

Jer. 35, The Rechabites
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Overview

1. Structure of 34-39

Four stories symmetrically arranged, with an epilog describing the fall of the city:

	King	Subject	Lesson
a) 34	Zed	Covenant	Imperfect obedience
b) 35	J'kim	Rechabites	Perfect obedience
c) 36	J'kim	Scroll	Consistent Persecution
d) 37f	Zed	Prison	Inconsistent Persecution
e) 39	Neb		

2. In ch. 34, we saw how imperfectly the people followed the law of God, even when led by the King in a solemn covenant. Now in 35, we go back more than 10 years to the time of Jehoiakim, and see how much more pure and steadfast obedience can be, even with lesser motives.

Like ch. 34, ch. 35 gives us an event and then its divine interpretation.

3. Basic overview: Jer invites a certain family into one of the temple chambers for a glass of wine. They refuse, because it violates their family laws. The Lord then uses them as an object lesson, contrasting their faithfulness to their traditions with Israel's unfaithfulness to the divine law.

The episode with the Rechabites occurred during the reign of Jehoiakim, 10 or more years before Zed's abortive covenant in the previous chapter, but the juxtaposition of the two here invites us to compare that covenant in particular with what happened with the Rechabites.

We will concentrate on the contrasts between the two cases, and in each contrast consider the application that it bears for us today.

A. 14, 15, Judah's Commander is Greater

1. Rechabites: Jonadab the son of Rechab.

- a) Came from an illustrious family. The Rechabites, acc. to 1 Chr. 2:55, were descended from the Kenites, who in turn sprang from Moses' in-laws who converted to Yahwism and came into the land of promise with the Israelites.
- b) 2 Kings 10:15ff recalls how in the days of Jehu, about 250 years earlier, Jonadab helped in a great purge of Baal worship.

- c) Still, Jonadab is only a man, himself under God's authority.
- 2. Judah: The Lord himself, and his prophets.
- 3. *Application*: Are we more faithful to the commands of our government and of our employers than we are to those of the Lord God? Sometimes, because the Lord is invisible, it seems less important for us to obey his instructions. Yet there can be no comparison between his commands and those of lesser authorities.

B. 6-7, 15, Judah's Command is More Important

- 1. Rechabites: Not even biblical injunctions, just family traditions. Today, people who want to "get away from the rat race" leave industrial society and go to a farm. The Rechabites went even further: they eschewed agriculture and were nomads.
 - a) Ye shall drink no wine.
 - b) Neither shall ye build house,
 - c) nor sow seed,
 - d) nor plant vineyard,
 - e) but all your days ye shall dwell in tents;
 Nothing wrong in these injunctions, but they are superficial and fleshly. Compare the standards of many Christians, "Don't go to movies." Helps avoid the pollution of the world, but in itself doesn't address the deeper spiritual issues.
- 2. Judah: three points in v.15:
 - a) "Return ye now every man from his evil way": repentance. To follow the Lord, we must forsake our evil past.
 - b) "Amend your doings": begin to walk in obedience to the Lord.
 - c) "Go not after other gods to serve them": this is the specific area in which repentance and new righteousness are required of them.
 These commands deal with much deeper issues than those of the Rechabites--the real loyalty of the heart.
- 3. *Application*: Of what does your Christianity consist: just outward avoidance of superficial matters of conduct? The Filthy Five, the Nasty Nine, or the Dirty Dozen--"We don't smoke and we don't chew and we don't go with girls who do." Or have you really turned from your devotion to the idols of this world, and changed your outward life as a result of an inner change? Cf. Rom. 12:2, "Be not conformed to this world" [outward], "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" [inward].

C. 6, 15, Judah's Motivation is Stronger

- 1. Rechabites: A long life in the land in which they are strangers. Recall their Midianite origins. Israel was not their land. They were strangers and pilgrims in it, as we are in the world today.
- 2. Judah: Dwell in their own land. They have title to it. The parallel in our case is our heavenly home.

3. *Application*: Do we work harder for temporal rewards, those that concern only this life and this world, than for riches in the life to come? Our Lord warns us that if we seek to preserve our life (here and now), we will lose not only blessing here, but life to come; but if we are willing to lose our earthly well-being for his sake and that of the gospel, we will find eternal life.

D. Judah's Persistence is Less

1. Rechabites: Jonadab lived in the time of Jehu (2 Kings 10), some 250 years before. That's longer than the entire history of the US. Most of us can't even name an ancestor that far back, let alone pretend to be following his instructions.
2. Judah:
 - a) The time of the Rechabite interview is no more than 25 years after the beginning of Josiah's revival. (Book of the law discovered in 622; Jehoiakim deposed in 597)
 - b) The covenant in ch. 34 lasted even less time, perhaps only a few months. It began around the time of Neb's invasion, and fell apart when Neb. withdrew to meet the Egyptians less than a year later.
3. *Application*: Eccl. 5:4,5. Better not to make a promise to God than to make it and back down on it. Our commitments to God should, if anything, be more sure than those to men. For that matter, our word to men should be our bond as well.

E. Judah's Commitment is Less Personal

1. Rechabites: Consider how strong Jer's invitation to drink wine in vv. 1-5 must have seemed. Jer is a true prophet. He can tell them truthfully that God sent him to offer them wine. The offer takes place in the temple, in the residence of the priests, and in particular a family known as stemming from a "man of God" (v.4). Probably, the wine itself was that offered by the people for the maintenance of the priests. Surely, if ever there were a set of circumstances calculated to lead them away from their commitment, this was it. Yet they trust their own judgment over that of priest and prophet. They are individually responsible for their conduct.

Contrast their commitment with that of the Man of God in 1 Kings 13, who believed a prophet over his own instructions from the Lord, and was slain for his sin.

2. Judah: The people continually hide behind the religious establishment. We have seen over and over how they trust in the temple and listen to the lying words of the priests and false prophets assuring them that they will have peace. Even in Zed's covenant, the priests led the way in abandoning the correct

direction taken by the king.

3. *Application*: Each of us stands or falls as an individual before God. We cannot delegate our spiritual well-being to others. We cannot assume that we are saved because we are part of a Christian family, or because we associate with believers, or because we listen to inspiring sermons. Each of us must know God individually. We should be cautious when we think God is leading us in directions different than those in which other believers seem to be going; perhaps we have misunderstood. But others cannot make the decision for us, and ultimately we stand before God as individuals, not as groups.

F. Applications

1. Do we, like the Israelites, find it easier to obey God than to obey men? Just because we can't see him doesn't mean we can afford to ignore him.
2. Do we give more heed to superficial rules and outward conduct than we do to the inward spiritual demands that God lays on us?
3. Are we more attracted by rewards "in the land where you are strangers" than by those "in the land that I have given to you"?
4. Are we willing to persist in our devotion to God, or do we promise service to him, only to fall away?
5. Is our commitment to God truly a personal one, or are we just riding on the coattails of others?

May God give us grace to honor him in our commitments to the extent that the Rechabites honored their noble ancestor.

Psalm: 85

Analysis

35, The Rechabites (J'qim): interpretation p

A. event: combined execution and interchange p

1. command: quote p: God sends Jer to the Rechabites
 - a) quote f: 35:1 HA/D.FBFR):AŞER-HFYFH)EL-YIR:M:YFHW. M"/)"T Y:HWFH B.I/YM"Y Y:HOWYFQIYM B.EN-YO)\$IY.FHW. MELEK: Y:HW.DFH L"/)MOR
 - b) quote: seq p
 - 1) 35:2 HFLOWK:)EL-B."YT HF/R"KFBIYM
 - 2) W:/DIB.AR:T.F)OWT/FM
 - 3) WA/H:ABI)OWT/FM B."YT Y:HWFH)EL-)AXAT HA/L.:ŞFKOWT
 - 4) W:/HIŞ:QIYTF)OWT/FM YFYIN
2. execution; initiating utterance: Jer invites the Rechabites to drink wine.
 - a) 35:3 WF/)EQ.AX)ET-YA):AZAN:YFH BEN-YIR:M:YFHW.

- B.EN-X:ABAC.IN:YFH W:/)ET-)EXFY/W W:/)ET-K.FL-B.FNFY/W W:/)"T
K.FL-B."YT HF/R"KFBIYM
- b) 35:4 WF/)FBI))OT/FM B."YT Y:HWFH)EL-LI\$:K.AT B.:N"Y XFNFN
B.EN-YIG:D.AL:YFHW.)IY\$ HF/):ELOHIYM):A\$ER-) "CEL LI\$:K.AT
HA/&.FRIYM):A\$ER MI/M.A(AL L:/LI\$:K.AT MA(:A&"YFHW.
BEN-\$AL.UM \$OM"R HA/S.AP
- c) 35:5 WF/)ET."N LI/P:N"Y B.:N"Y B"YT-HF/R"KFBIYM G.:BI(IYM
M:L")IYM YAYIN W:/KOSOWT
- d) WF/)OMAR):AL"Y/HEM \$:TW.-YFYIN

3. continuing utterance: quote p: They explain their ancestor's
command and their obedience to it.

- a) quote f: 35:6 WA/Y.O)M:RW.
- b) quote: reason p
- 1) text: LO) NI\$:T.EH-Y.FYIN
- 2) reason: execution p
- a> command: quote p: Yonadab's command
- 1> quote f: K.IY YOWNFDFB B.EN-R"KFB)FBIY/NW. CIW.FH
(FL"Y/NW. L"/)MOR
- 2> quote: purpose p
- a: text: contrast p
- 1: thesis:
- A. LO) TI\$:T.W.-YAYIN)AT.EM W./B:N"Y/KEM
(AD-(OWLFM
- B. 35:7 W./BAYIT LO)-TIB:NW.
- C. W:/ZERA(LO)-TIZ:RF(W.
- D. W:/KEREM LO)-TI+.F(W.
- E. W:/LO) YIH:YEH LFKEM
- 2: antithesis: K.IY B.F/):FHFLIYM T."\$:BW.
K.FL-Y:M"Y/KEM
- b: purpose: cf. Exod. 20:12.
L:MA(AN T.IX:YW. YFMIYM RAB.IYM (AL-P.:N"Y
HF/):ADFMFH):A\$ER)AT.EM G.FRIYM \$FM
- b> execution: sequence p
- 1> footnote p:
- a: opening bracket: 35:8 WA/N.I\$:MA(B.:/QOWL
Y:HOWNFDFB B.EN-R"KFB)FBIY/NW. L:/KOL):A\$ER
CIW./FNW.
- b: enclosure: contrast p
- 1: thesis:
- A. L:/BIL:T.IY \$:TOWT-YAYIN K.FL-YFM"Y/NW.
) :ANAX:NW. NF\$"Y/NW. B.FN"Y/NW.
W./B:NOT"Y/NW.
- B. 35:9 W./L:/BIL:T.IY B.:NOWT B.FT.IYM
L:/\$IB:T./"NW.
- C. W:/KEREM W:/&FDEH WF/ZERA(LO)
YIH:YEH-L./FNW.
- 2: antithesis: 35:10 WA/N."\$EB B.F/):FHFLIYM
- c: closing bracket: WA/N.I\$:MA(
- 2> WA/N.A(A& K.:/KOL):A\$ER-CIW./FNW. YOWNFDFB)FBIY/NW.
- 3> temporal p
- a: time: 35:11 WA/Y:HIY B.A/(:ALOWT N:BW.KAD:RE)C.AR
MELEK:-B.FBEL)EL-HF/)FREC
- b: text: quote p

1: quote f: WA/N.O)MER
 2: quote:
 A. B.O)W.
 B. W:/NFBOW) Y:RW.\$FLAIM MI/P.:N"Y X"YL
 HA/K.A&:D.IYM W./MI/P.:N"Y X"YL):ARFM
 C. WA/N."\$EB B.I/YRW.\$FLFIM P

B. interpretation: contrast p

1. thesis: quote p: Judgment on Judah and deliverance to the Rechabites

a) quote f: 35:12 WA/Y:HIY D.:BAR-Y:HWFH)EL-YIR:M:YFHW. L"/)MOR
 b) quote: result p

1) text: quote p: contrast btw. Rechabites and Judah

a> quote f: 35:13 K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT):ELOH"Y
 YI&:RF)"L

b> quote: quote p

1> quote f: HFLOK: W:/)FMAR:T.F L:/)IY\$ Y:HW.DFH
 W./L:/YOW\$:B"Y Y:RW.\$FLFIM

2> quote

a: H:A/LOW) TIQ:XW. MW.SFR LI/\$:MO(A)EL-D.:BFR/AY
 N:)UM-Y:HWFH

b: summary p: contrast btw Rechabites and Judah

1: text: contrast p

A. thesis: interchange p: behavior of Rechabites

1. 35:14 HW.QAM)ET-D.IB:R"Y Y:HOWNFDFB
 B.EN-R"KFB):A\$ER-CIW.FH)ET-B.FNFY/W
 L:/BIL:T.IY \$:TOWT-YAYIN

2. contrast p

a) thesis: W:/LO) \$FTW. (AD-HA/Y.OWM
 HA/Z.EH

b) antithesis: K.IY \$FM:(W.)"T MIC:WAT
):ABIY/HEM

B. antithesis: ampl p: behavior of Judah

1. text: interchange p

a) W:/)FNOKIY D.IB.AR:T.IY):AL"Y/KEM
 HA\$:K."M W:/DAB."R

b) W:/LO) \$:MA(:T.EM)"L/FY

2. ampl: interchange p

a) quote p

1) quote f: 35:15 WF/)E\$:LAX
):AL"Y/KEM)ET-K.FL-(:ABFD/AY
 HA/N.:BI)IYM HA\$:K."YM W:/\$FLOXA
 L"/)MOR

2) quote:

a> \$UBW.-NF))IY\$ MI/D.AR:K./OW
 HF/RF(FH

b> W:/H"Y+IYBW. MA(AL:L"Y/KEM

c> W:/)AL-T."L:KW.)AX:AR"Y

):ELOHIYM):AX"RIYM L:/ (FB:D/FM

d> W./\$:BW.)EL-HF/):ADFMFH

):A\$ER-NFTAT.IY L/FKEM

W:/LA/):ABOT"Y/KEM
b) W:/LO) HI+.IYTEM)ET-)FZ:N/:KEM
c) W:/LO) \$:MA(:T.EM)"L/FY

2: summary: contrast p
A. thesis: 35:16 K.IY H"QIYMW. B.:N"Y
Y:HOWNFDFB B.EN-R"KFB)ET-MIC:WAT):ABIY/HEM
):A\$ER CIW./FM
B. antithesis: W:/HF/(FM HA/Z.EH LO) \$FM:(W.
)"L/FY S

2) result: quote p. judgment on Judah
a> quote f: 35:17 LF/K"N K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH):ELOH"Y
C:BF)OWT):ELOH"Y YI&:RF)"L
b> quote: reason p
1> text: HIN/:NIY M"BIY))EL-Y:HW.DFH W:/)EL
K.FL-YOW\$:B"Y Y:RW.\$FLAIM)"T K.FL-HF/RF(FH):A\$ER
D.IB.AR:T.IY (:AL"Y/HEM
2> reason: YA(AN
a: D.IB.AR:T.IY):AL"Y/HEM
b: W:/LO) \$FM"(W.
c: WF/)EQ:RF) L/FHEM
d: W:/LO) (FNW.

2. antithesis: quote p: Preservation for Rechabites
a) quote f: 35:18 W./L:/B"YT HF/R"KFBIYM)FMAR YIR:M:YFHW.
K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT):ELOH"Y YI&:RF)"L
b) quote: reason p
1) reason: YA(AN):A\$ER
a> \$:MA(:T.EM (AL-MIC:WAT Y:HOWNFDFB):ABIY/KEM
b> WA/T.I\$:M:RW.)ET-K.FL-MIC:WOTFY/W
c> WA/T.A(:A&W. K.:/KOL):A\$ER-CIW.FH)ET/:KEM S
2) result: quote p 35:19 LF/K"N
a> quote f: K.OH)FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT):ELOH"Y YI&:RF)"L
b> quote: LO)-YIK.FR"TT)IY\$ L:/YOWNFDFB B.EN-R"KFB (OM"D
L:/PFNAY K.FL-HA/Y.FMIYM P