

# Nahum 2:11-13

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/nah/nah-2/nahum-211-13/>

*The prophet Nahum mocks the Ninevites, calling them lions without lairs, unable to satisfy their desires for prey because the LORD will destroy their power.*

In this section, the prophet compared Nineveh with a lion's den. He employed his poetic gift to mock the Ninevites by asking a question that contains two parts. In the first, he stated, *Where is the den of the lions and the feeding place of the young lions?* A lion is by far the most powerful of all carnivores of ancient Israel. It is a ruthless and ferocious animal, an unstoppable killer that works from ambush. A lion hunts, kills, and brings home what it has captured. But even when the lion is not actively hunting, its roar always causes fear (Amos 3:8).

The word *den* refers to the home of the lion. Likewise, the term *feeding place* refers to the lands where the lion captures its prey. The question *Where is the den of the lions and the feeding place of the young lions?* implied that the lion's den no longer existed. Thus, it would not be able to satisfy its cravings for prey. In our context, the prophet used the lion's den figuratively to refer to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. That means that the Assyrian empire would be powerless because Nineveh would be no more.

In the second part of the question, Nahum described the environment of the figurative lion of Assyria: *Where the lion, lioness and lion's cub prowled, with nothing to disturb them?* The Assyrian empire roamed the earth like a lion, devouring all in its path, eating what it pleased. Now that lion is no more. Neither the lion (perhaps Nineveh) or the lioness and cub (perhaps vassals in the Assyrian Empire) are to be seen. They are no more.

In the past, Assyria was safe and secure. The entire pride, the lion, lioness, and lion's cub prowled about as it pleased. There was nothing to threaten the smallest to the largest in the kingdom. But now, she would not be able to find any safety on the day of the LORD's judgment. The lions and their feeding grounds have disappeared. The hunter has become the hunted.

Nahum further compared Nineveh with a group of lions. In so doing, he described how the Assyrian soldiers used to behave to provide for their nation. He declared, *The lion tore enough for his cubs, killed enough for his lionesses, and filled his lairs with prey and his dens with torn flesh.* For many years, Assyria had acted like a lion, slaughtering other nations, and plundering their treasures. The treasures representing the toil of others were plundered and piled up in Assyria's lairs.

She had caused great fear among the nations. But now, since Nineveh would be no more, Assyria would not be able to plunder other nations to satisfy her insatiable appetite. Assyria had done enough. The LORD would intervene to judge her because of her selfishness, greed, and cruelty.

Then, the LORD spoke to announce judgment on Nineveh. He began with the particle *behold*, a term that often describes an event that is about to take place. It serves to attract the attention of

the listeners. In other words, the speaker uses the term *behold* to focus on an event that is surprising or unexpected for his listeners. In our context, the unexpected event in view was the destruction of Nineveh. At the time of Nahum's prophecy, the idea of Assyria's demise might have seemed impossible.

After the particle *behold*, the *LORD* stated, *I am against you*. The pronoun *you* is feminine singular in the Hebrew text and refers to the city of Nineveh. This statement is followed by the prophetic formula *declares the LORD of hosts*. The term *LORD* refers to Yahweh, the self-existent and eternal God (Exodus 3:14). The term *hosts* translates the Hebrew term "sabaoth," meaning "armies." This term refers to the angelic armies of heaven (1 Samuel 1:3). All in all, the phrase *the LORD of hosts* demonstrates His power and emphasizes His character as a warrior leading His angelic army to fight against Nineveh.

The *LORD* continued to portray Nineveh's downfall using terms such as chariots, young lions, prey, and messengers to show how He would destroy her to reduce her strength to debris. First, God declared, *I will burn up her chariots in smoke*. Chariots were used in ancient warfare and racing. They were a mobile platform allowing soldiers to shoot volleys of arrows to soften up the foot of their enemies (v. 3). The term *smoke* represents the effect produced by fire when it burns. Simply put, God would use fire to destroy Nineveh's *chariots*, causing her to lose all her strength and power.

Second, the *LORD* stated that *a sword will devour your young lions*. God would use the *sword* of the attacking infantrymen to *devour* (consume) Assyria's *young lions*. The term translated as *young lions* is used figuratively to refer to the Assyrian soldiers. This would indicate that the attackers would successfully breach the wall of Nineveh, and the attacking infantry would pour in and destroy the defending army.

Third, the *LORD* said, *I will cut off your prey from the land*. The word *prey* is used often to refer to animals eaten by lions (Job 4:11, 24:5, 29:17; Psalm 104:21). Since this passage begins by referring to Assyria as a "den of lions" (Nahum 2:11) it would seem that this phrase is telling the Assyrians that the *LORD* is going to *cut off* their access to *prey*. No longer will they have the power to exploit other peoples, taking their possessions and enslaving them.

Finally, the *LORD* declared, *No longer will the voice of your messengers be heard*. It was a common practice in the ancient world for a nation to send emissaries to other nations either to exact tribute from them or to threaten them. For instance, King Sennacherib of Assyria sent his field commander, "Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army" to threaten them and demand submission (Isaiah 36:2–8; 2 Kings 18:17). On the day of the *LORD*'s judgment on Assyria, the Assyrians would not be able to send any messenger to any other nations. The *LORD* would destroy their power.

## **Biblical Text**

**<sup>11</sup> Where is the den of the lions  
And the feeding place of the young lions,  
Where the lion, lioness and lion's cub prowled,**

With nothing to disturb *them*?

<sup>12</sup> The lion tore enough for his cubs,

Killed *enough* for his lionesses,

And filled his lairs with prey

And his dens with torn flesh.

<sup>13</sup> “Behold, I am against you,” declares the LORD of hosts. “I will burn up her chariots in smoke, a sword will devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the land, and no longer will the voice of your messengers be heard.”