

Job 32:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

I will speak, that I may be refreshed (אֲדַבְּרָה וַיִּרְוַח לִי, adabberah ve-yirvach li)—The verb ravach (רָוַח) means "to be wide, spacious, relieved." Elihu feels internal pressure requiring release through speech. The phrase **I will open my lips and answer** (אֶפְתָּח־שִׁפְתֵי וְאָעֲנֶה) uses patach (פָּתַח, "to open") and anah (עָנָה, "to answer, respond"). Elihu breaks his silence, unable to contain himself longer. This reveals both earnestness and possible pride—he must speak or burst (v. 19).

Elihu's youthful passion contrasts with the three friends' exhausted silence (32:1). Proverbs warns against hasty speech (Proverbs 29:20, "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him"), yet also values speaking truth (Proverbs 24:26). Elihu's speeches (chapters 32-37) offer theological insights superior to the three friends but still fall short of God's answer (chapters 38-41). This teaches that even earnest theological speech cannot substitute for divine revelation. We need God's Word, not merely human wisdom, however sincere.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom dialogues typically featured multiple speakers offering perspectives. Elihu's late entrance (absent in chapters 1-31) has puzzled interpreters—some suggest later addition, others see deliberate literary structure. His emphasis on youth deferring to age reflects cultural honor codes (Leviticus

19:32), but also shows how suffering and truth can transcend cultural hierarchies. Elihu waited respectfully (32:4) but ultimately speaks with passionate conviction.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do we balance the need to speak truth with the discipline of listening?
2. What does Elihu's passionate speech teach about youthful zeal and mature wisdom?
3. When is silence appropriate, and when must we speak despite social pressure?

Interlinear Text

אֶדְבֹּר ה	וְיִרְחַח	לִי	אֶפְתָּח	שִׁפְתֵי	אֶעֱנֶה:
I will speak	that I may be refreshed	H0	I will open	my lips	and answer
H1696	H7304		H6605	H8193	H6030

Additional Cross-References

Job 21:3 (Parallel theme): Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on.