

# Jeremiah 11:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

## Analysis

This verse appeals for divine justice: 'But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart.' Jeremiah appeals to God as righteous Judge (shophet tsedeq) who tests (bochen) inner motivations. 'Reins' (kelayoth, kidneys) and 'heart' (lev) represent the seat of emotions and will—God examines motives, not just actions. 'Let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.' The Hebrew neqamah (נִקָּמָה, vengeance) is divine vindication, not personal revenge. 'Revealed my cause' (galithi eth-rivi) means entrusted his case to God's court. Jeremiah doesn't seek personal retaliation but commits his situation to divine justice.

## Historical Context

This appeal for divine vengeance appears throughout Jeremiah's confessions (15:15, 17:18, 18:21-23, 20:12). The 'reins and heart' phrase appears also in Jeremiah 17:10, 20:12, and Psalm 7:9—emphasizing God's complete knowledge of human motivation. Similar appeals appear in imprecatory Psalms (Psalm 35, 69, 109). These are not personal vendettas but appeals to divine justice against those who oppose God's word.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does appealing for divine vengeance differ from seeking personal revenge?
2. What does 'revealing my cause to You' teach about handling injustice through trust in God's justice?

## Interlinear Text

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כָּלְיָה וְתַבְּחֵנָה בְּחֵנָה | אֲכַבָּאָתָה יְהִי הָה  
But O LORD of hosts that judgest righteously that triest the reins  
H3068 H6635 H8199 H6664 H974 H3629

אַל יְבַקֵּשׁ בְּלִבְנֵךְ מִמֶּמֶךְ כִּי מִמְּמֶנָּךְ נְקַרְתָּבָן  
and the heart let me see thy vengeance  
H3820 H7200 H5360 H1992 H3588 H413

רִיבֵּנִי אֶת גָּל יְתִי  
on them for unto thee have I revealed my cause  
H1540 H853 H7379

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 20:12** (Righteousness): But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

**Jeremiah 17:10** (References Lord): I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

**Psalms 7:9** (Righteousness): Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

**1 Samuel 16:7** (References Lord): But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

**Revelation 2:23** (Parallel theme): And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

**Jeremiah 17:18** (Parallel theme): Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

**Jeremiah 15:15** (References Lord): O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.

**1 Chronicles 29:17** (Parallel theme): I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

**Genesis 18:25** (Righteousness): That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

**Revelation 18:20** (Parallel theme): Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.