

# Jeremiah 43:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah.

## Analysis

**So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD**—The verse's structure emphasizes comprehensive rebellion. Johanan, who had initially seemed faithful (warning Gedaliah of Ishmael's plot, 40:13-16; rescuing captives, 41:11-16), now leads mass apostasy. **All the captains** and **all the people** unite in disobedience—there is no faithful remnant within the remnant.

The phrase **obeyed not the voice of the LORD** uses *lo shama* (עַמְשָׁנָה), meaning they did not hear/hearken/obey. The verb *shama* (עַמְשָׁנָה) means both to hear and to obey—hearing that leads to action. They audibly heard Jeremiah's prophecy (43:1) but refused to *shama* in the full covenantal sense. This echoes Israel's persistent rebellion: 'they have not hearkened to my words' (Jeremiah 6:19, 7:24, 13:10, 16:12, 25:3-7, 35:14-16, 44:16).

The specific disobedience follows: refusing **to dwell in the land of Judah** (*lashev et be'eretz Yehudah*, לְשַׁבֵּת בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה). God had commanded them to remain in the covenant land under His protection (42:10-12), promising blessing for obedience. By abandoning Judah for Egypt, they rejected both God's command and His protective promise. This parallels the wilderness generation who refused to enter Canaan despite divine command (Numbers 14), bringing forty years of judgment.

## Historical Context

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Johanan son of Kareah had appeared as a heroic figure—warning Gedaliah of Ishmael's assassination plot, rescuing the captives Ishmael took from Mizpah, and apparently seeking God's will through Jeremiah (42:1-3). Yet when God's answer contradicted his predetermined plan, he rejected it. This demonstrates that initial religious appearances and even genuine past faithfulness do not guarantee continued obedience. The 'captains of the forces' were military leaders of the Judean remnant, who should have trusted God's protection but instead trusted Egypt's military power. Archaeological evidence shows the Judean settlements in Egypt (including Tahpanhes, where they settled, 43:7) became centers of syncretistic worship, vindicating Jeremiah's warnings. The community eventually disappeared from history, while the Babylonian exiles who obeyed God's earlier word through Jeremiah returned to rebuild Jerusalem.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

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

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How can someone who initially appears faithful (like Johanan) end in disobedience, and what warning does this provide?
2. What does it mean to 'hear' God's word without obeying it, and how does this differ from true biblical hearing (<em>shama</em>)?
3. In what ways might we abandon the place of God's calling when we face fear or difficulty?

## Interlinear Text

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שָׁרֵי שָׁמָעַ יְהוָה וְיַעֲשֵׂה  
and all the captains of Kareah the son of Johanan obeyed

H8269 H7143 H1121 H3110 H8085 H3808

לְשָׁבֵת יְהוָה וְלֹא בְּקָרְבָּן  
to dwell of the LORD not the voice and all the people of the forces

H3427 H3068 H6963 H5971 H3605 H2428

בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה  
of Judah in the land

H3063 H776

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 37:3** (References Lord): Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

**Jeremiah 44:5** (Parallel theme): But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.

**2 Chronicles 25:16** (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.