

Jeremiah Chapter 35

Verses 1-19: This chapter provided a description of the commitment to obedience by a group of people to their father, in contrast to the Jews' disobedience to God.

The pledge of the "Rechabites" was probably instituted by their ancestor "Jonadab", who wanted to keep the clan pure from corruption when Jehu was purging Baal worship from Israel (2 Kings 10:15-23). If the Rechabites were this observant of the instructions of their forefather, then Judah should have obeyed the Word of God all the more.

Jeremiah 35:1 "The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,"

"Days of Jehoiakim": 609-597 B.C. This backed up to several years (before 34:1), possibly for a thematic reason, to cite a case of obedience after the episode of treachery (in chapter 34).

This is a totally different prophecy from the one in the last chapter. This prophecy is not addressed to Zedekiah.

Jeremiah 35:2 Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.

"The Rechabites" were descended from the Kenites (compare Judges 1:16; 1 Chron. 2:55). Their way of life was nomadic and austere, and their prohibition of "wine" recalled the Nazarite vows (see the notes on Judges 13:5 and 2 Kings 10:15).

These were a semi-nomadic Kenite group, related to Moses' father-in-law (Judges 1:16; 4:11), and descended from those (in 1 Chron. 2:55). The originator of their rules was Jonadab (35:6, 14; 2 Kings 10:15, 23). They derived their name from Rechab (verse 8), and were not of Jacob's seed, but "strangers" in Israel.

Who were the Rechabites, you might ask? It seems they were a group of very simple living people who lived above the sinful lifestyle of the cities. They were nomads. They did not even settle down to one spot when they were in the city. They were constantly on the move. They were people of very high morals. Many believe them to be associated with the Kenites. Others believe they ministered as the Levites. Their daughters were said to marry men from the Levitical tribe and their children ministered. Their lifestyle depicts the fact that all believers are strangers in this land. This is not our home. We are headed for our home in heaven. They were not materialistic people and they lived a very simple lifestyle. We might learn from that too. Many of the problems in our society today come from the cravings for the material things of life. Their religious convictions were much like the Israelites but the difference being they lived more holy lives than the Israelites. The fact they met in one of the rooms attached to the temple is what is meant by "chambers". They were offered wine to drink. It was believed however, they were teetotalers. The wine then had some religious significance.

Jeremiah 35:3 "Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites;"

Who was, no doubt, the most famous and leading man in this family.

"And his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites": The several branches of the family, especially the males; the women perhaps were excepted. Whom it might not be so decent to gather together on such an occasion, to drink wine; and not at least offer it to them.

The Jeremiah, in the verse above, is not Jeremiah who penned the book of Jeremiah. He is mentioned in the word "I". The Jeremiah mentioned was part of the family of Rechabites.

Jeremiah 35:4 "And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which [was] by the chamber of the princes, which [was] above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door:"

Into the temple, as he was ordered. That is, he invited them there, and they came along with him, having, no doubt, a respect for him as a prophet. And the rather, as it is highly probable he came in the name of the Lord to them.

"Into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God": A prophet, as the Targum and Syriac version; and so Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it. This must be understood of Hanan, and not Igdaliah, as the accents show. He is thought by some to be the same with Hanani the seer, in the times of Asa (2 Chron. 16:7).

"Which was by the chamber of the princes": These were not the princes of the blood, the sons of Jehoiachin. Their chambers or apartments were not in the temple, but in the royal palace. But these were the princes or rulers of the people, as they are called (Acts 4:8). The Sanhedrim, who's this chamber was, as Dr. Lightfoot has observed.

"Which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door": A porter, whose chamber or lodge was under that in which the Sanhedrim sat. The Targum calls him a treasurer. One of the seven "amarcalim", who had the keys of several chambers, where the vessels of the sanctuary and other things were put. And Kimchi observes, the word we render door comprehends the vessels of the sanctuary, and the vessels of wine, and other things.

The Scripture here is explaining where Jeremiah took them. This area was the area of Hanan. Hanan was an officer in the temple area. He was believed by many to be a prophet. Notice there was someone who kept the door, to keep all out who were not invited.

Jeremiah 35:5 "And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine."

The Lord had given His people houses and vineyards as one of the gifts of the Promised Land (Deut. 6:10-11), and so the Rechabites' pledge to "drink no wine" and "Neither shall ye build house" was something like a Nazirite vow that indicated special devotion to the Lord (Num. 6:2-4). God honored their vow, but human traditions can never have the same authority as His commands. Imposed on others, personal standards become a form of legalism (Rom. 14:1-12).

This is like a test for the Rechabites. They did not drink wine. This was a temptation to see, just exactly what they would do if they were offered the wine in private. Will their morals withstand such temptation? We will see in the next verse.

Jeremiah 35:6 "But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, [neither ye], nor your sons for ever:"

Or "we do not drink wine"; we are not used to it; we never do drink any. It is not lawful for us to do it; nor will we, no matter who asks us.

"For Jonadab the son of Rechab our father. Not their immediate father, but their progenitor. Perhaps the same Jonadab is meant who lived in the times of Jehu, and rode with him in his chariot. By which it appears he was a man of note and figure, and who lived near three hundred years before this time (2 Kings 10:15). Which is more likely than that he should be a descendant of his, and the proper father of the present Rechabites, which is the opinion of Scaliger.

"Commanded us, saying, ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever. As long as any of them were in the world. What was the reason of this command, and of what follows, is not easy to say. Whether it was to prevent quarrels and contentions, luxury and sensuality. Or to inure them to hardships; or to put them in remembrance that they were but strangers in the land in which they lived. Or to retain them in the original course of life their ancestors had lived in, feeding cattle. Be it what it will, these his sons thought themselves under obligations to observe it. And perhaps finding, by experience, it was for their good so to do.

We see from this their morals they had been taught will not allow them to drink. Jonadab was spoken of as the father of the Rechabites here. The one thing that set them aside from others, was their desire to live holy before God.

Jeremiah 35:7 "Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have [any]: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye [be] strangers."

The last words of the verse probably give us a reason of the former. They were not native Jews, but strangers amongst them, who commonly are envied when they are observed to thrive too much, or to live splendidly. And that envy of the natives of the place where they sojourn exposed them to their hatred and malice, so as their lives are made uneasy to them. Jonadab therefore cautions his sons to avoid these inconveniencies by a thrifty, sober, laborious life, to which they had been bred. In keeping flocks, and to avoid any thing might expose them to envy, or hatred, or malice of the people amongst whom they were come to sojourn.

We can see in this that their lifestyle was very different from the Hebrews, especially in the cities. They wanted no permanent roots. It reminds me a little of Abraham who left Ur of the Chaldees and lived in tents the rest of his life. He was looking for a city whose maker was God. The permanence of a house was what they were trying to avoid. They were strangers in the land. They were not controlled by such stable things as vineyards or crops.

Jeremiah 35:8 "Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters;"

“Obeyed”: What was commended here was not the father’s specific commands about nomadic life, but the steadfast obedience of the sons. Their obedience was unreserved in all aspects, at all times, on the part of all, without exception; in all these respects Israel was lacking (verse 14).

Their obedience to the holy life that Jonadab had set for them is admirable. This abstinence from wine was for the entire family.

Jeremiah 35:9 "Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:"

This explains that part of the charge more fully, which respects building of houses. Which did not restrain them from building houses for others, if any of them were masters of that art. Which is not very likely, since they were wholly brought up in the field as shepherds. But it forbade them building any for themselves, and making use of them by dwelling in them.

"Neither have we vineyard, nor field, or seed": Any piece of ground planted with vines, or field sown with corn, or any seed to sow with. So exactly conformable were they to the prescriptions of their ancestor. Diodorus Siculus reports of the Nabathaeans, a people of Arabia, descended from Nebaioth (see Isa. 60:7). That they have several laws which are much the same with those enjoined the Rechabites. For he says; "it is a law with them not to sow corn, nor to plant any plant that bears fruit, nor to make use of wine, nor to build houses. And whosoever is found doing any of these things is, reckoned worthy of death. And the reason of their having such a law is, because they think that those who possess such things are easily compelled by men in power to do whatever is commanded them, for the sake of the enjoyment of them."

Jeremiah 35:10 "But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us."

Ever since, until very lately, when they had taken up their dwelling in Jerusalem. The reason of which is presently given;

"And have obeyed, and done according to all Jonadab our father commanded us". And should it be objected, that in one point they had not obeyed, in that they had left their tents, and now dwelt in Jerusalem. They had this to say in answer to it, and as the reason of their so doing.

Many times the best way to keep away from sin, is to separate yourself from the temptations. This they have done. Their friends are those of their family, who believe the same thing they do. They have separated themselves from the world and its sins.

Jeremiah 35:11 "But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem."

Into the land of Judea to invade it, which was in the reign of Jehoiakim, in the fourth year of it, after he had served him three years, and rebelled against him (see note on Jer. 35:1).

"That we said, come, and let us go to Jerusalem": They said one to another, let us not stay here to be destroyed by a foreign enemy; but let us go to Jerusalem, a fortified city, where we may be safe.

"For fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians": For Nebuchadnezzar's army in this expedition consisted of Chaldeans and Syrians, and of other nations (2 Kings 24:2).

"So we dwell at Jerusalem": For the present. It seems as though this was quickly after Nebuchadnezzar's incursion, and when he was but just departed. So that their fears had not wholly subsided; and they, as yet, had not returned to their tents, and former manner of living. Hence it appears that the Rechabites did not look upon this command of their father as equal to a divine precept, which must be always obeyed. But that in case of necessity it might be dispensed with, and especially when in danger of life, and when human prudence required. And in which case the lawgiver himself would have dispensed with it, had he been on the spot.

This explains what they are doing in the city of Jerusalem. They have come here for safety from the Chaldean army. They felt there would be safety in Jerusalem believing God would preserve His holy city.

Jeremiah 35:12 "Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,"

Up to this time the prophet had acted on the thought which came into his mind as an inspiration, without apparently more than a partial insight into its meaning. Now, as the words indicate, he passes at once into the prophetic state and speaks the prophetic words. It follows from (Jeremiah 35:18), that it was uttered in the presence of the Rechabites and formed, we may believe, the conclusion of this strange dramatic scene.

Verses 13-17: The prophet indicted the Jews for flagrant disobedience.

Jeremiah 35:13 "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD."

The Lord of armies in heaven and earth; the Creator of Israel. Their benefactor, covenant God and Father and whom they professed to worship. God and not man; infinitely greater than Jonadab, whose precepts had been observed by his posterity.

"Go and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem": This is an order to the prophet to remove from the chamber where he was with the Rechabites, and go to the court of the people, where they were assembled for worship. Or into the city of Jerusalem, and gather the heads of them together, and declare the following things to them.

"Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord": From this instance and case of the Rechabites, who had so constantly obeyed their father, and hearkened to his words, though but a man. A father of their flesh; an earthly father; and who had been dead long ago. And therefore, much more ought they to hearken to the Father of their spirits; their Father which is in heaven, and who lives forever.

This is a break from the Rechabites. Perhaps Jeremiah stopped while he was at the temple and gave them a warning from God. God is fast losing patience with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because they will not heed His warnings.

Jeremiah 35:14 "The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me."

That article particularly, respecting drinking wine, has been carefully observed. Which, though so agreeable to the nature of man, what cheers the heart of God and man, and was not prohibited them by any law of God. Yet, being forbidden by their father, they abstained from it.

"For unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment": Though prescribed them three hundred years ago; during all which time they had punctually observed it, even to that very day. Which might with great truth and strictness be said; since they had that very day refused to drink anything.

"Notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early, and speaking": Who is the eternal God; the King of kings; the great Lawgiver, able to save and to destroy. Who had spoken to them, and given them laws as soon as they were a people. Very early, in the times of Moses, on Mount Sinai and Horeb. And of which they had been reminded time after time, and enforced by proper arguments and motives. Whereas the command of Jonadab was that of a mere man, not above three hundred years ago, and of which his posterity had never been put in mind. But as it was handed down from father to son, and this they constantly observed.

"But ye hearkened not unto me": So that their disobedience was greatly aggravated.

The Rechabites had no problem keeping the commandments of their earthly father, but the Israelites would not keep the commandments of their heavenly Father. The Rechabites made these Israelites look bad because Israel was not keeping God's commandments. The Rechabites

were not constantly being warned by prophets to repent. They just lived the holy life from the beginning. The Israelites had been warned over and over by prophets that God sent to repent and live for God.

Jeremiah 35:15 "I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending [them], saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me."

One after another, ever since the times of Moses, to explain and enforce the laws given. A circumstance not to be observed in the case of the Rechabites; who yet, without such intimations, kept the charge their father gave them.

"Rising up early, and sending them": (see Jer. 7:13).

"Saying, return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them": All which were of a moral nature, and what were in themselves just and fitting to be done. That they should repent of their sins, refrain from them, and reform their lives. And abstain from idolatry, and worship the one only living and true God, which was but their reasonable service. Whereas abstinence from wine, enjoined the Rechabites, was an indifferent thing, neither morally good nor evil. And yet they obeyed their father in it, and when they had not that advantage by it, as is next promised these people.

"And ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers": A land flowing with milk and honey. And in which they might build houses, plant vineyards, sow fields, and possess them; which the Rechabites might not do.

"But ye have not inclined your ear, and hearkened unto me": They did not listen to his precepts, nor obey them. They would not so much as give them the hearing, and much less the doing.

God's people had been taught from the time of Abraham that they would be blessed if they kept God's commandments. They also had been taught to be disobedient to God, brought curses. They ignored all of that and lived to please their flesh. They were unfaithful to God and started worshipping false gods. They were a stiff-necked people who would not listen to God's warnings.

Jeremiah 35:16 "Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me:"

Here we have the contrast between the Rechabites and the Israelites; the obedience of the one, and the disobedience of the other. The design of which is to aggravate and expose the sin of the Jews, since the former;

"Have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them": That particular commandment of not drinking wine, which they had never once violated in such a course of time. Nor could they now be prevailed upon, even by the prophet himself, to do it.

"But this people hath not hearkened unto me": The Lord their God, their father that bought them, made them, and established them. Gross ingratitude! (Deut. 32:6).

Jonadab and Rechab were but men, and yet their people obeyed the commandments they had laid down. God's people will not even listen to the commandments of the God that made them.

Jeremiah 35:17 "Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered."

Provoked by such ill usage.

"Behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them": Which Abarbinel interprets of all the threatening and curses in the law and the prophets respecting the Jews, until the times of Jeremiah. Though it may more especially intend the evil, God by him had pronounced upon them. Namely, that the Chaldean army should come into their land, besiege Jerusalem, and take it, and carry captive its inhabitants.

"Because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered": He spoke to them by his prophets, he called to them in his providences, and took every method to warn them of their sin and danger. And bring them to repentance and reformation; but all to no purpose. The Targum is, "because I sent unto them all my servants the prophets, but they obeyed not; and they prophesied to them, but they returned not."

God explains one more time why He is going to carry out all of the punishment against them. They have been unfaithful, worshipping false gods and have not repented.

Verses 18-19: "Because ye have obeyed": God will bless the Rechabites not in spiritually saving them all, but in preserving a posterity in which some can have a place in His service. A Rechabite still has a role (in Neh. 3:14); also, the title over Psalm 71 in the LXX (Greek translation of the Old Testament), was addressed for use by the sons of Jonadab and the earliest captives.

Jeremiah 35:18 "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you:"

To the family of them, to those that were with him in the temple, and while they were there. And what he said to them, which is as follows, was by the order and direction of the Lord.

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel": He uses the same titles, when speaking to them, as to the Jews, expressive of his sovereignty, power, and grace.

"Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father": That particular command concerning not drinking wine.

"And kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you. All the rest, as well as that; though they were many, they took notice of them, and observed them. They kept them in their minds and memory, and made them the rule of their actions, and conformed to them in all respects.

These Rechabites will be rewarded for living a holy life by obeying the commandments of Jonadab. God never overlooks even one person who is living upright before Him. It appears the teachings of Jonadab were pleasing to God. They had made a stand, and had not backslidden from that stand. God respects this type of loyalty.

Jeremiah 35:19 "Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."

The promise that Jonadab "shall not want a man to stand before me": is the same one given to the houses of David and Levi (in 33:17-18), and meant that the Lord would preserve this small clan through the Babylonian invasion and exile. The tragedy is that this blessing was only extended to a few individuals rather than the nation at large.

The following Scripture connects these Rechabites to the Levites.

Deuteronomy 10:8 "At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day."

Deuteronomy 18:5 "For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever."

Deuteronomy 18:7 "Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites [do], which stand there before the LORD." The type of life that God wanted the Levites to live is the type of life these Rechabites were living. God will honor their holiness by always having a Rechabite stand before Him. These Rechabites have pleased God, but the Israelites have greatly disappointed Him

Jeremiah Chapter 35 Questions

1. In verse 2, where did God send Jeremiah to prophesy?
2. Who were the Rechabites?
3. They were a people of very high _____.
4. Some believe they were associated with the _____.
5. Others believe they ministered like the _____.
6. What do many of the problems in our society today come from?
7. Their lifestyle depicts that all believers are _____ in this land.
8. What is meant by "chambers"?
9. They were _____, so the wine had some religious significance.
10. What chambers did they meet in?
11. How much wine was set before them?
12. Did their morals withstand this much temptation?
13. Why did they not drink the wine?
14. What were some of the other things he had commanded them not to do?
15. Who does this remind the author of?
16. Who, in their families, drank no wine?
17. Who were their friends?
18. Why had they come to Jerusalem?
19. What was Jeremiah to tell the men of Judah?
20. Who had commanded the Rechabites to not drink wine?
21. The Rechabites had no problem keeping the commandments of their earthly father, but the Israelites would not keep the commandments of their _____ Father.
22. Who had God sent to warn them?
23. How long had God's people been taught to keep the commandments of God, if they wanted to be blessed?
24. What did disobedience to God bring?

25. Why will God bring the evil on Judah and Jerusalem?
26. What will the Rechabites be rewarded for?
27. What promise does God make the Rechabites?
28. What two things does this lesson show?