

# 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:

Five images are given to indicate how fragile Nineveh would become

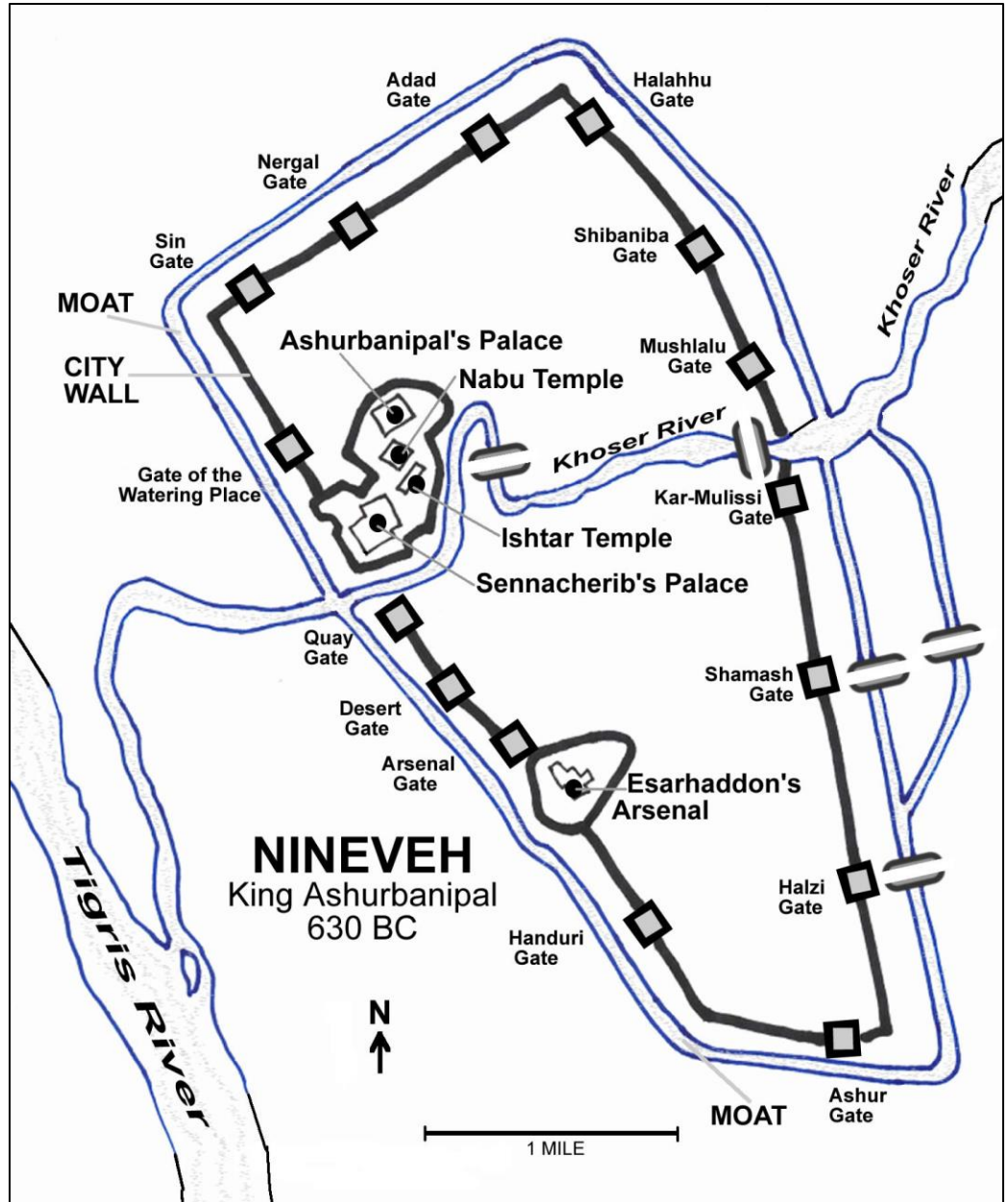
1. A drunk
2. A hiding refugee
3. Falling ripe fruit
4. A woman in battle
5. Open gates

**3:11** – “You also will be drunken;

you will go into hiding;  
you will seek a refuge from the enemy.

1. God's wrath has made them drunk. They are incapable of logical thought or ability to steady themselves.

2. God's wrath:
  - a. Revelation 14:9-10 – “And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on



his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

- b. Jeremiah 25:16-17 – “Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them.”

3. Assyrians became refugees:
  - a. 614 BC the capital of Asshur fell
  - b. 612 BC the capital of Nineveh fell
  - c. 610 BC the remnant with their new king and new capital 250 miles to the west, Haran, fell
  - d. 605 what was left of any Assyrian forces fell at Carchemish
  - e. The citizens that survived any of these battles ended up fleeing to the next city or seeking refuge in the mountains.

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

1. The fortresses on the way towards Nineveh and around Nineveh fell to the Babylonians just like a piece of ripe fruit falls from a tree or a vine when it is bumped. They fell easily without putting up any resistance.
2. Nineveh was ripe for judgment

**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.

## The general point of 3:14-18:

1. 3:14-15 – there is nothing Nineveh can do to prepare for this invasion
2. 3:15-16 – there are not enough number of troops that can stop this invasion
3. 3:17-18 – there are no negotiating officials or leaders that can stop this invasion

These verses are almost a reversal of the words spoken by Sennacherib's field marshal at Jerusalem in 701 BC (about 56 years previous to 645 BC and 89 years previous to the 612 fall of Nineveh)

**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 water was to be collected so the people of Nineveh could endure a long siege.
  - a. Sennacherib had built an aqueduct system and dug 18 canals to bring water throughout the city. Before this time the fields lacked water and the people had to wait for rain.
  - b. But, now these canals and aqueducts would be shut down by Babylon
2. The Babylonian Chronicle records that the military of Babylon and the Medes laid siege to Nineveh from May-July 612 BC.
3. 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.
4. “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.
5. Reinforcing the walls:
  - a. **“go into the clay”** is literally “go into the clay” meaning the people under siege would have to totally be immersed in working in the clay to help reinforce their gates and walls. But, it will be of no use. They will not be able to stop the invasion.
  - b. **“tread the mortar”** – the hard work meant for slaves of walking in the mortar to mix it for making bricks. This is intense effort for a people who did not normally do this kind of work.
  - c. **“take hold of the brick mold”**
    - i. The bricks were both:
      1. fired in a kiln
      2. unfired, but sundried



- ii. exhaustion and failed physical ability would be wearing away the people under siege

**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. There in the mud, treading the mortar with a brick mold in their hand trying to prevent the city wall or gate from collapsing the people will be consumed with the fire the Babylonians have set.
2. “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.

1448 [e] bag-gə-dê-rō-wī	2583 [e] ha-ḥō-w-nīm	1462 [e] gō-bāy;	1462 [e] kə-gō-wb	2951 [e] wə-ṭap-sə-ra-yik	697 [e] kā-'ar-beh,	4502 [e] min-nə-zā-ra-yik
בַּגְדָּרוֹת	הַחֹנִיִּים	גְּבוּי	כְּגֹב	וְטַפְסָרִיק	כְּאַרְבֵּה	מִנְזַרְיָד 17
in the hedges	which camp	great	like grasshoppers	and your generals	like [swarming] locusts	Your commanders [are]
Prep-b, Art   N-fp	Art   V-Qal-PrtcpI-mp	N-mp	Prep-k   N-msc	Conj-w   N-mpc   2fs	Prep-k, Art   N-ms	N-mpc   2fs

335 [e] 'ay-yām.	4725 [e] mə-qō-w-mōw	3045 [e] nō-w-da'	3808 [e] wə-lō-	5074 [e] wə-nō-w-dad,	2224 [e] zā-re-ḥāh	8121 [e] še-meš	7135 [e] qā-rāh,	3117 [e] bə-yō-wm
אֵימָם	מְקוֹמוֹ	נֹדָע	וְלֹא	וְנוֹדָד	זָרַחְהָ	שֶׁמֶשׁ	קָרָה	בְּיוֹם
where they [are]	the place	is known	and not	and they flee away	when rises	the sun	cold	on a day
Interrog   3mp	N-msc   3ms	V-Nifal-Perf-3ms	Conj-w   Adv-NegPrt	Conj-w   V-Pual-ConjPerf-3ms	V-Qal-Perf-3fs	N-cs	N-fs	Prep-b   N-msc

1. “princes” is *minnezar* referring to a crowned royalty wearing a diadem crown. This is the king, but the officials under the king
  - a. There are very many “crowned” officials comparable to grasshoppers in a field

2. “scribes” (or, “generals” or captains”) is *tipsar* are people in leadership with authority.
  - a. These are as numerous as locusts

**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. The sleep and slumber could refer to:
  - a. They are unprepared
  - b. They are dead
2. “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.
2. As news spread of Nineveh’s fall the people universally responded with applause in approval and joy of Nineveh’s end.
3. It is clear why people applaud the fall of Assyria: Everyone suffered because of Assyrian evil.