

~OATH (1160)

[Hebrew, *Shevu-`ah'*, Greek, *hor'kos*]

- .. Expressions Used In Making Oaths
- .. Forms Or Actions Employed
- .. Under The Law

- A sworn statement as to the truthfulness of what is said or that a person will or will not do a certain thing, it frequently involves an appeal to a superior, especially to God.

- In the Hebrew Scriptures two words are used to denote what we understand as an oath. *Shevu-`ah'* means an oath or a sworn statement.

- But if the woman should not wish to come with you, you also will have become free from this oath you gave me. Only you must not return my son there. (**Genesis 24:8**)

- Or in case a soul **swears** to the extent of speaking thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good as respects anything at all that the man might speak thoughtlessly in a **sworn statement**, although it had been hidden from him, and yet he himself has come to know it, then he has become guilty as respects one of these things. (**Leviticus 5:4**)

- The related Hebrew verb *sha-va`*, meaning, **swear**, or take an **oath**, comes from the same root as the Hebrew word for, **seven**. Thus **swear** originally meant, **come under the influence of 7 things**.

[Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by G. Friedrich, translator and editor, G. Bromiley, 1970, Vol. V, p. 459]

- Abraham and Abimelech swore over seven female lambs in making the covenant at the well of Beer-sheba, meaning, **Well of the Oath**, or, **Well of Seven**.

- With that Abraham took sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech, and both of them proceeded to conclude a covenant. (**Genesis 21:27**)

- When Abraham set seven female lambs of the flock by themselves. (**Genesis 21:28**)

- Abimelech went on to say to Abraham; What is the meaning here of these seven female lambs that you have set by themselves? (**Genesis 21:29**)
- Then he said; You are to accept the seven female lambs at my hand, that it may serve as a witness for me that I have dug this well. (**Genesis 21:30**)
- That is why he called that place Beersheba, because there both of them had taken an oath. (**Genesis 21:31**)
- So they concluded a covenant at Beersheba, after which Abimelech got up together with Phicol the chief of his army and they returned to the land of the Philistines. (**Genesis 21:32**)
- To this they said; We have unmistakably seen that Yehowah has proved to be with you. Hence we said; Let, please, an oath of obligation occur between us, between us and you, and let us conclude a covenant with you. (**Genesis 26:28**)
- That you will do nothing bad toward us just as we have not touched you and just as we have done only good toward you in that we sent you away in peace. You now are the blessed of Yehowah. (**Genesis 26:29**)
- Then he made a feast for them and they ate and drank. (**Genesis 26:30**)
- Next morning they were early in rising and they made sworn statements one to the other. After that Isaac sent them away and they went from him in peace. (**Genesis 26:31**)
- Now on that day it occurred that the servants of Isaac proceeded to come and report to him regarding the well that they had dug, and to say to him; We have found water! (**Genesis 26:32**)
- Hence he called its name Shibah. That is why the name of the city is Beersheba, down to this day. (**Genesis 26:33**)
- *Shevu-`ah'* has reference to a sworn statement on the part of a person that he will do or will not do a certain thing. The word itself carries no connotation of a curse upon the one swearing if he fails to fulfill the oath.

- This is the word used for the oath, or sworn statement, to Abraham by Yehowah, who never fails to fulfill his word and upon whom no curse can come.
- Reside as an alien in this land, and I shall continue with you and bless you, because to you and to your seed I shall give all these lands, and I will carry out the sworn statement that I swore to Abraham your father. (**Genesis 26:3**)
- The other **Hebrew** word used is '*a-lah*', meaning, **oath, cursing**.
- At that time you will be cleared of obligation to me by oath when you get to my family, and if they will not give her to you, then you shall become free of obligation to me by oath. (**Genesis 24:41**) Footnote
- It may also be translated, **oath** of obligation.
- To this they said; We have unmistakably seen that Yehowah has proved to be with you. Hence we said; Let, please, an **oath of obligation** occur between us, between us and you, and let us conclude a covenant with you. (**Genesis 26:28**)
- A Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon by **Koehler and Baumgartner [p. 49]** defines the term as a, **curse, threat of calamity in case of misdeed, laid on a person by himself or by others**.
- In ancient Hebrew times it was considered the gravest matter to make an **oath**. An **oath** was to be kept, even to the **oath** takers hurt.
- In his eyes anyone contemptible is certainly rejected, but those fearing Yehowah he honors. He has **sworn** to what is bad for himself, and yet he does not alter. (**Psalms 15:4**)
- Again you heard that it was said to those of ancient times, You must not **swear** without performing, but you must pay your vows to Yehowah. (**Matthew 5:33**)
- A person was held guilty before Yehowah if he spoke thoughtlessly in a sworn statement.
- Or in case a soul swears to the extent of speaking thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good as respects anything at all that the man might speak thoughtlessly in a **sworn statement**,

although it had been hidden from him, and yet he himself has come to know it, then he has become guilty as respects one of these things. (**Leviticus 5:4**)

- Violation of an **oath** would bring the most severe consequences of punishment from God. Among the earliest nations and particularly among the Hebrews an **oath** was in a sense a religious act, involving God.
- The use of the term '*a-lah*' by the Hebrews by implication made God a party to the **oath** and professed a readiness to incur any judgment he might be pleased to inflict in event of the oath makers infidelity. This term is never used by God with reference to his own oaths.
- The corresponding **Greek** terms are *hor'kos*, **oath**, and *o-mny'o*, **swear**, which both occur in;
- Above all things, though, my brothers, stop **swearing**, yes, either by heaven or by earth or by any other **oath**. But let your Yes mean Yes, and your No, No, so that you do not fall under judgment. (**James 5:12**)
- The **Greek** verb *hor-ki'zo* means, **put under oath** or **solemnly charge**.
- And, when he had cried out with a loud voice, he said; What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I put you under **oath** by God not to torment me. (**Mark 5:7**)
- But certain ones of the roving Jews who practiced the casting out of demons also undertook to name the name of the Lord Jesus over those having the wicked spirits, saying; I **solemnly charge** you by Jesus whom Paul preaches. (**Acts of Apostles 19:13**)
- Other terms related to *hor'kos* mean, **sworn oath**.
- Also, to the extent that it was not without a sworn oath. (**Hebrews 7:20**)
- **Put under solemn obligation or oath.**
- I am putting you **under the solemn obligation** by the Lord for this letter to be read to all the brothers. (**1 Thessalonians 5:27**)

- False **swearer** or **oath-breaker**.
- Fornicators, men who lie with males, kidnappers, liars, **false swearers**, and whatever other thing is in opposition to the healthful teaching (**1 Timothy 1:10**)
- And **swear** without performing or make an **oath falsely**.
- Again you heard that it was said to those of ancient times, You must **not swear without performing**, but you must pay your vows to Yehowah. (**Matthew 5:33**)
- The **Greek** word *a-na-the-ma-ti'zo* is rendered, **bind with a curse** in;
- Now when it became day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with a curse, saying they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. (**Acts of Apostles 23:12**)
- And they went to the chief priests and the older men and said; We have **solemnly bound ourselves with a curse** not to take a bite of food until we have killed Paul. (**Acts of Apostles 23:14**)
- Above all things, do not let them persuade you, for more than forty men of theirs are lying in wait for him, and they have **bound themselves with a curse** neither to eat nor to drink until they have done away with him, and they are now ready, waiting for the promise from you. (**Acts of Apostles 23:21**)

• Expressions Used In Making Oaths

- Often an **oath** was made by **swearing** by God or in the name of God.
- At this Abram said to the king of Sodom. I do lift up my hand in an oath to Yehowah the Most High God, Producer of heaven and earth. (**Genesis 14:22**)
- Let the god of Abraham and the god of Nahor judge between us, the god of their father. But Jacob swore by the Dread of his father Isaac. (**Genesis 31:53**)
- Yehowah your God you should fear, and him you should serve, and by his name you should swear. (**Deuteronomy 6:13**)

- **What shall we do to those who are left over as to wives, now that we ourselves have sworn by Yehowah not to give them any of our daughters as wives? ([Judges 21:7](#))**
- **And it must occur that if they will without fail learn the ways of my people in swearing by my name; As Yehowah is alive! Just as they taught my people to swear by Baal, they will also be built up in the midst of my people. ([Jeremiah 12:16](#))**
- **Yehowah swore by himself, or by his own life.**
- **And to say; By myself I do **swear**, is the utterance of Yehowah, that by reason of the fact that you have done this thing and you have not withheld your son, your only one. ([Genesis 22:16](#))**
- ****As I am alive**, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Yehowah, in the place of the king who put in as king the one that despised his **oath** and that broke his covenant, with him in the midst of Babylon he will die. ([Ezekiel 17:16](#))**
- **Therefore, **as I am alive**, is the utterance of Yehowah of armies, the God of Israel, Moab herself will become just like Sodom, and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah, a place possessed by nettles, and a salt pit, and a desolate waste, even to time indefinite. The remaining ones of my people will plunder them, and the remnant of my own nation will take possession of them. ([Zephaniah 2:9](#))**
- **Expressions of a formal nature were sometimes employed by men, such as, May Yehowah do so to me, or, to you, and add to it if I, or you, fail to do as sworn.**
- **Where you die I shall die, and there is where I shall be buried. May Yehowah do so to me and add to it if anything but death should make a separation between me and you. ([Ruth 1:17](#))**
- **And he went on to say; What is the word that he has spoken to you? Do not, please, hide it from me. May God do so to you and so may he add to it if you should hide from me a word of all the word that he has spoken to you. ([1 Samuel 3:17](#))**
- **And to Amasa you should say; Are you not my bone and my flesh? So may God do to me and so may he add to it if you will not become the army chief before me always instead of Joab. ([2](#)**

Samuel 19:13)

- The assertion might be made more emphatic by the individuals pronouncing his own name.
- So may Yehowah do to Jonathan and so may he add to it, if, in case it should seem good to my father to do evil against you, I do not indeed disclose it to your ear and send you away, and you do not certainly go in peace. And may Yehowah prove to be with you, just as he proved to be with my father. (**1 Samuel 20:13**)
- So may God do to the enemies of David and so may he add to it if I shall let anyone of all who are his that urinates against the wall remain until the morning. (**1 Samuel 25:22**)
- So may God do to Abner and so may he add to it, if, just as Yehowah swore to David, that is not the way that I shall do to him. (**2 Samuel 3:9**)
- Pagans made similar appeals to their false gods. Jezebel the Baal worshiper appealed, not to Yehowah, but to gods, '*elo-him*', with a plural verb, as did Ben-hadad II, king of Syria.
- At that Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying; So may the gods do, and so may they add to it, if at this time tomorrow I shall not make your soul like the soul of each one of them! (**1 Kings 19:2**)
- Ben-hadad now sent to him and said; So may the gods do to me, and so may they add to it, if the dust of Samaria will be sufficient for handfuls for all the people that follow me! (**1 Kings 20:10**)
- In fact, because such expressions were universally prevalent, idolatry came to be represented in the Bible as a **swearing by some false god**, or by what was **no God**.
- By never going in among these nations, these that remain with you. And you must not mention the names of their gods **nor swear by them**, neither must you serve them nor bow down to them. (**Joshua 23:7**)
- How can I forgive you for this very thing? Your own sons have left me, and they keep swearing by what is no God. And I kept satisfying them, but they continued committing adultery, and to

the house of a prostitute woman they go in troops. (**Jeremiah 5:7**)

- And it must occur that if they will without fail learn the ways of my people in swearing by my name, As Yehowah is alive! Just as they taught my people to swear by Baal, they will also be built up in the midst of my people. (**Jeremiah 12:16**)
- Those who are swearing by the guiltiness of Samaria, and who actually say; As your god is alive, O Dan! And. As the way of Beer-sheba is alive! And they will certainly fall, and they will rise up no more. (**Amos 8:14**)
- In a few, very serious cases or when strong emotional feeling attended the solemn declaration, the curses or punishments that would attend failure to fulfill the **oath** were specifically named.
- And the priest must make her swear, and he must say to the woman; If no man has lain down with you and if while under your husband you have not turned aside in any uncleanness, be free of the effect of this bitter water that brings a curse. (**Numbers 5:19**)
- But you, in case you have turned aside while under your husband and in case you have defiled yourself and some man has put in you his seminal emission, besides your husband. (**Numbers 5:20**)
- The priest must now make the woman swear with an oath involving cursing, and the priest must say to the woman; May Yehowah set you for a cursing and an oath in the midst of your people by Yehowah's letting your thigh fall away, and your belly swell. (**Numbers 5:21**)
- And this water that brings a curse must enter into your intestines to cause your belly to swell and the thigh to fall away. To this the woman must say; Amen! Amen! (**Numbers 5:22**)
- And the priest must write these cursings in the book and must wipe them out into the bitter water. (**Numbers 5:23**)
- If I have repaid the one rewarding me with what is bad, or if I have despoiled anyone showing hostility to me without success. (**Psalms 7:4**)

- Let an enemy pursue my soul and let him overtake and trample my life down to the very earth and cause my own glory to reside in the dust itself. (**Psalms 7:5**)
- If I should forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgetful. (**Psalms 137:5**)
- Let my tongue stick to my palate, if I were not to remember you, if I were not to make Jerusalem ascend above my chief cause for rejoicing. (**Psalms 137:6**)
- Job, in contending for his uprightness, reviews his life and declares himself willing to undergo the direst punishments if he is found to have violated Yehowah's laws of loyalty, righteousness, justice, and morality. (**Job Chapter 31**)
- In the trial resulting from a husband's jealousy, the wife, by answering; Amen! Amen! To the priests reading of the **oath** and the **curse**, thereby swore an **oath as to her innocence**.
- The priest must now make the woman **swear** with an **oath** involving **cursing**, and the priest must say to the woman; May Yehowah set you for a **cursing** and an **oath** in the midst of your people by Yehowah's letting your thigh fall away, and your belly swell. (**Numbers 5:21**)
- And this water that brings a curse must enter into your intestines to cause your belly to swell and the thigh to fall away. To this the woman must say; Amen! Amen! (**Numbers 5:22**)
- What amounted practically to an oath was often voiced by affirming not only by Yehowah's name but additionally by the life of the king or of a superior.
- And now, my lord, as Yehowah is living and as your soul is living, Yehowah has held you back from entering into bloodguilt and having your own hand come to your salvation. And now let your enemies and those seeking injury to my lord become like Nabal. (**1 Samuel 25:26**)
- But Ittai answered the king and said; As Yehowah is living and as my lord the king is living, in the place where my lord the king may come to be, whether for death or for life, there is where your servant will come to be! (**2 Samuel 15:21**)

- **And Elijah began to say to Elisha; Sit here, please, because Yehowah himself has sent me clear to Bethel. But Elisha said; As Yehowah is living and as your soul is living, I will not leave you. So they went down to Bethel. (2 Kings 2:2)**
- **As Yehowah lives was a common assertion adding gravity to ones attestation of determination or of truthfulness of a statement.**
- **At that he said; They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As Yehowah lives, if you had preserved them alive, I would not have to kill you. (Judges 8:19)**
- **For as Yehowah, who is the Deliverer of Israel, is alive, even if it is in Jonathan my son, yet he will positively die. But there was no one answering him out of all the people. (1 Samuel 14:39)**
- **But the people said to Saul; Is Jonathan to die, who has performed this great salvation in Israel? It is unthinkable! As Yehowah is alive, not as much as a single hair of his head will fall to the earth, for it was with God that he worked this day. With that the people redeemed Jonathan, and he did not die. (1 Samuel 14:45)**
- **Then Saul obeyed the voice of Jonathan, and Saul swore; As Yehowah is living, he will not be put to death. (1 Samuel 19:6)**
- **But David swore in addition and said; Your father must surely know that I have found favor in your eyes, and so would say; Do not let Jonathan know this for fear he may feel hurt. But, in fact, as Yehowah is living and as your soul is living, there is just about a step between me and death! (1 Samuel 20:3)**
- **And, look! I shall send the attendant, saying; Go, find the arrows. If I should specifically say to the attendant, Look! The arrows are on this side of you, take them, then you come, for it means peace for you and there is nothing the matter, as Yehowah is living. (1 Samuel 20:21)**
- **And now, my lord, as Yehowah is living and as your soul is living, Yehowah has held you back from entering into bloodguilt and having your own hand come to your salvation. And now let your enemies and those seeking injury to my lord become like Nabal. (1 Samuel 25:26)**

- And, on the other hand, as Yehowah the God of Israel is living, who has held me back from doing injury to you, if you had not hastened that you might come to meet me, there would certainly not have remained to Nabal until the morning light anyone urinating against a wall. (1 Samuel 25:34)
- A less forceful expression that may not have been intended to be considered an **oath** but that conveyed a very serious intent and that was given for the assurance of the hearer was a swearing by the life of the person addressed, as in Hannah's words to Eli.
- With that she said; Excuse me, my lord! By the life of your soul, my lord, I am the woman that was standing with you in this place to pray to Yehowah. (1 Samuel 1:26)
- And in Uriah's statement to King David.
- At this Uriah said to David; The Ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping on the face of the field, and I, shall I go into my own house to eat and drink and to lie down with my wife? As you are living and as your soul is living, I shall not do this thing! (2 Samuel 11:11)
- Now at the moment that Saul saw David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner the chief of the army; Whose son is the boy, Abner? To this Abner said; By the life of your soul, O king, I do not know at all! (1 Samuel 17:55)

•• Forms Or Actions Employed

- The most frequent gesture used in taking an oath seems to have been the raising of the right hand toward heaven. Yehowah himself is mentioned as uttering an oath in this manner, symbolically.
- At this Abram said to the king of Sodom; I do lift up my hand in an oath to Yehowah the Most High God, Producer of heaven and earth. (Genesis 14:22)
- And I shall certainly bring you into the land that I raised my hand in oath to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and I shall indeed give it to you as something to possess. I am Yehowah. (Exodus 6:8)

- For I raise my hand to heaven in an oath, and I do say; As I am alive to time indefinite. ([Deuteronomy 32:40](#))
- Yehowah has sworn with his right hand and with his strong arm; I will no more give your grain as food to your enemies, nor will foreigners drink your new wine, for which you have toiled. ([Isaiah 62:8](#))
- And you must say to them, This is what the Sovereign Lord Yehowah has said; In the day of my choosing Israel, I also proceeded to lift up my hand in an oath to the seed of the house of Jacob and to make myself known to them in the land of Egypt. Yes, I proceeded to lift up my hand in an oath to them, saying; I am Yehowah your God. ([Ezekiel 20:5](#))
- An angel in one of Daniel's visions raised both hands to the heavens in voicing an **oath**.
- And I began to hear the man clothed with the linen, who was up above the waters of the stream, as he proceeded to raise his right hand and his left hand to the heavens and to swear by the One who is alive for time indefinite. It will be for an appointed time, appointed times and a half. And as soon as there will have been a finishing of the dashing of the power of the holy people to pieces, all these things will come to their finish. ([Daniel 12:7](#))
- Of false **swearers**, it is said that their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.
- Whose mouth has spoken what is untrue and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. ([Psalms 144:8](#))
- One requesting an oath from another might ask him to place his hand under his thigh or hip. When Abraham sent his steward to get a wife for Isaac he said to the steward;
- Hence Abraham said to his servant, the oldest one of his household, who was managing all he had; Put your hand, please, under my thigh. ([Genesis 24:2](#))
- As I must have you swear by Yehowah, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in among whom I am

dwelling. (**Genesis 24:3**)

- But you will go to my country and to my relatives, and you will certainly take a wife for my son, for Isaac. (**Genesis 24:4**)
- With that the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter. (**Genesis 24:9**)
- In the same way Jacob exacted an **oath** from Joseph that he not bury him in Egypt.
- Gradually the days approached for Israel to die. So he called his son Joseph and said to him; If, now, I have found favor in your eyes, place your hand, please, under my thigh, and you must exercise loving-kindness and trustworthiness toward me. Please, do not bury me in Egypt. (**Genesis 47:29**)
- And I must lie with my fathers, and you must carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their grave. Accordingly he said; I myself shall do in keeping with your word. (**Genesis 47:30**)
- Then he said; Swear to me. So he swore to him. At that Israel prostrated himself over the head of the couch. (**Genesis 47:31**)
- Regarding the significance of this practice.

See Also ATTITUDES AND GESTURES

- Frequently an oath was connected with the making of a covenant. A common expression in such cases was; God is a witness between me and you.
- And now, come, let us conclude a covenant, I and you, and it must serve as a witness between me and you. (**Genesis 31:44**)
- If you go to afflicting my daughters and if you go to taking wives in addition to my daughters, there is no man with us. See! God is a witness between me and you. (**Genesis 31:50**)
- Let the god of Abraham and the god of Nahor judge between us, the god of their father. But Jacob swore by the Dread of his father Isaac. (**Genesis 31:53**)

- **Such an expression was also made to strengthen a statement of fact or truth. Moses calls on the heavens and the earth as witnesses when discussing Israel's relationship in their oath-bound covenant with Yehowah.**
- **I do take as witnesses against you today the heavens and the earth, that you will positively perish in a hurry from off the land to which you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of it. You will not lengthen your days on it, because you will positively be annihilated. ([Deuteronomy 4:26](#))**
- **Often a person or persons, a written document, a pillar, or an altar stood as a witness and reminder of an oath or a covenant.**
- **Accordingly Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. ([Genesis 31:45](#))**
- **Then Jacob said to his brothers; Pick up stones! And they went taking stones and making a heap. After that they ate there on the heap. ([Genesis 31:46](#))**
- **And Laban began calling it Jegarsahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. ([Genesis 31:47](#))**
- **And Laban proceeded to say; This heap is a witness between me and you today. That is why he called its name Galeed. ([Genesis 31:48](#))**
- **And The Watchtower, because he said; Let Yehowah keep watch between me and you when we are situated unseen the one from the other. ([Genesis 31:49](#))**
- **If you go to afflicting my daughters and if you go to taking wives in addition to my daughters, there is no man with us. See! God is a witness between me and you. ([Genesis 31:50](#))**
- **And Laban went on to say to Jacob; Here is this heap and here is the pillar that I have erected between me and you. ([Genesis 31:51](#))**
- **This heap is a witness, and the pillar is something that bears witness, that I will not pass this heap against you and that you will not pass this heap and this pillar against me for harm. ([Genesis 31:52](#))**

- Taking this book of the Law, you must place it at the side of the ark of the covenant of Yehowah your God, and it must serve as a witness there against you. ([Deuteronomy 31:26](#))
- Hence we said; Let us take action in our behalf, please, by building the altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice. ([Joshua 22:26](#))
- But that it may be a witness between us and you and our generations after us that we shall render the service of Yehowah before him with our burnt offerings and our sacrifices and our communion sacrifices, that your sons may not say in a future day to our sons; You have no share in Yehowah. ([Joshua 22:27](#))
- So we said; And it must occur that in case they should say that to us and to our generations in a future day, we must also say; See the representation of Yehowah's altar that our fathers made, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, but it is a witness between us and you. ([Joshua 22:28](#))
- At this Joshua said to the people; You are witnesses against yourselves that you of your own accord have chosen Yehowah for yourselves, to serve him. To this they said; We are witnesses. ([Joshua 24:22](#))
- In turn the people said to Joshua; Yehowah our God we shall serve, and to his voice we shall listen! ([Joshua 24:24](#))
- And Joshua proceeded to conclude a covenant with the people on that day and to constitute for them a regulation and judicial decision in Shechem. ([Joshua 24:25](#))
- Then Joshua wrote these words in the book of God's Law and took a great stone and set it up there under the massive tree that is by the sanctuary of Yehowah. ([Joshua 24:26](#))
- And Joshua went on to say to all the people; Look! This stone is what will serve as a witness against us, because it has itself heard all the sayings of Yehowah that he has spoken with us, and it must serve as a witness against you, that you may not deny your God. ([Joshua 24:27](#))

See Also COVENANT

· Under The Law

- **Instances in which oaths were required of certain persons under the Mosaic Law were, of a wife in the trial of jealousy.**
- **The priest must now make the woman swear with an oath involving cursing, and the priest must say to the woman; May Yehowah set you for a cursing and an oath in the midst of your people by Yehowah's letting your thigh fall away, and your belly swell. (Numbers 5:21)**
- **And this water that brings a curse must enter into your intestines to cause your belly to swell and the thigh to fall away. To this the woman must say; Amen! Amen! (Numbers 5:22)**
- **Of a bailee when property left in his care was missing.**
- **In case a man should give his fellow an ass or bull or sheep or any domestic animal to keep, and it does die or get maimed or gets led off while nobody is looking. (Exodus 22:10)**
- **An oath by Yehowah is to take place between them both that he did not put his hand on the goods of his fellow, and their owner must accept it, and the other is not to make compensation. (Exodus 22:11)**
- **Of the older men of a city in the case of an unsolved murder.**
- **In case someone is found slain on the ground that Yehowah your God is giving you to take possession of it, fallen on the field, and it has not become known who struck him fatally. (Deuteronomy 21:1)**
- **Your older men and your judges must also go out and measure to the cities that are all around the slain one. (Deuteronomy 21:2)**
- **And it must prove to be the city nearest to the slain one. And the older men of that city must take a young cow of the herd that has not been worked with, that has not pulled in a yoke. (Deuteronomy 21:3)**
- **And the older men of that city must lead the young cow down to a torrent valley running with water in which there was**

customarily no tilling or sowing of seed, and they must break the neck of the young cow there in the torrent valley. (**Deuteronomy 21:4**)

- And the priests the sons of Levi must approach, because they are the ones Yehowah your God has chosen to minister to him and to bless in the name of Yehowah and at whose mouth every dispute over every violent deed should be disposed of. (**Deuteronomy 21:5**)
- Then all the older men of that city who are nearest to the slain one should wash their hands over the young cow, the neck of which was broken in the torrent valley. (**Deuteronomy 21:6**)
- And they must answer and say; Our hands did not shed this blood, neither did our eyes see it shed. (**Deuteronomy 21:7**)
- Do not set it to the account of your people Israel, whom you redeemed, O Yehowah, and do not put the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel. And the bloodguilt must not be set to their account. (**Deuteronomy 21:8**)
- And you, you will clear away the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, because you will do what is right in Yehowah's eyes. (**Deuteronomy 21:9**)
- Voluntary oaths of abstinence were allowed.
- And in case a woman makes a vow to Yehowah or she does bind herself with a vow of abstinence in the house of her father in her youth. (**Numbers 30:3**)
- And her father actually hears her vow or her abstinence vow that she has bound upon her soul and her father does keep silent toward her, all her vows must also stand, and every abstinence vow that she has bound upon her soul will stand. (**Numbers 30:4**)
- However, if it is in the house of her husband that she has vowed or has bound an abstinence vow upon her soul by an oath. (**Numbers 30:10**)
- And her husband has heard it and has kept silent toward her, he has not forbidden her, and all her vows must stand or any abstinence vow that she has bound upon her soul will stand.

(Numbers 30:11)

- **Servants of God were sometimes adjured by one in authority, and they told the truth. Likewise a Christian under oath would not lie but would tell the whole truth called for, or he may refuse to answer if it jeopardizes the righteous interests of God or of fellow Christians, in which case he must be ready to suffer any consequences that might result from his refusal to testify.**
- **Then he came in to the king, and the king proceeded to say to him; Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead in war, or shall we refrain? At once he said to him; Go up and prove successful, and Yehowah will certainly give it into the king's hand. (1 Kings 22:15)**
- **At that the king said to him; For how many times am I putting you under oath that you should not speak to me anything but truth in the name of Yehowah? (1 Kings 22:16)**
- **So he said; I certainly see all the Israelites scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd. And Yehowah went on to say; These have no masters. Let them go back each one to his house in peace. (1 Kings 22:17)**
- **Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat; Did I not say to you, He will prophesy concerning me, not good things, but bad? (1 Kings 22:18)**
- **But Jesus kept silent. So the High Priest said to him; By the living God I put you under oath to tell us whether you are the Christ the Son of God! (Matthew 26:63)**
- **Jesus said to him; You yourself said it. Yet I say to you men, From henceforth you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. (Matthew 26:64)**
- **Jesus now stood before the governor, and the governor put the question to him; Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus replied; You yourself say it. (Matthew 27:11)**
- **But, while he was being accused by the chief priests and older men, he made no answer. (Matthew 27:12)**

- Then Pilate said to him; Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you? ([Matthew 27:13](#))
- Yet he did not answer him, no, not a word, so that the governor wondered very much. ([Matthew 27:14](#))
- Vows were regarded in Israel as having the strength of an oath, as sacred and to be fulfilled even though they resulted in loss to the vower. God was viewed as watching to see that vows were carried out, and as bringing punishment for failure.
- In case a man makes a vow to Yehowah or swears an oath to bind a vow of abstinence upon his soul, he must not violate his word. According to all that has gone out of his mouth he should do. ([Numbers 30:2](#))
- In case you vow a vow to Yehowah your God, you must not be slow about paying it, because Yehowah your God will without fail require it of you, and it would indeed become a sin on your part. ([Deuteronomy 23:21](#))
- But in case you omit making a vow, it will not become a sin on your part. ([Deuteronomy 23:22](#))
- The utterance of your lips you should keep, and you must do just as you have vowed to Yehowah your God as a voluntary offering that you spoke of with your mouth. ([Deuteronomy 23:23](#))
- Then Jephthah made a vow to Yehowah and said; If you without fail give the sons of Ammon into my hand. ([Judges 11:30](#))
- It must also occur that the one coming out, who comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, must also become Yehowah's, and I must offer that one up as a burnt offering. ([Judges 11:31](#))
- And it came about that when he caught sight of her, he began to rip his garments and to say; Alas, my daughter! You have indeed made me bend down, and you yourself have become the one I was ostracizing. And I, I have opened my mouth to Yehowah, and I am unable to turn back. ([Judges 11:35](#))
- But she said to him; My father, if you have opened your mouth to Yehowah, do to me according to what has gone forth from your

mouth, since Yehowah has executed acts of vengeance for you upon your enemies, the sons of Ammon. (**Judges 11:36**)

- And it came about at the end of two months that she made her return to her father, after which he carried out his vow that he had made toward her. As for her, she never had relations with a man. And it came to be a regulation in Israel. (**Judges 11:39**)
- Whenever you vow a vow to God, do not hesitate to pay it, for there is no delight in the stupid ones. What you vow, pay. (**Ecclesiastes 5:4**)
- Better is it that you vow not than that you vow and do not pay. (**Ecclesiastes 5:5**)
- Do not allow your mouth to cause your flesh to sin, neither say before the angel that it was a mistake. Why should the true God become indignant on account of your voice and have to wreck the work of your hands? (**Ecclesiastes 5:6**)
- The vows of wives and unmarried daughters were subject to affirmation or cancellation by the husband or father, but widows and divorced women were bound by their vows.
- And in case a woman makes a vow to Yehowah or she does bind herself with a vow of abstinence in the house of her father in her youth. (**Numbers 30:3**)
- And her father actually hears her vow or her abstinence vow that she has bound upon her soul and her father does keep silent toward her, all her vows must also stand, and every abstinence vow that she has bound upon her soul will stand. (**Numbers 30:4**)
- But if her father has forbidden her on the day of his hearing all her vows or her abstinence vows that she has bound upon her soul, it will not stand, but Yehowah will forgive her, because her father forbade her. (**Numbers 30:5**)
- However, if she at all happens to belong to a husband, and her vow is upon her or the thoughtless promise of her lips that she has bound upon her soul. (**Numbers 30:6**)
- And her husband actually hears it and keeps silent toward her on the day of his hearing it, her vows must also stand or her

- abstinence vows that she has bound upon her soul will stand. (Numbers 30:7)**
- **But if her husband on the day of hearing it forbids her, he has also annulled her vow that was upon her or the thoughtless promise of her lips that she bound upon her soul, and Yehowah will forgive her. (Numbers 30:8)**
 - **In the case of the vow of a widow or a divorced woman, everything that she has bound upon her soul will stand against her. (Numbers 30:9)**
 - **However, if it is in the house of her husband that she has vowed or has bound an abstinence vow upon her soul by an oath. (Numbers 30:10)**
 - **And her husband has heard it and has kept silent toward her, he has not forbidden her, and all her vows must stand or any abstinence vow that she has bound upon her soul will stand. (Numbers 30:11)**
 - **But if her husband has totally annulled them on the day of his hearing any expression of her lips as her vows or as an abstinence vow of her soul, they will not stand. Her husband has annulled them, and Yehowah will forgive her. (Numbers 30:12)**
 - **Any vow or any oath of an abstinence vow to afflict the soul, her husband should establish it or her husband should annul it. (Numbers 30:13)**
 - **But if her husband absolutely keeps silent toward her from day to day, he has also established all her vows or all her abstinence vows that are upon her. He has established them because he kept silent toward her on the day of his hearing them. (Numbers 30:14)**
 - **And if he totally annuls them after his hearing them, he also actually bears her error. (Numbers 30:15)**
 - **Jesus Christ, in his Sermon on the Mount, corrected the Jews in their practice of light, loose, and indiscriminate making of oaths. It had become common among them to swear by heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, and even by their own heads.**

- But since heaven was God's throne, earth his footstool, Jerusalem his kingly city, and ones head, or life, was dependent on God, making such oaths was the same as taking oaths in the name of God.
- It was not to be treated lightly. So Jesus said; Just let your word **Yes** mean **Yes**, your **No**, **No**. For what is in excess of these is from the wicked one.
- Again you heard that it was said to those of ancient times; You must not **swear** without performing, but you must pay your vows to Yehowah. (**Matthew 5:33**)
- However, I say to you; Do not **swear** at all, neither by heaven, because it is God's throne. (**Matthew 5:34**)
- Nor by earth, because it is the footstool of his feet, nor by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. (**Matthew 5:35**)
- Nor by your head must you **swear**, because you cannot turn one hair white or black. (**Matthew 5:36**)
- Just let your word **Yes** mean **Yes**, your **No**, **No**. For what is in excess of these is from the wicked one. (**Matthew 5:37**)
- Jesus Christ did not hereby prohibit the making of all oaths, for he himself was under the Law of Moses, which required oaths under certain circumstances. In fact, when Jesus himself was on trial he was put under oath by the High Priest, yet he did not object to this, but gave an answer.
- But Jesus kept silent. So the High Priest said to him; By the living God I put you under oath to tell us whether you are the Christ the Son of God! (**Matthew 26:63**)
- Jesus said to him; You yourself said it. Yet I say to you men, From henceforth you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. (**Matthew 26:64**)
- Rather, Jesus was showing that a person should not have two standards. The keeping of ones word, once given, should be viewed as

a sacred duty and should be fulfilled just as an **oath** would be, the person should sincerely mean what he says.

- He shed further light on the meaning of his words when he exposed the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees by saying to them;
- Woe to you, blind guides, who say; If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is under obligation. (**Matthew 23:16**)
- Fools and blind ones! Which, in fact, is greater, the gold or the temple that has sanctified the gold? (**Matthew 23:17**)
- Also, If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is under obligation. (**Matthew 23:18**)
- Blind ones! Which, in fact, is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? (**Matthew 23:19**)
- Therefore he that swears by the altar is swearing by it and by all the things on it. (**Matthew 23:20**)
- And he that swears by the temple is swearing by it and by him that is inhabiting it. (**Matthew 23:21**)
- And he that swears by heaven is swearing by the throne of God and by him that is sitting on it. (**Matthew 23:22**)
- By the false reasoning and hairsplitting casuistry of these scribes and Pharisees, as here pointed out by Jesus, they justified themselves in failing to carry out certain oaths, but Jesus showed that such swearing on their part was being dishonest with God and was actually reproaching his name, for the Jews were a people dedicated to Yehowah. Yehowah plainly states that he hates a false oath.
- And calamity to one another do not you scheme up in your hearts, and do not love any false oath, for these are all things that I have hated, is the utterance of Yehowah. (**Zechariah 8:17**)
- James corroborates Jesus words.
- Above all things, though, my brothers, stop **swearing**, yes, either by heaven or by earth or by any other **oath**. But let your **Yes** mean **Yes**, and your **No, No**, so that you do not fall under

judgment. (James 5:12)

- But these statements of Jesus and James against such indiscriminate practices do not prevent the Christian from taking an oath when necessary to assure others of the seriousness of his intentions or of the truthfulness of what he says.
- For instance, as Jesus illustrated by example before the Jewish High Priest, a Christian would not object to taking an oath in court, for he is going to speak the truth whether under oath or not.
- But Jesus kept silent. So the High Priest said to him; By the living God I put you under **oath** to tell us whether you are the Christ the Son of God! (Matthew 26:63)
- Jesus said to him; You yourself said it. Yet I say to you men, From henceforth you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. (Matthew 26:64)
- Even the Christian resolve to serve God is an **oath** or a **swearing** to Yehowah, putting the Christian into a sacred relationship. Jesus put swearing and vows in the same category.
- Again you heard that it was said to those of ancient times; You must not **swear without performing**, but you must **pay your vows to Yehowah**. (Matthew 5:33)
- Also, the apostle Paul, in order to strengthen his testimony before his readers, makes what is tantamount to an **oath** at;
- Now I call upon God as a witness against my own soul that it is to spare you that I have not yet come to Corinth. (2 Corinthians 1:23)
- Now as to the things I am writing you, look! In the sight of God, I am not lying. (Galatians 1:20)
- He further refers to an **oath** as a customary and proper way of putting an end to a dispute and calls attention to the fact that God; when he purposed to demonstrate more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his counsel, stepped in with an **oath**, **swearing** by himself, since he could not swear by anyone greater.

- This added to his promise a legal guarantee and gave double assurance by means of two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, namely, God's word of **promise** and his **oath**.
- For when God made his promise to Abraham, since he could not swear by anyone greater, he swore by himself. (**Hebrews 6:13**)
- Saying; Assuredly in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply you. (**Hebrews 6:14**)
- And thus after Abraham had shown patience, he obtained this promise. (**Hebrews 6:15**)
- For men swear by the one greater, and their **oath** is the end of every dispute, as it is a legal guarantee to them. (**Hebrews 6:16**)
- In this manner God, when he purposed to demonstrate more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his counsel, stepped in with an **oath**. (**Hebrews 6:17**)
- In order, that, through two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to the refuge may have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope set before us. (**Hebrews 6:18**)
- Furthermore, Paul points out that Christ was made High Priest by oath of Yehowah and has been given in pledge of a better covenant.
- For there are indeed men that have become priests without a sworn oath, but there is one with an oath sworn by the One who said respecting him; Yehowah has sworn, and he will feel no regret, You are a priest forever. (**Hebrews 7:21**)
- To that extent also Jesus has become the one given in pledge of a better covenant. (**Hebrews 7:22**)
- The Scriptures make upwards of 50 references to Yehowah himself as making oaths.
- On the night of Jesus arrest, the apostle Peter three times denied knowing Jesus, finally giving way to cursing and swearing. We read concerning the third denial. Then Peter started to curse and swear; I do not know the man Jesus!

- Then he started to curse and **swear**; I do not know the man!
And immediately a cock crowed. (**Matthew 26:74**)
- Peter was fearfully trying to convince those around him that his denials were truthful. By **swearing** to the matter, he was taking an **oath** that his words were true and that a calamity might befall him if they were not.

See Also CURSE