

# CHAPTER 35

## INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 35

In this chapter the disobedience of the people of the Jews unto God is aggravated by the obedience of the Rechabites to their father; and the one are threatened with the judgments of God upon them, and the other have a promise of the divine blessing. The time of this prophecy is observed; (<sup>2487D</sup>Jeremiah 35:1); an order to bring the Rechabites into one of the chambers of the temple, which was done accordingly, (<sup>2487D</sup>Jeremiah 35:2-4); wine is set before them to drink; which they refuse; alleging the command of their father to the contrary, (<sup>2487B</sup>Jeremiah 35:5-7); which they had carefully and constantly obeyed in every part of it, excepting that which respects their dwelling in tents; for which they give a reason, (<sup>2487B</sup>Jeremiah 35:8-11); by this instance of filial obedience to parents, the disobedience of the Jews towards their Father, which is in heaven, is aggravated; who, though he gave them laws and commandments, and sent his prophets to put them in mind of them, and exhort them to obedience, yet hearkened not to them, (<sup>2487D</sup>Jeremiah 35:12-15); wherefore the Lord threatens to bring all the evil on them he had pronounced, (<sup>2487B</sup>Jeremiah 35:16,17); and promises the sons of Rechab that there should be always some of them that should minister unto him, (<sup>2487B</sup>Jeremiah 35:18,19).

**Ver. 1.** *The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord*, etc.] Not as following the former prophecies; for they must be delivered seventeen years after this. The prophecies of Jeremiah are not put together in their proper time in which they were delivered. The preceding prophecies were delivered in the “tenth” and “eleventh” years of Zedekiah’s reign: but this

*in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah*; in what part of his reign is not certain; but it must be after Nebuchadnezzar had invaded the land, (<sup>2487B</sup>Jeremiah 35:11); very probably in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, after he had been the king of Babylon’s servant three years, and rebelled against him, (<sup>1220E</sup>2 Kings 24:1,2);

*saying*; as follows:

**Ver. 2.** *Go unto the house of the Rechabites*, etc.] Or “family”,<sup>f677</sup>; these are the same with the Kenites, who descended from Hobab or Jethro, Moses’s father in law, (<sup><0016></sup>Judges 1:16 4:11 <sup><0025></sup>1 Chronicles 2:55); these, as their ancestors, became proselytes to Israel, and always continued with them, though a distinct people from them; these here had their name from Rechab, a famous man in his time among those people:

*and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord*; into the temple; for they were worshippers of the true God, though foreigners and uncircumcised persons; and so might be admitted into places belonging to the temple:

*into one of the chambers*; of the temple, where there were many; some for the sanhedrim to sit in; others for the priests to lay up their garments and the vessels of the sanctuary in; and others for the prophets and their disciples to converse in together about religious matters:

*and give them wine to drink*; set it before them, and invite them to drink of it, and thereby try their steady obedience to their father’s commands. Now this family was brought to the temple either in vision, as it seemed to the prophet; or really, which latter is most probable; and that for this reason, that this affair might be transacted publicly, and many might be witnesses of it, and take the rebuke given by it; and, as some think, to reproach the priests for their intemperance.

**Ver. 3.** *Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah*, etc.] 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 only excepted; whom it might not be so decent to gather together on such an occasion, to drink wine; or at least offer it to them.

**Ver. 4.** *And I brought them into the house of the Lord*, etc.] Into the temple, as he was ordered; that is, he invited them thither, 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, (<sup><4407></sup>2 Chronicles 16:7);

*which [was] by the chamber of the princes*; these were not the princes of the blood, the sons of Jehoiachim; 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, (<sup><4048></sup>Acts 4:8); the sanhedrim, whose this chamber was, as Dr. Lightfoot<sup>f678</sup> 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.

**Ver. 5.** *And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups*, etc.] Which the prophet might have out of the chambers where these vessels were, and particularly from Maaseiah, if he was a keeper of them, as before observed. The number of men gathered together was probably very large; and therefore pots, or large vessels of wine, were prepared, and set before them, and cups, lesser vessels, to drink out of:

*and I said unto them, drink ye wine*; he invited them to it, and bid them welcome; nay, more, he might not only encourage, but enjoin them to drink it; though, as Gataker observes, he does not say unto them, “thus saith the Lord, drink wine”; for then they must have done it, and doubtless would; since it is right to obey God rather than man, even parents.

**Ver. 6.** *But they said, we will drink no wine*, etc.] Or “we do not drink wine”<sup>f679</sup>; we are not used to it; we never do drink any; it is not lawful for us to do it; nor will we, let who will solicit 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, (<sup><4205></sup>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<sup>f680</sup>:

*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.

**Ver. 7.** *Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have [any],* etc.] That is, they were not to build houses, sow seed, or plant vineyards, for themselves, for their own profit and advantage; nor possess either of these through purchase or gift: all this was enjoined them, partly because they were strangers in the land of Israel, as is suggested in the latter part of the verse, and so were to have no inheritance in it; and partly because the pastoral life was what their ancestors had lived; and therefore Jonadab was desirous it should be continued in his posterity; as well as because by this means they would live not envied by the Israelites, among whom they were; since they did not covet to get any part of their possessions into their hands; as also these being their circumstances, upon any public calamity, as sword, famine, or pestilence, they could more easily remove to other places; and likewise, by observing these rules, would not be liable to some sins, as drunkenness, worldly mindedness, etc. which are often the cause of great calamities. The Essenes, a sect among the Jews afterwards, seem in some things to have copied after these Rechabites:

*but all your days ye shall dwell in tents;* which they could move from place to place, for the convenience of pasture for the cattle, the business they were brought up in, and were always to exercise:

*that ye may live many days in the land where ye [be] strangers;* for they were not Israelites, as before observed, but Kenites, the descendants of Jethro; they were proselytes of the gate only; and now, partly on account of their obedience to parents, which had annexed to it the promise of long life in the land in which they lived; and partly because they would, by such a course of life, give no umbrage to, nor raise any jealousy in, the minds of the inhabitants of it, they might expect a continuance in it.

**Ver. 8.** *Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father,* etc.] The above was the charge he gave them; and this, in every

article of it, they had carefully and constantly kept, though it had been for the space of three hundred years, or thereabout; as follows:

*in all he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters*; which was the first of the precepts he gave them: and which they were now tempted to disregard, but were resolved to observe it, as they had hitherto done. The rest of the articles follow.

**Ver. 9.** *Nor build houses for us to dwell in*, etc.] 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<sup>f681</sup> reports of the Nabatheans, a people of Arabia, descended from Nebaioth, (see <sup>-2307</sup>Isaiah 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.”

**Ver. 10.** *But we have dwelt in tents*, etc.] 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, as follows:

**Ver. 11.** *But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land*, etc.] 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 Gill on “<sup>285</sup>Jeremiah 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, (<sup>1210</sup>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 it; and in which case the lawgiver himself would have dispensed with it, had he been on the spot.

**Ver. 12.** *Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah*, etc.] After the Rechabites had been tried whether they would break the command of their father, respecting drinking of wine; and steadfastly persisted in their resolution not to drink, urging the reason of it, and vindicating their conduct in another respect:

*saying*; as follows:

**Ver. 13.** *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, etc.] 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 for ever.

**Ver. 14.** *The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons, not to drink wine, are performed,* etc.] 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 any:

*notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early, and speaking;* who am 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.

**Ver. 15.** *I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets,* etc.] 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 <sup>207B</sup>Jeremiah 7:13 11:7);

*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 fit 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.

**Ver. 16.** *Because the son of Jonadab the son of Rechab,* etc.] 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! (<sup>45316</sup>Deuteronomy 32:6).

**Ver. 17.** *Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel,* etc.] 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 threatenings 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.”

**Ver. 18.** *And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites,* etc.] 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.

**Ver. 19.** *Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel,* etc.] Who has enjoined children obedience to their parents, and has promised to reward it, and does:

*Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever;* which may be understood of a long time, of ages to come; or as long as the people of the Jews were a people, or the world should stand, the posterity of this man should continue: or, “a man shall not be cut off from Jonadab etc.”<sup>f682</sup>; his offspring shall never fail. It is certain that some of this family returned from the captivity, (<sup><125></sup>1 Chronicles 2:55); and, according to Scaliger<sup>f683</sup>, the Hasidaeans sprung from them. And, if any credit could be given to Benjamin Tudelensis, there were Rechabites in the twelfth

century, since the times of Christ; for he tells<sup>f684</sup> us, that in his travels he found a place where Jews dwelt, who were called Rechabites. The phrase, “to stand before me”, is by the Targum paraphrased,

“ministering before me;”

serving and worshipping God, for they were religious people; that is, in their own families, carrying on religious worship among themselves, and not in the temple, where they had no office, and did no service; though some think they had, because called scribes, (~~105~~ 1 Chronicles 2:55). Kimchi says that some of their Rabbins asserted that the daughters of these people married priests, and so some of their children’s children offered sacrifice on the altar. And if what Eusebius reports from Hegesippus is true, there were priests of this family after the times of Christ; for he says<sup>f685</sup>, that when the Jews were stoning James the just, a priest of the sons of Rechab cried out, saying, stop, what are ye doing? but these testimonies are not to be depended on; however, we may be sure of this, that the promise of God shall not fail, but be certainly accomplished. Very appropriate are the words of the learned Altin<sup>f686</sup> upon this subject:

“not only the Lord promises length of life to the obedient, which proselytes, equally with Israelites, have the promise of; but, particularly, that the posterity of Jonadab should not perish, should have a place in the church of God, and an admission to the gracious enjoyment of God; not as priests and Levites, but as other Israelites and strangers, (~~2604~~ Isaiah 56:4,7); so that the posterity of Jonadab must still continue, and hope of restoration of them with the Israelites remains; as in (~~2436~~ Jeremiah 31:36,37); but in the same way and manner; so that being equally sharers in exile, they are to be restored after a long interruption. Indeed, the family is not at this day known; but from the ignorance of men, to the denial of a thing, there is no available argument. Families cannot be confounded, since they descend by the fathers; mothers do not belong to them; and as is the father as to tribe, so also is the son and grandson, and so on. A genealogical series may perish from the knowledge of men, but not from the nature of things, and the knowledge of God. Though the seeds of wheat, barley, and other things, may be mixed together, that men cannot distinguish them, yet their distinction does not perish; and God not only knows it, but also discovers it,

when he makes every seed to rise in its own body, (~~4:157~~ 1  
Corinthians 15:37,38); so must we judge concerning families.”

Perhaps, since these Rechabites were proselytes, and not Israelites, the conversion of the Gentiles may be respected; who are priests in a spiritual sense, and minister before the Lord, offering up, through Christ, the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise; and such a generation to serve the Lord will never be wanting.