

# Jeremiah 12:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.

## Analysis

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This verse contrasts Jeremiah with the wicked: 'But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee.' Jeremiah's heart is open to God's examination. 'Knowest' (yada'tani) is intimate relational knowledge; 'seen' (re'itani) indicates direct observation; 'tried' (bachan) means tested and proven genuine. 'Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.' The prophet requests judgment on the hypocrites—remove them like sheep destined for butchering. This imprecatory prayer asks God to act on what He knows, vindicating the righteous by judging the wicked.

## Historical Context

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Jeremiah appeals to God's omniscience—unlike humans who are deceived by hypocrisy, God knows true hearts. The sheep/slaughter imagery inverts 11:19 where Jeremiah was 'like a lamb to slaughter.' Now he asks that his persecutors face that fate instead. Such prayers for judgment appear throughout Psalms and prophets, expressing trust in divine justice rather than seeking personal revenge.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does appealing to God's knowledge of our hearts differ from self-righteous claims of innocence?
2. What justifies praying for judgment on hypocritical persecutors?

## Interlinear Text

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וְאֵת הַ	יְהוָה!	יִדְעֶתָ נִי	תָּרֵא נִי	וּבְחִנֵּת	לִבִּי
H859	<b>But thou O LORD</b>	<b>knowest</b>	<b>me thou hast seen</b>	<b>me and tried</b>	<b>mine heart</b>
	H3068	H3045	H7200	H974	H3820
אֶתְךָ	הַתִּקֶּם	כְּצֹאֵן	לְטִבּוֹתָהּ	וְהִקְדַּשְׁתָּ	
H854	<b>toward thee pull them out</b>	<b>like sheep</b>	<b>for the slaughter</b>	<b>and prepare</b>	
	H5423	H6629	H2878	H6942	
לִי יוֹם	הַרְגָהּ:				
<b>them for the day</b>	<b>of slaughter</b>				
H3117	H2028				

## Additional Cross-References

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**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.

**2 Kings 20:3** (References Lord): I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

**Psalms 17:3** (Parallel theme): Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

**James 5:5** (Parallel theme): Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

**Psalms 26:1** (References Lord): Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

**Psalms 139:23** (Parallel theme): Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

**Job 23:10** (Parallel theme): But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

**Jeremiah 50:27** (Parallel theme): Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter: woe unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation.

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