JOB 32
Elihu’s Response—He Is Angry With Job & His Friends
And Is Compelled to Speak

Introduction:
In this chapter a man named Elihu, a fourth, and youngest, friend of Job begins his discourse of four
distinct speeches or sermons found in chapters 32-33, 34, 35 and 36-37, respectively.
This chapter provides an introduction to his discourse with the next dedicated to Elihu’s defense of
God's righteousness.

Note that Job does not reply to any of Elihu’s speeches, nor does the LORD.
Although Elihu is the youngest of all the “friends” of Job, his words ring truest. And he will give a
rebuttal to both Job's and the other friends' statements.
Although Elihu was respectful of his elders {vv.4, 6-13} he was unaffected by their error {v.14} and we
will see that he is quite upset and angry with all of them!
Elihu’s “sermons” show a knowledge of the debate that has gone on between Job and his friends, but
they come from an entirely different perspective. Elihu's arguments are based on the fact that suffering
is a discipline from God, to teach and train those who have put their faith and trust in Him what true
humility and faith are. In other words, Elihu’s point is that Job was suffering to bring glory to God and
vindicate God's confidence in him.

It becomes evident that Elihu correctly identified Job's determination to maintain his integrity at God's
expense as the primary problem {vv1-3; Job 34:37; 35:16; cf. 38:2; 40:8; Job 42:3}. He sought to
maintain impartiality {vv.21-22} and to offer true wisdom {Job 33:33}, believed like Job that a mediator
existed {Job 33:23-24}, and desired Job's vindication {Job 33:32}.

Although Elihu's speeches form an interesting part of the book, they too are irrelevant to Job's actual
case because they fail to solve Job's dilemma of suffering.

In the first speech, there is a short introduction {vv.1-5}, and then the speech proper with these
sections: Elihu will speak because his youth is wiser {vv.6-14}, and his friends arguments failed
{vv.15-22}; he calls for Job's attention {Job 33:1-7}, claims Job's case is wrong {Job 33:8-13}, and
Job's argument that God does not answer is false {Job 33:14-28}, and then makes an appeal to Job
{Job 33:29-33}.

In his second, third and fourth sermons, Elihu focuses on vindicating God's actions {Job 34:12; 35:10-
11; 36:2-3, 22-26} and hinting at the response from the Lord {Job 37:1-5, 22}.

It appears that Elihu was not included in the divine condemnation of Job's friends {Job 42:7-9} and
was excluded from Job's prayer of intercession {Job 42:8-10}; both perhaps implying divine approval
of his behavior and words.

In this chapter Elihu gets some things “off his chest” preparing his audience for what he’s going to say.
After Job said all he could think of in defending himself, after his three friends present their cases
against Job with all their advice, allegations and accusations, and after Elihu finally finishes speaking,
God finally speaks in chapter 38!

vv. 1-5➤  Elihu Vents His Anger Against Job & His Three Friends

[ 1 So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2 Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. 3 Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. 4 Now because they were years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job. 5 When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was aroused.]
[of Elihu.....] We are now introduced to a fourth friend of Job, named “Elihu”, and as we shall see he is much younger than Job and the others. Unlike Job, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, we get a glimpse into the background of this young man because his genealogy is given.

It is important to note that neither the genealogy of Job or his three friends are given in this book. Not even the name of Job’s father is given, only the place where they lived or came from is given.

Biblical names are commonly significant and it was not unusual to incorporate the Hebrew names of God, El, YAH or YAHWEH¹, in those given to human beings². This name was probably given as an expression of piety on the part of his parents.

The name Elihu means, “God is He”; or, since the word “He” is often used by way of eminence to denote the true God or YAHWEH, the name is equivalent to saying, “El is YAHWEH”.

Elihu’s very name was a statement on the identity of the One True God. This indicates that his parents were probably devout believers and faithful followers of the One True God. The name itself would have been a valuable reminder to Elihu of the great God he was accountable to.

[.....the son of Barachel.....] The name Barachel means “God blesses” and was also probably given as expressive of the faithfulness of Elihu’s grandparents, also indicating the fact that Elihu came from a very godly heritage!

[.....the Buzite.....] Buz was the second son of Nahor, the brother of Abraham, Gen. 22:20-21.

A city of the name Buz is mentioned in Jer. 25:23, in connection with Dedan and Tema, cities of Arabia, and it is probable that Barachel, the father of Elihu, was of that city. If this name was given to the place after the son of Nahor, it will follow that Elihu, and consequently Job, must have lived after the time of Abraham.

In our INTRODUCTION to this book it was mentioned that Job and his friends probably lived during the generations of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thus, if Elihu was related to Nahor [as a grandson] he would have been Abraham’s grand-nephew!

[.....of the family of Ram] Of Ram nothing is known for certain. The Chaldee renders this “of the race of Abraham”. Some suppose this family is related to Aaraam mentioned in Gen. 22:21 as a grandson of Nahor, Abraham’s brother.

The fact that we are told that Elihu was the son of the “Buzite” after a named son of Nahor [Buz], lends support to this viewpoint. As such Elihu would have been Abraham’s grand-nephew and another of Nahor’s grandsons; equivalent to Jacob’s generation³.

Others have supposed that the “Ram” mentioned here may be the same as the ancestor of David mentioned in Ruth 4:19, and in the genealogical table in Matt. 1:3-4, under the name of Aram. But that “Ram” would have been six generations after Abraham and it is unlikely that is the reference to “the family of Ram” mentioned here.

¹ From the Tetragammaton; YHWH, with vowels inserted for pronunciation. Some also use the word “Jehovah” to represent this name.
² For example, Elijah, Joel, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Micah, Daniel, etc.
³ It should be noted that Jacob and Esau were Abraham’s grandchildren and that Abraham’s son, Isaac, was married to Rebekah who was Nahor’s granddaughter [his 2nd cousin] Gen. 22:20-23.
It is the custom of Turkish and Persian poetry to weave in, near the end of the poem, the name of the author in a subtle manner. From this custom some commentators have concluded that Elihu himself may be the author of this book.

Here we learn that after Job finishes defending himself against the eighteen accusations/allegations leveled at him in the last chapter, his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, are now speechless because they realize that Job is “righteous in his own eyes”.

They have finally given up on convincing Job otherwise and refuse to answer him any further [a wise thing to do, but they should have done this much earlier].

Elihu is extremely angry with Job and his three friends, indicated by the fact that four times we are told of his “wrath”. This word is rendered from a Hebrew word which literally refers to “flared nostrils”, which is a very graphic description of the effect that this emotion has on one’s face!

Why was Elihu filled with anger against Job and his three friends?

First, we are told because of the same reason that Job’s friends quit speaking to him—Job justified himself rather than God. In other words, Job did not consider his situation in comparison with the authority and character of God. The Almighty is both the CREATOR of all things and He alone is HOLY! He is the “boss” of this Universe and He sets the ‘rules’.

Job did not give God the proper respect, awe and fear that He deserves.

Second, twice we are told {vv.3, 5} that Elihu was filled with wrath because Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had failed in providing an adequate answer to Job, while at the same time condemning him. Perhaps Elihu found both hypocrisy and irony in this and it upset him to the point of being quite angry.

But because Elihu was much younger he had waited all this time to answer Job.

vv. 6-8 ➢ Elihu’s Humility—He Patiently Waited to Speak

[6 So Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said: “I am young in years, and you are very old; Therefore I was afraid, And dared not declare my opinion to you. 7 I said, ‘Age should speak, And multitude of years should teach wisdom.’ 8 But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.”]

Further proof of Elihu’s humility and respect come from his admission that being so much younger he understood that he needed to wait until everyone was finished speaking. He says he was “afraid” to speak because he was so young and they were so “very old” [literally referring to the white and gray hair of the elderly].

The word rendered “afraid” in v.6 literally means “to crawl”. The two other places this word is used it is rendered as “serpents of” {Deut. 32:24} and “like worms of” {Mic. 7:17}. Like the expression, “I’m so low I’m only knee-high to a grasshopper”.

In other words, Elihu is admitting to the lowness of his position, which has prevented him from speaking until now.

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4 See for example Rosenmuller and Lightfoot, Chronica Temporum Et Ord. Text.
Elihu knew that with age usually comes wisdom so he also admits that “age should speak” so that the wisdom of a multitude of years could hopefully teach wisdom. The irony is that didn’t happen, which is one of the main reasons he’s so upset.

Elihu mentions that man has a spirit created in him [which God gave him in the beginning and makes him a ‘living being’]. But, somewhat amazingly, he also mentions that it’s the breath or Spirit of the Almighty [God] that gives him understanding.

**Application:** In other words, the Holy Spirit has taught him. Elihu has discerned these things spiritually. This was something that was prophesied would happen and forms the basis of New Testament revelation after the coming of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.


vv. 9-13  **Elihu Claims He Has Earned the Right to Be Heard**

[9 “Great men are not always wise, Nor do the aged always understand justice. 10 Therefore I say, ‘Listen to me, I also will declare my opinion.’ 11 Indeed I waited for your words, I listened to your reasonings, while you searched out what to say. 12 I paid close attention to you; and surely not one of you convinced Job, or answered his words—13 Lest you say, ‘We have found wisdom’; God will vanquish him, not man.’”]

Elihu continues with his introduction by reminding everyone of two things: (1) men of great means and wealth are not always wise and (2) those with years of experience do not always understand justice.

Note that Job fits into both of these categories of fact.

At the very beginning of this book Job is described as; “Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East” [Job 1:3].

vv. 14-16  **Eliphaz, Bildad & Zophar Had Failed to Provide an Answer to Job**

[14 “Now he [i.e., Job] has not directed his words against me; so I will not answer him with your words. 15 They [Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar] are dismayed and answer no more; words escape them. 16 And I have waited, because they did not speak, because they stood still and answered no more.”]

Elihu acknowledges two things:

- First, none of Job’s words were ever directed against him.
- Second, Job’s three friends were dismayed and left speechless.

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3 **Genesis 2:7** tells us, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” The word for spirit is related to the word for “wind or breath”. In Hebrew this word is “ruwach” and in Greek it is “pneuma”. Thus, this is equivalent to saying that Yahweh Elohim put into man the “spirit of life”.

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Job Chapter 32  
Klaus G. Schiessel  
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The word rendered “dismayed” literally means “to be broken or beat down”. Job’s last response had so beat down his friends’ arguments, accusations and allegations that they became speechless.

Because he heard how Job had responded to the words of his three friends, and left them speechless, Elihu says he will not use the same arguments they used with Job. That would just result in “going in circles” without accomplishing anything. Like a man in a rocking chair, there’s a lot of energy expended but there’s no forward progress.

Elihu did not want to be left “speechless” going around in circles with Job.

Implicit in this is the fact that the words of Job’s three friends [Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar] had failed to provide him any comfort nor answer his charges and complaints.

Again, Elihu emphasizes that he waited to speak until everyone was finished speaking and became silent [i.e., “stood still”]. This indicates not only great respect and humility but also a relatively young age [20—40 years].

And Elihu correctly identified Job’s real issue: A dogged determination to maintain his integrity at God’s expense.

**vv. 17-22**  
**Elihu Feels Compelled to Answer & Is ‘Bursting at the Seams’ to do So**

[17 “I also will answer my part, I too will declare my opinion. 18 For I am full of words; the spirit within me compels me. 19 Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; it is ready to burst like new wineskins. 20 I will speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer. 21 Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone; nor let me flatter any man. 22 For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away.”]

So after patiently listening to Job and his three friends go “round-n-round’ Elihu is now going to answer everyone and declare his opinion; literally “express my knowledge”.

He is full of words, that is, he knows what he wants to say and must say it.

Using very descriptive metaphor, Elihu says that his belly [that which he wants to say] is like the wine fermenting in new wineskins having no vent, which are ready to burst.

He is compelled to speak, he must speak, he is ‘bursting at the seams’ to speak. He must open his lips and speak so that he can find relief for the words pent up inside him. He needs to vent his frustration and anger with Job and his friends.

Elihu says he will show no partiality to anyone, meaning he will not take anyone’s side, literally “lifting up” their opinion or argument.

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6 During the fermenting process of turning the juice of grapes into wine inside a wineskin, the bacteria metabolize [convert] the sugar in the grape juice into alcohol. A byproduct of this conversion process is the release carbon dioxide gas which, if not vented, can result in the bursting of the wineskins under the gas pressure. This can especially occur if one puts the grape juice [“new wine”] into old wineskins which have already been stretched to capacity. Thus, both the wineskin and wine are lost. Refer to Jesus’ remarks contrasting the new order of things [the Gospel message] with the old order of things [Old Testament Law], and the resistance to change, using the metaphor of fresh grape juice being put into old wineskins to ferment {Matt. 9:14-17; Mk. 2:18-22; Lk. 5:33-39}. 
He also explicitly states that in being impartial he does not intend to “flatter any man”. The idea here in the Hebrew is that Elihu does not intend, using a contemporary term, “give props to” what Job or any of the others have said.

Matter-of-fact, he claims that he doesn’t know how to flatter and that if he did, his Maker [God Almighty] would “soon take me away”. In this context it means to be lifted up out of the way, that is, “taken out of circulation”.

And this would come sooner rather than later because, evidently, God frowns on those who practice flattery. Note:

“They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks proud things, who have said, ‘With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; Who is lord over us?’”—Psalm 12:2-4

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”—Rom 16:17-19

“These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.”—Jude 1:16-19
### Table 32-1. The Major Themes Repeated in Job’s Responses

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<th>First Round of Speeches</th>
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<td>Despair with life (or desire to die)</td>
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<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;Speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disappointment in his friends</td>
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<td>Disillusionment with God’s ways</td>
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<td>Despair with life (or desire to die)</td>
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<td>Desire for vindication with God</td>
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**The LORD Speaks**

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**Elihu Speaks**

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**Bildad’s Response**

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**Job Chapter 32**

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