

# Psalm 81:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

## Analysis

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God laments Israel's stubbornness: "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" (Hebrew *lu ammi shome'a li Yisra'el bid-rakai yehaleku*). The interjection "Oh that" (Hebrew *lu*) expresses divine pathos—God's genuine desire for His people's obedience, not for His benefit but theirs. "Hearkened" (Hebrew *shama*) means more than hearing; it indicates responsive obedience. "Walked in my ways" pictures ongoing life conduct aligned with God's revealed will. The verse reveals that covenant disobedience grieves God and harms His people.

## Historical Context

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This echoes the tragic pattern throughout Judges and Kings: Israel repeatedly rejected God's ways, pursuing idolatry and alliances with pagan nations. Deuteronomy 5:29 records similar divine longing after giving the Ten Commandments. Jesus wept over Jerusalem with similar pathos (Luke 19:41-44).

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

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

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

## Study Questions

1. What does God's expressed desire for obedience reveal about His character and your relationship with Him?
  2. In what areas of life are you walking in your own ways rather than God's, and what are the consequences?
  3. How does Christ fulfill perfect obedience on behalf of His people, and how does His Spirit enable us to walk in God's ways?

## Interlinear Text

ל	שָׁמַע	ל	שָׁבָא	ל	בָּדָבֶכּ
Oh	that my people	had hearkened	unto me and Israel	in my ways	
H3863	H5971	H8085	H3478		H1870

## Additional Cross-References

**Isaiah 48:18** (Parallel theme): O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

**Deuteronomy 5:29** (Parallel theme): O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!