

Nahum 3

Nahum 3:1 – “Woe to the bloody city,
all full of lies and plunder—
no end to the prey!

1. Nineveh’s sinfulness described as:
 - a. Bloody city
 - b. Full of lies
 - c. Full plunder
 - d. Prey or victims
2. This builds on (or, is connected to) the last verses of chapter 2 describing the lions’ den which was figurative for Ashurbanipal’s palace which was filled with torn meat or plunder.



There are four descriptive declarations of the siege of Nineveh in Nahum:

1. First description of Nineveh’s coming fall is 2:3-7
2. Second description of Nineveh’s coming fall is 2:8-13
3. Third description of Nineveh’s coming fall is 3:1-7
4. Fourth description of Nineveh’s coming fall is 3:8-19

The Third description of Nineveh’s coming fall begins here:

3:2 – “The crack of the whip, and rumble of the wheel,
galloping horse and bounding chariot!

1. Seven action packed phrases describes the invading Babylonians in 3:2-3:
 - a. “Crack of the whip”
 - b. “Rumble of the wheel”
 - c. “Galloping horse”
 - d. “Bounding chariot” – this identifies the chariot forces
 - e. “Horsemen charging” – this identifies the mounted troops that accompany the chariots as seen in the Assyrian reliefs
 - f. “Flashing sword” – the sword was part of the weaponry of the foot soldiers used in hand-to-hand combat. According to archaeologist Yigael Yadin the sword was not part of the regular equipment of the mounted troops or chariots
 - g. “glittering spear” – spears were used by all three: chariot crew, cavalry and infantry foot soldier

2. This verse describes again a rapidly moving invasion
3. It is very visual as it would have appeared to the people and leaders of Nineveh

3:3 – Horsemen charging,
 flashing sword and glittering spear,
 hosts of slain,
 heaps of corpses,
 dead bodies without end—
 they stumble over the bodies!

1. Four times the dead bodies are mentioned (using three different Hebrew words) that result from the rapid, versatile Babylonians
 - a. “hosts of slain” – *halal* “casualties” is a person fatally pierced or wounded.
 - b. “heaps of corpses” left behind by the advancing invaders – corpses is *gewiya* comes from the root word *gaw* (“back”) which refers to a person’s back and would refer to a dead body lying facedown.
 - c. “dead bodies without end” –
 - d. “the bodies” - *peger* “carcass” or “bodies” is someone who has collapsed from exhaustion”
2. “they stumble” refers to the Babylonian military moving through the piles of dead Assyrians.
3. “heaps” is the Hebrew word *kobed* describing the “heaps of corpses” or the “piles of corpses” This is the same Hebrew word used in 2:9 to say “wealth” (*kabod*). The irony is Nineveh’s “wealth” is now in dead bodies

a. 2:9 -

2532 [e]	3627 [e]	3605 [e]	3519 [e]	8498 [e]	7097 [e]	369 [e]	2091 [e]	962 [e]	3701 [e]	962 [e]
ḥem·dāh.	ke·lî	mik·kōl	kā·bōd	lat·te·gū·nāh,	qê·seh	we·'ên	zā·hāb;	bōz·zū	ke·sef	bōz·zū
desirable	prize	of every	Or wealth	of treasure	end	and [There is] no	of gold	take spoil	of silver	Take spoil
N-fs	N-msc	Prep-m N-msc	N-ms	Prep-l, Art N-fs	N-ms	Conj-w Adv	N-ms	V-Qal-Imp-mp	N-ms	V-Qal-Imp-mp

b. 3:3 -

3514 [e]	2491 [e]	7230 [e]	2595 [e]	1300 [e]	2719 [e]	3851 [e]	5927 [e]	6571 [e]
we·kō·bed	ḥā·lāl	we·rōb	ḥā·nîṭ,	ū·ḇə·raq	ḥe·reb	we·la·hāb	ma·'ā·leh,	pā·rāš
and a great number	of slain	and [There is] a multitude	spear	and glittering	sword	and bright	charge with	Horsemen
Conj-w N-msc	N-ms	Conj-w N-ms	N-fs	Conj-w N-msc	N-fs	Conj-w N-msc	V-Hifil-Prtcppl-ms	N-ms

1472 [e]	3782 [e]	yik·šə·lū	1472 [e]	7097 [e]	369 [e]	6297 [e]
biḡ·wî·yā·tām.	we·kā·šə·lū	(יכשלו)	lag·gə·wî·yāh,	qê·seh	we·'ên	pā·ḡer;
over the corpses	they stumble	-	corpses	Countless	and	of bodies
Prep-b N-fsc 3mp	Conj-w V-Qal-ConjPerf-3cp	V-Nifal-Imperf-3mp	Prep-l, Art N-fs	N-ms	Conj-w Adv	N-ms

3:4 – “And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute,
 graceful and of deadly charms,
 who betrays nations with her whorings,
 and peoples with her charms.

1172 [e] ba·'ā·lat	2580 [e] hên	2896 [e] tō·w·bat	2181 [e] zō·w·nāh,	2181 [e] zə·nū·nê	7230 [e] mê·rōb
בעלת	הן	טובת	זונה	זנוגני	מרב 4
the mistress	seductive	of the well favored	of the harlot	of harlotries	because of the multitude
N-fsc	N-ms	Adj-fsc	N-fs	N-mpc	Prep-m N-msc

3785 [e] bik·šā·pe·hā.	4940 [e] ū·miš·pā·hō·wt	2183 [e] biz·nū·ne·hā,	1471 [e] gō·w·yim	4376 [e] ham·mō·ke·ret	3785 [e] kə·šā·pîm;
בכשפיה:	ומשפחות	בזנוגניה	גוים	המכרת	כשפים
through her sorceries	and families	through her harlotries	nations	who sells	of sorceries
Prep-b N-mpc 3fs	Conj-w N-fp	Prep-b N-mpc 3fs	N-mp	Art V-Qal-Prtcpl-fs	N-mp

1. The “prostitute” uses her attraction to lure people for her own personal gain.
 - a. The person paying the prostitute may think they are being served, but they are the victim serving the interests of the prostitute.
 - b. Likewise Assyria. The empire lured nations by providing them a service, but in reality the nations were serving the attractive Assyria for Assyrian interests
 - c. The person paying the prostitute is always the victim and will face fatal consequences.
 - d. Ahaz was lured this way by Assyria:
 - i. 2 Kings 16:7-11 – “So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, “I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.” Ahaz also took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king's house and sent a present to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria listened to him. The king of Assyria marched up against Damascus and took it, carrying its people captive to Kir, and he killed Rezin. When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, he saw the altar that was at Damascus. And King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details. And Uriah the priest built the altar; in accordance with all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, so Uriah the priest made it, before King Ahaz arrived from Damascus.
 - ii. Isaiah 36:16-17 – “Do not listen to Hezekiah. For thus says the king of Assyria: Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.”
 - e. They promised help to Judah, but gave them trouble. See 2 Chronicles 28:20: Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him, but he gave him trouble instead of help. “
2. In the end, in 612 BC, both the nations lured by Assyria and Assyria themselves had their life drained away by the practicing of whoredom.
 - a. Two words of demonism are the same word, just a different form (#3785) is *kesheph* meaning “sorceries” and “witchcrafts”
 - i. “deadly charms” –

- ii. “betrays...peoples with her charms”
- 3. Prostitution and sorcery are a form of control over people for the benefit of the prostitute or the sorcerer. Assyria used both immoral attraction and magic arts to enslave nations and people.
- 4. Nahum calls Nineveh:
 - a. “whore of the whores”
 - b. A charming well-dressed lady (*Tobat hen* is literally “fair of grace”) promising love and cooperation, but who is in reality a demon in witchcraft
 - c. It is coarse, insulting language used by Nahum
- 5. Revelation 18:11-13

3:5 – “Behold, I am against you,
 declares the Lord of hosts,
 and will lift up your skirts over your face;
 and I will make nations look at your nakedness
 and kingdoms at your shame.

3:6 – I will throw filth at you
 and treat you with contempt
 and make you a spectacle.

3:7 – And all who look at you will shrink from you and say,
 “Wasted is Nineveh; who will grieve for her?”
 Where shall I seek comforters for you?

1. Sennacherib threatened Jerusalem and Hezekiah in 701 BC at the height of Assyrian power and by 612 his capital was laid a total waste. The turnaround from Ashurbanipal’s first 20 years (668-648) when Nahum wrote in 645 was very drastic.
2. When Nineveh fell in 612 BC there is no evidence that the site was occupied for the next 300 years.
3. Xenophon, the Athenian-born military leader, philosopher and historian that was elected to command the 10,000 Greek mercenaries at the age of 30, passed the ruins of Nineveh around 400 BC and did not recognize Nineveh.
4. Lucian (125-180 AD) an Assyrian satirist and rhetorician wrote, “Nineveh has perished, and there is no trace left where it once was.”
5. Cambridge Ancient History says “no other land seems to have been sacked and pillaged so completely as was Assyria.
6. One of Nineveh’s excavators wrote: “We have been fortunate enough to acquire the most convincing and lasting evidence of that magnificence and power, which made Nineveh the wonder of the ancient world, and her fall the theme of the prophets, as the most signal instance of divine vengeance. Without the evidence that these monuments afford, we might also have doubted that the great Nineveh ever existed, so completely has she become “a desolation and a waste.”

The fourth description of Nineveh’s coming fall begins here (3:8-19):

3:8 – “Are you better than Thebes
 that sat by the Nile,
 with water around her,

her rampart a sea,
and water her wall?

3:9 – Cush was her strength;
Egypt too, and that without limit;
Put and the Libyans were her helpers.

3:10 – Yet she became an exile;
she went into captivity;
her infants were dashed in pieces
at the head of every street;
for her honored men lots were cast,
and all her great men were bound in chains.

Thebes was used as an example of Nineveh's fall. Now the fall of Nineveh is described for the fourth time:

3:11 – “You also will be drunken;
you will go into hiding;
you will seek a refuge from the enemy.

3:12 – All your fortresses are like fig trees
with first-ripe figs—
if shaken they fall
into the mouth of the eater.

3:13 – “Behold, your troops
are women in your midst.
The gates of your land
are wide open to your enemies;
fire has devoured your bars.

3:14 – “Draw water for the siege;
strengthen your forts;
go into the clay;
tread the mortar;
take hold of the brick mold!

3:15 – There will the fire devour you;
the sword will cut you off.
It will devour you like the locust.
Multiply yourselves like the locust;
multiply like the grasshopper!

The different classes of people in Nineveh on the day of battle are described:

3:16 – You increased your merchants
more than the stars of the heavens.

The locust spreads its wings and flies away.

3:17 – Your princes are like grasshoppers,
your scribes like clouds of locusts
settling on the fences
in a day of cold—
when the sun rises, they fly away;
no one knows where they are.

3:18 – Your shepherds are asleep,
O king of Assyria;
your nobles slumber.
Your people are scattered on the mountains
with none to gather them.

The End: A final description of Nineveh's fate and a rhetorical question highlighting their unceasing oppression on the people in the Middle East.

3:19 – There is no easing your hurt;
your wound is grievous.
All who hear the news about you
clap their hands over you.
For upon whom has not come
your unceasing evil?