

Age Definitions for Vows

Ref: *Sefer Haflaah, Hilchot Nedarim, Chapter 11*

A vow is taken for G-ds sake.

Therefore, a child who takes a vow must be tested to see if they understand this.

A male child is tested *throughout* his 13th year (i.e. between 12 and 13). A female child is tested throughout her 12th year (i.e. between 11 and 12).

A child younger than this cannot take a vow, even if they claim to understand.

Older than 13 (boys) and 12 (girls), their vow is accepted and binding even if they say that they did not understand, and even if they have not manifested physical signs of maturity.

However, they are not subject to *malkot* until they reach majority with signs of physical maturity (i.e. pubic hairs etc.).

- Male for **full 13th year** – investigate to see if they understood their vows (i.e. between **12 & 13**).
- Female for the **full 12th year** – investigate to see if they understood their vows (i.e. between **11 & 12**).
- Male of **13 years and 1 day** even if physical signs of maturity absent – vow affective.
- Female of **12 years and 1 day** even if physical signs of maturity absent – vow effective.
- Male of **13 years plus** and physical signs of maturity present, then punishable.
- Female of **12 years plus** and physical signs of maturity present, then punishable.
- *Naarah* (maiden) from **12-12.5 years** – father may nullify her vows (or husband if married).
- Child below 12 male and 11 female cannot take vows.
- *Bogeret* i.e. **after 12.5**, father may not nullify her vows.
- Married women from *chuppah* onwards, husband can nullify her vows.
- *Naarah* who has *erusin* (first stage of marriage), vows can be nullified by father *together* with *arus* (husband).
- *Yevamah* – *Yavam* can only nullify her vows after marriage *consummated*.
- Once a father has married off his daughter and she is after *chuppah*, if she becomes a divorcee or widow, her father can no longer nullify her vows even if she is a *naarah*.

Reminder:

Age Definitions. Ref: *Sefer Nashim, Hilchot Ishut, Chapter 2.*

