

Psalm 139:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

Analysis

This imperative prayer invites God's penetrating examination through paired synonymous verbs: 'search' (chaqar—to investigate thoroughly) and 'know' (yada—intimate knowledge). The parallel 'heart' (leb) and 'thoughts' (sar'appim—disquieting thoughts or anxieties) encompass the inner life. David's invitation for divine scrutiny reflects confidence in God's omniscience (verses 1-6) and gracious judgment. The prayer for God to 'try' (bachan—test, examine, as refining metal) demonstrates the believer's desire for sanctification. This vulnerability anticipates the Christian call to self-examination (2 Corinthians 13:5) and God's future judgment (1 Corinthians 4:5).

Historical Context

Psalm 139 celebrates God's omniscience, omnipresence, and creative sovereignty. David wrote from mature awareness of his own sin (Bathsheba, Uriah) and God's faithful discipline. The psalm reflects Israel's covenant relationship where God judges to purify, not merely to condemn. Ancient Near Eastern religion feared capricious gods, but Israel's God offers redemptive examination.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Are you willing to invite God's searching examination of your heart, or are there hidden areas you're protecting?
2. What anxious thoughts or attitudes might God want to expose and heal in you through this prayer?

Interlinear Text

שְׁרַעֲפִים: וְיִדְעָה לְבָבִי תַּחַת נִיְלָה וְיִדְעָה תַּחַת נִיְלָה
Search me O God and know my heart try and know my thoughts

H2713 H410 H3045 H3824 H974 H3045 H8312

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 26:2 (Parallel theme): Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

1 Peter 1:7 (Parallel theme): That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Job 31:6 (References God): Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity.

Proverbs 17:3 (Parallel theme): The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.

Deuteronomy 8:2 (References God): And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Psalms 139:1 (Parallel theme): O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

Jeremiah 11:20 (Parallel theme): 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.

Zechariah 13:9 (References God): And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

Deuteronomy 8:16 (Parallel theme): Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org