

# Psalms 89:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;

## Analysis

**If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;** This verse continues the conditional section begun in verse 30, specifying covenant violations. **If they break my statutes** uses 'im-ḥuq-qô-ṭay yə-ḥal-lê-lû (יִמְחַדּוּ־מִן־יְדֵי־יְהוָה), where ḥillēl (חָלַל) means to profane, pollute, defile, or violate. This is stronger than mere neglect—it's active desecration. "Statutes" (ḥuqqôṭ, חֻקִּים) refers to God's prescribed ordinances and decrees, the specific regulations of covenant life.

**And keep not my commandments** employs ûmiṣ-wō-ṭay lô' yiš-mō-rû (וְלֹא־יִשְׁמְרוּ־אֶת־מִצְוֹתַי). The verb šāmar (שָׁמַר), "to keep," means to guard, observe carefully, treasure. The negative construct "keep not" indicates failure to treasure and obey. "Commandments" (miṣwôṭ, מִצְוֹת) are God's direct commands, His authoritative instructions. Together with verse 30, these verses cover the breadth of covenant obligation: law (tôrāh), judgments (mišpāṭîm), statutes (ḥuqqôṭ), and commandments (miṣwôṭ).

The repetition of "if" (verses 30-31) creates an extended conditional statement resolved in verses 32-34. This grammatical structure emphasizes the seriousness of covenant breaking while building toward God's surprising grace. The sad reality is that David's descendants did break statutes and keep not commandments—yet God's ultimate covenant promise stood firm in Christ, who perfectly kept every statute and commandment, fulfilling the law's righteous requirements (Matthew 5:17, Romans 8:3-4).

## Historical Context

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Israel's history chronicles repeated violations of God's statutes and commandments. Solomon himself broke the explicit commands against multiplying wives and accumulating wealth (Deuteronomy 17:16-17; 1 Kings 11:1-8). Subsequent kings in both Israel and Judah broke covenant repeatedly: establishing idolatrous shrines, practicing syncretism, neglecting the temple, oppressing the poor, and disregarding the prophets. The exile was divine discipline for these covenant violations (2 Kings 17:7-23, 2 Chronicles 36:15-21). Yet even in judgment, God preserved a remnant and kept His ultimate covenant promise.

## Related Passages

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

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

## Study Questions

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1. What is the difference between merely failing to keep God's commandments and actively 'breaking' or 'profaning' His statutes?
2. How does the structure of verses 30-34 (extended 'if' followed by 'nevertheless') reveal both God's justice and His mercy?
3. How does Christ's perfect obedience to all of God's statutes and commandments secure salvation for covenant-breakers?

## Interlinear Text

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אֲנִי	חֻקֵּי	אִם	יִשְׁמְרוּ:	לֹא	וְ	חֻמּוֹתַי	אִם	יִשְׁמְרוּ:
H518	my statutes	If they break	not my commandments	H3808				and keep
	H2708	H2490	H4687					H8104

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 55:20** (Parallel theme): He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant.

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