

# Jeremiah 26:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you,

## Analysis

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**And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you**—the message begins with a conditional warning. Shama' (שָׁמַעַ, hearken) means not merely to hear but to heed and obey. **To walk in my law** uses halak (הָלַךְ, walk) plus torah (תּוֹרָה, law/instruction), emphasizing practical obedience as a lifestyle, not mere intellectual acknowledgment.

**Which I have set before you**—the phrase natati lipnekem (נָתַתִּי לִפְנֵיכֶם, I have set/placed before you) recalls Moses' covenant language: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing" (Deuteronomy 30:19). God's law isn't hidden or obscure; He has clearly revealed His requirements. Israel's failure stems not from ignorance but from willful disobedience. This sets up the sermon's devastating indictment: they cannot plead ignorance or claim the law was too difficult. God provided clear instruction; they simply refused to obey. The conditional "if" offers mercy—repentance remains possible—but introduces consequences if they continue in rebellion. Verses 5-6 spell out those consequences.

## Historical Context

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Jeremiah's ministry occurred after Josiah's reformation (2 Kings 22-23), when the lost Book of the Law was discovered and the nation heard God's covenant demands read publicly. The people knew what God required—they had heard the law,

witnessed Josiah's reforms, and experienced covenant renewal. Yet Jehoiakim deliberately reversed those reforms, reintroduced idolatry, and oppressed the vulnerable. This made their sin inexcusable. God had "set before" them His clear requirements, and they consciously chose rebellion. The law Jeremiah referenced wasn't merely ritual regulations but the comprehensive covenant demands summarized in Deuteronomy 6-11: exclusive worship of Yahweh, justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Jesus later condemned similar hypocrisy in religious leaders who knew Scripture but didn't obey it (Matthew 23:3, 23). Paul likewise emphasized that possessing the law without doing it brings judgment, not exemption (Romans 2:12-13).

## **Related Passages**

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## **Study Questions**

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1. What does the phrase "walk in my law" teach about the relationship between knowledge and obedience?
2. How does God's statement "which I have set before you" eliminate excuses based on ignorance or the law's difficulty?
3. In what ways might contemporary Christians treat God's word like ancient Judah did—possessing it, hearing it, but not obeying it?

## Interlinear Text

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אָמַר	אֵלֶיָּהּ	כִּי	אָמַר	יְהוָה	אִם	לֹא
And thou shalt say	H413	H3541	And thou shalt say	the LORD	H518	H3808
H559			H559	H3068		
תִּשְׁמָעוּ	אֵלֵּי	לִלְכָת	בֵּית וְכֶתֶרִי	אֲשֶׁר	נָתַתִּי	
If ye will not hearken	H413	H1980	in my law	H834	which I have set	
H8085			H8451		H5414	
לִפְנֵיכֶם:						
before						
H6440						

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Kings 9:6** (Word): But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them:

**Isaiah 1:20** (Word): But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

**Jeremiah 44:10** (Word): They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers.