

# Job 20:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him.

## Analysis

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The wicked's gain brings death: 'He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him.' Continuing poison imagery, Zophar depicts the wicked actively consuming poison (sucking asp poison). The viper's tongue (forked tongue associated with deception) brings death. Zophar implies that Job's words (his 'tongue') reveal hidden poison that brings his suffering. This attacks both Job's wealth and his speeches.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern texts associated serpents with evil, deception, and death (Genesis 3). Wisdom literature used snake imagery for dangerous speech (Psalm 140:3). Zophar combines material and verbal accusations—Job's wealth and words both allegedly poisonous.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How do our words sometimes poison both ourselves and others?

2. What is the difference between honest lament and poisonous speech?
3. How does the Gospel provide both forgiveness for harmful words and power for edifying speech?

## Interlinear Text

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רָאשׁ פְּתַנְתִּים יְמִינֵךְ תְּבִרְגֵּה אֶפְעָה:  
the poison of asps He shall suck shall slay tongue the viper's  
H7219 H6620 H3243 H2026 H3956 H660

## Additional Cross-References

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**Romans 3:13** (Parallel theme): Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

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