

# Job 34:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words.

## Analysis

**If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words.** Elihu issues a direct challenge to Job's wisdom. The conditional "if" (im, אם) assumes Job possesses binah (בִּינָה, understanding)—the capacity for discernment and insight. "Hear" (shama, שָׁמַע) is the Shema's foundational command (Deuteronomy 6:4), meaning to listen with intent to obey. "Hearken" (ha'azinah, הִאָזִינָה) from azan (אָזן, ear) means to give ear, pay careful attention—more intensive than ordinary hearing.

"The voice of my words" (qol millai, קוֹל מִלְּאִי) emphasizes Elihu's expectation that his speech carries authority deserving careful consideration. This verse marks a transition—having accused Job (verses 7-9), Elihu now shifts to theological instruction about God's character and governance (verses 17-37). The structure parallels wisdom literature's common pattern: "if you are wise, listen" (Proverbs 1:5, 9:9). Yet Elihu's confidence will prove premature—God later affirms Job spoke rightly while the counselors (presumably including Elihu, though not explicitly named) did not (42:7-8). The verse warns against assuming our theological formulations are beyond challenge. True wisdom holds convictions firmly while remaining teachable, recognizing that even sound doctrine can be wrongly applied. Job demonstrates this balance—maintaining his integrity while ultimately submitting to God's greater wisdom (42:1-6).

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern wisdom tradition emphasized listening to wise counsel (Proverbs emphasizes hearing/listening over 90 times). The young were expected to defer to elders, but wisdom literature also acknowledged that age doesn't guarantee insight (32:9). Elihu's appeal to understanding rather than age attempts to establish his authority. His subsequent theological discourse, while more sophisticated than the three friends', still misses the book's central point—that suffering can serve purposes beyond punishment.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How do you balance confidence in biblical truth with humility about your own understanding and application of it?
2. When should we insist others listen to us, and when should we instead listen more carefully ourselves?
3. What distinguishes godly conviction from arrogant presumption that our interpretation is infallible?

## Interlinear Text

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וְאִם	כִּי יִנָּה	שְׁמָעָה	זֶה אֵת	הֵאָזֵן יִנָּה	לְקוֹל
H518	<b>If now thou hast understanding</b>	<b>hear</b>	H2063	<b>this hearken</b>	<b>to the voice</b>
	H998	H8085		H238	H6963
מְלִי:					
<b>of my words</b>					
H4405					

