

Job Chapter 32

Verses 32:1 – 37:24

Job's final defense provoked a response from a fourth friend, the young man "Elihu."

These might be called the "intrusive speeches of Elihu", a young sage who was silent until this time.

Job and his friends had been resolute in their opposing opinions; Elihu's speeches prepare the way for the even more "intrusive" speeches of the LORD!

Elihu took a new approach to the issue of Job's suffering.

Angry with the other 3, he had some new thoughts, but was very hard on Job.

Elihu was angry, full of self-importance and verbose, but his approach was refreshing after listening repetitiously to the others, though not really helpful to Job.

Why was it necessary to record and read those 4 blustering speeches by this man?

Because they happened as part of the story, while Job was still waiting for God to disclose Himself (chapters 38-41).

Job 32:1 "So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he [was] righteous in his own eyes."

Elihu was probably one of a number of onlookers who witnessed the debate between Job and his friends.

In the six chapters devoted to his speeches, the emphasis seems to be fourfold: supreme reverence for God, grave sensitivity to sin, recognition of the instructive power of suffering under God's hand, and awareness of the danger of spiritual pride.

In this introductory chapter, Elihu lives up to the caricature of the "angry young man".

The word "wrath" occurs four times (in verses 2-5).

He explains that he has kept silent because of his youth, but now feels compelled to speak.

This was actually stating that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar had run out of things to accuse Job of.

Job knew that he was not guilty of the things they had accused him of.

They thought Job was righteous in his own sight.

Job had not made that statement.

He had only defended himself from their accusations, which were untrue.

Verses 2-5

Elihu was angry with Job for self-righteousness, and with the friends for false accusations and unsuccessful arguments.

He believed all four men had hurt God by their words.

Job 32:2 "Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God."

"Buzite":

Elihu's ancestry was traced to the Arabian tribe of Buz (Jer. 25:23).

The "family of Ram" is unknown.

"Elihu" means He is my God.

"Barachel" means God blesses.

These names both indicate that Elihu was a believer in the One True God.

We would have to twist the names Buzite and Ram to make any connection with them.

The main thing was that Elihu was angry with Job for justifying himself before God.

We will find in a later lesson, that God was not offended by Job's defense of his own actions.

Job 32:3 "Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and [yet] had condemned Job."

He did not take part with either side, but blamed both, and took upon himself to be a moderator between them, and deal impartially with them.

What highly displeased him, and raised his spirit against the three friends of Job, was:

"Because they had found no answer":

They were at a loss for one, or for a sufficient one.

They had all of them been answering him in their turns again and again, but with nothing to the purpose, not with anything conclusive and convincing.

And particularly they could find and give no answer to Job's last vindication of himself.

"And yet had condemned Job":

They condemned Job as a hypocrite or ungodly man.

The three who called themselves friends of Job, were not friends at all.

Their accusations were unfounded.

They could not prove them, because they were not true.

They should not have condemned Job without facts to prove what they were saying.

It appears that Elihu had waited to see the outcome of their actions.

When he saw they could not get answers for their accusations, Elihu took up the battle.

Job 32:4 "Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they [were] elder than he."

Rather, to speak to Job (see the Revised Version), he had waited impatiently until the three special "friends" had said their say, and so that he might come forward without manifest presumption.

"Because they were elder than he":

On the respect paid to age at this time in the land wherein Job lived.

We are told very little of how Elihu had the authority to come against Job.

He had been polite and waited until Job finished, because he was a younger man.

His waiting showed he had respect for age at least.

Job 32:5 "When Elihu saw that [there was] no answer in the mouth of [these] three men, then his wrath was kindled."

That could be called an answer; nay, when he perceived they were quite confused and silenced.

Though men of years and experience, and reputed wise and knowing.

"Then his wrath was kindled":

His spirit was stirred up; his heart was hot within him; he burned with anger against those men.
He was all on fire, as it were, and wanted to vent his resentment.

Verses 6-9

Out of respect for his elders, Elihu had refrained from speaking; now he claimed that advanced “age” is no guarantee of wisdom (Psalm 119:100).

Elihu’s answers require discernment, as they are sometimes correct and sometimes incorrect.

Elihu may have called his words “what I think” (verses 6, 10, 17), but he claimed it had come by inspiration from God (verse 8; 33:6, 33).

Job 32:6 "And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I [am] young, and ye [are] very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion."

We can only guess at the exact ages of Job and his friends.

From the fact that God at the last "gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10).

And the further fact that he lived, after he had recovered his prosperity, a hundred and forty years (Job 42:16).

It has been conjectured that he was seventy years of age at the time of his conference with his friends, and that he died at the age of two hundred and ten.

"Wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion":

Rather, I held back and was afraid to utter what I knew in your presence.

Elihu would have been thought unduly pushing and presumptuous if he had ventured to come forward before his seniors had ended their colloquy.

This young man at least called his accusations his opinion.

He was much younger than Job it seems.

Ordinarily, it would not be appropriate for a young man to reprimand his elder

Job 32:7 "I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom."

I.e. "I kept saying to myself, when the desire to interrupt came upon me."

"Days should speak":

Age should give wisdom, and the speech of the old should be most worthy of being attended to.

Elihu had been brought up in this conviction, and therefore refrained himself.

"And multitude of years should teach wisdom":

"Old experience should attain to something of prophetic strain."

"One ought to give attention," says Aristotle,

"to the mere unproved assertions of wise and aged men, as much as to the actual demonstrations of others" (compare Job 10:12; 15:10; Prov. 16:31).

Verses 8-18

The young sage believed his speech was divinely inspired ("Inspiration of the Almighty"), so he felt compelled to speak (33:4).

Job 32:8 "But [there is] a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."

But, after all, it is not mere age and experience that make men wise and able to teach others.

"There is a spirit in man" (see Genesis 2:7); and it is according as this spirit is or is not enlightened from on high that men speak words of wisdom or the contrary.

"And the inspiration of the Almighty":

This it is, which giveth them understanding.

And such inspiration it is in the power of God to bestow, as he pleases, on the old or on the young, on the great of the earth, or on those of small reputation.

Hence Elihu's conclusion.

Elihu had been reluctant to speak because of his youth, but he said the Spirit of God moved upon his spirit to speak.

It is not just age and education that give people the right to teach others.

It is the Spirit of God moving within them.

Job 32:9 "Great men are not [always] wise: neither do the aged understand judgment."

Elihu lays down the universal law, before applying it to the particular instance.

True wisdom is from God, not from observation and experience.

Therefore, many aged men are not wise; many experienced men, great in position, versed in affairs, do not possess understanding.

It is a trite remark, "With how little wisdom the world is governed!"

He was speaking of men with great power and prestige, when he said "great men".

Age does not make a man wise either.

Wisdom is a gift from God.

Job 32:10 "Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will show mine opinion."

Thou O Job, and every one of you his friends, for the word is singular.

Though I am but a young man, yet if I have the Spirit of God, and am under the inspiration of the Almighty, I may be able to say something to you worth your hearing.

"I also will show mine opinion":

For though for a while he was suffering and fearful of doing it, lest he should mistake and expose himself.

Yet having duly weighed and considered the above things, he was determined to do it.

He was asking the three friends of Job, as well as Job, to hear him out.

Job 32:11 "Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say."

With great desire, with great eagerness and earnestness, in hope of meeting with arguments fully satisfying and convincing.

He waited for them, as for the rain, and the latter rain, to be revived, refreshed, and edified therewith.

And he patiently waited until they had done speaking.

"I gave ear to your reasons":

Or "understandings"; as he endeavored to get into the sense and meaning of their words.

Not only attended to what they did say, but to what he thought they meant to say.

Some are not so happy in their expressions; and yet, by what they do say, with close attention it may be understood what they aim at, what is their drift and design.

This Elihu was careful to attain unto, not barely to hear their words, but penetrate, if possible, into their meaning.

"Whilst ye searched out what to say":

For they did not make their replies to Job immediately, and say what came uppermost at once, but they took time to think of things.

And to search out for the most forcible arguments to refute Job, and strengthen their cause.

It is very probable they made a pause at the end of every speech of Job's, and considered what was proper to be said in reply, and perhaps consulted each other.

He had waited patiently while Job's three accusers looked for things to accuse Job of.

He waited patiently for them to prove Job guilty.

It seemed to him, as if they were hunting for words to say.

Job 32:12 "Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, [there was] none of you that convinced Job, [or] that answered his words:"

Very closely, with great application and diligence.

Endeavoring to get, as it were, within them, and thoroughly understand the meaning of what they said.

"And, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job":

Which was not owing to his obstinacy, but to want of proof in them, their words and arguments.

They had charged Job highly, as particularly Eliphaz (Job 22:5).

But then they failed in their proof; they produced nothing to support their allegations.

"Or that answered his words":

The arguments and reasons he gave in proof of his own innocence and uprightness.

Or the instances he produced, showing that God often afflicted good men, and suffered the wicked to prosper.

And therefore, no argument could be drawn from God's dealings with men, proving they were either of this or the other character, good or bad men.

He listened carefully to them, but they did not even convince him of Job's guilt in these matters, much less Job.

They were not effective in causing Job to see his errors and repent.

They did not even answer Job's questions.

Job 32:13 "Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man."

Or, beware lest ye say: We have found wisdom (see the Revised Version).

"Do not suppose, i.e., that you have triumphed in the controversy, that your mode of meeting Job's complaints is the wise and right one.

The exact reverse is the case.

You have not vanquished Job.

On the contrary, he is unvanquished, and remains master of the field.

If he is ever to be vanquished, it will not be by you.

"God thrusteth":

Rather, may thrust him down, not man.

"A true prophecy! (See Job 40:1-14).

It appears their reason for trying to destroy Job was to build themselves up.

If Job were thrust down, it would be from God, and not from them.

Job 32:14 "Now he hath not directed [his] words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches."

I am not engaged in this dispute by any provoking words of Job, as you have been, which have excited your passions, and biased your judgments.

But I speak merely from zeal for the vindication of God's honor, and from love of truth and justice, and a sincere desire to administer to Job's matter both of conviction and comfort.

"Neither will I answer him with your speeches":

With such words or arguments as yours, both weak and impertinent, or offensive and provoking.

As Job did not direct any of his words against me, so I shall not trouble him with any of your replies.

Job had not said anything against Elihu.

Elihu would not be trying to defend his own character.

He would not be speaking to get revenge on Job.

He would take an entirely different approach.

Verses 15-20

Elihu's need to be "refreshed" (a chance to speak), was similar to what Jeremiah experienced (Jer. 20:9); Paul had a similar compulsion, only his was to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16).

Job 32:15 "They were amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking."

They were like persons thunderstruck, quite surprised and astonished to hear a young man talk after this manner.

"They answered no more":

As they had ceased to answer Job, they did not undertake to answer Elihu, who had plainly told them their arguments were not convincing, their answers were no answers, and that they had done a wrong thing in condemning Job without proof.

And that which they thought their greatest wisdom, and strongest argument, had no wisdom nor strength in it.

Namely, which was taken from his sore afflictions by the hand of God.

"They left off speaking":

Or words departed from them, as Jarchi; their speech left them, they seemed deprived of it.

This caused the three friends of Job to say no more.

Their amazement was in the fact that this young man would take it upon himself to speak to his elders in this manner.

Job 32:16 "When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, [and] answered no more;)"

Which he repeats as a strange and unreasonable thing, that they should be silent when they had such obligations to speak for the vindication both of God's justice, and of their own truth and reputation.

Job 32:17 "[I said], I will answer also my part, I also will show mine opinion."

Or take his turn in giving an answer to Job; what they had given being quite insufficient and unsuitable.

"I also will show mine opinion":

Knowledge, or sentiment; this for a while he was fearful of doing, but, upon a thorough and serious consideration of things, he determined upon it, and now repeats it, to assure he would do it.

The reasons of which follow.

When Elihu realized that the three had nothing else to say, he decided to speak his opinion.

Job 32:18 "For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me."

I.e. I have many things to say in this cause.

"The spirit within me":

Either my own spirit or soul, which is wholly dissatisfied with what hath been hitherto spoken, and clearly apprehends what may silence Job, and end the dispute.

Or God's Spirit, which he hath put in me; the Spirit of understanding, which hath discovered the truth of the matter to me.

And the Spirit of zeal, which urges me to plead God's cause against Job.

"Constraineth me":

Forces me to speak.

It is a metaphor from a man or woman whose belly is full with wind, or with a child, and is never at rest till it be emptied and eased of its burden.

There were many things he would like to say, but his spirit was telling him not to speak.

Job 32:19 "Behold, my belly [is] as wine [which] hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles."

I.e. my mind or heart, which is oft called a man's belly (as Job 15:35; Psalm 40:8; Hab. 3:16 John 7:38).

"As wine":

As new wine pent up close in a bottle, as the following words explain it and determine it.

The wine is here put for the bottle in which it is, by a common figure of speech.

"New bottles":

I.e. bottles of new wine, by the same general figure; for otherwise old bottles are most apt to burst (Matt. 9:17).

He was so full he would burst, if he did not open his mouth and speak some of the words that were built up inside of him.

Wine will swell and burst new bottles, if the bottle is allowed to swell.

Job 32:20 "I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer."

That I may ease my mind of those thoughts which now oppress it.

"I will open my lips and answer":

I will not utter impertinent words, but solid answers, to Job's arguments.

It was almost as if he was trying to convince himself that he should speak.

After he had spoken perhaps, he would be more at peace.

Job 32:21 "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man."

So as, either from fear of, or respect to, any man, to speak otherwise than I think.

Do not expect me to speak partially, or by way of flattery, to anyone, but bear with my free and plain dealing.

As he found himself under a strong impulse to speak, so he would deliver his opinion with all freedom, and without partial inclination to either side.

"Neither let me give flattering titles unto man":

That is, I have neither skill nor inclination to flatter Job nor any man, so as to corrupt the truth, or speak falsely for his sake.

Elihu hoped that he would not lean to either side, because of who they were.

He wanted his speech to be unbiased.

He did not want to think of the high position that Job had in the community, and not say what he needed to say either.

He truly wanted to speak truth.

Job 32:22 "For I know not to give flattering titles; [in so doing] my maker would soon take me away."

I have neither skill nor will to flatter Job or any man so as to debauch my conscience, or corrupt the truth, or speak falsely for his sake.

If I should be guilty of that sin, God would quickly and sorely punish me for it.

"My Maker would soon take me away":

To wit, out of this world.

I dare not flatter any man, because I consider I must shortly die and go to judgment, to give an account of all my words and actions.

He would speak to Job, as he would to any other man.

He was afraid to call an earthly man by a flattering title, for fear God would be jealous and punish him.

Job Chapter 32 Questions

1. Why did the three men cease to answer Job?
2. Had Job made that statement?
3. Their accusations were _____.
4. Then was kindled the wrath of _____.
5. Who was his father?

6. Why was he angry?
7. What does "Elihu" mean?
8. What does Barachel" mean?
9. What does the meaning of their names tell us?
10. Was God offended by Job trying to defend himself from the accusations?
11. Why was Elihu offended at the three friends of Job?
12. Why had they not been able to prove their accusations against Job?
13. Why had Elihu waited this long to speak?
14. Elihu said, "I am young, and ye are very _____".
15. The young man called his accusations his _____.
16. What caused Elihu to desire to speak?
17. Great men are not always _____.
18. It seemed to Elihu, that the friends were searching for things to _____.
19. Why had the friends tried to destroy Job?
20. There were many things he wanted to _____.
21. What constrained Elihu?
22. Elihu said, his belly was as _____ which hath no vent.
23. Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's _____.
24. Why would he not use flattering titles?
25. What did Elihu fear might happen to him?