

# Jeremiah 2:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:

## Analysis

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This verse begins the formal charges: 'Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel.' The summons addresses both 'house of Jacob' (corporate Israel) and 'all the families' (every tribal subdivision), ensuring comprehensive audience—no one exempted from hearing the indictment. The imperative 'hear' (shim'u, שִׁמְעֻ) demands attention, obedience, and response—not mere auditory reception but covenant loyalty. Throughout Deuteronomy and prophetic literature, 'hear' means 'obey' (Deuteronomy 6:4, the Shema: 'Hear, O Israel'). God's lawsuit addresses the entire nation because covenant was corporate—the community bore collective responsibility for faithfulness. This verse transitions from nostalgic remembrance (verses 2-3) to direct accusation (verses 5ff), establishing the legal framework: God as prosecutor, Israel as defendant, evidence to follow, verdict anticipated. The repetitive address formulas ('house of Jacob,' 'house of Israel,' 'families') emphasize that this message targets every level of Israelite society—no one stands outside the covenant lawsuit.

## Historical Context

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The divided kingdom (Israel/northern and Judah/southern) reunited in language here—'house of Jacob' and 'house of Israel' were sometimes distinguished (Jacob=Judah, Israel=northern kingdom) but here function as parallel terms for the entire covenant community. By Jeremiah's time, northern Israel had fallen to Assyria (722 BC), its population exiled and replaced (2 Kings 17). Yet God's indictment addresses all Israel because Judah repeated northern Israel's sins

without learning from their judgment. The prophetic summons to 'hear the word of the LORD' recalls covenant renewal ceremonies (Deuteronomy 31:11-13, Joshua 24, 2 Kings 23:1-3) where the law was read publicly and people recommitted to covenant obedience. Here, however, the summons introduces accusation rather than renewal—the people have violated the covenant they once pledged to keep. This legal setting provides context for understanding prophetic literature as covenantal rather than merely predictive.

## Related Passages

## **John 3:16 — God's love and salvation**

## **Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith**

## **Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory**

## **Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth**

## Study Questions

1. How does the corporate nature of covenant (addressing families and house of Jacob) challenge modern individualistic approaches to faith and accountability?
2. What does the command to 'hear' teach about the relationship between listening to God's word and obeying it in covenant faithfulness?

## Interlinear Text

|             |                    |                    |                |                 |              |                             |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| שָׁמַע וְ   | דָּבָר             | יְהִי הַ           | בְּ יִתְ       | בְּ יַעֲקֹב     | וְשָׁמַח בְּ | מִשְׁפָּחָה וְתִּכְלֵל      |
| <b>Hear</b> | <b>ye the word</b> | <b>of the LORD</b> | <b>O house</b> | <b>of Jacob</b> | H3605        | <b>and all the families</b> |
| H8085       | H1697              | H3068              | H1004          | H3290           |              | H4940                       |

