Jeremiah - Commentaries by James M. Freeman

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 550. Evidences of Purchase

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Jeremiah 32:14. Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

It is supposed that one of these documents was a duplicate of the other; and it may have been customary to carefully seal one copy and deposit it in a safe place, perhaps to bury it on a part of the land described in it, while the other was left unsealed in some public place designated for the purpose, where all persons interested might have access to it whenever they desired. Inasmuch, however, as the city was to be destroyed, the prophet was directed to have both copies put into an earthen vessel for preservation.

In Taylor's Calmet it is suggested that the earthen vessel containing these documents was to be buried in one corner of the land purchased, as a sort of hidden landmark of the property; and as a possible illustration the following passage is cited from the Gentoo laws of boundaries and limits: "Dust, or bonds, or seboos (bran), or cinders, or scraps of earthenware, or the hairs of a cow's tail, or the seed of the cotton-plant: all these things above-mentioned, being put into an earthen jar filled to the brim, a man must privately bury upon the confines of his own boundary; and there preserve stones also, or bricks, or sea sand: either of these three things may be buried by way of Landmark of the limits; for all these things, upon remaining a long time in the ground, are not liable to rot, or to become putrid; any other thing, also, which will remain a long time in the ground without becoming rotten or putrid, may be buried for the same purpose. Those persons who, by any of these methods, can show the line of their boundaries, shall acquaint their sons with the respective Landmarks of those boundaries; and, in the same manner, those sons shall explain the signs of the limits to their children" (Fragments, No. 80, Taylor's Calmet, vol. 3, p. 138).

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 547. Tidings of a New Born Son

Jeremiah 20:15. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee; making him very glad.

The birth of a son is, in the East, considered a cause of special congratulation to the father. Its announcement makes him "very glad." In Persia it is associated with particular ceremonies. Morier says, "Some confidential servant about the harem is usually the first to get the information, when he runs in great haste to his master, and says, 'Mujdeh, or Good news,' by which he secures to himself a gift, which generally follows the Mujdeh. Among the common people, the man who brings the Mujdeh frequently seizes on the cap or shawl, or any such article belonging to the father, as a security for the present, to which he holds himself entitled" (Second Journey, etc., p. 103).