

# Job 11:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?

## Analysis

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### **If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?**

Zophar the Naamathite speaks these words, articulating God's absolute sovereignty and irresistible power. The Hebrew chalaph ("cut off") means to pass by, sweep away, or replace, suggesting divine judgment that removes the wicked. Sagar ("shut up") means to close, imprison, or confine - God restricting human freedom. Qahal ("gather together") can mean to assemble for judgment or convene a court.

The rhetorical question mi yoshibenu ("who can hinder him?") expects the answer "no one" - God's actions are unstoppable. Zophar's argument: God is sovereign, all-knowing (vv. 7-8), and can execute judgment without human interference. While theologically true regarding God's omnipotence, Zophar wrongly applies this to condemn Job, assuming Job's suffering proves hidden sin.

Ironically, Zophar's orthodox theology serves faulty pastoral application. Yes, God is sovereign and irresistible, but this doesn't mean all suffering results from personal sin. The book of Job challenges simplistic retribution theology while affirming God's incomprehensible sovereignty. Job 42:7-8 reveals God's displeasure with Zophar's counsel, showing that correct theological propositions wrongly applied can become false witness about God.

## Historical Context

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Job is likely set during the patriarchal period (2000-1800 BCE), though the book's composition date is debated (possibly 7th-5th centuries BCE). Zophar represents conventional ancient Near Eastern wisdom theology - the belief that the universe operates on strict moral causation where righteousness produces prosperity and wickedness brings suffering.

This retribution theology appears throughout ancient wisdom literature, including Egyptian Ma'at (cosmic order) teaching and Mesopotamian wisdom texts like "Ludlul Bel Nemeqi" ("I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom," Babylonian Job-parallel). However, these texts also question simplistic retribution when righteous sufferers experience unexplained calamity.

Job's friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar) embody religious orthodoxy that lacks empathy and misapplies true principles. Their "courtroom" approach - gathering evidence against Job, confining him with accusations - reflects ancient Near Eastern legal proceedings. Yet Job's vindication (chapters 38-42) demonstrates that God's sovereignty includes purposes beyond human comprehension. For Israel in exile or under persecution, Job affirmed that suffering doesn't necessarily indicate divine displeasure, challenging both pagan fate-theology and rigid covenant-blessing formulas.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How can we affirm God's absolute sovereignty (as Zophar correctly states) while avoiding the error of assuming all suffering results from personal sin?
2. What does Job's experience teach us about the dangers of applying correct theology in pastorally harmful ways?

3. In what ways does this verse challenge or confirm our understanding of God's freedom to act without human constraint or comprehension?
4. How should we respond when, like Job's friends, our theological explanations fail to account for observed reality?
5. What is the relationship between divine sovereignty and human mystery in suffering, and how does this inform Christian pastoral care?

## Interlinear Text

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H518	If he cut off	and shut up	or gather together	H4310	then who can hinder		
H2498	H5462		H6950		H7725		

## Additional Cross-References

**Revelation 3:7** (Parallel theme): And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

**Job 12:14** (Parallel theme): Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.

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