

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* (לֹא שָׁמָעַ), meaning they did not hear/hearken/obey. The verb *shama* (שָׁמָעַ) 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** (lashevet be'ereẓ Yehudah, לָשֶׁבֶת 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

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

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

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 (*shama*)?
3. In what ways might we abandon the place of God's calling when we face fear or difficulty?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא	שָׁמַע	יוֹחָנָן	בֶּן	קָרֵחַ	וְכָל	שָׂרֵי י
H3808	obeyed	So Johanan	the son	of Kareah	H3605	and all the captains
	H8085	H3110	H1121	H7143		H8269
הַחֲיָלִים	וְכָל	הָעָם	בֶּקֶל וּל	יְהוָה	לִשְׁכֹּן בְּת	
of the forces	H3605	and all the people	not the voice	of the LORD	to dwell	
H2428		H5971	H6963	H3068	H3427	
בְּאֶרֶץ	יְהוּדָה:					
in the land	of Judah					
H776	H3063					

Additional Cross-References

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 forbare, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.