thing happen? Are you getting the picture now of the importance of one's word, promise or vow to someone else?

 (d) Have you heard the sayings: "His word is as good as gold." Or, "He is a man of his word." What do these sayings mean? Can you trust such a person? What do we call such a person? Do you like being around a person who does not keep his word, and who doesn't mean what he says? Is that the kind of person you want for a friend?


 (e) Now what if YHVH was not a "man" of his word? What if we couldn't trust all the promises he was made in his Word, the Bible? Would we even be able to trust the Bible?


 (f) Write down what each of these scriptures teach us about the Word of YHVH.


- Numbers 23:19
- Malachi 3:6
- James 1:17
- Hebrews 6:18
- Luke 21:33
- Titus 1:2
- 2 Corinthians 1:20
- Hebrews 13:8
- Psalm 119:42, 74, 81, 105, 114, 140, 147, 148, 160, 161, 162, and 172



One of the most important proofs that the Bible IS the very Word of Elohim and that his promises are true is that he promises to take care of his people and to answer their prayers. When he says something is going to happen, then it does. Scripture contains many promises and prophecies of things Elohim said would come to pass in the future, AND THEY DID just as he promised they would!

 (g) Read Psalm 37:4-7, 23-24 to see what promises he has made to you if you will claim them for yourself and trust YHVH to bring them to pass.

 (h) Now go and read Psalms 91 and 103 (the entire chapters). What promises do you find in these chapters?

-  (i) Finally, go and read John 3:16-18 and Romans 10:9-10,13. Can you believe these promises? If so, what are you going to do about it???

