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

Elihu comes forward, and expresses his disapprobation both of Job and his three friends - with the one for justifying himself; and with the others for taking up the subject in a wrong point of view, and not answering satisfactorily - and makes a becoming apology for himself, vv. 1-22.

Verse 1

These three men ceased to answer Job - They supposed that it was of no use to attempt to reason any longer with a man who justified himself before God. The truth is, they failed to convince Job of any point, because they argued from false principles; and, as we have seen, Job had the continual advantage of them. There were points on which he might have been successfully assailed; but they did not know them. Elihu, better acquainted both with human nature and the nature of the Divine law, and of God's moral government of the world, steps in, and makes the proper discriminations; acquits Job on the ground of their accusations, but condemns him for his too great self-confidence, and his trusting too much in his external righteousness; and, without duly considering his frailty and imperfections, his incautiously arraigning the providence of God of unkindness in its dealings with him. This was the point on which Job was particularly vulnerable, and which Elihu very properly clears up.

Because he was righteous in his own eyes - The Septuagint, Syriac, Arabic, and Chaldee, all read, "Because he was righteous in Their eyes;" intimating, that they were now convinced that he was a holy man, and that they had charged him foolishly. The reading of these ancient versions is supported by a MS. of the thirteenth century, in Dr. Kennicott's collections; which, instead of בעיניו beinaiv, in His eyes, has בעיניהם beineyhem, in Their eyes. This is a reading of considerable importance, but it is not noticed by De Rossi. Symmachus translates nearly in the same way: Διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ δικαίον φαίνεσθαι ἐπ' αὐτῶν; Because he appeared more righteous than themselves.

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

Verse 2

Then was kindled the wrath - This means no more than that Elihu was greatly excited, and felt a strong and zealous desire to vindicate the justice and providence of God, against the aspersions of Job and his friends.

Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite - Buz was the second son of Nahor, the brother of Abram, Gen 22:21.

Of the kindred of Ram - Kemuel was the third son of Nahor; and is called in Genesis (see above) the father of Aram, which is the same as Ram. A city of the name of Buz is found in Jer 25:23, which probably had its name from this family; and, as it is mentioned with Dedan and Tema, we know it must have been a city in Idumea, as the others were in that district. Instead of the kindred of Ram, the Chaldee has of the kindred of Abraham. But still the question has been asked, Who was Elihu? I answer, He was "the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram:" this is all we know of him.

But this Scriptural answer will not satisfy those who are determined to find out mysteries where there are none. Some make him a descendant of Judah; St. Jerome, Bede, Lyranus, and some of the rabbins, make him Balaam the son of Beor, the magician; Bishop Warburton makes him Ezra the scribe; and Dr. Hodges makes him the second person in the glorious Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, and supposes that the chief scope of this part of the book was to convict Job of self-righteousness, and to show the necessity of the doctrine of justification by faith! When these points are proved, they should be credited.

Because he justified himself rather than God - Literally, he justified his soul, נִפְשׁוֹ naphso, before God. He defended, not only the whole of his conduct, but also his motives, thoughts, etc.

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

Verse 3

They had found no answer - They had condemned Job; and yet could not answer his arguments on the general subject, and in vindication of himself.

JOB 32: 4 Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they were elder than he.

JOB 32: 5 When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was kindled.

JOB 32: 6 Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered, "I am young, and you are very old; Therefore I held back, and didn't dare show you my opinion.

Verse 6

I am young - How young he was, or how old they were, we cannot tell; but there was no doubt a great disparity in their ages; and among the Asiatics the youth never spoke in the presence of the elders, especially on any subject of controversy.

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

Verse 7

Days should speak - That is, men are to be reputed wise and experienced in proportion to the time they have lived. The Easterns were remarkable for treasuring up wise sayings: indeed, the principal part of their boasted wisdom consisted in proverbs and maxims on different subjects.

JOB 32: 8 But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.

 Verse 8

But there is a spirit in man - Mr. Good translates: - "But surely there is an afflation in mankind, And the inspiration of the Almighty actuateth them."

Coverdale, thus: -

Every man (no doute) hath a mynde; but it is the inspyracion of the Almightye that geveth understandinge.

I will now offer my own opinion, but first give the original text: רוח היא באנוש ונשמת שדי תבינם ruach hi beenosh venishmath shaddai tebinem. "The spirit itself is in miserable man, and the breath of the Almighty causeth them to understand," How true is it that in God we live, move, and have our being! The spirit itself is in man as the spring or fountain of his animal existence, and by the afflatus of this spirit he becomes capable of understanding and reason, and consequently of discerning Divine truth. The animal and intellectual lives are here stated to be from God; and this appears to be an allusion to man's creation, Gen 2:7: "And God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of lives," נפש חיה nishmath chaiyim, i.e., animal and intellectual, and thus he became a living soul, nephesh chayah, a rational animal. When man fell from God, the Spirit of God was grieved, and departed from him; but was restored, as the enlightener and corrector, in virtue of the purposed incarnation and atonement of our Lord Jesus; hence, he is "the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," Joh 1:9. That afflatus is therefore still continued to אנוש enosh, man, in his wretched, fallen state; and it is by that Spirit, the רוח אלהים Ruach Elohim, "the Spirit of the merciful or covenant God," that we have any conscience, knowledge of good and evil, judgment in Divine things, and, in a word, capability of being saved. And when, through the light of that Spirit, convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, the sinner turns to God through Christ, and finds redemption in his blood, the remission of sins; then it is the office of that same Spirit to give him understanding of the great work that has been done in and for him; "for the Spirit itself (αὐτοῦ τοῦ Πνεύματος, Rom 8:16, the same words in Greek as the Hebrew רוח היא ruach hi of Elihu) beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God." It is the same Spirit which sanctifies, the same Spirit that seals, and the same Spirit that lives and works in the believer, guiding him by his counsel till it leads him into glory. In this one saying, independently of the above paraphrase, Elihu spoke more sense and sound doctrine than all Job's friends did in the whole of the controversy.

JOB 32: 9 It is not the great who are wise, nor the aged who understand justice.

Verse 9

Great men are not always wise - This is a true saying, which the experience of every age and every country increasingly verifies. And it is most certain that, in the case before us, the aged did not understand judgment; they had a great many wise and good sayings, which they had collected, but showed neither wisdom nor discretion in applying them.

JOB 32: 10 Therefore I said, 'Listen to me; I also will show my opinion.'

JOB 32: 11 “Behold, I waited for your words, and I listened for your reasoning, while you searched out what to say.

Verse 11

I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons - Instead of תבונותיכם *tebunotheychem*, your reasons, תכונותיכם *techunotheychem*, your arguments, is the reading of nine of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. The sense, however, is nearly the same.

Whilst ye searched out what to say - עד תחקרון מלין *ad tachkerun millin*; "Whilst ye were searching up and down for words." A fine irony, which they must have felt.

JOB 32: 12 Yes, I gave you my full attention, but there was no one who convinced Job, or who answered his words, among you.

Verse 12

Yea, I attended unto you - Instead of ועדיכם *veadeychem*, and unto you, one MS. reads the above letters with points that cause it to signify and your testimonies; which is the reading of the Syriac, Arabic, and Septuagint.

Behold, there was none of you that convinced Job - Confuted Job. They spoke multitudes of words, but were unable to overthrow his arguments.

JOB 32: 13 Beware lest you say, ‘We have found wisdom, God may refute him, not man;’

Verse 13

We have found out wisdom - We by dint of our own wisdom and understanding, have found out the true system of God's providence; and have been able to account for all the sufferings and tribulations of Job. Had they been able to confute Job, they would have triumphed over him in their own self-sufficiency.

God thrusteth him down, not man - This is no accidental thing that has happened to him: he is suffering under the just judgments of God, and therefore he must be the wicked man which we supposed him to be.

JOB 32: 14 for he has not directed his words against me; neither will I answer him with your speeches.

Verse 14

He hath not directed - I am no party in this controversy; I have no party feeling in it: he has not spoken a word against me, therefore I have no cause of irritation. I shall speak for truth; not for conquest or revenge. Neither will I answer him with your speeches; your passions have been inflamed by contradiction, and you have spoken foolishly with your lips.

JOB 32: 15 "They are amazed. They answer no more. They don't have a word to say.

Verse 15

They were amazed - Mr. Good translates: "They (the speeches) are dissipated; they no longer produce effect; the words have flitted away from them." Your words, being without proper reference and point, are scattered into thin air: there is nothing but sound in them; they are quite destitute of sense. But I prefer the words as spoken of Job's friends. They took their several parts in the controversy as long as they could hope to maintain their ground: for a considerable time they had been able to bring nothing new; at last, weary of their own repetitions, they gave up the contest.

JOB 32: 16 Shall I wait, because they don't speak, because they stand still, and answer no more?

Verse 16

When I had waited - I waited to hear if they had any thing to reply to Job; and when I found them in effect speechless, then I ventured to come forward.

JOB 32: 17 I also will answer my part, and I also will show my opinion.

Verse 17

I will answer also my part - אענה חלקי aaneh chelki, "I will recite my portion." We have already seen that the book of Job is a sort of drama, in which several persons have their different parts to recite. Probably the book was used in this way, in ancient times, for the sake of public instruction. Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad, had recited their parts, and Job had responded to each: nothing was brought to issue. Elihu, a bystander, perceiving this, comes forward and takes a part, when all the rest had expended their materials: yet Elihu, though he spoke well, was incapable of closing the controversy; and God himself appears, and decides the case.

JOB 32: 18 For I am full of words. The spirit within me constrains me.

Verse 18

I am full of matter - מלים millim, "I am full of Words," or sayings; i.e., wise sentences, and ancient opinions.

The spirit within me constraineth me - How similar to the words of St. Paul! The love of Christ constraineth us. Elihu considered himself under the influence of that Spirit of God which gives understanding, and felt anxiously concerned for the welfare both of Job and his friends.

JOB 32: 19 Behold, my breast is as wine which has no vent; like new wineskins it is ready to burst.

Verse 19

My belly is as wine which hath no vent - New wine in a state of effervescence.

Like new bottles - Bottles, or rather bags, made of goat-skins. The head and shanks being cut off, the animal is cased out of the skin. The skin is then properly dressed; the anus and four shank holes properly tied up; and an aperture left at the neck or in some other place for the liquor to be poured in, and drawn out. One of these now lies before me, well tanned, and beautifully ornamented, and capable of holding many gallons. They are used, not only to carry wine and water, but for butter, and also for various dry goods. I have mentioned this in another place. When the wine is in a state of fermentation, and the skin has no vent, these bottles or bags are ready to burst; and if they be old, the new wine destroys them, breaks the old stitching, or rends the old skin. Our Lord makes use of the same figure, Mat 9:17 (note); where see the note.

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

Verse 20

I will open my lips and answer - In the preceding verse Elihu compares himself to a skin-bottle, in which the wine was in a state of fermentation, and the bottle ready to burst for want of vent. He carries on the metaphor in this verse: the bottle must be opened to save it from bursting; I will Open my mouth.

JOB 32: 21 Please don't let me respect any man's person, neither will I give flattering titles to any man.

Verse 21

Let me not - accept any man's person - I will speak the truth without fear or favor.

Neither let me give flattering titles - I will not give epithets to any man that are not descriptive of his true state. I will not beguile him by telling him he is what he is not. אכנה acanneh, from כנה canah, is generally supposed to signify to surname, to put a name to or upon a name, as the French word surnom implies. It means to give proud titles to persons who are worthless. It is well known that the Arabs make court to their superiors by carefully avoiding to address them by their proper names,

instead of which they salute them with some title or epithet expressive of respect - Scott See below. Titles expressive of office, ecclesiastical, civil, or military, are always proper, and never forbidden, because they serve for distinction; but the Asiatic titles are in general bombastically and sinfully complimentary. The reader will find several specimens at the end of this chapter.

JOB 32: 22 For I don't know how to give flattering titles; or else my Maker would soon take me away.

Verse 22

My Maker would soon take me away - Were I to copy this conduct while under the influence which I now feel, God might justly consume me as in a moment. He is my Maker; he made me to know truth, to tell truth, and to live according to truth; for he is the God of truth: I shall, therefore through his help, speak the Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth.

We find from the above that vain titles of ceremony, expressive of the most eminent qualities, were given to worthless men, from time immemorial; and no wonder, for hypocrisy entered into man at the same time that sin entered into the world.

Of the flattering titles used in the East, I shall give a few specimens from the (Arabic) Kooayid us Sultanet Shah Jehan, or, "The Rules observed during the Reign of the Mogul Emperor Shah Jehan."

Speaking of the emperor, he is entitled, "The Sun which illuminates the firmament in the universe of royalty and dominion; the Moon, which irradiates the sky of monarchy and felicity; the King who in pomp resembles Gem-sheed. His hand is boundless as the ocean in bestowing bounties, being the key of the gates of kindness and liberality!" Again: - "The Sun of the heaven of prosperity and empire, the Shadow of God, the Asylum of the Universe, the splendor of whose instructive front causes light and gladness to the world and to mankind." "The just and vigilant Monarch; the Asylum of Truth, the Refuge of the World; the Diffuser of Light, the Solver of all human difficulties." "The Lord of the Age, who is endowed with such perfect excellence, both in internal and external qualifications, that on all occasions he holds fast the thread of good counsel, prudence, and purity of morals." "The faculty of apprehension is possessed by him in such a degree, that before the matter has scarcely obtained utterance he comprehends the purport, and gives answers with the tongue of inspiration."

Addresses to Persons of Distinction "Let them convey to the presence of glorious empire, the Sultan, in pomp like Solomon, the center of the universe, powerful as heaven!" "Let them who kiss the carpet of the palace, in pomp like heaven, convey this letter to his majesty, whose sight is as creative as alchymy, king of kings, the asylum of the world!" "To the exalted presence, which gratifies the desires of all people, the most beneficent of the age, the vizier, protector of the universe, may the Almighty perpetuate his fortune!" "May this letter be dignified in the presence of Naweeb Saheb, diffuser of benefits, of exalted pomp, the respectable, the discriminator of ranks! May his power increase!" "Let them convey this to the perusal of his excellency, conversant in realities and mysteries, the support of excellencies, the cream of his contemporaries, and the cherisher of the poor!"

These are a specimen of the flattering titles given in the East to persons in eminent stations. Their kings they clothe in all the attributes of the Deity, when both in their public and private character they are corrupt and unholy, rascals in grain, and the ruthless oppressors of suffering humanity.