

# Hebrews 10:30 in the Navajo Bible

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Háálá, K'ééhodidoo'nííígíí éí bee shóhólnííh, shí k'éédideesh'nííł, jidííniidii hwéédahoniilzin. Náá'áldó' ánáázhdí'ní, Bóhólnííhii éí bidine'é yaa nídoót'ííł. (Hebrews 10:30)<sup>1</sup>

For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." (Hebrews 10:30)<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

What does it mean that, "The Lord will judge his people" (Hebrews 10:30)? Does this mean the Lord will punish His people? Does it mean He will pass judgment on His people, making decisions for them that are either favorable or unfavorable? Neither of these meanings fits the context. So what exactly does this verse mean?

## Discussion

We begin by considering the word "avenge," as in, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay." What does "avenge" mean? Two related words, which might be more familiar to the reader, are "vengeance" and "revenge." "Vengeance" means getting back at someone for what they've done. "Revenge" means someone does something to you and you do something back to them.

The word NIV uses is similar to this, but with an important difference. When you avenge someone, it doesn't mean you're paying them back for something they did to you. It means you're paying someone else back for what they did to the person you're avenging – usually someone you care about. When God says, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay" (above), what He means is, Don't try to take justice into your own hands and pay people back for the harm they've done; I'll do that for you.

If this is the context – as it surely is – then what does the word "judge" mean in the last part of the verse? It means the same thing as "avenge," i.e., to come to someone's defense. The two quotations are parallel to each other. They represent two ways of saying the same thing. When God "judges" His people, in the sense of Hebrews 10:30, He is avenging the wrongs done to them by others. Is the idea of punishment present here? Yes, but it's not directed to God's people in this verse. Instead it's directed to those who have harmed them. A similar use of the word "judge" can be found in one of the Psalms.

He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. (Psalm 72:2)

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<sup>1</sup> Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> English Bible quotations are from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

In the context of Psalm 72:2, judging is not something God does *to* His people, but rather *for* His people. He is avenging His people for suffering brought on them by others. Another verse that conveys this meaning is found in Deuteronomy.

The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free. (Deuteronomy 32:36)

In the Bible judging can be favorable or unfavorable, just as it is in any court of law today. It simply refers to taking matters in hand, deciding what needs to be done and then making sure it happens. It's the opposite counterpart of letting things slide.

## Conclusion

Will God punish His people as well as their enemies? Certainly! He does this frequently, as any Christian can testify. Consider the following verse.

And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." (Hebrews 12:5)

If the Lord does not punish us from time to time, that's an indication that we are not His. We should value God's punishments and be reassured, as well as corrected, by them. He "disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." But that's Hebrews 12, where God punishes those who serve Him. In Hebrews 10:30 (above) He is not punishing His people, but punishing others for harming His people. In Hebrews 10 He's not punishing His people, but rather taking up their cause and defending them.