

Nahum 3:8-19

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

Nahum is not warning Nineveh as Jonah did. Instead, Nahum (in 645 BC) is doing these two things (at least):

1. Announcing to Nineveh their destruction is coming from the God of Israel, YHWH (if they even received a copy of this prophecy.)
2. Building faith and laying the foundation for future faith in Israel when Nineveh is overrun in 612 BC

Nahum 3:8-10 - Thebes

3:8 – “Are you better than Thebes
that sat by the Nile,
with water around her,
her rampart a sea,
and water her wall?”

1. Pronunciation of “Thebes”:
 - a. /the-beez/ (YouTube – Pronunciation Guide)
 - b. /**theeb-z**/ (YouTube – pronounceNames.com)
 - c. /thee-bis/ (YouTube – from Greece on pronounceNames.com)
2. Thebes occupied both sides of the Nile.
 - a. Thebes is 400 miles south of Cairo
 - b. The two temples (Karnak and Luxor) dedicated to the god Amun on the east bank of the Nile River are about 1.75 miles apart
 - c. The west side of Thebes on the west bank of the Nile where the fertile soil meets the desert is dedicated to the burial temples of the kings/pharaohs
 - d. Thebes became important to Egyptian history when the Theban dynasties (11 and 12th dynasties) unified Upper (south) and Lower (north) Egypt to form a prosperous nation.
 - e. The Theban royalty of the 18th dynasties expelled the Hyksos and found Egypt's empire that lasted from the 18th-20th dynasties during the years 1550-1085 BC.
 - i. Amun, the god of Thebes, was the god of empire.
3. There is no exact plan of the city from 663 BC showing the defensive system or the street system.
4. There is a sculpture from Ashurbanipal's palace in Nineveh that show the Assyrians attacking an Egyptian city that was on a large river with another waterway running into the city.
5. Ezekiel writing in 571 BC warned Thebes of further judgment in Ezekiel 30:14-16 and Jeremiah writing in 605 BC did the same in Jeremiah 46:25.

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.

From cojs.org:

“In 663 B.C. the Assyrians celebrated the greatest triumph in their whole history. King Ashurbanipal conquered the capital of Upper Egypt No-Amun, which the Greeks called Thebes. According to Homer it had 100 gates and until then it had been regarded as impregnable. It was an event which caused an enormous stir in the world of the ancient orient, in the “Fertile Crescent” itself and as far as Greece. The Assyrians plundered the metropolis, whose temples contained boundless wealth. “I conquered the whole city... silver, gold, precious stones, the whole contents of its palace, coloured vestments, linen, magnificent horses, slaves, both men and women, two great obelisks of shining bronze weighing 2,500 talents; I took the temple gates from their place and brought them to Assyria. Enormous spoils of priceless worth did I take with me from Thebes,” exulted Ashurbanipal.

The Assyrian war machine had made a tabula rasa of the far famed temple-city on the Nile. Excavations fully confirm the description of the catastrophe given by the prophet Nahum and by the victor himself. The capital of Upper Egypt never again recovered from this blow.”

[\(http://cojs.org/ashurbanipal-s_conquest_of_thebes-663_bce/\)](http://cojs.org/ashurbanipal-s_conquest_of_thebes-663_bce/)

Nahum 3:11-19 – Nineveh’s Fall Described

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.

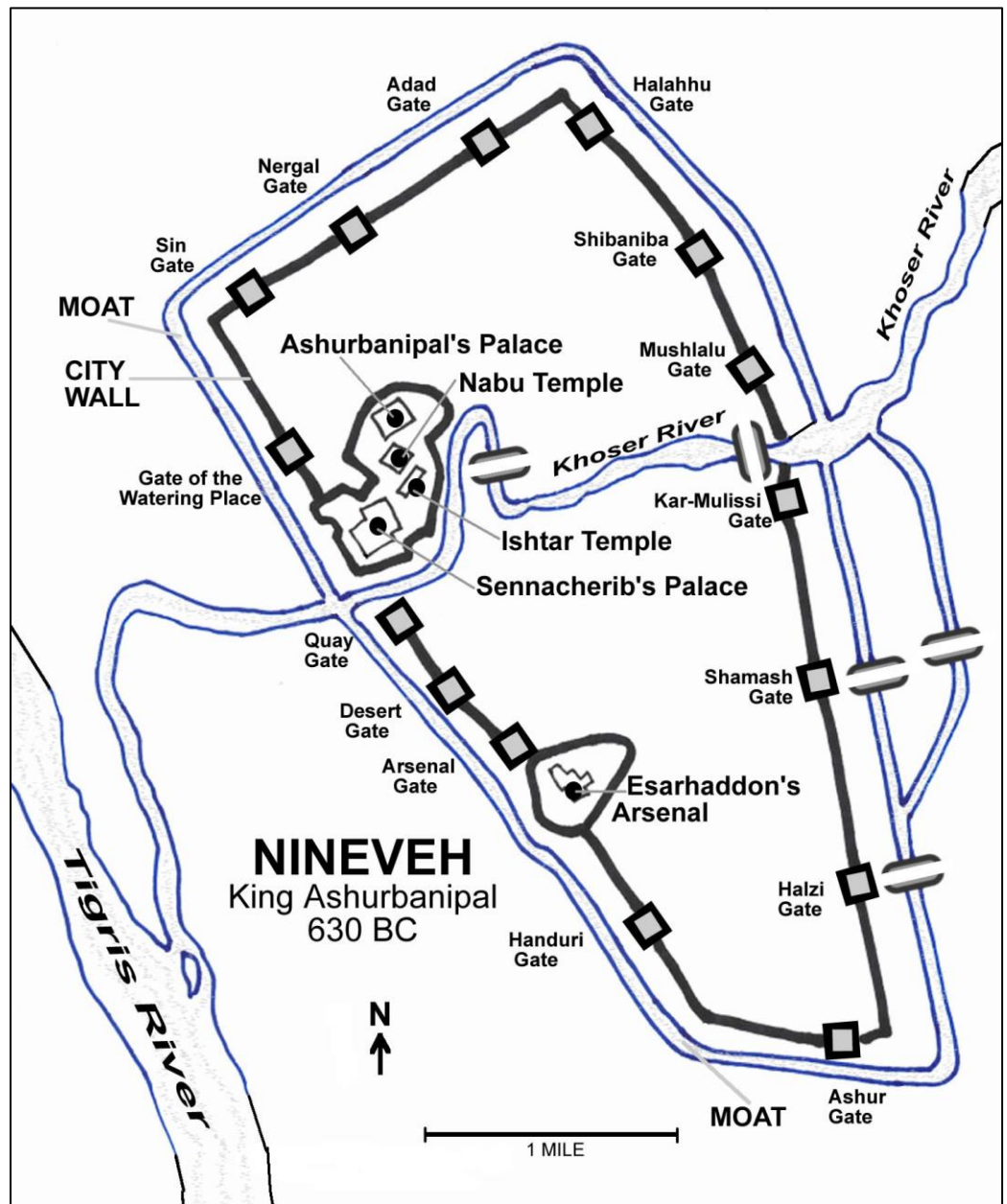
3:13 – “Behold, your troops are women in your midst. The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has devoured your bars.

1. Woman were not warriors. They were the ones warriors protected. This comparison of frightened, incompetent soldiers is also used in:

- a. Isaiah 19:16 of the Egyptians
- b. Jeremiah 50:37 and 51:30 of the Babylonians

2. “Gates” –

- a. Gates would be wooden panels with a bronze strips binding their edges.
- b. The wooden panels were attached on one side to a large wooden post that pivoted in a stone socket on the bottom while the top of the post pivoted in the lintel that ran across the door opening
- c. The wooden gate in the temple at Balawat 17 miles SE of Nineveh was 20+ feet tall because the bronze strips that bound the wooden panels excavated by archaeologists were built to hold a 20+foot tall wooden door panel.





Inner gate swinging door socket for hinge to pivot (at Dan)



The final and most inner gate of the city with the final series of chambers.
Note a socket cut out of stone where one of the sides of the gate doors would have pivoted

3. "Bars" –

- a. Once the wooden gates were shut horizontal bars would be laid across the inside of the wooden gates to keep them shut.

- b. Ancient gateways still have sockets in their stone door jams where a metal bar or wooden beam would be held to prevent the city gates from being opened.

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

1. The Babylonian Chronicle records that the military of Babylon and the Medes laid siege to Nineveh from May-July 612 BC.
2. The short siege 3 month siege indicates:
 - a. The weakness of Nineveh
 - b. The lack of fortitude of Nineveh
 - c. “Fleeing locusts” is a figure of speech to capture the attitude of the fleeing merchants, guards and officials.
 - i. The merchants, guards and officials were all in Nineveh to devour the material wealth.
 - ii. But, in the face of difficulty the merchants, guards and officials were not loyal to the Assyrian Empire because they were only loyal to their own appetites
 - iii. When trouble rises, the “locusts” move on to the next green field.
3. “Strengthen your defenses” – this is seen at the excavation of the gateways of Nineveh where it can be seen that the panicked citizens tried to prevent Babylonian entry into Nineveh by building extra walls inside the gateways.
4. “

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!

1. “The sword will cut you off” – excavation of the gateways in Nineveh have exposed the skeletons of the defenders “strengthening their defenses” by filling in the entry ways in the city gate in an attempt to save themselves from the Babylonians invaders.

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.

1. Many of these “merchants”, “laborers”, “scribes”, “officials” were deported from their homelands and brought to live, practice their trade/skill and prosper in Nineveh.
2. These same welcomed “merchants” and other citizens of the world that prospered in Nineveh will easily and quickly betray Nineveh and “fly away” to save themselves.

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.

1. “Your people are scattered”...”with none to gather them”
 - a. In 612 BC the survivors fled to the mountains for survival and the shambles of Assyrian government fled west to Haran until they were forced to flee to Carchemish in 610 BC where they were finally completely eliminated in 605 BC.
 - b. Assyria was absorbed into the Babylonian Empire after 605 BC which was itself absorbed into the Persian Empire in 538 BC. By the time the Greeks marched through the Middle East to take the Persian Empire the city of Nineveh could no longer be identified and the culture was itself ancient history.

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?

1. The medical skills of this ancient world were so limited that a slight wound could become infected and cause death.