

Young Elihu's First Speech (c. 2200 BC)

Job 32–33

Introduction of Elihu

32:1 Then these three men ceased from answering Job because he *was* righteous in his *own* eyes.

2 So Elihu the son of Barakel the Buzite, from the clan of Ram, became angry. He became angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God,

3 and he became angry at his three friends because they had not found an answer, and they had declared Job guilty.

4 Thus Elihu had waited [to speak to Job] because they were older than he.

5 When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men, he became angry.

Elihu Explains Why He Remained Silent Until Now

6 Then Elihu the son of Barakel the Buzite spoke up and said,

“I am young, but you are old;
therefore I feared and became afraid of explaining my knowledge to you.

7 I thought, ‘Let days speak,
and let many years teach wisdom.’

8 “Truly, it *is* a spirit in a human being,
and the breath of Shaddai teaches them.

9 *It is* not the aged *who* are wise,
or *it is not the* elders *who* understand justice.

Elihu Rebukes Job's Three Friends

10 Therefore I say, ‘Listen to me;
let me also declare my knowledge myself.’

11 “Look, I waited for your words;
I listened for your insight,
until you searched out what to say.

12 And I directed my attention to you;
and, look, there is no *one* for Job *who* refuted,
answering his words among you.

13 So do not say, ‘We have found wisdom;
let God refute him, not a man.’

14 But he did not direct *his* words to me,
and I will not answer him with your words.

15 “They are dismayed; they no longer answer;
they have nothing to say.

16 And I have waited because they do not speak,
because they stand *there and* no longer answer.

Elihu's Compulsion to Speak

17 I myself will answer my share also;
I myself will declare my knowledge also,

18 for I am full of words;
the spirit within me urges me.

19 “Look, my internal organs *are* like unopened wine,
like new wineskins it is *ready* to burst open.

20 Let me speak that I may find relief;
let me open my lips, and let me answer.

21 Please let me not show partiality to anyone,
and let me not show flattery to human beings,

22 for I do not know *how* to flatter,
else my Maker would soon put an end to me.

Elihu Tells Job to Listen

33:1 “But now, please hear my speeches, Job,
and hear all my words.

2 Please look, I open my mouth;

my tongue in my mouth speaks.

- 3 My words *declare* my heart's uprightness,
and my lips sincerely speak what my lips know.
- 4 The Spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of Shaddai gives life to me.
- 5 "If you are able, answer me.
Present *your argument* before me; take your stand.
- 6 Look, before God I am like you;
I myself was also formed from clay.
- 7 Look, dread of me should not terrify you,
and my hand will not be heavy upon you.

Elihu's Perception of Job's Statements

- 8 "Surely you have spoken in my ears,
and I have heard *the sound of your words*:
- 9 'I *am* clean, without transgression;
I *am* pure, and *there is* no guilt in me.
- 10 Look, he finds fault against me;
he reckons me as his enemy;
- 11 he puts my feet in the block;
he watches all my paths.'

Elihu's Answer—God Disciplines Men in Various Ways

- 12 "Look, *in* this you are not right—I will answer you:
Indeed, God is greater than a human being.
- 13 Why do you contend against him,
that he will not answer all a person's words?
- 14 Indeed, God speaks in one *way*,
even in two, *yet someone* does not perceive it.

God Disciplines Men through Dreams

- 15 "In a dream, a vision of *the* night,
when a deep sleep falls on men slumbering on *their* bed,
16 then he opens *the* ear of men,
and he frightens them with a warning
17 to turn human beings aside *from their* deeds,
and he keeps man from pride.
- 18 He spares his life from *the* pit
and his life from passing over the river of *death*.

God Disciplines Men through Pain and Illness

- 19 "And he is reprov'd with pain on his bed,
even *with* the strife of his bones continually,
20 so that his life loathes bread,
and his inner self *loathes* appetizing food.
- 21 His flesh is wasted away from sight,
and his bones, *which* are invisible, are bared.
- 22 And he draws near to the pit
and his life to the killers.

Elihu Believes There is a Special Angel (lit. "Messenger") Who Acts as Mediator for the Sinner

- 23 "If there is a messenger beside him, a mediator, one of a thousand,
to declare to a human being his uprightness
24 so that he is gracious *to* him, and he says,
'Deliver him from descending into *the* pit;
I have found a ransom.'
- 25 His flesh is renewed with *his* youth;
he returns to *the* days of his youthful strength.

God Accepts Those Who Repent of Their Sin

- 26 He prays to God, then he accepts him,
and he sees his face with a shout of joy,
and he repays to the human being his righteousness.
- 27 “He will sing to men, and he will say,
‘I have sinned and have perverted *what is* right,
and it was not paid back to me.
- 28 He redeemed my life from going down into the pit,
so I will enjoy the light.’
- 29 Look, God does all these *things*
twice, three times with a person
- 30 to bring his life back from *the* pit
so that he may enjoy the light of life.

Elihu Tells Job to Speak if He Must or Be Silent and Listen to Wisdom

- 31 “Listen attentively, Job; listen to me;
be silent, and I will speak.
- 32 If you have anything to say, answer me;
speak, for I desire to justify you.
- 33 If not, you listen to me;
be silent, and I will teach you wisdom.”

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Job 34

Job Remains Silent and Elihu Continues

- 1 Thus Elihu spoke up and said,
- 2 “Hear my words, you wise men,
and listen to me, you who know,
3 for *the* ear tests words,
and *the* palate tastes food.
- 4 Let us choose justice for ourselves;
let us determine among ourselves what *is* good—

Elihu Twists Job’s Words

- 5 for Job has said, ‘I am righteous,
but God has taken away my justice.
6 Should I lie concerning my justice?
Though I am without transgression, my wound caused by an arrow is incurable.’
- 7 What man *is* like Job,
who drinks scorn like water?
8 And he goes on the road in company with instigators of mischief,
and walks with men of wickedness.
- 9 Indeed, he says, ‘A man does not profit
when he takes delight in God.’

Elihu’s Premise—God Rules Justly and Repays Men According to Their Deeds

- 10 “Therefore, listen to me, people who have sense:
far be it from God that he should commit wickedness
and that Shaddai should do wrong.
- 11 Indeed, he will repay *according to* a human being’s deeds,
and according to a man’s way he will let *it* happen *to* him.
- 12 What’s more, God truly does not act wickedly,
and Shaddai does not pervert justice.
- 13 Who gave him charge *over the* earth?
Or who laid on *him the* whole world?
- 14 If he should set his heart to it,
and he should gather his spirit and his breath to himself,

15 all flesh would perish together,
and humankind would return to dust.

Defense of the Premise

16 “But if *you have* understanding, hear this;
listen to what I say.
17 Shall *he who* hates justice really govern?
Or will you declare *the* Righteous One, the Mighty, guilty?—
18 the one who says to a king, ‘You worthless man,’
to noblemen, ‘You wicked man,’
19 who shows no partiality to officials
and *who* does not take note of the noble more than of the insignificant,
for all of them *are* the work of his hands?
20 *In* a moment they die,
and *in* the middle of *the* night *the* people are shaken, and they pass away,
and they take away *the* mighty effortlessly.
21 “Indeed, his eyes *are* upon *the* ways of man,
and he sees all his steps.
22 There is no darkness, and there is no deep shadow
where instigators of mischief might hide themselves.
23 Indeed, he has not yet appointed *a time* for man
to go to God in the judgment.
24 He shatters the mighty without investigation,
and he sets others in their place.
25 Therefore he knows their works,
and he overturns *them in the* night
so that they are crushed.
26 He strikes them where the wicked stood,
where there are onlookers,
27 because they have turned aside from him
and have not understood any of his ways,
28 so that *they cause the* cry of distress from *the* helpless to come to him,
and he hears *the* cry of distress from *the* needy,
29 but he remains quiet, and who can condemn?
And he hides *his* face, and who can behold him?
Yet *he is* over a nation and over a person alike,
30 so that godless human beings should not reign,
nor those who ensnare *the* people.

Elihu Challenges Job to Repent

31 “Indeed, does anyone say to God, ‘I have endured *chastisement*;
I will not act corruptly *again*;
32 teach me yourself what I cannot see;
if I have done wrong, I will not repeat *it*’?
33 According to your judgment, must he repay *it* because you rejected *this*?
Indeed, you must choose, and not I, so declare what you know.

Elihu Condemns Job When He Does Not

34 Those who have sense say to me,
and *the* wise man hearing me *says*:
35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge,
and his words *are* without insight.
36 Would that Job were tested up to *the* end
because *his* answers *are* like *those from* men of mischief,
37 for he adds transgression to his sin;
he claps hands among us,
and he multiplies his words against God.’”