

Jeremiah 35:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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;

Analysis

Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah (יאזניאח בֶּן־הַבָּצָנִיה—)—"Jaazaniah" means "Yahweh hears"; interestingly, a Rechabite bears this Yahwistic (Yahweh-name) though Rechabites were Kenite by ancestry. This demonstrates their full integration into Israelite worship while maintaining distinct identity. The mention of genealogy ("son of Jeremiah, son of Habaziniah") establishes identity and credibility—these were known individuals, not fictional characters. Biblical narrative's historical specificity matters; these events occurred in real time with real people.

And his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites—the comprehensive description emphasizes this was the entire family present in Jerusalem. The test wasn't selective (choosing only the most faithful) but corporate. Jeremiah assembled the complete Rechabite community, ensuring the demonstration would be total: either all maintain the ancestral command, or some break it. Their unanimous faithfulness across generations becomes even more remarkable—not one family member compromised, though wine was culturally normative and their ancestor's prohibition seemed arbitrary.

The parallel with "the whole house of the Rechabites" and "the whole house of Judah/Israel" runs throughout Scripture. God deals with families and communities, not just atomistic individuals. The Rechabites succeeded at multi-generational faithfulness where Israel failed. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 commands transmitting

covenant faithfulness from generation to generation; the Rechabites did this for human tradition, condemning Israel's failure to do it for divine law. This anticipates Ephesians 6:4—fathers, bring children up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Historical Context

The Rechabites' presence in Jerusalem (having fled Babylonian invasion, v. 11) meant they were already under stress—displaced from their normal semi-nomadic territory, forced into the city they normally avoided. Testing their obedience during this crisis made the demonstration more powerful. Under pressure, many abandoned convictions; the Rechabites held firm. Archaeological evidence shows Jehoiakim-period Jerusalem was fortified and crowded with refugees from Babylon's advancing armies, creating social pressure to conform to urban Judean norms the Rechabites resisted.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why is testing faithfulness during crisis (like the Rechabites' displacement) especially revealing of genuine commitment?
2. How does maintaining distinct identity while integrating into the broader community (Yahwistic names but Kenite ancestry) provide a model for Christians being "in the world but not of it"?
3. What enables entire families to maintain faithfulness across generations when surrounding culture abandons it?

Interlinear Text

בָּתִּים יְהוָה אֶת תְּאֵקָה
Then I took H853 Jaazaniah and all his sons of Jeremiah and all his sons
H3947 H2970 H1121 H3414 H1121

כָּל וְאֵת בָּתִּים יְהוָה אֶת סְבָאֵקָה
of Habaziniah H853 and his brethren H853 H3605 and all his sons H853 H3605
H2262 H251 H1121

בָּתִּים רְכָבִים:
and the whole house of the Rechabites
H1004 H7397

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