

Jeremiah 35:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Nor to build houses for us to dwell in (בָּתִּים לָשֶׁבֶת batim lashevet)—The refusal to construct permanent dwellings (from בָּנָה banah, to build) and possess agricultural land maintained perpetual awareness of life's transience. **Neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed**—The triple negation (כֶּרֶם...שָׂדֶה...זֶרַע kerem...sadeh...zera') renounces the entire settled agrarian economy that defined ancient Near Eastern security and wealth.

This voluntary poverty wasn't monastic withdrawal but prophetic witness: the Rechabites lived as Israel was called to live—not trusting in earthly securities but in Yahweh's provision. Their asceticism rebuked Judah's materialism. While Judah built houses (Jeremiah 22:13-14) and planted vineyards yet rotted spiritually, the Rechabites owned nothing yet possessed covenant integrity. Jesus later said, "Foxes have holes...but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20).

Historical Context

In ancient agrarian society, land ownership equaled identity, security, and legacy. The Rechabites' landlessness made them perpetual outsiders, economically vulnerable, yet spiritually insulated from the seductions of Canaanite fertility religion that infected settled Israelite farmers who syncretized Baal worship with Yahweh worship.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What 'vineyards and fields' (investments, securities, possessions) have you accumulated that may subtly displace your dependence on God?
2. How does the Rechabites' voluntary simplicity challenge the 'prosperity gospel' that equates God's blessing with material accumulation?
3. In what ways does Jesus's landless ministry (Matthew 8:20) call you to looser attachment to earthly possessions and tighter grip on heavenly treasure?

Interlinear Text

וְלִבְלֹתָ י	בֵּן אוֹת	בֵּית יִם	לְשִׁבְתָּנוּ	וְכִרְם
H1115	Nor to build	houses	for us to dwell in	neither have we vineyard
	H1129	H1004	H3427	H3754
וְשֵׂדָה	וְזֶרַע	לֹא	יִהְיֶה	לָנוּ
nor field	nor seed	H3808	H1961	H0
H7704	H2233			

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 6:6 (Parallel theme): But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Psalms 37:16 (Parallel theme): A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.

Jeremiah 35:7 (Parallel theme): 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.

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