

Nahum 2:8-10

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/nah/nah-2/nahum-28-10/>

Nahum now describes the consequences of the scatterer's attack upon Nineveh. The city will become desolate, causing the Ninevites to suffer pain and agony.

After urging Nineveh to be on guard and describing the siege and capture of the city (Nahum 2:1–7), Nahum described the aftermath of the attack. He began by making a comparison: *Though Nineveh was like a pool of water throughout her days, now they are fleeing.* The word translated as *pool* [“berēkhāh” in Hebrew] refers to a reservoir or a basin (2 Samuel 2:13; 4:12; Isaiah 7:3; 22:9; Nehemiah 2:14). When the dam of a reservoir breaks, the water flows away. Similarly, when the enemy soldiers attacked Nineveh, the Assyrian troops fled the city because it had become dry. Even though someone (probably the leaders of the people) cried out, ‘*Stop, stop*’, *no one turns back*. The great city of *Nineveh* would become desolate.

As Nahum envisioned the destruction of *Nineveh*, he turned his attention to the attackers to encourage them to press forward: *Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold!* The verb *plunder* [“bazaz” in Hebrew] means to take something by force, that is, to seize it. It occurs frequently in military contexts, where the conqueror takes the goods of the loser. The terms *silver and gold* represent the most valuable items that would attract *Nineveh*'s adversaries.

Nahum encouraged *Nineveh*'s enemy soldiers to take her *silver and gold* that she likely plundered from other nations. We know that 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold were plundered from the temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:14-16). *Nineveh* had long turned away from her state of repentance following *Jonah*'s warning (*Jonah* 3:4). Now the plunder *Nineveh* had taken from others would be taken from it.

Besides *silver and gold*, the city of *Nineveh* possessed many other goods. *There is no limit to the treasure* she possessed. She had plundered precious possessions by force from many nations, including Israel. Also, she had forced the subject nations to pay an annual tribute, which could be considered a form of blackmail. Thus, she had *wealth from every kind of desirable object*. Now *Nineveh*'s enemies, particularly the Babylonians and Medes, would take away all her wealth in an instant. The city would lose everything because “ill-gotten gains do not profit” (*Proverbs* 10:2).

That the city of *Nineveh* would lose everything is further explained when the prophet stated, *She is emptied! Yes, she is desolate and waste!* This statement translates three Hebrew terms that are similar in both sound and meaning: “Buqah umeBuqah umeBullaqah.” Nahum lengthened each successive word with an additional syllable (consonant), building the rhythm like a crescendo to a dramatic climax. The purpose is to intensify the city's desolation. The wordplay served to capture the attention of the listener and reinforce the message of judgment. The point is that *Nineveh* would be utterly emptied just like someone empties fluid from a bottle.

In the next line, Nahum described Nineveh's terror and fear as she experienced the enemy's attack, *Hearts are melting and knees knocking!* The word heart ("lēb" in Hebrew) often describes the seat of intellect, including intent and thoughtful consideration (Genesis 20:5 and Deuteronomy 4:20, respectively). It also describes the core of a person's inner being or the source of courage (Leviticus 26:36). Thus, when the heart melts, the person becomes weak (Joshua 2:11) and thus unable to fight. Similarly, *knocking* or trembling knees refers to weakness or fear. When the knees tremble, people cannot run away. The idea is that *Nineveh* would be weak and helpless on the day of her downfall. Her soldiers would be powerless before their enemies.

As a result of the terrifying attack of the enemy on Nineveh, *anguish is in the whole body*. The word translated as *anguish* is "chalchālāh" in Hebrew. It often pictures the agonies of a woman in labor pains (Isaiah 21:3). The term translated as *body* is "mātēnayim" in Hebrew. It means "loins," that is, the body between the ribs and the hip bones. The Bible often speaks of loins as the center of physical strength (Job 40:16). Thus, when the loins of the Ninevites are in *anguish*, all their strength would be gone, like a woman undergoing labor pains (Isaiah 21:3; Proverbs 31:17). In addition, *all their faces are grown pale* before their enemies (Joel 2:6).

The *face* displays the whole range of human feelings and emotions. When someone is in a crisis, his *face* grows pale. For instance, the LORD declares that one day He will bless the house of Jacob again. At that time, "Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now turn pale" (Isaiah 29:22). The Ninevites would lose all their happiness. Terror and agony would fill them on the day of judgment.

Biblical Text

**⁸ Though Nineveh was like a pool of water throughout her days,
Now they are fleeing;
"Stop, stop,"
But no one turns back.
⁹ Plunder the silver!
Plunder the gold!
For there is no limit to the treasure—
Wealth from every kind of desirable object.
¹⁰ She is emptied! Yes, she is desolate and waste!
Hearts are melting and knees knocking!
Also anguish is in the whole body
And all their faces are grown pale!**