

Jeremiah 34:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying,

Analysis

I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen (בְּרִית כַּרְתִּי, berit karati—"I cut a covenant"). God anchors His indictment in the Exodus deliverance, the foundational saving act that created covenant obligation. The phrase beyt avadim ("house of bondmen/slaves") creates devastating irony: God freed them from Egyptian slavery, yet they now re-enslaved their Hebrew brothers, violating the very purpose of redemption.

The covenant reference points to Deuteronomy 15:12-15, where slave release laws explicitly invoke Exodus memory: "remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt." Jeremiah's contemporaries knew this law but disregarded it. Their refusal to free Hebrew slaves demonstrated amnesia regarding God's saving grace—the root of all covenant breaking. As redeemed people should extend redemption to others, Israel's failure to release slaves revealed they'd forgotten their own slave-past and God's liberating character.

Paul later uses similar logic in Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13—forgive as God in Christ forgave you. The pattern is consistent: experiencing God's deliverance creates obligation to extend grace. Refusal to do so questions whether one truly grasped God's salvation. Reformed theology's emphasis on grace producing grateful obedience finds Old Testament foundation here.

Historical Context

The Exodus covenant (c. 1446 or 1260 BCE depending on dating) included comprehensive social legislation protecting the vulnerable. Deuteronomy 15:12-18 mandated releasing Hebrew servants after six years, explicitly grounding this in Israel's Egyptian bondage. By Jeremiah's time (c. 587 BCE), these laws were systematically ignored—the powerful exploited the poor, treating covenant brothers as permanent property. This contributed to social collapse preceding Babylon's conquest.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does remembering your own 'slavery' to sin and God's deliverance affect your treatment of others?
2. In what ways might Christians today violate the spirit of redemption by exploiting those whom Christ also died to save?
3. Why does forgetting God's past grace inevitably lead to present disobedience?

Interlinear Text

כֹּה	יֹאמֶר:	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	אָנֹכִי	כָּרַתִּי	בְּרִית
H3541	Thus saith	the LORD	the God	of Israel	H595	I made	a covenant
	H559	H3068	H430	H3478		H3772	H1285
אֶת	אֲבֹתֵיכֶם	בַּיּוֹם	הַהוּא	אֲנִי	הוֹצֵאתִי	אֹתְכֶם	
H854	with your fathers	in the day	that I brought them forth			H853	
	H1	H3117	H3318				
מֵאֶרֶץ	מִצְרַיִם	מֵבֵית	עֲבָדִים	יֹאמֶר:			
out of the land	of Egypt	out of the house	of bondmen	Thus saith			
H776	H4714	H1004	H5650	H559			

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 24:17 (References God): For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

Judges 6:8 (References God): That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

Jeremiah 31:32 (Covenant): Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

Exodus 24:3 (References Lord): And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

Deuteronomy 5:27 (References God): Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it.

