

JOB

Chapter-By-Chapter Through The Greatest Poem in Literature

Session 27 | Job 32:1-33:13

Elihu the Mediator | Job 32:1-37:4

- Job 32:1-5 - Setting the Scene for Elihu
 - These verses are written in prose, not poetry.
 - The three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar) would speak no longer because Job was **righteous in his own eye** (this is the opinion of the three friends, not of God).
 - Elihu's father is mentioned (unlike for the other three), and it is noted that he is a **Buzite, of the kindred of Ram**.
 - Buz was the brother of Uz, who were nephews of Abraham (sons of Nahor).
 - **Ram** could be a version of *Aram*, who was also a brother of Uz and Buz.
 - Since Job is said to be of the land of Uz (Job 1:1), there is the *possibility* that Elihu is related to Job. Nothing can be conclusive.
 - Elihu, a young man, is upset with Job **because he justified himself rather than God**.
 - The argument appears to be that Job should not be demanding a meeting with God or that Job should not be so focused on his own problems, but should be extolling the righteousness of God instead.
 - Note that Young's Literal says that Elihu was angry "because of his justifying himself more than God."
 - Elihu's anger is more directed (in this introduction) to the three friends. He is angry with the friends because **there was no answer in the mouth of these three men**.
 - Verse 3 contains an interesting history in the words **yet had condemned Job**.
 - The words say that Elihu was angry for condemning when they didn't have an answer. However, the Jewish rabbis say that the words originally said that the friends *condemned God* (and not Job) and that the words were altered (here and in 17 other places in the Scripture) out of reverence to God, not wanting to be party with anyone who would condemn God.
 - While the only texts we have say **Job**, it is a historically based and theologically plausible argument. If this is the case, then Elihu is telling what we've been thinking about the three friends: *they are anti-God*.
 - Rashi (a famed Jewish Rabbi) said, "This is one of the verses wherein the Scribes rectified the language of the Scripture. 'And they condemned,' as directed against the Omnipresent, by remaining silent, should have been written, but Scripture euphemized."¹
- Job 32:6-22 - Elihu's Apologetic Introduction
 - Elihu apologizes for speaking as a youth when **Days should speak, and multitude of years** (v. 7) but Elihu seems to claim to have **the inspiration of the Almighty** as the source of his **understanding** (v. 8).
 - Elihu begins his **opinion** (v. 10) in verse 11, saying that he had waited for the **reasons** of the friends, but in all their words **there was none of you that convinced Job, Or that answered his words** (v. 12).
 - Elihu warned the friends of saying, **We have found out wisdom**, telling them that **God thrusteth him [Job] down, not man** (v. 13).

¹ https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16434/jewish/Chapter-32.htm#showrashi=true

- In v. 14, Elihu speaks of Job when he says, **Now he hath not directed his words against me**. Elihu also says that he would never **answer him with your [poor] speeches**.
- In verses 15-22 Elihu seems to speak directly to Job (or is just speaking narratively).
 - He remarks about how the friends **answered no more** (v. 15) and implies they were dumbfounded at Job's remarks (v. 16).
 - Elihu, however, says that he is **full of matter** (v. 18) and **is ready to burst like new bottles** of wine which **hath no vent** (v. 19).
 - When he speaks, he wants to do so without regard to **any man's person** (v. 21), thus *without prejudice*, and will not **give flattering titles unto man**.
- Some commentaries give Elihu very negative treatment. It is my view that nothing at this point merits such negative treatment and that he may actually turn out to be the preparatory mouthpiece for God. Could he represent either the two witnesses of Revelation or some other "John the Baptist" type forerunner? Further study will reveal the answer!
 - Example from the UBS handbook for translators: "Elihu's self-importance and wordiness grow with each new utterance."² (Note how disastrous it could be to have translators start their work with such a bias).
 - The New American Commentary introduces Elihu's speeches as, "long, repetitive, and even boring."³
- Job 33:1-7 - Elihu Calls for Job's Attention.
 - Elihu (the witness?) begs that Job would **hear my speeches** (v. 1). He testifies that the words he will speak are **of the uprightness of my heart** and shall contain clear **knowledge** (v 3). Nothing in this chapter will cause us to believe that Elihu is mistaken.
 - Elihu makes the unmistakable claim that he is an answer to Job's prayer, saying, **I am according to thy wish in God's stead** (v. 6). When he says, **my terror shall not make thee afraid** (v. 7), it hints to us that he *might* be one of the Two Witnesses, calling out to the Jewish people.
- Job 33:8-13 - Elihu Reviews Job's Stated Position
 - Though Elihu hasn't been mentioned before, he claims to have **heard the voice of thy words** (v. 8). Verses 9-11 are a summary of Job's words, given as if Job is speaking.
 - In verse 12 Elihu tells the *one* area in which Job is wrong: **that God is greater than man**. Job (representative of the Tribulation remnant) still needs to humble himself before God. God answers to nobody and does not need to give an account of His actions (v. 13).

² William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 600.

³ Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 313–314.