

# Jeremiah 35 - The Obedient Rechabites

V. Present calamity of Judah (Jer 34:1–45:5)

(1) Before the fall (Jer 34:1–36:32)

(B) Faith of the Rechabites (35:1-19)

(a) Test (35:1-5)

(b) Fidelity (35:6-11)

(c) Example (35:12-17)

(d) Reward (35:18-19)

## Jeremiah 35

(B) Faith of the Rechabites (35:1-19)

(a) Test (35:1-5)

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying,

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1 This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the LORD during the reign of Josiah's son Jehoiakim, king of Judah:

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

- Previously discussing Zedekiah the last king, here Jeremiah goes all the back to Jehoiakim the king of Judah where this peculiar event occurs.

## The Rechabites

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

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2 "Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak to them. Bring them into the LORD's Temple, to one of the offices, and offer them wine to drink."

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.

3 So I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons, and all the household of the Rechabites,

3 Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites,

3 So I took Jeremiah's son Jaazaniah (a descendant of Habazziniah), his brothers, all his sons, and the whole family of the Rechabites.

3 Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites;

Jaazaniah—leader of the group, common name.

4 and I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was next to the chamber of the officials, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the doorkeeper.

4 and I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the doorkeeper.

4 I brought them to the LORD's Temple to the office of the descendants of Igdaliah's son Hanan, the man of God, which was next to the office of the officials, and which was above the office of Shallum's son Maaseiah, the keeper of the threshold.

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:

- Maaseiah = father of Zephaniah the priest? (Jer 21:1; 29:25; 37:3).

5 Then I set before the men of the house of the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, "Drink wine!"

5 Then I set before the men of the house of the Rechabites pitchers full of wine and cups; and I said to them, "Drink wine!"

5 I put containers full of wine and cups in front of the members of the Rechabite clan and told them, "Drink the wine!"

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.

#### (b) Fidelity (35:6-11)

6 But they said, "We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'You shall not drink wine, you or your sons, forever.'

6 But they said, "We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'You shall not drink wine, you or your sons, forever.'

6 But they said, "We won't drink wine, because our ancestor, Rechab's son Jonadab commanded us: 'You and your descendants are never to drink wine!'

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:*  
- Rechabites - a strange separatist nomadic group. They are descendants of Jonadab or Jehonadab who shows up in about 840 B.C. (2 Kings 10:15-23). They are somehow associated with the Midianites because we know that their kindred Jethro was of them. Jethro was Moses' father-in-law. Jethro was a Kenite and it was not an Israeli or Hebrew sect or tribe. At the time of Jehu, they were very prominent in purging the Northern Kingdom of Baal worship.

Heber was a Kenite and his wife was Jael. Israel was at war with Caananites and Sisera was the big ruler, he tried to hide in Jael's tent and she killed him, and that is a very important factor in the defeat to rid the land of Baal worship. The Kenites, even though they were not Hebrew, they were helpful in purging the land of idols. They generally lived in the Southern deserts (1 Sam 15:6) and in Israelite territory (Judges 4:17; 5:24). They are a very mysterious group which we don't know a lot about them. At the time that the Northern Kingdom fell, the Kenites moved south, so we do get the impression that they are faithful to the God of Israel even though they are not Hebrews. They are assimilated into Israel even though they do not have ethnic roots there.

They had a major leader about 840 BC called Jonadab and he is the one that gave them some rules. His positioning of them was to be a nomadic tribe and not to do anything that interfered with being nomadic. Therefore they did not build houses, they lived in tents where they could move. They did not raise wine, they did not raise any kind of crops, nomadic tribes can't do that.

A lot of misunderstandings have come out of this because it sounds like wine is bad but recognize that the main thing here is that Jonadab gave them all kind of rules incident to them maintaining a nomadic existence, he banned all sorts of sedentary occupations. What is interesting is that the Rechabites some three hundred years later were faithful to Jonadab's instruction. Their patriarch was Jonadab and here Jehoiakim invites the current Rechabites into the house of the Lord and he gives them pots full of wine and cups and says for them to drink some wine. There is nothing wrong with drinking wine or building houses, that was just the instruction that they were given.

7 You shall not build a house, and you shall not sow seed nor plant a vineyard, nor own one; but you shall live in tents all your days, so that you may live many days in the land where you live as strangers.'

7 You shall not build a house, and you shall not sow seed and you shall not plant a vineyard or own one; but in tents you shall dwell all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.'

7 You aren't to build houses, you aren't to sow seeds, and you aren't to plant vineyards, or own them. Instead, you are to live in tents all your lives, so you will enjoy a long life in the land where you reside.'

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.

- This advice is good, we should have a very light touch with the things of this world for our citizenship is in heaven.

8 And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, not to drink wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters,

8 We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, not to drink wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons or our daughters,

8 We have obeyed everything that our ancestor, Rechab's son Jonadab, commanded us. So we, our wives, our sons, and our daughters have drunk no wine all our lives,

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;

9 nor to build ourselves houses to live in; and we do not have a vineyard, a field, or seed.

9 nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in; and we do not have vineyard or field or seed.

9 and have built no houses to live in. We don't have vineyards, fields, or seed.

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

10 But we have lived *only* in tents, and have obeyed and have done according to all that our father Jonadab commanded us.

10 We have only dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and have done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

10 We have lived in tents. We have obeyed and have done everything that our ancestor Jonadab commanded us.

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

11 However, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, 'Come, and let's go to Jerusalem away from the army of the Chaldeans and the army of the Arameans.' So we have lived in Jerusalem."

11 But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, 'Come and let us go to Jerusalem before the army of the Chaldeans and before the army of the Arameans.' So we have dwelt in Jerusalem."

11 Now when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, 'Come on! Let's go to Jerusalem because of the army of the Chaldeans and the army of Aram. And now we're living in Jerusalem."

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.

- They are not city people. They retreated to the city because of the pressures of war. They are not normally in a city, but this is where we find them (Cf. Nazarites, Num 6:1-21).

(c) Example (35:12-17)

**12** Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

**12** Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

**12** This message from the LORD came to Jeremiah:

**12** Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

13 "This is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel says: 'Go and say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Will you not accept instruction by listening to My words?" declares the LORD.

13 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Go and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words?" declares the LORD.

13 "This is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel says: 'Go and say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Will you not accept correction by listening to what I say?" declares the LORD.

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.

14 "The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab have been followed, which he commanded his sons: not to drink wine. And they do not drink *wine* to this day, for they have obeyed their father's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not listened to Me.

14 "The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are observed. So they do not drink *wine* to this day, for they have obeyed their father's command. But I have spoken to you again and again; yet you have not listened to Me.

14 "But what Rechab's son Jonadab commanded his sons about not drinking wine is observed, and they haven't drunk wine until this day. Indeed, they obey the commands of

their ancestor. But I've spoken to you again and again, and you haven't obeyed me.

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.

15 Also I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending *them* again and again, saying: 'Turn now every person from his evil way and amend your deeds, and do not follow other gods to worship them. Then you will live in the land which I have given to you and to your forefathers; but you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me.'

15 Also I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending *them* again and again, saying: 'Turn now every man from his evil way and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to worship them. Then you will dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your forefathers; but you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me.'

15 I've sent you all my servants, the prophets, sending them again and again. I've said, 'Each of you turn from his evil behavior and make your deeds right. Don't follow other gods to serve them. Then you will remain in the land that I gave to you and to your ancestors.'

But you haven't paid attention<sup>9</sup> and you haven't obeyed me.

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.

- The Lord is drawing a contrast: here is this strange nomadic mystery group, but they are faithful to the voice of their instructor. The Lord is not making an issue of the wine, He is making an issue of their faithfulness to their prophet. He is contrasting their faithfulness and Judah's disobedience.

16 Indeed, the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have followed the command of their father which he commanded them, but this people has not listened to Me."<sup>10</sup>

16 Indeed, the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have observed the command of their father which he commanded them, but this people has not listened to Me."<sup>10</sup>

16 Indeed the descendants of Rechab's son Jonadab have carried out the command of their ancestor that he gave them, but this people has not obeyed me."

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:

17 Therefore this is what the LORD says, the God of armies, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I am bringing on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have

pronounced against them; because I spoke to them but they did not listen, and I have called them but they did not answer."

**17** Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am bringing on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them; because I spoke to them but they did not listen, and I have called them but they did not answer."

**17** Therefore, this is what the LORD God of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel says: "Look, I'm bringing on Judah and all the residents of Jerusalem all the disaster that I pronounced against them, because I spoke to them, but they didn't listen, and I called out to them, but they didn't answer."

**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.

(d) Reward (35:18-19)

**18** Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, "This is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel says: 'Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands, and done according to all that he commanded you,

**18** Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands and done according to all that he commanded you;

**18** Then Jeremiah told the house of the Rechabites, "This is what the LORD God of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel says: 'Because you obeyed the commandment of your ancestor Jonadab, have observed all his commandments, and have done everything that he commanded you,'

**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:

**19** therefore this is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel says: "Jonadab the son of Rechab will not lack a man to stand before Me always."

**19** therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me always."

**19** therefore, this is what the LORD God of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel says: 'Rechab's son Jonadab won't lack a descendant who serves me always.'

**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.

- Is 1:2-3. Our Lord's frustration is that the ox knows his master and his master's feeding trough, but Israel doesn't know the Lord. This is why I am intrigued with this whole positioning of Jer 35 and the Rechabites. It has nothing to do with the story, it is going back 17 years in the days of Jehoiakim. However, the contrast is that the princes of Judah didn't keep the covenant.

Five contrasts here:

- (1) The Rechabites followed a fallible leader, Jonadab was human, Judah disobeyed the eternal God. (Mal 1:6)
- (2) Jonadab gave his commandments once, God put down His rules repeatedly (v15).
- (3) The Rechabites had their restrictions only on temporal issues. No evidence that there is any profound spiritual issue, yet they have specific set of rules to deal with their physical life. God's rules are on both, there is some temporal issues but mostly eternal issues.
- (4) The Lord's people continually disobeyed for hundreds of years. The Rechabites obeyed three hundred years.
- (5) The final contrast is the Rechabites fidelity to their leader is rewarded. And the disloyalty of Judah is punished.

There is another issue here that causes a lot of puzzlement (v19). God is saying the descendants of Jonadab, that is the Rechabites, are going to be before the throne of grace forever. That leaves all kinds of questions. This question of stand before me or serve me typically implied to mean a priesthood, however it actually is used of the prophets (1 Kings 17:1), of the priests (Num 16:9) and of kings (1 Kings 10:8). So what is exactly meant by a Rechabite standing before the Lord forever is not that clear. The term is also used of patriarchs (Gen 19:27) and of Moses and Samuel both (Jer 15:1) and of the nation when they are worshiping the Lord (Jer 7:10).

Apparently the Rechabites are in fact destined to stand before the Lord. There is a strange passage in the Targim, one of the Jewish commentaries, which implies the Rechabites were somehow incorporated into the tribe of Levi. That is not Scriptural, it is not known for sure. Jeremiah's book was written twice and we will see why in Jer 36.