

Thus each half year would begin with a period of special festivals and sacrifices. Our present section has to do only with the prescribed services. Individuals would make thankofferings, or offerings with regard to their own special need of cleansing, in addition to these regular sacrifices (39).

b. Regulations about women's vows (xxx.1-16)

An important aspect of family life is brought out in this chapter. The Bible never considers a woman as a mere chattel. Her individuality is stressed and respected. A mature woman who lives alone is answerable only to God (9). A woman who is a member of a family is subject to a definite but limited oversight by the head of that family.

The chapter begins by asserting that a man who makes a vow is bound by it, and cannot revoke it. A young woman who is living in her father's house, or a married woman, can make a vow, and must fulfil it unless her father or husband (as the case may be) cancels it. This he can do, if he chooses, on the day when he first hears of it, but not later on. If he interferes at a later time, he is as guilty before the Lord as if he had broken a vow which he had made himself (15).

XIX. VENGEANCE ON THE MIDIANITES. xxxi.1-54

This chapter looks back to the terrible harm done to Israel by the Midianite seduction, but also looks ahead to the destruction of the Canaanites. The defilement and wickedness of the Midianites constituted a source of infection which was bound to destroy the testimony of Israel if allowed to continue. God might have wiped them out by pestilence, or by some natural calamity. Instead He chose to use the Israelites as His instrument for this purpose. Again we should note that their action was specifically commanded by the Lord (2) and should beware of taking it as warrant for any action on our part which does not have a similar divine revelation. While it is, of course, not inconceivable that a particular