

ברוך אתה טדה"ד  
אלהינו מלך העולם  
אשר קדשנו במצוותיו  
ואנו לעסוק  
בדברי תורה.

Barukh Atah Adonai  
Eloheinu melekh ha-olam  
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu la'asok  
b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, **TDHD**,  
our God, eternal sovereign, who  
sanctifies us in God's connecting  
command to busy ourselves  
in words of Torah.

**Numbers 30:2-10**

וידבר משה אל-ראשי המטות לבני  
ישראל לאמר זה הדבר אשר צוה  
טדה"ד: איש כי ידר נדר לטדה"ד או-  
השבע שבעה לאסור אסור על-נפשו  
לא יחל דברו ככל-היצא מפיו יעשה:

2-3. Moses spoke to the chiefs of the tribes of the  
Children of Israel, saying – This is what **TDHD**  
commanded: **If a man vows to TDHD**, or **swears an  
oath to bind his soul**, he must not break his word: he  
must do all that comes out of his mouth.

ואשה כי-תדר נדר לטדה"ד ואסרה  
אסור בבית אביה בנעריה: ושמע אביה  
את-נדרה ואסרה אשר אסרה על-  
נפשה והחריש לה אביה וקמו כל-  
נדריה וכל-אסור אשר-אסרה על-  
נפשה יקום: ואם-הניא אביה אותה  
ביום שמעו כל נדריה ואסריה אשר-  
אסרה על-נפשה לא יקום וטדה"ד  
יסלח-לה כי-הניא אביה אותה:

4-6. If a **woman vows to TDHD** and binds herself  
while unmarried in her father's house, and her  
father hears her vow and the bond by which she  
bound her soul, and her father stays silent at her,  
then all her vows will stand and every bond by  
which she bound her soul will stand. But if her  
father **inhibits** her on the day he hears her vow to  
bind her **soul**, it will not stand and **TDHD** will  
forgive her, for her father inhibited her.

ואם-היו תהיה לאיש ונדרה עליה  
או מבטא שפתייה אשר אסרה  
על-נפשה: ושמע אישה ביום שמעו  
והחריש לה וקמו נדריה ואסריה  
אשר-אסרה על-נפשה יקמו:

7-8. And if she had a husband when she vowed or  
spoke from her lips to bind her soul, and her  
husband hears it and stays silent for it on the day he  
heard it, then her vows will be enforced on her: the  
bond of her soul will stand.

ואם ביום שמע אישה וניא אותה  
והפר את-נדרה אשר עליה ואת  
מבטא שפתייה אשר אסרה על-נפשה  
וטדה"ד יסלח-לה: ונדר אלמנה  
וגרושה כל אשר-אסרה על-נפשה  
יקום עליה:

9-10. But if her husband inhibits his wife on the day  
he hears it, then he may nullify her vow, and what  
she spoke from her lips to bind her soul will be of no  
effect – and **TDHD** will forgive her. But for a widow  
and divorcee, every vow and word that binds her  
soul will be enforced on her.

KOL NIDRE

<u>PARDES</u>		<u>COMMENTS</u>	<u>QUESTIONS</u>
<u>P</u>	Pshat (פשוט)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differential gender treatment</li> <li>Woman vow stands if not instantly stopped</li> <li>How old = 11&gt;&gt;12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What kind of vow, binding? - what are these?</li> <li>What is inhibit versus prohibit?</li> </ul>
<u>R</u>	Remez (רמז)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise objections instantly, do</li> </ul>	
<u>D</u>	Drash (דרש)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender roles</li> <li>Male paternali:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>But wait, women heard it all at Sinai!</li> </ul>
<u>S</u>	Sod (סוד)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soul - nefesh (Earthly level)</li> <li>V:</li> </ul>	

This matters a whole lot

### Hizkuni, Num. 30:2

או השבע שבעה לאסר אסר מה בין נדר לשבועה נדר נודר בחיי המלך שבועה נשבע במלך עצמו – חי ה' וחי נפשך אם אעזבך.

*Or swears an oath to bind his soul* – What is the difference between a vow and an oath? A vow is on the life of the [Sovereign] and an oath on the Sovereign itself – the life of God and of your soul if you break it.

### Or HaHayyim, Num. 30:2

אִישׁ כִּי יָדַר נֶדֶר לַטְהָרָה אוֹ-הַשְּׁבַע שְׁבַעַה לְאַסֹּר אֶסֶר עַל-נַפְשׁוֹ. ב' עֲנִיּוּנִים אַחַד, לַעֲשׂוֹת מַעֲשֵׂה הַטּוֹב כְּגוֹן לַלְמוּד וּלְלַמֵּד לַהֲקַדִּישׁ לְגַמְלוֹת חֲסִדִּים וְא' לְהַרְחִיק הַתִּיעוּב לְהַגְדִּיר עֲצֻמוֹ... ב' בְּעֲנִיּוּנֵי הַנּוֹגְעִים לְגוֹף בְּמַעֲשֵׂה שְׂאֵין בּוֹ לֹא אִיסוּר וְלֹא מִצְוָה, וְגַם זֶה יִתְחַלֵּק לְשְׁנֵי דְבָרִים, לְאֲכֹל וּלְשִׁתּוֹת לְדוֹר בְּדִירָה זֶה וְכַדוּמָה אוֹ שְׁלֹא לְאֲכֹל דְּבַר פְּלוּנִי וְשְׁלֹא לְלַבּוֹשׁ מְלִבוֹשׁ זֶה וְכַדוּמָה... וּלְפִי שֵׁשׁ נֶדֶר שֶׁהוּא לֵה' וְדִינוֹ מִשׁוֹנָה מִנְדְרֵי חוּל כְּאֲשֶׁר יִבָּאֵר הַכְּתוּב לִזֶּה פֶּרְטוֹ וְאָמַר נֶדֶר לֵה', נִמְצָאת אֹמֵר שֶׁהַזְכִּיר הַכְּתוּב ב' מִיָּנִי נְדָרִים נְדָרֵי חוּל וְנְדָרֵי קֹדֶשׁ:

*If a man vows to TDHD, or swears an oath to bind his soul* – These are two different sets of categories. One set is for spiritual categories [of which we are commanded] – one to do good deeds like learning Torah, teaching, sanctifying [by performing Jewish ritual] and acts of *hesed*, and another to distance and restrain oneself [from impurity]. And there are two corporeal categories of which we are commanded neither to do nor not do – such as permitted choice of food or drink, where we live, what we wear, etc. When we invoke the Name of God, we convert a secular vow to a spiritual one: it then directly relates to God. So Torah's apparent repetition of "vow" and "oath" is not so – one applies when we invoke God, the other not, though both being holy, but invoking God renders the ordinary vow especially sacred.

### Sforno, Num. 30:2

זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה טְהָרָה ד' - כְּשֶׁאָמַר בְּהָר סִינַי וְלֹא תִשְׁבַּעוּ בְּשֵׁמִי לְשַׁקֵּר וְחָלַלְתָּ הֵיתָה הַכּוֹנֵה הָאִישׁ הַנּוֹדֵר אוֹ נִשְׁבַּע לֹא יִחַל דְּבָרוֹ כִּי בְּחַלּוֹ דְּבָרוֹ הוּא מַחֲלֵל אֶת יְהוָה אֲבֵל הָאִשָּׁה שְׂאִינָה בְּרִשׁוֹת עֲצֻמָּה לֹא תִהְיֶה מַחֲלֵל אִם יִפְר הַמִּיפֵּר:

*This is what TDHD commanded* – At Sinai: "Do not make a false oath in My Name and desecrate it." The intent was that one must not *deliberately* swear falsely, but having sworn you must honor your oath in its every detail so as not to desecrate God. But a [child or married] woman subject to restrictions imposed upon her is not considered as having desecrated the Name of God by violating her vow or oath on that account, provided her [father or] husband declared her vow void.

### Rashi, Num. 30:2

בבית אביה. בְּרִשׁוֹת אָבִיהָ וְאֶפְלוֹ אִינָה בְּבֵיתוֹ.

*In her father's house* – Under her father's control, even if not [literally] in his house.

### Ramban, Num. 30:2

ואשה כי תדר נדר לה' ושמע אביה רצה הכתוב להזכיר האיסור תחלה להגיד כי גם הנערה בלאו הנזכר שלא יחל דברו ועל כן אם קיים לה אביה קם הנדר אבל אם הניא אותה לא יקום ואמר וה' יסלח לה כי הניא אביה אותה להגיד שלא נאמר יסלח לה רק כאשר תעשה אחרי הנאת האב לא מתחלה אם עברה על הנדר ואחרי כן הניא אותה.

*If a woman vows to TDHD ... and her father hears her vow* - Torah orders deliberately, first upholding the woman's vow: if she makes a vow and her father is quiet about it or confirms it, all her vows stand. Only then Torah addresses the father's prohibition, to teach that the woman's vow usually stands. Only [in the exceptional case of a father's disavowal, and only on the day of it] does Torah state "and God will forgive, because her father inhibited her."

<b>Familial Status of Woman</b>	<b>Power / Authority</b>	<b>Status of Vow</b>
Never married	Father	Presumptive
Married	Husband	Presumptive
Widowed, Divorced	None	Absolute

**B.T. Bava Kama 84a; B.T. Hullin 11b-12a; B.T. Niddah 67b**

היכא דאפשר אפשר      What is possible is possible;  
היכא דלא אפשר לא אפשר      What is impossible is impossible.

**B.T. Pesahim 108a**

אשה אצל בעלה לא בעיא הסיבה ואם      A woman in her husband's [house] needn't recline  
אשה חשובה היא צריכה הסיבה.      but if she is an important woman, she must recline.

**Meiri on B.T. Pesahim 108a**

*(Menahem ben Solomon Meiri, Spain [1249-1315])*

A woman need not recline, because a woman is not fully free in the presence of her husband. But if she is an important woman, then she must recline, as there is nothing servile in her marriage.

**Tosafot on B.T. Pesahim 108a**

Nowadays all women are important, so they are required to recline.

**Committee on Jewish Law and Standards  
Conservative Movement (1980)**

Once women have accepted [a Jewish spiritual] obligation, they may recite the *berakhot*, and [thereby] become eligible to enable others to discharge their obligation. It was not [Talmudic or other first-millennium] sources that prohibited women ... but later [decisors of the Middle Ages] who escalated restrictiveness in the matter....

Thus, beginning with such statements as "Do not increase conversation with a woman," through "The *yetzer hara* only has dominion over what the eyes see [and] *Satan* was created along with woman," "The voice of a woman is [a source of lewdness]," the escalation went on until some sages declared a [prohibition merely] upon gazing at a woman's little finger....

We must never forget in dealing with either an individual or a whole segment of society, in this case women, that a pervasive factor in rabbinic creativity that evolved ancient halakhah was the humanitarian approach.

If this did not always motivate a progressive process in their halakhah related to women as it did, for example, in their consideration for the poor or in regard to selecting leniency over stringency, this can only be attributed to their cultural conditioning.

## Vows in an Unhinged World, and a World Redeemed

Today I receive Torah's gendered words more in terms of power than gender itself. Torah's deep focus here isn't really about gender, but an external force overpowering our agency to keep promises and become our best selves.

We live in an unhinged time. Rage politics, corruption, natural disasters, wars, bigotry, hate, isolation, fear, trauma and other mental health challenges all swirl around. Sometimes these external forces overpower us. They can leave us feeling small, weak, pessimistic, detached or defeated. Our very hearts whose openness and sensitivity we need to become our best selves are, by design and necessity, also vulnerable to the slings and arrows of unhinged times. Try as we might to rise above them, sometimes we come up short.

It's easy (maybe too easy) to blame unhinged times for the times we fall short. How much this unhinged year pulled us from our best selves – and whether we tried our best anyway – are questions for discernment between us and conscience, between us and the Sacred.

As the High Holy Days come into view on the distant horizon, Torah's timely point, I'd offer, is that we should go both hard and easy on ourselves. It's time to begin turning deeply within, to ask hard questions and hold ourselves accountable. But as we do, in this unhinged year, maybe Torah also asks us to note the external forces that overpowered us – ones that maybe inhibited our best selves and heisted our agency to fully keep our commitments.

If we're reticent to do so, we might take a cue from social psychologists. The [fundamental attribution error](#) we tend to make about behaviors is to under-emphasize the circumstances and instead "attribute" behavior to character only. Turns out that all of us are products of our circumstances as well as our character and choices.

So maybe we can extend ourselves grace and understanding that this unhinged year has been what it was – full of beauty and promise, and also full of tumult. And if so for us, then so too for others who hurt or disappointed us. This unhinged year was unhinged also for them. Maybe we can extend to others the grace and understanding that we crave for ourselves.

Perhaps this inward turn, and this nuanced approach, can help us pivot from a year unhinged to a new year just waiting to be redeemed. Our hearts and souls, our relationships and community, our nation and our world all hang in the balance.

### Rashi, Num. 30:2

ראשי המטות - למד שְהִפְרַת נְדָרִים  
בְּיָחִיד מִמַּחָה, וְאִם אֵין יָחִיד מִמַּחָה,  
יִפָּר בְּשִׁלְשָׁה הַדְּיוּטוֹת.

[Why did Moses say this to] the chiefs of the tribes [and not all the people]? – To teach that annulling vows is to be effected by a [spiritual] expert, and that only if there is no such expert, they are annulled by three common people.

### Ramban, Num. 30:2

אמר עוד מלבד אלה הנדרים  
הנוכחים יש עוד נדרי הדיוט וככל  
היוצא מפיו של אדם חייב לקיים  
ולעשות כל אשר אסר על נפשו  
ובכולן לא יחל דברו אבל אחרים  
מוחלין לו:

Now comes this teaching that besides all these [ritual] vows and freewill offerings, there are vows of common people – and a person is [no less] obliged to do all that comes out of one's mouth, and do all by which one has bound one's soul. And in all of it, one cannot break one's word – but others may forgive it.

## Mahzor for the High Holy Days

אמת כי אתה הוא חסדן	Truth: You are our <b>Love</b> ,
ומוכיח ויודע ועד	abjurer and eternal witness.
וכותב וחותם וסופר ומונה	You write and seal, inscribe and recount,
ותזכר כל הנשכחות	Remembering all that we forgot,
ותפתח את ספר הזכרונות	And opening the Book of Remembrance
ומאליו יקרא	Which reads from itself
וחותם יד כל אדם בו.	The acts of each human hand.
ושופר גדול יתקע	The great Shofar is sounded,
וקול דממה דקה ישמע	And a still, small Voice is heard.
ומלאכים יחפזון	Even the angels rush to attention:
וחיל ורעדה יאחזון	They are grasped with awe
ויאמרו הנה יום הדין	As they declare: "It's the day of judgment!"
לפקוד על צבא מרום בדין	The heavenly hosts stand at attention
כי לא יזכו בעיניך בדין	For in Your eyes, all are seen as they are.
וכל באי עולם	And now we come before You, one by one,
יעברון לפניך	Passing before You
כבני מרון	Like a flock of sheep.

\* \* \*

בישיבה של מעלה ובישיבה של מטה. In the *yeshivah* above and the *yeshivah* below, on the  
על דעת המקום ועל דעת הקהל. אנחנו authority of God and this community, we hereby  
מתירין להתפלל את העברנין: permit prayer with the *avaryonim*.

כל נדרי ואסרי וחרמי וקונמי וכנויי All vows, bonds and promises ... that we vowed,  
וקנוסי ושבועות דאנדרא ודאשתבעא made and promised, by which we bound our souls  
ודאחריםא על נפשתיא: from last Yom Kippur to this Yom Kippur – may it  
מיום פפורים העבר עד יום פפורים be good for us – we repudiate them all. All of  
הזה עלינו לטובה. כלהון איחרטא them are undone, abandoned, cancelled, null and  
בהון. כלהון יהון שרון. שביקין. שביתין. void, not in force and not in effect. May our vows  
בטלין ומבטלין. לא שרירין ולא קימין: not be vows, and our bonds not be bonds, and our  
נדרא לא נדרי. ואסרנא לא אסרי. oaths not be oaths.  
ושבועתנא לא שבועות: