

Job 20:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,

Analysis

Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said (וַיֹּעַן צִפּוֹר הַנַּעֲמָתִי וַיֹּאמֶר, vaya'an Tsofar haNa'amati vayomar)—Zophar (צִפּוֹר, 'bird, chirper') from Naamah ('pleasant place') delivers his second and final speech. Unlike Eliphaz (who has three speeches) and Bildad (three speeches), Zophar speaks only twice—perhaps indicating his arguments exhaust themselves fastest.

Zophar represents the most dogmatic, least nuanced friend. Where Eliphaz appeals to experience (ch. 4) and Bildad to tradition (ch. 8), Zophar traffics in confident assertions about divine retribution. His theology lacks pastoral sensitivity—he knows certainties where mysteries reside. The dialogue structure shows failing friendship: each friend becomes more strident, less helpful.

Historical Context

Naamah's location is uncertain—possibly in northern Arabia or Edom. The three friends represent wisdom traditions from different regions (Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from Shuah, Zophar from Naamah), creating an international symposium on suffering. Ancient Near Eastern wisdom crossed cultural boundaries; suffering's universality demanded collective reflection.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why do you think Zophar speaks fewer times than the other friends—what does his silence after chapter 20 suggest?
2. What makes dogmatic certainty particularly unhelpful in pastoral contexts of suffering?
3. How can we recognize when our theological convictions, however true, need tempering with humility and mystery?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר:	הַנֶּעֱמָתִי	צֹפָר	וַיַּעַן
and said	the Naamathite	Zophar	Then answered
H559	H5284	H6691	H6030

Additional Cross-References

Job 2:11 (Parallel theme): Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.