

Job 20:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

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

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

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

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

רָאֵשׁ	פֶּתֶן יָם	יִנֹּק	תִּהְרֹג הוּא	לֶשׁוֹן	אֶפְסָה:
the poison	of asps	He shall suck	shall slay	tongue	the viper's
H7219	H6620	H3243	H2026	H3956	H660

Additional Cross-References

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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