

# Psalms 26:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

## Analysis

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**Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.** This verse intensifies David's appeal for divine scrutiny, using three imperative verbs that invite God's searching examination. The progression moves from general examination to specific testing of innermost being.

"Examine me" (bechaneni, בְּחָנֵנִי) comes from bachan (בָּחָן), meaning to test, try, examine, assay (as testing metal). This is technical language of refining—testing to verify purity or identify impurities. Psalm 17:3: "Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing." David invites thorough investigation, confident examination will vindicate rather than condemn.

"Prove me" (nasseni, נִסְנֵנִי) uses nasah (נִסָּה), meaning to test, try, prove. This word often describes testing to reveal character or verify quality. God tested Abraham (Genesis 22:1). Israel tested God in wilderness (Exodus 17:2). James 1:3 speaks of testing producing patience. David welcomes testing that will demonstrate his integrity.

"Try my reins" (tzorfa khilyotai, צְרוֹפָה כְּלִיּוֹתִי) uses metallurgical imagery. Tzaraf (צְרוֹפָה) means to smelt, refine, test metals by fire. Kilyot (כְּלִיּוֹת, kidneys/reins) represent innermost being, emotions, and conscience. Ancient thought located emotions and moral consciousness in kidneys, as modern thought locates them in the heart. This requests examination of deepest thoughts, hidden motives,

unconscious drives.

"And my heart" (velibbi, וְלִבִּי) adds lev (לב), the center of thought, will, and desire. Together, reins and heart encompass the entire inner life—emotions and will, unconscious and conscious, what we feel and what we choose. David holds nothing back from God's examination, inviting scrutiny of his complete inner world.

## Historical Context

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The language of refining metal was familiar to ancient audiences. Metalworkers heated ore to separate pure metal from dross (impurities). The process required high heat and skill—the refiner heated until impurities floated to surface for removal, producing pure metal. Proverbs 17:3: "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts." Malachi 3:3: "he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

The concept of God testing hearts appears throughout Scripture. Psalm 7:9: "the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." Proverbs 21:2: "the LORD pondereth the hearts." Jeremiah 17:10: "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways." God's omniscience includes not just knowledge of actions but penetrating understanding of motives.

David's willingness to be examined contrasts with human tendency to hide from God. Adam and Eve hid after sinning (Genesis 3:8). Jonah fled from God's presence (Jonah 1:3). But those walking in integrity welcome divine scrutiny. Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Jesus, throughout His ministry, demonstrated this principle. He welcomed examination of His life and teachings. John 8:46: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" His prayer in Gethsemane: "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42), showed complete openness to the Father's will. Believers united to Christ can similarly invite divine examination, confident that Christ's righteousness covers while the Spirit sanctifies.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

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

## Study Questions

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1. Why does David use three different words (examine, prove, try) to describe God's scrutiny, and what does this repetition communicate?
2. What does it mean to invite God to test your 'reins and heart' (innermost being), and what might such examination reveal?
3. How is the metaphor of refining metal helpful for understanding spiritual testing and sanctification?
4. In what areas of life are you hesitant to invite God's examination, and what does that hesitancy reveal?
5. How does union with Christ enable believers to welcome divine examination despite their ongoing sin and imperfection?

## Interlinear Text

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כְּלִיּוֹת יְהִי תְּשַׁבַּח נִיְמָנָה  
Examine me O LORD and prove me try my reins and my heart  
H974 H3068 H5254 H6884 H3629 H3820

## Additional Cross-References

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

**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.

**Job 13:23** (Parallel theme): How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.

**Psalms 66:10** (Parallel theme): For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.

**Zechariah 13:9** (References Lord): 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.

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