

## Unit II: Jeremiah and the Promise of Renewal

# Promises, Promises

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Corinthians 6:16–7:4

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 35:1-19

PRINT PASSAGE: Jeremiah 35:5-11

### KEY VERSE

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. (Jeremiah 35:14b, KJV)

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“To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me.” (Jeremiah 35:14b, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Investigate the pattern of God's call to obedience.
- Remember and recommit to the promises made to God.
- Pass on the tradition of faith to the next generation.

### \*Key Terms

**Build/built** (verse 9)—Hebrew: *banah* (baw-naw'): construct(ed); establish(ed); build/built upon; fashion(ed).

**Commanded** (verse 8)—Hebrew: *tsavah* (tsaw-vaw'): appointed; ordained; ordered; “charged” (KJV).

**Dwelt** (verse 10)—Hebrew: *yashab* (yaw-shab'): sat; remained; dwelled; inhabited; “lived” (NIV).

**Fear** (verse 11, KJV)—Hebrew: *yārē'* (yaw-ray'): to revere, be afraid of, stand in awe of, respect.

**Obeded** (verse 8)—Hebrew: *shama* (shaw-mah'): listened attentively; heard; gave heed.

**Sojourners** (verse 7)—Hebrew: *ger* (gare): persons who dwell in an area temporarily; “strangers” (KJV); “nomads” (NIV).

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



## The Biblical Context

The narrative of Jeremiah 35:5-11 unfolds during the tumultuous reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, around 607 BC, a critical period when the nation faced imminent judgment from Babylon. The Rechabites, featured in this passage, were descendants of Jehonadab (also called Jonadab) son of Rechab, who had lived during the time of King Jehu of Israel, approximately 250 years earlier. Jehonadab was known for his zealous commitment to the Lord, having assisted Jehu in purging Baal worship from Israel (see 2 Kings 10:15-27). The Rechabites followed strict ancestral vows established by Jehonadab, which included abstaining from wine, living in tents, and avoiding agricultural pursuits. These practices preserved their nomadic lifestyle and kept them distinct from the settled agricultural communities around them. Their presence in Jerusalem at this time was due to the Babylonian invasion under Nebuchadnezzar which forced them to seek refuge within the city walls. God used their exemplary faithfulness as an object lesson to the people of Judah, contrasting the Rechabites' steadfast obedience to their forefather's commands with Judah's persistent rebellion against divine instruction despite God's repeated warnings through the prophets.

## Introduction

The profound story of the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35:5-11 speaks powerfully to the African American experience of maintaining faith, values, and cultural identity through generations of challenge and change. Just as the Rechabites held fast to their forefather Jonadab's instructions despite living in a society that pulled them in different directions, the community understands deeply what it means to preserve sacred traditions and moral principles against strong cultural pressures. This passage resonates particularly with those who remember grandparents and great-grandparents who instilled unshakeable values—the importance of education, the strength found in family bonds, the power of faith, and the dignity of principled living. Like the Rechabites who chose a distinctive lifestyle to maintain their identity and values, African American families have long understood the importance of passing down not just traditions, but the wisdom for surviving and thriving while maintaining integrity. At a time when many of our youth are facing new pressures and challenges to their faith and values, this ancient story offers profound insights about the power of generational faithfulness and the courage to live differently in service of higher principles.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### The Test of Commitment (*Jeremiah 35:5-6*)

KJV

**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.**

**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:**

## **NIV**

**5 Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the Rekabites and said to them, “Drink some wine.”**

**6 But they replied, “We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jehonadab son of Rekab gave us this command: ‘Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine.’”**

Jeremiah 35:5-6 presents a compelling scene within the magnificent Temple of God, a space brimming with spiritual significance. In the atmosphere of reverence, the prophet Jeremiah approached the Rechabite family, offering them bowls filled with rich, inviting wine. This moment unfolded during the tumultuous reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, around 607 BC, a time marked by political instability and moral decay, making the Temple a powerful symbol of unwavering faith amid uncertainty.

When offered the wine, the Rechabites responded with resolute conviction, firmly declining. They recalled their forefather Jehonadab, who established a strong prohibition against wine consumption to protect their family from distractions that could lead them astray. Their refusal embodies a profound commitment to a generational promise upheld for centuries.

Jehonadab's directive, issued during the chaotic reign of King Jehu nearly 250 years earlier, reflects an inspiring legacy of faith. The Rechabites' dedication to their ancestral values serves as a powerful example for us all, reminding us to honor our commitments and remain steadfast in our principles, even when facing societal challenges.

## **? WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**What motivated God to use the Rechabites as an example to His people?**

## **The Depth of Their Vows (*Jeremiah 35:7-10*)**

## **KJV**

**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.**

**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 houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:**

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

## NIV

7 “Also you must never build houses, sow seed or plant vineyards; you must never have any of these things, but must always live in tents. Then you will live a long time in the land where you are nomads.’

8 “We have obeyed everything our forefather Jehonadab son of Rekab commanded us. Neither we nor our wives nor our sons and daughters have ever drunk wine

9 “or built houses to live in or had vineyards, fields or crops.

10 “We have lived in tents and have fully obeyed everything our forefather Jehonadab commanded us.”

The passage highlights the profound significance of the Rechabites’ vows, showcasing a commitment that extended beyond merely abstaining from wine. In verse 7, their forefather’s command to avoid building houses, sowing seeds, or planting vineyards required a life of constant movement and simplicity—an empowering choice that embraces a nomadic existence. This lifestyle reflects their unwavering trust in God and fostered a deep dependence on divine provision as they navigated life’s challenges.

Verses 8-9 illustrate the remarkable unity within the Rechabite family. Each member—wives, sons, and daughters—stands together in solidarity, and their collective commitment strengthened their bonds and deepened their connection to their heritage. In verse 10, the insistence on obeying “everything our forefather Jehonadab commanded” (NIV) underscored their dedication to this ancestral way of life. Their faith intricately intertwined with their identity, securing resilience and inspiring others amid societal pressures. Through their example, the Rechabites embody the strength found in unity, commitment, and a deep-rooted faith that guided them through life’s wilderness.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What made the Rechabites’ whole-family commitment so successful?

## Practical Wisdom in Crisis (*Jeremiah 35:11*)

## KJV

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.

## NIV

11 “But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded this land, we said, ‘Come, we must go to Jerusalem to escape the Babylonian and Aramean armies.’ So we have remained in Jerusalem.”

The narrative of the Rechabites took an inspiring turn in the final verse as they confronted the threat of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion. Wisely, they sought refuge in Jerusalem, demonstrating a profound understanding that staying true to their ancestral vows transcended rigid legalism. Instead, it embodied a flexible obedience to God's more excellent plan. Their decision illustrates that survival may require temporary adjustments to lifestyle. By entering Jerusalem, the Rechabites signified that they were not abandoning their nomadic identity but responding thoughtfully to life's challenges, showcasing the adaptability essential for enduring faith.

In summary, the story of the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35 is rich with themes of steadfast commitment, familial unity, and wisdom in navigating the complexities of faith. It invites reflection on our values and relationships, encouraging us to balance unwavering devotion and adaptability amid uncertainties. Their journey inspires us to remain anchored in our principles while courageously facing the ever-changing landscape of our lives. Through their example, we are reminded of the importance of faithfulness and the wisdom to adjust to life's demands, encouraging us to navigate challenges with strength and flexibility.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**What wisdom can extended families in this generation glean from the story of the Rechabites?**

## A Closing Thought

The Rechabites' testimony in Jeremiah 35:5-11 challenges modern believers to examine their commitment to godly living. Like them, we're called to maintain distinctive lifestyles in a culture that often opposes biblical values. Their example teaches that faithful obedience is more than rigid rule following—it is a wholehearted commitment to God's ways. Just as they passed their convictions down through generations, as families, we should intentionally disciple our children and grandchildren in the faith while also preparing them to live wisely in the world. Their practical wisdom during the Babylonian invasion is an example of how to balance unwavering faith with wise decision making in challenging circumstances.

## Your Life

Believers can follow the example of the Rechabites, who established clear family values based on Scripture, maintained those convictions even when tested, and demonstrated to the next generation what it means to live faithfully for God. Their story reminds us that our daily choices create a legacy that can impact future generations.

## Your World!

The Rechabites adapted to crises while maintaining their core values, showing us how to engage with culture without compromising our testimony. Their faithfulness illustrates that our

consistent witness can influence our contemporaries and future generations. Ultimately, our most potent witness lies not in our words but in our daily choices and commitment to God's ways amid a world moving in the opposite direction.

 **Closing Prayer**

Heavenly Father, grant us courage to speak Your truth with love. It is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

**Conclusion**

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Please be prepared for next week's lesson. The lesson topic for Sunday, October 26, 2025, is "The Heart Wants What the Heart Wants." The Devotional Reading is Psalm 103:17-22, the Background Scriptures are Jeremiah 31:1-40; John 1:17; Hebrews 8:7-13, and the Print Passages are Jeremiah 31:29-34; John 1:17.

| Home Daily Bible Readings |                               |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| MONDAY, October 20        | "A New Salvation"             | (Joel 2:28-32)          |
| TUESDAY, October 21       | "A New Heart"                 | (Ezekiel 36:25-35)      |
| WEDNESDAY, October 22     | "The Law's Essence"           | (Deuteronomy 10:12-21)  |
| THURSDAY, October 23      | "A New Covenant"              | (2 Corinthians 3:1-6)   |
| FRIDAY, October 24        | "A New Spirit"                | (2 Corinthians 3:7-11)  |
| SATURDAY, October 25      | "A New Freedom"               | (2 Corinthians 3:12-17) |
| SUNDAY, October 26        | "A New Relationship with God" | (Jeremiah 31:27-34)     |

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