

Nachum (Nahum) – Part 3

Guilt of Bloodshed

3¹ Woe to the city of blood, steeped in lies, full of prey, with no end to the plunder!² The crack of the whip! The rattle of wheels! Galloping horses, jolting chariots,³ cavalry charging, swords flashing, spears glittering—and hosts of slain, heaps of bodies; there is no end to the corpses; they stumble over their corpses. ⁴"Because of the continual whoring of this whore, this alluring mistress of sorcery, who sells nations with her whoring and families with her sorcery;

Again, the author is initially vague about the identity of the bloody city with its mounds of corpses. Still, the attentive reader knows that it is **Nineveh**, the once-formidable city, which **God** will now devastate.

Shame and Disgrace

5 I am against you," says Adonai-Tzva'ot. "I will uncover your skirts on your face; I will show the nations your private parts and the kingdoms your shame. ⁶I will pelt you with disgusting filth, disgrace you, and make a spectacle of you. ⁷Then all who see you will recoil from you; they will say, 'Ninveh is destroyed!' Who will mourn for her? Where can I find people to comfort you?"

Their motive to **recoil** is now clearly not fright but rather horror and amazement, like looking at the dead body of a once fierce monster, saying, "**Nineveh is destroyed.**"

Fate Same As Victims

8 Are you any better than No-Amon, located among the streams of the Nile, with water all around her, the flood her wall of defense? ⁹Ethiopia and Egypt gave her boundless strength, Put and Luvim were there to help you. ¹⁰Still, she went captive into exile, her infants torn to pieces at every streetcorner. Lots were drawn for her nobles, and all her great men were bound in chains. ¹¹You too, [Ninveh,] will be drunk; your senses completely overcome. You, too, will seek a refuge from the enemy.

No-Amon (also known as **Thebes**), located about 400 miles south of the Mediterranean at modern **Karnak** and **Luxor**, spanned both sides of the **Nile River**. It became a prominent city during the sixth dynasty, about 2200 BCE. By the twelfth dynasty (ca. 1990–1776 BCE.), its temple to **Amun-Ra** was one of the most important temples in **Egypt**, and its god was called "**King of the Gods, and who is over the Two Lands (i.e., Egypt).**" During the New Kingdom era (1550–1076 BCE), Thebes reached even greater heights of influence and was noted as the burial city of kings in the **Valley of the Kings**. Many temples were built there for Egyptian gods. It remained a major city until it was sacked by the **Assyrians under Ashurbanipal** in 663 BCE.

The **Egyptian children** were **dashed to pieces** by the **Assyrians**, just as **Assyria** had recently done to **Isra'el** in fulfillment of Hosea 13:16 & 10:14–15. The atrocities included ripping pregnant women open. Such cruelty was not unique to the **Assyrians**; other invading armies did similar things (see 2 Kings 8:12; Isaiah 13:16).

Assyria's Vulnerability

¹² All your fortifications will be like fig trees with early ripening figs; the moment they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater.

The message of 3:12 is that, regardless of how secure and invincible **Nineveh** felt itself to be, before **God's** forces, they were as exposed and vulnerable as figs on a ripe fig tree.

¹³ *Look at your troops! They behave like women! Your country's gates are wide open to your foes; fire has consumed their bars.*

Assyria's troops, known for their ruthless efficiency and skill, are called **women**. This is a common curse in the ancient **Near East**.

¹⁴ *Draw water for the siege! Strengthen your fortifications! Go down in the clay, tread the mortar, Take hold of the mold for bricks! ¹⁵ There the fire will burn you up; and the sword will cut you down; it will devour you like grasshoppers. Make yourselves as many as grasshoppers, Make yourselves as many as locusts! ¹⁶ You had more merchants than stars in the sky. The locust sheds its skin and flies away. ¹⁷ Your guards are like grasshoppers, your marshals like swarms of locusts, which settle on the walls on a cold day, but when the sun rises, they fly away; they vanish to no one knows where.*

Despite **Nineveh's** most elaborate preparations **for the siege** - acquiring extra **water** and fortifying its **strongholds** with new clay bricks where needed—it would fall. Though the **merchants, commanders, and generals** were as numerous as **the stars in the sky**, yet they would desert the city **like swarming locusts** flying off at sunrise.

World Will Celebrate Fall

¹⁸ *Your shepherds are slumbering, king of Ashur. Your leaders are asleep. Your people are scattered all over the mountains, with no one to round them up. ¹⁹ Your wound cannot be healed. Your injury is fatal. Everyone hearing the news about you claps their hands in joy over you. For who has not been overwhelmed by your relentless cruelty?* ¹

The **shepherds** (leaders) of **Assyria** now **slumber** in death. The nation has suffered a mortal **wound**. **News** of its fall will cause great rejoicing because many have suffered at its hands. Nineveh fell in 612 BCE. So thoroughly was **Nachum's** prophecy fulfilled that, in later times, armies, such as **Xenophon's** and **Alexander the Great's**, were totally unaware that they were marching near or over the ruins of great **Nineveh**. Not until the nineteenth century was the ancient site of **Nineveh** finally relocated.²

In our next post, we will begin our study of the **Prophecy of Havakuk (Habakkuk)**.

¹ Nachum 3:1-19.

² Paul Emile Botta, Austen Henry Layard, and George Smith were pioneer archaeologists among the famed ruins of Nineveh (1840's to 1870's)