

Book of Nahum

Chapter 3:1-19

¹ **Woe** to the **bloody city**, completely full of **lies** and **pillage**; her prey never departs.

Woe > (Patterson) Nahum writes his second description of Nineveh's certain doom in the form of a woe oracle. The initial "woe" is a word drawn from a lamentation liturgy for the dead. As utilized by the prophet, while containing a prophetic declaration and description of the coming judgment, it also constitutes a formal denunciation of the doomed city.

In pronouncing his woe against Nineveh, Nahum begins with an invective that singles out Nineveh's established reputation. Nineveh was, first of all, a city of blood.

Bloody city > (Barnes) literally, *city of bloods*

Lies > (Strong's) literally, a failure of flesh, i.e. emaciation; figuratively, hypocrisy

II Kings 18 ...

- Vs 7 > Hezekiah rebels against Assyria and doesn't serve them
- Vs 13 > Sennacherib begins destroying the cities around Jerusalem
- Vss. 14-16 > Hezekiah apologizes to Sennacherib and asks how much he wants in tribute ... and pays that amount (FYI > 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold!)
- Vs. 17 > In spite of Hezekiah doing exactly what was agreed upon Sennacherib still sends an envoy to Jerusalem for more
- Vss. 18-34 > Promises made by the Assyrians that the residents of Jerusalem would live in peace in Assyria.

Pillage > (Strong's) rapine*; also a fork (in roads) ... crossway, robbery

* the violent seizure of someone's property.

According to Wikipedia – a talent weighed 66 lb. 9 oz. Therefore, 300 talents of silver would weigh just under 19,969 lbs. > or **\$5,195,268** today! And the 30 talents of gold would weigh just under 1,997 lbs. > or **\$50,380,000** today! This is what Nahum 2:9 meant when he wrote > *Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! For there is no limit to the treasure!*

² *The noise of the whip, the noise of the rattling of the wheel, galloping horses and bounding chariots!* ³ *Horsemen charging, swords flashing, spears gleaming, many slain, a mass of corpses, and countless dead bodies - they stumble over the dead bodies!*

The *Fall of Nineveh Chronicle* indicated that “the siege lasted for three months; in July the city fell (it may be noted that archaeologists discovered the remains of 40 of the defenders ... unburied).”

Archaeologist David Stronach of the University of California at Berkeley > 'They lie as they fell more than 2,600 years ago, a writhing clump of humanity frozen in a moment of fearful combat. Pieces of armor, iron daggers, pikes, and other weapons litter the ground. ' This tableau of nine skeletons, recently uncovered in northern Iraq, represents the first clearly documented evidence of an epic story that has been shrouded by centuries of myth and speculation: the downfall of Nineveh, the capital of what was then the world's mightiest empire. 'It's not often that you get such vivid evidence for an event that has been in the consciousness of the world through the Bible and classical sources for such a very long period,' ... 'It's quite remarkable.'

⁴ ***All because of the many harlotries of the harlot, the charming one, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations by her harlotries and families by her sorceries.***

All because of > Why the destruction of Nineveh found in the earlier verses? Part of it is right here.

Sorceries > (Strong's) magic ... sorcery, witchcraft.

Robertson (who commented on the use of *beliya'al* in referring to the leadership in Nineveh in last week's lesson) takes us to II Corinthians 6:15 for a very telling use of the word by Paul there > ¹⁵ *Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?* In this passage “Belial” refers to Satan himself. Robertson says of Nineveh > “An ominous figure stands behind the ruler from Nineveh, prodding him on in his wicked determinations.” That may explain the direct opposition to Jehovah Himself found in chapter 1 and the sorceries found here in chapter 3.

It also leads us to the comments opening verse 5 below.

⁵ ***Behold, I am against you,” declares the LORD of hosts; “And I will lift up your skirts over your face and show to the nations your nakedness and to the kingdoms your disgrace. ⁶ “I will throw filth on you and make you vile and set you up as a spectacle.***

Behold, I am against you ... > Verse 15 of chapter 2 closed with these dramatic words. In **Hebrews 10:31** we find > ³¹ *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Behold, I am against you ... > (Barnes) literally, "toward thee."

And I will lift ... > (Barnes) Violence is punished by suffering; deeds of shame by shame.

I will throw filth on you ... > (Patterson) Literally translated, the line would read something like “I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle”

The ***Septuagint*** translates these two verses as > ⁵*Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord God Almighty, and I will uncover thy skirts in thy presence, and I will shew the nations thy shame, and the kingdoms thy disgrace. ⁶And I will cast abominable filth upon thee according to thine unclean ways, and will make thee a public example.*

⁷*“And it will come about that all who see you will shrink from you and say, ‘Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her?’ **Where will I seek comforters for you?**”*

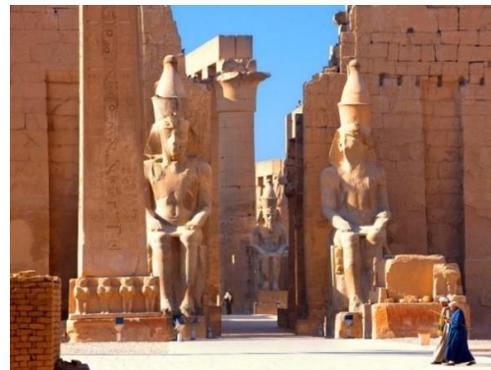
Even Babylon in Revelation 18 was wept over by those that did business with her. Mourners were scarce for Nineveh.

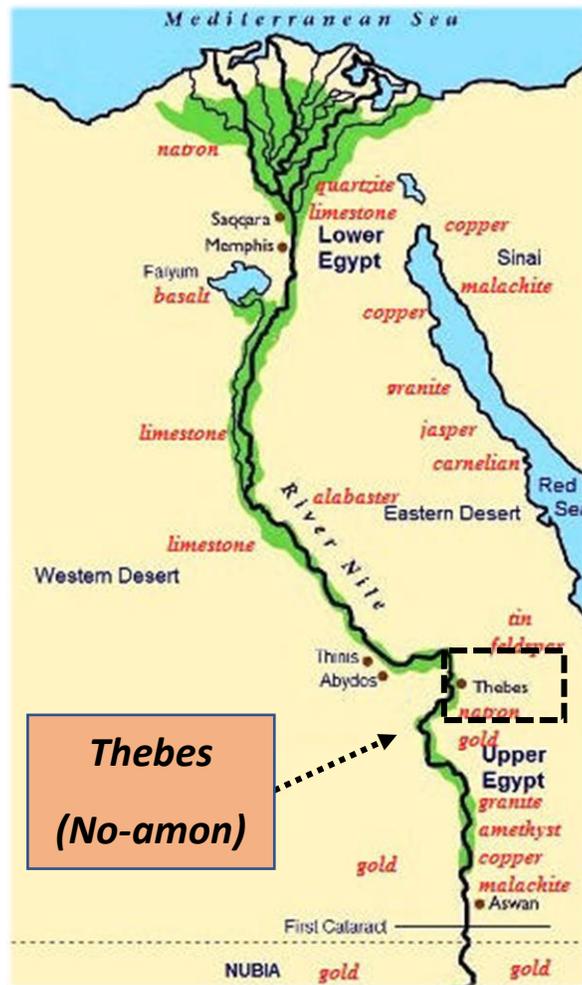
⁸*Are you better than **No-amon**, which was situated by the waters of the Nile, with water surrounding her, whose rampart was the sea, whose wall consisted of the sea?*

No-amon > (Strong’s) **No** > of Egyptian origin; No (i.e. Thebes), the capital of Upper Egypt. ***Amon*** > variation for 1995; a throng of people:--multitude.

(“1995” > a noise, tumult, crowd; also disquietude, wealth ... abundance, company, many, multitude, multiply, noise, riches, rumbling, sounding, store, tumult.)

Here are some pictures of the Thebes being discussed!





⁸ Are you better than No-amon, which was situated by the waters of the Nile, with water surrounding her, whose rampart was the sea, whose wall consisted of the sea?

John Walvoord > Nineveh's strength, God said, would be no greater than that of the Egyptian city of Thebes, which Assyria had conquered in 663 B.C. Before that date Jeremiah Jer. 46:25) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 30:14, 16) had predicted Thebes' fall. The Hebrews called the city No-Amon (city of the god Amun). Thebes was at the site of modern-day Karnak and Luxor, 400 miles south of Cairo. The city was built on the eastern bank of the Nile River but its suburbs were on both shores. One strength of Thebes was her strategic location. Water was all around her, that is, moats, canals, and water channels flowed throughout much of the city. These helped defend the city as enemy soldiers would find it difficult to cross numerous canals to get to the heart of the city. The waters were thus like a wall. In this way Nineveh and Thebes were similar (cf. Nahum 2:8).

⁹ Ethiopia was her might, and Egypt too, without limits. Put and Lubim were among her helpers.

Ethiopia was her might ... > (Barnes) Literally, "Egypt was strength, and Ethiopia, and boundless."

Keil and Delitzsch > To the natural strength of Thebes there was also added the strength of the warlike nations at her command. Cush, i.e., Ethiopians in the stricter sense, and Mitsraim, Egyptians, the two tribes descended from Ham, who formed the Egyptian kingdom before the fall of Thebes, and under the 25th (Ethiopian) dynasty ... Egyptians, as for them there is no number; equivalent to an innumerable multitude. To these there were to be added the auxiliary tribes: Put, i.e., the Libyans in the broader sense, who had spread themselves out over the northern part of Africa as far as Mauritania ... and Lubim equals Lehâbhîm, the Libyans in the narrower sense.

¹⁰ ***Yet she became an exile, she went into captivity; also her small children were dashed to pieces at the head of every street; they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound with fetters.***

Yet she became an exile ... The captivity of Egypt was predicted by the Lord through Isaiah at least 45 years before it occurred > **Isaiah 20:1-6** > ¹ *In the year that the commander came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria (Sargon captured Ashdod about 711 B.C.) sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it,* ² *at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips and take your shoes off your feet."* And he did so, going naked and barefoot. ³ *And the LORD said, "Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush,* ⁴ *so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.* ⁵ *Then they will be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast.* (Ashurbanipal sacked Thebes in 663 B.C.)

¹¹ ***You too will become drunk, you will be hidden. You too will search for a refuge from the enemy.***

Patterson > If, as the Assyrians themselves knew full well, great Thebes, despite all of her natural defenses and vast network of allies, had not escaped such ignominy, could Nineveh expect to do better? The answer is a resounding negative. Nineveh, like Thebes, would know the terror of all-out attack. Nahum prophesies that Nineveh "will become drunk." the stupefying effect of intoxicating drink is often applied figuratively to threats of military defeat (e.g., Jer. 25:27; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 23:33; Hab. 2:16).

Hitzig > "The fate of No-amon is a prophecy of thine own"

¹² ***All your fortifications are fig trees with ripe fruit - when shaken, they fall into the eater's mouth.*** ¹³ ***Behold, your people are women in your midst! The gates of your land are opened wide to your enemies; fire consumes your gate bars.***

All your fortifications ... > This prediction was fulfilled ... sieges don't just last 3 months!

Behold, your people are women ... (Barnes) Fierce, fearless, hard, iron men, such as their warriors still are portrayed by themselves on their monuments, they whom no toll wearied, no peril daunted, shall be, one and all, their whole "people, women."

The gates of your land ... (Barnes) So were her palaces buried as they stood, that the traces of prolonged fire are still visible, calcining the one part and leaving others which were not exposed to it, uncalcined. : "It is incontestable that, during the excavations, a considerable quantity of charcoal, and even pieces of wood, either half-burnt or in a perfect state of preservation, were found in many places. The lining of the chambers also bears certain marks of the action of fire. All these things can be explained only by supposing the fall of a burning roof, which calcined the slabs of gypsum and converted them into dust.

What tends most positively to prove that the traces of fire must be attributed to the burning of a wooden roof is, that these traces are perceptible only in the interior of the building. The gypsum also that covers the wall inside is completely calcined, while the outside of the building is nearly everywhere untouched. But wherever the fronting appears to have at all suffered from fire, it is at the bottom; thus giving reason to suppose that the damage has been done by some burning matter falling outside. In fact, not a single bas-relief in a state to be removed was found in any of the chambers, they were all pulverized."

¹⁴ ***Draw for yourself water for the siege! Strengthen your fortifications! Go into the clay and tread the mortar! Take hold of the brick mold!***

Strengthen your fortifications ... (Patterson) It is known that both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal devoted considerable effort to matters of repair and to the strengthening of Nineveh's defenses, including its walls. The force of the irony becomes immediately apparent. In those matters where the most extensive preparations are urged to be taken—water and walls—the city was to meet its demise

¹⁵ ***There fire will consume you, the sword will cut you down; it will consume you as the locust does. Multiply yourself like the creeping locust, multiply yourself like the swarming locust.*** ¹⁶ ***You have increased your traders more than the stars of heaven - the creeping locust strips and flies away.***



17 Your guardsmen are like the swarming locust. Your marshals are like hordes of grasshoppers settling in the stone walls on a cold day. The sun rises and they flee, and the place where they are is not known.

Your guardsmen are like ... (Patterson) Likewise, Nineveh's trusted officials could be likened to locusts that come out of the ground in great swarms, lodge during the cooler part of the day on walls, and then, with the rising of the sun, fly away. Ancient sources record the flight of the Assyrian nobility with the advance of the combined enemy force against Nineveh. The Assyrian kings repeatedly boasted that, on hearing of the advance of the Assyrian monarch, the enemy king and his officials fled for their lives. Now the Assyrian king and his officials would be cast in the same role. With the heat of the day's battle, Nineveh would be left without her leadership to provide her defense. How skillfully Nahum has played upon the figure of the locust! Like locusts her merchants and officials flee and leave Nineveh alone, leaderless, ill-equipped to meet the advance of the locust-like army that was even now about to surround her.

18 Your shepherds are sleeping, O king of Assyria; Your nobles are lying down. Your people are scattered on the mountains and there is no one to regather them.

Your people are scattered on the mountains > (Zondervan Academic) If you get out a modern map, look for the city of Mosul because the city of Mosul is actually located in the general vicinity of where Ninevah would have been in the times of ancient Israel. In fact, Mosul is situated between two mountains, one of which is actually called نينوى or Neviunis in Arabic. Well, guess what Neviunis means in Arabic? ... The prophet Jonah.

19 There is no relief for your breakdown, your wound is incurable. All who hear about you will clap their hands over you, for on whom has not your evil passed continually?

Patterson > As indicated in the various preceding comments, Nahum's words have been dramatically precise in their fulfillment. Indeed, the prophecies concerning the siege and fall of Nineveh stand as a remarkable example of fulfilled prophecy.

- (1) The fact of an intense siege (3:14) is validated both in the Babylonian Chronicles and by Diodorus Siculus.
- (2) The fall of the city due to water (1:8; 2:7, 9) has been attested both by archaeologists and the ancient historians Xenophon and Diodorus.
- (3) Nahum also predicts the burning of the city (1:10; 2:13; 3:3, 15; cf. 1:6), a fact confirmed by archaeological excavation.
- (4) Minute details concerning the events of the final days before Nineveh's fall, such as the drunkenness (1:10; 3:11), cowardice, degeneracy (3:3), and the desertion (2:9; 3:17) of the city by its leadership are also abundantly recorded in the ancient traditions.
- (5) Nahum's prophecies concerning the final slaughter of Nineveh's citizens (3:3) and the looting of the city (2:10, 11), its utter destruction (2:11; 3:7), and the virtual disappearance of its people (3:18-19) are facts confirmed in the ancient records.

Nahum's last words contain the message that the news of Nineveh's fall has spread across the landscape (v. 19). But the tidings of that event are not met with a tear; they are welcomed with a clap of hands and, perhaps, a heaving sigh.

What a story!