

Nahum

Introduction

1:1 The oracle against Nineveh,¹ the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite:²

God Takes Vengeance against His Enemies

1:2 The LORD is a zealous³ and avenging⁴ God; the LORD is avenging and very angry.⁵ The LORD takes vengeance⁶ against his foes; he sustains his rage⁷ against his enemies.

1:3 The LORD is slow to anger⁸ but great in power,⁹ the LORD will certainly not¹⁰ allow the wicked¹¹ to go unpunished.

The Divine Warrior Destroys His Enemies but Protects His People

He marches out¹² in the whirlwind and the raging storm; dark storm clouds billow like dust¹³ under his feet.¹⁴

¹ tn Heb "of Nineveh."

² tn Or "Nahum of Elkosh" (NAB, NRSV).

³ tn Heb "jealous." The Hebrew term קַנָּוִי (*qanno*, "jealous, zealous") refers to God's zealous protection of his people and his furious judgment against his enemies. The root קָנָא (*qana*) can denote jealous envy (Gen 26:14; 30:1; 37:11; Pss 37:1; 73:3; 106:16; Prov 3:31; 23:17; 24:1, 19; Ezek 31:9), jealous rivalry (Eccl 4:4; 9:6; Isa 11:13), marital jealousy (Num 5:14, 15, 18, 25, 30; Prov 6:34; 27:4), zealous loyalty (Num 11:29; 25:11, 13; 2 Sam 21:2; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; 2 Kgs 10:16; Ps 69:10; Song 8:6; Isa 9:6; 37:32; 42:13; 59:17; 63:15; Zech 1:14; 8:2), jealous anger (Deut 32:16, 21; Ps 78:58), and zealous fury (Exod 34:14; Deut 5:9; 29:19; 1 Kgs 14:22; Job 5:2; Pss 79:5; 119:139; Prov 14:30; Isa 26:11; Ezek 5:13; 8:3; 16:38, 42; 23:25; 35:11; 36:5, 6; 38:19; Zeph 1:18). See BDB 888 s.v. קָנָא; E. Reuter, *TDOT* 13:47-58.

⁴ tn The syntax of this line has been understood in two ways: (1) as a single clause with the LORD as the subject: "A jealous and avenging God is the LORD" (NRSV; NASB) or "The LORD is a jealous and avenging God" (NIV); and (2) as two parallel clauses: "God is jealous, and the LORD avenges" (KJV). The LXX reflects the latter. Masoretic accentuation and Hebrew syntax support the former. Accentuation links קַנָּוִי וְנֹקֵם (*qano* v^e *noqem*, "jealous and avenging") together rather than dividing them into separate clauses. Normal word order suggests that קַנָּוִי וְנֹקֵם ("jealous and avenging") are attributive adjectives modifying אֱלֹהִים ("el", "God"). In verbless clauses such as this, the predicate normally precedes the subject; thus, "a jealous and avenging God" (אֱלֹהִים וְנֹקֵם וְקַנָּוִי, "el qanno" v^e *noqem*) is the predicate and "the LORD" (יהוה, "yhwh") is the subject.

⁵ tn Or "exceedingly wrathful"; Heb "a lord of wrath." The idiom "lord of wrath" (וְנֹקֵם וְקַנָּוִי, *uva' al khemah*) means "wrathful" or "full of wrath" (Prov 22:24; 29:22). The noun "lord" (וְנֹקֵם) is used in construct as an idiom to describe a person's outstanding characteristic or attribute (e.g., Gen 37:19; 1 Sam 28:7; 2 Kgs 1:8; Prov 1:17; 18:9; 22:24; 23:2; 24:8; Eccl 7:12; 8:8; 10:11, 20; Isa 41:15; 50:8; Dan 8:6, 20); see *IBHS* 149-51 §9.5.3.

⁶ tn The term נָקַם (*naqam*, "avenge, vengeance") is used three times in 1:2 for emphasis. The LORD will exact just retribution against his enemies (the Assyrians) to avenge their wickedness against his people (Judah).

⁷ tn The verb "rage" (נָטַר, *natar*) is used elsewhere of keeping a vineyard (Song 1:6; 8:11-12) and guarding a secret (Dan 7:28). When used of anger, it does not so much mean "to control anger" or "to be slow to anger" (*HALOT* 695 s.v.) but "to stay angry" (*TWOT* 2:576). It describes a person bearing a grudge, seeking revenge, and refusing to forgive (Lev 19:18). It is often used as a synonym of שָׂמַר (*shamar*, "to maintain wrath, stay angry") in collocation with לְעוֹלָם ("forever, always") and לְעַד לְעַד (*la'ad*, "continually") to picture God harboring rage against his enemies forever (Jer 3:5, 12; Amos

1:11; Ps 103:9). The long-term rage depicted by נָטַר ("maintain rage") serves as an appropriate bridge to the following statement in Nahum that the LORD is slow to anger but furious in judgment. God seeks vengeance against his enemies; he continually rages and maintains his anger; he is slow to anger, but will eventually burst out with the full fury of his wrath.

⁸ tn Heb "long of anger," i.e., "slow to anger" (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Prov 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; Neh 9:17) or restraining anger (Jer 15:15; Prov 25:15). Cf. NCV "The Lord does not become angry quickly."

⁹ tc The BHS editors suggest emending MT "power" (כֹּחַ, *koakh*) to "mercy" (חֶסֶד, *khased*) as in Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Ps 103:8; Neh 9:17. However, this is unnecessary, it has no textual support, and it misses the rhetorical point intended by Nahum's modification of the traditional expression.

^{sn} This is an allusion to the well-known statement, "The LORD is slow to anger but great in mercy" (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Ps 103:8; Neh 9:17). Nahum subtly modifies this by substituting "great in mercy" with "great in power." God's patience at the time of Jonah (Jonah 4:2) one century earlier (ca. 750 b.c.), had run out. Nineveh had exhausted the "great mercy" of God and now would experience the "great power" of God.

¹⁰ tn Or "he will certainly not acquit [the wicked]"; KJV "and will not at all acquit the wicked." The root נָקַח (*naqah*, "to acquit") is repeated for emphasis. The phrase "he will certainly not allow the wicked to go unpunished" (וְנֹקֵם לֹא יִנְקֶה, *v'naqqeh lo' y'naqqeh*) is an emphatic construction (see *GKC* 215 §75. *hh*; *IBHS* 584-88 §35.3.1).

¹¹ tn The words "the wicked" are not in the Hebrew text but are supplied in the translation; they are implied when this idiom is used (Exod 34:7; Num 14:18). In legal contexts the nuance "the guilty" is most appropriate; in nonlegal contexts the nuance "the wicked" is used.

¹² tn Heb "His way is in the whirlwind" (so NIV). The noun דַּרְכוֹ (*darko*, "his way") is nuanced here in a verbal sense. The noun דֶּרֶךְ (*derekh*) often denotes a "journey" (Gen 28:20; 30:36; 45:23; Num 9:10; Josh 9:13; 1 Sam 21:6; 1 Kgs 18:27). The verb דָּרַךְ (*darakh*) often means "to tread a path" (Job 22:15) and "to march out" (Judg 5:21). The LORD is portrayed as the Divine Warrior marching out to battle (Exod 15:1-12; Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4-5; Pss 18:7-15; 68:4-10, 32-35; 77:16-19; Mic 1:3-4; Hab 3:3-15).

¹³ tn Heb "clouds are dust."

¹⁴ tn Heb "of his feet."

1:4 He shouts a battle cry¹ against the sea²
 and makes it dry up;³
 he makes all the rivers⁴ run dry.
 Bashan and Carmel wither;⁵
 the blossom of Lebanon withers.
 1:5 The mountains tremble before him,⁶
 the hills convulse;⁷
 the earth is laid waste⁸ before him,

the world and all its inhabitants⁹ are laid
 waste.¹⁰
 1:6 No one can withstand¹¹ his indigna-
 tion!¹²
 No one can resist¹³ his fierce anger!¹⁴
 His wrath is poured out like volcanic fire,
 boulders are broken up¹⁵ as he approach-
 es.¹⁶
 1:7 The LORD is good¹⁷ –

¹ **tn** The term גַּעַר (*ga'ar*) often denotes "reprimand" and "rebuke" (cf. KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV). When it is used in the context of a military attack, it denotes an angry battle cry shouted by a mighty warrior to strike fear into his enemies to drive them away (e.g., 2 Sam 23:16; Isa 30:17; Pss 18:15; 76:6; 80:17; 104:7). For example, the parallel Ugaritic term is used when Baal utters a battle cry against Yam before they fight to the death. For further study see, A. A. MacIntosh, "A Consideration of Hebrew g' r," VT 14 (1969): 474; P. J. van Zijl, "A Consideration of the root *ga'ar* ("rebuke")," OTWSA 12 (1969): 56-63; A. Caquot, TDOT 3:49-53.

² **sn** The "sea" is personified as an antagonistic enemy, representing the wicked forces of chaos (Pss 66:6; 72:8; 80:12; 89:26; 93:3-4; Isa 50:2; Mic 7:12; Hab 3:8; Zech 9:10).

³ **tn** This somewhat unusual use of the preterite (וַיַּבְשֹׁהוּ, *vayyabb'shehu*) follows a participle which depicts characteristic (present-time) action or imminent future action; the preterite depicts the subsequent present or future-time action (see IBHS 561-62 §33.3.5).

⁴ **sn** The Assyrians waged war every spring after the Tigris and Euphrates rivers dried up, allowing them to cross. As the Mighty Warrior par excellence, the LORD is able to part the rivers to attack Assyria.

⁵ **tn** The term אָבַל (*'umlal*, "wither") occurs twice in this verse in MT. The repetition of אָבַל is also supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah). The BHS editors suggest emending the first occurrence of אָבַל ("wither") to בָּלַל (*dollu*, "linguishes") to recover the letter ד (*daleth*) in the partial acrostic. Several versions do, in fact, employ two different verbs in the line (LXX, Syr, Targum, and Vg). However, the first verb at the beginning of the line in all of the versions reflects a reading of אָבַל. Although several elements of an acrostic are present in Nahum 1, the acrostic is incomplete (only א [alef] to כ [kaf] in vv. 2-8) and broken (several elements are missing within vv. 2-8). There is no textual evidence for a complete, unbroken acrostic throughout the book of Nahum in any ancient Hebrew mss or other textual versions; it is most prudent simply to leave the MT as it stands.

⁶ **tn** Or "because of him." The Hebrew preposition בְּמִנּוֹ (*mimnu*) is taken in a causal sense ("because of him") by NASB, NJPS; however, it is taken in a locative sense ("before him") by KJV, NKJV, NRSV, NIV. On the other hand, the LXX rendered it in a separative sense: ἀπ' αὐτοῦ (*ap autou*, "from him"). The parallelism between 1:5a and 1:5b seems to favor the locative nuance: "The mountains quake before him (בְּמִנּוֹ), the earth is laid waste before him (בְּמִנּוֹ, *mi-fanayy*)."

⁷ **tn** Traditionally, "the hills melt." English versions typically render the originally Hebrew verb הִמְלָגוּ (*hilmogagu*) as "melt" (KJV, NRSV, NIV, NJPS) or "dissolve" (NASB). The LXX renders it ἐσάλυθησαν (*esaleuthēsan*, "are shaken"). The Hebrew root has a range of meanings: (1) "to melt," of courage (Ps 107:26) or troops retreating ("melting away" in fear) in battle (1 Sam 14:16); (2) "to dissolve," of mountains dissolving due to erosion (Amos 9:13); (3) "to quake, shake apart," of mountains quaking, swaying backwards and forwards, coming apart, and collapsing in an earthquake (Amos 9:5; Pss 46:6 [7]; 75:3 [4]). The latter fits the imagery of v. 5 (violent earthquakes): the earth trembles in fear at the approach of the Divine Warrior (e.g., Hab 3:6).

⁸ **tn** Or "is upheaved"; or "heaves." There is debate whether the originally unpointed Hebrew verb וַתִּשָּׂא (*vattissa*) should be vocalized as וַתִּשָּׂא (*v^etissa*); NASB "is upheaved"; NRSV, NJPS "heaves" from the root נָשָׂא (*nasa*), "to lift up" or as וַתִּשָּׂא (*vattisha*), "is devastated, laid waste" from the root שָׂא (*sho'ah*, "to devastate, lay waste"). The vocalization וַתִּשָּׂא is attested in the Masoretic tradition and the Greek versions:

Origen ("was raised up"), Symmachus ("was moved"), and Aquila ("shivered"). However, וַתִּשָּׂא demands an intransitive ("heaves") or passive ("is upheaved") sense which is not attested for the Qal stem. The vocalization וַתִּשָּׂא ("is devastated, laid waste") is supported by the Syriac and Vulgate. The re-vocalization of the MT וַתִּשָּׂא ("is lifted up") to וַתִּשָּׂא ("is devastated") is suggested by the BHS editors and several Hebrew lexicons (HALOT 726 s.v. נָשָׂא; BDB 670-71 s.v. נָשָׂא). The re-vocalization involves only the difference between the form ש (*sin*) and שׁ (*shin*) and is followed in the present translation.

⁹ **sn** The phrase "the world and all its inhabitants" is used to stress the universal dimensions of God's revelation of his glory and his acts of judgment (e.g., Pss 33:8; 98:7; Isa 18:3; 26:9, 18; Lam 4:12).

¹⁰ **tn** The words "are laid waste" are not in the Hebrew text, but are an implied repetition from the previous line.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "stand before" (so KJV, NASB, NRSV, NLT). The Hebrew verb עָמַד (*'amad*, "stand") here denotes "to resist, withstand." It is used elsewhere of warriors taking a stand in battle to hold their ground against enemies (Judg 2:14; Josh 10:8; 21:44; 23:9; 2 Kgs 10:4; Dan 11:16; Amos 2:15). It is also used of people trying to protect their lives from enemy attack (Esth 8:11; 9:16). Like a mighty warrior, the LORD will attack his enemies, but none will be able to make a stand against him; none will be able to hold their ground against him; and none will be able to protect themselves from his onslaught (Pss 76:7[8]; 147:17; Mic 3:2).

¹² **tn** *Heb* "Who can stand before his indignation?" The rhetorical question expects a negative answer; it is translated here as an emphatic denial. The Hebrew noun זַעַם (*za'am*, "indignation, curse") connotes the angry wrath or indignant curse of God (Isa 10:5, 25; 13:5; 26:20; 30:27; Jer 10:10; 15:17; 50:25; Ezek 21:36 HT [21:31 ET]; 22:24, 31; Hab 3:12; Zeph 3:8; Pss 38:4; 69:25; 78:49; 102:11; Lam 2:6; Dan 8:19; 11:36). It depicts anger expressed in the form of punishment (HALOT 276 s.v.; TWOT 1:247).

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "Who can rise up against...?" The verb יָקַם (*yaqum*, "arise") is here a figurative expression connoting resistance. Although the adversative sense of ב (*bet*) with יָקַם (*yaqum*, "against him") is attested, denoting hostile action taken against one's enemy (Mic 7:6; Ps 27:12), the locative sense ("before him") is preferred due to the parallelism with לִפְנֵי (*lifney*, "before him").

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "Who can rise up against the heat of his anger?" The rhetorical question expects a negative answer which is translated as an emphatic denial to clarify the point.

¹⁵ **tn** Or "burst into flames." The Niphal perfect נִתְצַוּ (*nit'tsu*) from נָתַץ (*natats*, "to break up, throw down") may denote "are broken up" or "are thrown down." The BHS editors suggest emending the MT's נִתְצַוּ (*nit'tsu*) to נִתְצַוּ (*ni's'tu*, Niphal perfect from יָצַת; *yatsat*, "to burn, to kindle, to burst into flames"); "boulders burst into flames." This merely involves the simple transposition of the second and third consonants. This emendation is supported by a few Hebrew mss (cited in BHS apparatus). It is supported contextually by fire and heat motifs in 1:5-6. The same metathesis of נִתְצַוּ and נִתְצַוּ occurs in Jer 4:26.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "before him" (so NAB, NIV, TEV).

¹⁷ **tn** The Masoretic disjunctive accent marker (*zaqeph parvum*) divides the lines here. Most English versions reflect this line division (KJV, RSV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NKJV). Some extend the line: "Yahweh is better than a fortress" (NJB); "The LORD is good to those who hope in him" (NJPS); and "The LORD is good to those who trust him" (NEB). This issue is complicated by the textual problems in this verse.

indeed,¹ he is a fortress² in time of distress,³
and he protects⁴ those who seek refuge⁵
in him.

1:8 But with an overwhelming flood⁶
he will make a complete end of Nineveh;⁷
he will drive⁸ his enemies into darkness.

1 tn The preposition לְ (*lamed*) probably functions in an emphatic asseverative sense, suggested by D. L. Christensen, "The Acrostic of Nahum Reconsidered," *ZAW* 87 (1975): 22. This explains the preceding statement: the LORD is good to his people (1:7a) because – like a fortress – he protects them in time of distress (1:7b).

2 tc Some ancient versions read, "The LORD is good to those who trust him." The MT reads לְמַעַן (l'ma'oz, "a fortress"): the noun מַעַן (ma'oz, "fortress") with the preposition לְ (l', see below). However, the LXX reflects the reading לְמַעַן (l'me'iz, "to those who trust [him]"): the Hiphil participle from עָוַן ('uz, "seek refuge") with the preposition לְ. The variants involve only different vocalizations and the common confusion of *vav* (ו) with *yod*. Most English versions follow the traditional Hebrew reading (KJV, RSV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NKJV); however, several others follow the alternate Greek reading (NEB, NJPS). The *BHS* editors and several other scholars favor the LXX tradition; however, the Masoretic tradition has been defended by others. The Masoretic tradition is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah). The problem with the LXX reading is the absence of the direct object in the Hebrew text; the LXX is forced to supply the direct object αὐτόν (*auton*, "him"); for a similar addition of the direct object αὐτόν by the LXX, see Amos 9:12). The main objection to the MT reading לְמַעַן ("a fortress") is that לְ is hard to explain. However, לְ may be taken in a comparative sense (Cathcart: "Yahweh is better than a fortress in time of distress") or an asseverative sense (Christensen: "Yahweh is good; indeed, a fortress in time of distress"). See K. J. Cathcart, *Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic* (BibOr), 55; idem, "More Philological Studies in Nahum," *JNSL* 7 (1979): 4; D. L. Christensen, "The Acrostic of Nahum Reconsidered," *ZAW* 87 (1975): 22. Elsewhere, the LORD is commonly portrayed as a "fortress" (מַעַן) protecting his people (Pss 27:1; 28:8; 31:3, 5; 37:39; 43:2; 52:9; Isa 17:10; 25:4; 27:5; Joel 4:16 HT [3:16 ET]; Jer 16:19; Neh 8:10; Prov 10:29).

3 sn The phrase "time of distress" (בְּיָמֵי צָרָה) refers to situations in which God's people are oppressed by enemy armies (Isa 33:2; Jer 14:8; 15:11; 16:19; Obad 12; Pss 20:2; 37:39). Nahum may be alluding to recent Assyrian invasions of Judah, such as Sennacherib's devastating invasion in 701 B.C., in which the LORD protected the remnant within the fortress walls of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18-19; 2 Chr 32; Isa 36-37).

4 tn Heb "he knows" or "he recognizes." The basic meaning of the verb יָדַע (*yada*) is "to know," but it may denote "to take care of someone" or "to protect" (*HALOT* 391 s.v.; see Gen 39:6; Job 9:21; Ps 31:8). Most English versions render it as "know" here (KJV, RSV, NASB, NKJV) but at least two recognize the nuance "protect" (NRSV, NIV [which reads "cares for"]). It often refers to God protecting and caring for his people (2 Sam 7:20; Ps 144:3). When the subject is a king (suzerain) and the object is a servant (vassal), it often has covenantal overtones. In several ancient Near Eastern languages this term depicts the king (suzerain) recognizing his treaty obligation to protect and rescue his servant (vassal) from its enemies. For example, a letter from Abdi-Ashirta governor of Ammur to the Egyptian king Amenophis III ends with a plea for protection from the raids of the Mittani: "May the king my lord know [= protect] me" (*yi-da-an-ni*; EA 60:30-32). Similarly, in the treaty between Muwatallis and Alaksandus, the Hittite suzerain assures his vassal that in case he was attacked, "As he is an enemy of you, even so he is an enemy to the Sun; I the Sun, will know [= "protect"] only you, Alaksandus" (see H. B. Huffman, "The Treaty Background of Hebrew YADA," *BASOR* 181 (1966): 31-37; idem, "A Further Note on the Treaty Background of Hebrew YADA," *BASOR* 184 (1966): 36-38).

5 tn Or "those who trust in him" (NIV); NAB "those who have recourse to him."

6 tn Some scholars connect "in an overwhelming flood" (וּבַיּוֹם שֶׁבַח עֹבֵר, *uv'shetef* "over") with the preceding line: "he protects those who trust him in an overwhelming flood." However, others connect it with the following line: "But with an overwhelming flood he will make a complete end of its [Nineveh's] site." D. T. Tsumura ("Janus Parallelism in Nah 1:8," *JBL* 102 [1983]: 109-11) suggests that it does double duty and should be read with both lines: "he knows those who trust him in an overwhelming flood, / but with an overwhelming flood he will make a complete end of its [Nineveh's] site." Connecting it with the preceding line creates a tight parallelism and a balanced 5+5 metrical count. Connecting it with the following line harmonizes with Nah 2:9 [8], which describes the walls of Nineveh being destroyed by flood waters, and with historical evidence (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 2.27.1-3; Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 3.4.12) and modern archaeological evidence (A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, 637). This might be an example of intentional ambiguity: God will protect his people from the very calamity that he will use to destroy his enemies.

7 tc Heb "her place." Alternately, some ancient versions read "his adversaries." The MT reads מְקוֹמָהּ (*m'qomah*, "her place"). This is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls (מְקוֹמָהּ, "her place," found in 4QpNah) and Symmachus (τῆς τόπου αὐτοῦ, *tes topou autou*, "her place"). The reading of the LXX (τοὺς ἐπεχειρουμένους, *tous epegeiroumenous*, "those who rise up [against Him]") and Aquila (ἀντιπαραστανῶν, *antiparastanōn*, "adversaries") reflect מְקוֹמָהּ or מְקוֹמָיו (his "adversaries"), also reflected in the Vulgate and Targum. Some scholars suggest emending the MT in the light of the LXX to create a tight parallelism between "his adversaries" and "his enemies" (וְאֵיבָיו, *v'oiyavayv*) which is a parallel word pair elsewhere (Deut 28:7; 2 Sam 22:40-41, 49; Mic 7:6; Ps 59:2). Likewise, Tsumura suggests emending the MT because the text, as it stands, does not have a clear parallel word for "his enemies" (וְאֵיבָיו) – emending the MT's מְקוֹמָהּ ("her place") to מְקוֹמָיו ("his adversaries") would result in a parallel word (D. T. Tsumura, "Janus Parallelism in Nah 1:8," *JBL* 102 [1983]: 109-11). The *BHS* editors propose emending the MT in favor of the Greek tradition. The English versions reflect both textual traditions – several follow the MT with "her place" and "its site" (KJV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, NJPS), while others adopt the LXX reading and emend the Hebrew, resulting in "his adversaries" (NRSV) or "those who defy him" (NJB). The MT makes sense as it stands, but the proposed emendation is attractive and involves only the common confusion between ה and ו.

8 tc The *BHS* editors propose emending the Masoretic reading יִרְדֵּף (*yaddef*, Piel imperfect of יָרַד [*yaddaf*], "to chase") to יִהְדֹּף (*yekhdof*, Qal imperfect of יָרַד [*hadaf*], "to thrust away, drive away"). Although יִהְדֹּף is used with הִשְׁכֵּחַ (*khoshekh*, "darkness") in Job 18:18 ("he is driven from light into darkness"), the MT makes good sense as it stands, and is supported by the versions. The conjectural emendation has no support and is unnecessary.

Denunciation and Destruction of Nineveh

1:9 Whatever¹ you plot² against the LORD,
he will completely destroy!³
Distress⁴ will not arise⁵ a second time.
1:10 Surely they will be totally consumed⁶

like⁷ entangled thorn bushes,⁸
like the drink of drunkards,⁹

1 **tn** Alternately, “Why are you plotting?” or “What are you plotting?” The term *מה* (*mah*) ordinarily functions as the interrogative pronoun “what?” (HALOT 550-51 s.v.; BDB 552-53 s.v.). It is often used in reproachful, ridiculing questions and in accusations with an insinuation of blame, reproach, or contempt; see Gen 4:10; 37:10; 44:15; Josh 22:16; Judg 8:1; 15:11; 20:12; 1 Sam 29:3; 2 Sam 9:8; 1 Kgs 9:13; 2 Kgs 9:22; 18:19. It is more disparaging than *מי* (*mi*; HALOT 551 s.v. *מה*). The LXX translates it with the interrogative pronoun *τί* (“what?”). R. L. Smith (*Micah-Malachi* [WBC], 76) takes it as the indefinite pronoun “whatever” (see also BDB 553 s.v. *מה* 3; GKC 443-44 §137.c; Num 23:3; 1 Sam 19:3; 20:10; 2 Sam 18:22-23, 29; Job 13:13; Prov 25:8). W. A. Maier (*Nahum*, 186) takes it as the interrogative adverb “why?” (see also BDB 553 s.v. *מה* 2.b; Gen 3:13; 12:18; 26:10; Exod 14:15; 17:2; 2 Kgs 6:33; 7:3; Pss 42:6, 12 HT [42:5, 11 ET]; 43:5; 52:3 HT [52:1 ET]; Job 7:21; 15:12; Song 8:4). All three are represented in English versions: “What?” (KJV, NKJV), “Why?” (NRSV, NJPS), and “Whatever” (NASB, NIV).

2 **tn** Less likely, “[What are you] thinking about.” When used with *אל* (*el*) the verb *הִשָּׁב* (*hishav*) may be taken (1) in a hostile sense: “What are you plotting against the LORD?” or (2) in a nonhostile sense: “What are you thinking about the LORD?” The hostile sense is clearly intended when it is used in collocation with the direct object *רָאָה*, “evil”; Zech 7:10; 8:17; Pss 35:4; 140:3; Prov 16:9) or when it is followed by the preposition *עַל* (*al*; Gen 50:20; 2 Sam 14:13; Jer 11:19; 18:11, 18; 29:11; 48:2; 49:30; Mic 2:3; Nah 1:11; Pss 36:5; Esth 8:3; 9:24, 25; Dan 11:25). It is also used in a hostile sense when followed by the preposition *אֵל*, as it is here (Jer 49:20; 50:45; Hos 7:15; Nah 1:9). The major lexicons classify this usage in a hostile sense (BDB 363 s.v. *הִשָּׁב*; HALOT 360 s.v. *הִשָּׁב*). The verb is repeated in Nah 1:11 where it is clearly used in a hostile sense.

3 **tn** Or “The LORD will completely foil whatever you plot against him”; or “Whatever you may think about the LORD, he [always] brings everything to a conclusion.”

4 **tc** The MT reads *צָרָה* (*tsarah*, “distress”). This is supported by the LXX. However, the BHS editors propose emending the MT’s *צָרָה* (“distress”) to *צָרָיו* (*tsaray*, “his adversaries”). Several English versions follow course (NRSV, NJPS); however, the majority of English versions follow the traditional MT reading (KJV, NASB, NIV, NKJV). The term “distress” (*צָרָה*, *tsarah*) is repeated from v. 7: God will not only protect his people in time of “distress” (*צָרָה*) from the Assyrians (v. 7), he will put an end to “distress” (*צָרָה*) by destroying the Assyrians (v. 9).

5 **tn** The originally unvocalized consonantal form *תִּקוּם* is vocalized in the MT as *תִּקוּם* (*taqum*, “will arise”) or *קוּם* (*qum*, “to arise”). However, the LXX reflects a vocalization of *תִּקוּם* (*tigom*, “will take vengeance”) or *נָקַם* (*naqam*, “to avenge”). The Masoretic vocalization makes sense and should be retained. The LXX vocalization probably arose under the influence of the three-fold repetition of *נָקַם* in Nah 1:2.

6 **tn** The verb *אָכַל* (*ukk’lu*, “they will be consumed”) is an example of the old Qal passive perfect 3rd person common plural which was erroneously pointed by the Masoretes as Pual perfect 3rd person common plural. The Qal passive of *אָכַל* (*akhal*) occurs several times in the Hebrew Bible, pointed as Pual (e.g., Exod 3:2; Neh 2:3, 13; Isa 1:20; Nah 1:10). For further discussion on the old Qal passive see H. L. Ginsberg, “Studies on the Biblical Hebrew Verb: Masoretically Misconstrued Internal Passives,” *AJSL* 46 (1929): 53-56; R. J. Williams, “The Passive Qal Theme in Hebrew,” *Essays on the Ancient Semitic World*, 43-50; Joüon 1:166-67 §58.a; *IBHS* 373-76 §22.6 (see especially n. 36 on p. 375).

7 **tn** The particle *כִּד* (*ad*) is taken as a comparative of degree (“like”) by many lexicographers (BDB 724 s.v. i.3; HALOT 787 s.v. 5), English versions (NASB, NRSV, NJPS), and scholars (W. A. Maier, *Nahum*, 192; R. L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* [WBC], 76; R. D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* [WEC], 42). Although the comparative sense is rare (1 Sam 11:15; 2 Sam 23:19; 2 Kgs 24:20; 1 Chr 4:27), it is suggested by the similes in v. 10 (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 57, §312). The comparative sense is reflected in the Greek versions of Symmachus, Aquila, and Theodotion. Although Origen took *כִּד* in its more common spatial sense (“up to”), his approach can be dismissed because he misunderstood the entire line: *ὅτι ἕως θεμελίου αὐτοῦ ξερσῶθησεται* (*hoti heōs themeliou autou xersōthēsetai*, “up to his foundation he shall be laid bare”). The KJV takes *כִּד* in its rare temporal sense (“while”; see BDB 725 s.v. II.2). T. Longman suggests a locative sense: “by the entangled thorns they are like drunkards stinking of drink” (“Nahum,” *The Minor Prophets*, 2:794, 796; see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 56-57, §310). Because of its difficulty, several scholars have resorted to conjectural emendations of the MT: (1) K. J. Cathcart (*Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic* [BibOr], 61) suggests emending the MT’s *כִּד* to the temporal particle *כִּד* (*od*, “again”); (2) The BHS editors suggest emending the MT’s *כִּד* (*ki* *ad*) to *הוֹי עִיר* (*hoy ir*, “woe to the city!”) which appears in Nah 3:1; (3) The BHS editors suggest the alternate conjectural emendation of *כִּד* to *יִבְעִיר* (*yiv’aru ke*, “they will burn like ...”); (4) H. Junker (*Die zwölf kleinen Propheten*, 175) suggests emending *כִּד* (*ki* *ad*) to *כִּד* (*ke* *ga’ad*, “like a forest”). Although the Masoretic reading is difficult, it is more plausible than any conjectural emendation.

8 **tc** The MT reads *סִרִּים קִבְּבִים* (*sirim s’vukhim*, “entangled thorn-bushes”), and is supported by the Dead Sea text from Murabba’at (see *סִרִּים קִבְּבִים* in *DJD* 2:197). The noun *סִרִּים* (“thorn bushes”) is from *סִר* (*sjr*, “thorn, thorn bush”; BDB 696 s.v. II *סִר*; HALOT 752 s.v. *סִר*), e.g., Isa 34:13; Hos 2:8; Eccl 7:6. The Qal passive participle *קִבְּבִים* (*s’vukhim*) is from *קִבַּח* (*savakh*, “to interweave,” BDB 687 s.v. *קִבַּח*; HALOT 740 s.v. *קִבַּח*), e.g., Job 8:17, which is related to Assyrian *sabaku* (“to entwine,” *AHW* 2:999.a) and Arabic *sabaka* (“to entwine”; Leslau, 51). The MT is supported by several LXX translators, e.g., Symmachus, Aquila, and Theodotion. It is also reflected in Vulgate’s *spinarum perplexi* (“thorn-bushes entangled”). On the other hand, the Syriac Peshitta reflects *סִרִּים קִבְּבִים* (*sarim sor’rim*, “your princes are rebels”) which points to orthographic confusion and a different vocalization. Similar textual confusion is apparent in Origen: *θεμελίου αὐτοῦ ξερσῶθησεται* (*themeliou autou xersōthēsetai*, “his foundation shall be laid bare”) seems to reflect *יָסָדִים קִבְּבִים* (*yāsodam y’khabbes*, “their foundation shall be washed away”) which was caused by orthographic confusion and transposition of consonants. The MT should be retained.

9 **tn** This simile compares the imminent destruction of Nineveh to the burning of a mass of entangled thorn-bushes (Job 8:17). When thorn-bushes are entangled they burn quickly and completely (Eccl 7:6; Isa 34:13).

9 **tc** The MT reading *כְּבֹאֵם כְּבֹאֵם* (*ukh’sav’am s’vu’im*, “and like the drink of drunkards”) is supported by Symmachus (“and as those drinking their drink with one another”) who is known for his wooden literalness to the Hebrew text, and by Vulgate which reads *et sicut vino suo inebriati*. K. J. Cathcart re-vocalizes as *כְּבֹאֵם וּכְבֹאֵם* (*ukh’sov’im s’vu’im*, “and like drunkards sodden with drink”; *Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic* [BibOr], 61). Haldar equates Hebrew *כְּבֹאֵם* (*sava*) with Ugaritic *sp’* (“eat”) due to an interchange between *ב* (*bet*) and *פ* (*pe*), and produces “and as they consume a consuming” (A. Haldar, *Studies in the Book of Nahum*, 32). Barr argues that the *mem* (*מ*) on MT *כְּבֹאֵם* (*ukh’sov’am*) is enclitic, and he translates the line as “and as the drunken are getting drunk” (J. Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 33).

tn The MT’s *כְּבֹאֵם* is a noun with masculine plural suffix from *כָּבַע* (*sove*, “drink, liquor”), meaning “their drink, liquor” (e.g., Hos 4:18). This is supported by Symmachus (“their drink”) and is reflected in the Syriac (“in their drink”). The Masoretic *כְּבֹאֵם* (*s’vu’im*) is the passive participle from

like very¹ dry stubble.
1:11 From you, O Nineveh,² one has
 marched forth who plots evil against
 the LORD,
 a wicked military strategist.³

Oracle of Deliverance to Judah

1:12 This is what the LORD says:⁴
 “Even though⁵ they are powerful⁶ –

כֶּבֶא (sava), “to drink,” BDB 684-85 s.v. כֶּבֶא). This produces “and like their liquor/drink being drunken.” This makes good sense with the following line in which אָכְלוּ (‘ukklelu, “they will be consumed”) appears. The verb אָכְלוּ is frequently used in comparisons of consuming liquor and being consumed like chaff.

1 tc The BHS editors propose emending the MT’s מָלֵא (male’, “fully”) to the negative interrogative הֲלוֹ (halo’, “Has not...?”) and connecting it with the next line: “Has not one plotting evil marched out from you?” However, this emendation is unnecessary because the MT makes sense as it stands, and there is no textual support for the emendation. The MT is supported by the Greek tradition, the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah), and the other versions.

tn Or “They will be fully consumed like dried stubble.” The term מָלֵא (‘fully”) functions either as: (1) an adjective modifying כֶּבֶשׁ יָבֵשׁ (k’eqash yavesh, “like fully dried stubble”) or (2) an adverb modifying אָכְלוּ (‘ukklelu, “they will be fully consumed”); see BDB 571 s.v. מָלֵא. The adverbial sense is rare, appearing elsewhere only in Jer 12:6; thus, the adjectival sense is more probable. The Hebrew word order also suggests the adjectival sense because מָלֵא follows כֶּבֶשׁ יָבֵשׁ (k’eqash yavesh) rather than אָכְלוּ.

2 tn The words “O Nineveh” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity. The preceding pronoun is feminine singular, indicating the personified city is in view. See 2:1 (2:2 HT).

3 tn Heb “a counselor of wickedness”; NASB “a wicked counselor”; NAB “the scoundrel planner.”

4 sn Verse 12 begins with a typical prophetic introduction (“This is what the LORD says”) in language similar to the typical ancient Near Eastern messenger formula (see C. Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speeches*, 100-115). This formula is frequently used to introduce prophetic speeches (e.g., Jer 2:5; Ezek 2:4; Amos 1:3). The messenger formula indicates that the prophet’s message is not his own, but is a revelatory and prophetic oracle from the LORD. It confirms the authenticity of the message.

5 tn The syntax of this line is complicated and difficult to translate. The first clause is the concessive protasis of a real condition, while the second is the logical apodosis of a comparative clause. This creates an *fortiori* argument: “Even though they are strong and likewise many, so much more will they be cut down and pass away!” The first use of the particle וְכִן (v’khen, “Even though”) introduces a concessive or conditional protasis of a present-time or immediate future-time real condition (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 87, §515; *IBHS* 636-37 §38.2). The second use of the particle וְכִן (“so much more...”) introduces the apodosis of a logical resultative clause (see *IBHS* 641-42 §38.5).

6 tn Or “are strong” (cf. NCV); or “are at full strength” (NAB, NRSV); or “are intact.” Alternately, “Even though they have allies” (cf. NIV, NLT). The Hebrew noun שְׁלֵמִים (sh’lemim, from שָׁלֵם [shalem]) means “complete, healthy, sound, safe, intact, peaceful” (BDB 1023-24 s.v. שָׁלֵם; *HALOT* 1538-1539 s.v. שָׁלֵם). It can connote “full strength” or “full number” of an object (Gen 15:16; Deut 25:15; Prov 11:1; Amos 1:6, 9). Most commentators view this as a reference to the strength or numbers of the Assyrian army: “strong” (R. L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* [WBC], 77-78), “full strength” (NASB, NRSV) or “intact” (T. Longman, “Nahum,” *The Minor Prophets*, 2:798). On the other hand, NIV and NLT follow the lead of Wiseman who points out that שְׁלֵמִים can refer to military allies: “Even though they will have allies and so be all the more numerous” (D. J. Wiseman, “Is It Peace? Covenant and Diplomacy,” *VT*

and what is more,⁷ even though their
 army is numerous⁸ –
 nevertheless,⁹ they will be destroyed¹⁰ and
 trickle away!¹¹

32 [1982]: 311-26). Nahum refers to the allies of the Assyrians elsewhere (Nah 3:15-17).

7 tn The particle וְכִן (v’khen, “and moreover”) functions as an emphatic comparative adverb of degree (BDB 486 s.v. וְכִן; *IBHS* 663, 665-67 §39.3.4). It draws a comparison between שְׁלֵמִים (sh’lemim, “strong”) and רַבִּים (rabbim, “many”) but goes one step further for emphasis. This creates an “A, what is more B!” parallelism: “They are strong – what is more – they are many!”

8 tc The MT reads רַבִּים וְכִן שְׁלֵמִים (im-sh’lemim v’khen rabbim, “Even though they are strong and numerous”). The complicated syntax of this line led to textual confusion and several textual variants among the versions. For example, the LXX’s καταρξουν ὀδατων πολλων (katarxoun hudaton pollon, “ruler of many waters”) reflects רַבִּים מִשְׁלֵם (moshel mayim rabbim, “ruler of many waters”) which redivides the words, and omits the letter א (aleph) and the word וְכִן (v’khen). Similarly, the Syriac reflects רַבִּים מִשְׁלֵם (el mos’le rabbim, “to the rulers of many waters”). The MT is the most difficult reading and therefore best explains the origin of these textual variants. Moreover, the LXX of Nahum is well-known for its unusual mistranslations of the Hebrew text of Nahum. The LXX butchers v. 12 in several other places (see below). All major English versions follow the MT here.

9 tn The particle וְכִן (v’khen, “so much more...”) introduces the apodosis of a logical resultative clause (*IBHS* 641-42 §38.5). It emphasizes that the action described in the apodosis will occur almost immediately (e.g., 1 Kgs 20:40; Ps 48:6).

10 tn Heb “they will be sheared.” The term “cut off” (גָּזַז, gazaz) is ordinarily used to describe the literal actions of “shearing” sheep (Gen 31:19; 38:12-13; Deut 15:19; 18:4; 1 Sam 25:2, 4, 7, 11; 2 Sam 13:23-24; Job 31:20; Isa 53:7) and “cutting” hair (Jer 7:29; Mic 1:16; Job 1:20). It is used figuratively here to describe the destruction of the Assyrian army (BDB 159 s.v. גָּזַז; *HALOT* 186 s.v. גָּזַז).

sn The expression *they will be cut off* is an example of a hypocatastasis (implied comparison); Nahum intentionally chose this term to compare the destruction of the Assyrians to the shearing of sheep. This word-play has great rhetorical impact because the Assyrians frequently used sheep imagery when boasting of the ease and brutality with which they defeated their enemies (see D. Marcus, “Animal Similes in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions,” *Or* 46 [1977]: 92-93). It is both appropriate (poetic justice) and ironic (reversal of situation) that the Assyrians themselves should suffer a fate which they boasted of inflicting upon others. They will be an easy, helpless prey for the Divine Warrior. Their punishment will fit their crimes.

11 tc In v. 12 the MT preserves a string of plural forms followed by a seemingly anomalous singular form: וְיִעָבְרֻ ... וְיָגִזוּ ... רַבִּים ... שְׁלֵמִים ... רַבִּים ... וְיִעָבְרֻ ... וְיָגִזוּ. “Even though they are numerous...they are many... they will be cut off...and he [?] will pass away”). Several other versions (LXX, Syr, Targum) read the plural form וְיִעָבְרוּ (v’avaru, “and they will pass away”). Several scholars emend the MT to the plural form, noting that the next word (יָגִזוּ, v’imittikh) begins with vav (ו); they suggest that the plural ending of וְיִעָבְרוּ dropped out due to haplography or faulty word division (e.g., T. Longman, “Nahum,” *The Minor Prophets*, 2:798). Another scholar retains the consonantal text, but reprints the form as an infinitive absolute: “They will be cut off, passing away” (K. J. Cathcart). On the other hand, more conservative scholars defend the MT reading and try to solve the problem by suggesting a shift from a plural referent (the Assyrians) to a singular referent (God or the Assyrian king): “They shall be cut down, when he passes through” (KJV) and “They will be cut off and he will pass over” (R. L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* [WBC], 77). Still others suggest that the singular form functions as a collective: “They will be cut off and [they] will pass away” (W. A. Maier, *Nahum*, 206; K&D 27:15). However, rather than resorting to textual emendations or performing syntactical improbabilities, the best solution may be simply to posit the presence of a rhetorical, stylistic device.

Although I afflicted you,
I will afflict you no more.¹
1:13 And now,² I will break Assyria's³
yoke bar⁴ from your neck,⁵

The shift from these plural forms to the concluding singular form may be an example of heterosis of the plural to the singular (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 525 [4.5]). This is a common poetic device used for emphasis, especially at the climactic point in a speech (e.g., Gen 29:27; Num 22:6; 32:25; Job 12:7; 18:2; Esth 9:23; Ps 73:7; Prov 14:1, 9; John 3:11; 1 Tim 2:15).

tn Or “pass away.” The term עָבַר (*avar*, “to pass through”) is a key word in Nahum 1; it occurs three times (Nah 1:8, 12, 15 [2:1 HT]). This verb is often used in reference to water, both the raging onset of flood waters (Nah 1:8) and the passive trickling or dwindling away of receding waters (Job 6:15; 11:16).

sn The phrase *trickle away* is an example of a hypocatastasis (implied comparison); Nahum compares the destruction of the mighty Assyrians with the trickling away of once high waters. This imagery has strong rhetorical impact because the Assyrians often boasted that they overwhelmed their enemies like a flood. It is ironic then that they would soon dwindle away to a mere trickle! This is also an appropriate image in the light of the historical destruction of Nineveh through the use of flood waters, as predicted by the prophet (Nah 2:7-9) and recorded by ancient historians (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 2.26-27; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.4.12; also see P. Haupt, “Xenophon’s Account of the Fall of Nineveh,” *JAOs* 28 [1907]: 99-107).

1 tn The terms אָנֶכְךָ (*a’annekh*, “I will [no longer] afflict you”) and וְנִכְרַךְ (*v’innitikh*, “I afflicted you”) are both derived from the root נִכַּח (*anah*, “to afflict”). The LXX mistakenly confused this with the more common root נָקַד (“to answer, respond”). Although it mistranslated the roots, the LXX reflects the same consonantal text as the MT: וְנִכְרַךְ לֹא אֶנְכֶּךָ (*v’innitikh lo’ a’annekh*, “Although I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no longer”). Some modern English versions supply various terms not in the Hebrew text to indicate the addressee: NIV “O Judah”; NLT “O my people.” Judah is specifically addressed in 1:15 (2:1 HT) and the feminine singular is used there, just as it is in 1:12.

2 tn The particle וְעַתָּה (*v’attah*, “And now”) often introduces a transition in a prophetic oracle (HALOT 902 s.v. 3.a). It often draws a contrast between a past condition (as described in v. 12) and what will happen in the immediate future (as described in v. 13; see, e.g., Gen 11:6; 2 Sam 2:6; 2 Kgs 12:8). See H. A. Brongers, “Bemerkungen zum Gebrauch des adverbialen *v’attah* im Alten Testament,” *VT* 15 (1965): 289-99.

3 tn Heb “his”; the referent (Assyria) has been supplied from context.

4 tc The BHS editors propose revocalizing the MT מַטְהוּ (*matehu*, “his yoke bar”) to מַטְהוּ (*mattahu*, “his scepter”). The threat of breaking an enemy’s scepter was a common ancient Near Eastern treaty curse (see D. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* [BibOr], 61). This proposed revocalization has no external support. The MT is supported by the use of the parallel word pair מַטְהוּ/מוֹטָה (*matehu*, “scepter”)/מוֹסֶר (*moser*, “bonds”) elsewhere (Jer 27:2). The term מַטְהוּ is never used in parallelism with מוֹסֶר elsewhere.

sn The terms *yoke bar* and *shackles* are figures of speech (hypocatastasis) for Assyrian subjugation of Judah. The imagery of the yoke bar draws an implied comparison between the yoking of a beast of burden to the subjugation of a nation under a foreign power, i.e., vassalhood (Lev 26:13; Jer 27:2; 28:14; Ezek 30:18; 34:27). This imagery also alludes to the Assyrian use of “yoke” imagery to describe their subjugation of foreign nations to the status of vassal. When describing their subjugation of nations, Assyrian rulers frequently spoke of causing them to “pull my yoke.” Sennacherib subjugated Judah to the Assyrian “yoke” in 701 b.c. when he invaded Judah and forced Hezekiah into a position of Assyrian vassal: “I laid waste the large district of Judah and put the straps of my yoke upon Hezekiah, its king” (“Sennacherib: The Siege of Jerusalem,” lines 13-15, in ANET 288).

5 tn Heb “from you”; the word “neck” is supplied in the

I will tear apart the shackles⁶ that are on
you.⁷

Oracle of Judgment against the King of Nineveh

1:14 The LORD has issued a decree against
you.⁸

“Your dynasty will come to an end.⁹
I will destroy the idols and images in the
temples of your gods.
I will desecrate¹⁰ your grave – because you

translation as a clarification for the modern reader who may be less familiar with the imagery of a yoke around the neck of farm animals or draft animals.

sn The statement *I will break Assyria’s yoke bar from your neck* draws an implied comparison (hypocatastasis) between breaking a plowing yoke off the neck of a farming animal and freeing a vassal from the tyranny of an oppressive suzerain through military conquest (Lev 26:13; Isa 58:6; Jer 30:8; Ezek 30:18; 34:27).

6 sn The phrase *the shackles that are on you* draws an implied comparison between the chains and stocks of prisoners or slaves with the burden of international vassalhood to a tyrannical suzerain who demands absolute obedience and requires annual tributary offerings (e.g., Ps 2:3; Isa 52:2; Jer 27:2; 30:8). “Shackles” were the agent of covenantal discipline (e.g., Deut 28:48). Isaiah stated that the Assyrian “yoke” was the Lord’s instrument of discipline (Isa 28:22). The phrase *I will tear apart the shackles that are on you* draws an implied comparison (hypocatastasis) between removing the iron chains from a prisoner/slave and freeing a vassal from the oppression of a tyrannical suzerain through military conquest (Ps 2:3; Isa 52:2).

7 tn Heb “your shackles.”

8 tn Heb “has commanded concerning you.” The referent of the 2nd person masculine singular suffix (“you”) probably refers to the Assyrian king (cf. 3:18-19) rather than to the personified city of Nineveh (so NIV). Elsewhere in the book of Nahum, the city of Nineveh is referred to by the feminine rather than masculine gender. Some modern English versions supply terms not in the Hebrew text to indicate the addressee more clearly: NIV “Nineveh”; NLT “the Assyrians in Nineveh.”

9 tn Heb “from your name there will no longer be sown.”

10 tn The MT reading אֲשִׁים בְּקִרְבְּךָ (*asim qivrekha*, “I will make your grave”) is usually understood as a figure of speech (metonymy of effect) meaning that the Lord will destroy/execute the Assyrian king. On the other hand, the Targum and Syriac treat this as a double-accusative construction – the implied second object of אֲשִׁים being בַּיַּת אֱלֹהֶיךָ (*mibbet ’elohekha*, “the house [i.e., “temple”] of your gods”): “I will make it [the house (i.e., temple) of your gods] your grave.” Cathcart suggests revocalizing the MT אֲשִׁים to אֲשִׁים אֶשְׂחֵם (*ashiyim* from שָׂחַם (*shamem*, “to devastate”): “I will devastate your grave.” Cathcart notes that the destruction of one’s grave, like the threat of no burial, was a common ancient Near Eastern treaty-curse: “Tombs, especially royal tombs, were often protected by curses directed against persons who might violate and desecrate them, and the very curse kings used to have inscribed on their tombs were precisely the curse of no progeny and no resting-place” (K. J. Cathcart, “Treaty-Curses and the Book of Nahum,” *CBQ* 35 [1973]: 180-81). This might reflect the background of the ancient Near Eastern *kuduru* curses which were made against those who might devastate a royal grave and which were put into effect by the gods of the king (see F. C. Fensham, “Common Trends in Curses of the Near Eastern Treaties and Kuduru-Inscriptions Compared with Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah,” *ZAW* 75 [1963]: 157-59). Despite the fact the king’s grave was allegedly protected by the Assyrian gods, the Lord would nevertheless successfully destroy it, and it would be the Assyrian king who would receive the curse. This approach respects the traditional consonantal text and only involves the revocalization of the MT’s שָׂחַם (*sin*) to שָׁחַם (*shin*).

are accursed!”¹⁴

Proclamation of the Deliverance of Judah

1:15 (2:1)² Look! A herald is running³ on the mountains!
A messenger is proclaiming deliverance:⁴
“Celebrate your sacred festivals, O Judah!
Fulfill your sacred vows to praise God!⁵
For never again⁶ will the wicked⁷ Assyrians⁸ invade⁹ you,
they¹⁰ have been completely destroyed.”¹¹

Proclamation of the Destruction of Nineveh

2:1 (2:2) The watchmen of Nineveh shout:¹²

“An enemy who will scatter you¹³ is marching out¹⁴ to attack you!”¹⁵
“Guard¹⁶ the rampart!”¹⁷
Watch the road!
Prepare yourselves for battle!¹⁸
Muster your mighty strength!”¹⁹

¹ **tn** The Hebrew verb קָלְלוּ (*qallotu*) is usually rendered “you are despised” (e.g., Gen 16:4-5; 1 Sam 2:30). However, it is possible that the Hebrew root קָלַל (*qalal*) is related to the Assyrian term *qalu* “accursed” (W. von Soden, “Hebraische Wortforschung,” VTSup 16 [1967]: 295).

² **sn** Beginning with **1:15**, the verse numbers through **2:13** in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (*BHS*), with **1:15** ET = **2:1** HT, **2:1** ET = **2:2** HT, etc., through **2:13** ET = **2:14** HT. Beginning with **3:1**, the verse numbers in the English Bible and the Hebrew Bible are again the same.

³ **tn** *Heb* “the feet of a herald.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “a messenger of peace.” The Hebrew noun translated “peace” is sometimes used in reference to deliverance or freedom from enemy attack or destruction (e.g., Jer 4:10; 6:14; 8:11; 12:5; 28:9; 29:7).

⁵ **sn** The sacred vows to praise God were often made by Israelites as a pledge to proclaim the mercy of the Lord if he would be gracious to deliver (e.g., Gen 28:20; 31:13; Lev 7:16; Judg 11:30, 39; 1 Sam 1:11, 21; 2 Sam 15:7-8; Pss 22:25 [26]; 50:14; 56:12 [13]; 61:5 [6], 8 [9]; 65:1 [2]; 66:13; 116:14, 18; Eccl 5:4 [3]; Jonah 1:16; 2:9 [10]). The words “to praise God” are not in the Hebrew, but are added in the translation for clarification.

⁶ **tc** The LXX reflects the plural יֹסִיפוּ (*yosifu*, “they shall [never]”). The MT reads the singular יֹסִיף (*yosif*, “he shall [never]”) which is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah). The subject of the verb is the singular noun בְּלִיַּיָּא’ (*b’līyāyā’*, “the wicked one”) which is also misunderstood by the LXX (see below).

⁷ **tc** The MT reads בְּלִיַּיָּא’ (*b’līyāyā’*, “the wicked one”; so ASV, NASB). The LXX reading εἰς παλαιότητα (*eis palaiōtēsin*, “to old age”) mistakenly derived from בָּלָה (*balah*, “to become worn”). There are several places in the book of Nahum where the LXX produced poor translations.

tn *Heb* “the wicked one.” This is a collective singular and has been translated as a plural.

⁸ **tn** The term “Assyrians” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied from context for clarity. If left unspecified, the prophetic statement could be understood to mean that the wicked [i.e., wicked conquerors in general] would never again invade Judah. Cf. NLT “your enemies from Nineveh.”

⁹ **tn** Or “pass through you” (NASB); or “march against you”; NCV “attack you.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “he.” This is in agreement with the singular “wicked one” in the previous line.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “he is completely cut off.”

¹² **tn** The introductory phrase “The watchmen of Nineveh shout” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied from the context for clarity.

¹³ **tc** The MT reads מַפְיִץ (*mefits*, “scatterer, disperser”), the Hiphil participle of פָּיַץ (*puts*, “to scatter, to disperse”; HALOT 755 s.v. פָּיַץ, but see BDB 807 s.v. מַפְיִץ, which classifies it as a noun). The Vulgate’s *qui dispergat* (“one who disperses”) and the LXX’s ἐμφυσών (*emphusōn*, “one who blows hard; one who scatters”) also reflect מַפְיִץ. The *BHS* editors propose the emendation מַפְפֵּץ (*mappets*, “shatterer, hammerer, war club”; e.g., Jer 51:20 and Prov 25:18). This is unnecessary; the text makes sense as it stands and there is no textual support for the emendation. The theme of exile and dispersion is prominent in the book (Nah 2:7; 3:10-11, 17-18).

tn *Heb* “a scatterer.” The Hebrew term מַפְיִץ (*mefits*, “scatterer”) is either a collective singular referring to the Babylonian army or a singular of number referring to the Babylonian commander. Singular forms occur elsewhere in the vision of the fall of Nineveh (2:1-10), used in reference to the Babylonian commander (Nah 2:3, 5)

¹⁴ **tn** Or “has come up”; or “has advanced.” Used in reference to an army, the verb יָקַם (*alah*, “to go up”) means “to advance; to march against” (HALOT 829 s.v. 3.d; see 1 Sam 7:7; 1 Kgs 20:22; Isa 7:1; 21:2; Jer 46:9; Joel 1:6; Mic 2:3). Appearing in a prophetic vision, the suffix conjugation (perfect tense) form יָקַם can denote a future-time action that is pictured as complete (certain) and independent (not contingent upon other factors). The so-called “prophetic perfect” or “perfect of confidence” vividly expresses a future action that is “as good as done” (cf. Num 24:17; Isa 5:13; 8:23 HT [9:1 ET]; 9:1 HT [9:2 ET]). See R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 33, §165; *IBHS* 489-90 §30.5.1.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “against your face”; NASB, NRSV “against you.”

¹⁶ **tn** The Qal infinitive absolute נֹצֵר (*notsar*, from נָצַר [*nas-tar*], “to guard”) is used in an imperatival sense as the following string of imperatives suggests. The imperatival use of the infinitive absolute is often used to introduce a series of imperatives with special urgency (e.g., Deut 1:16; 2 Sam 24:12; 2 Kgs 5:10). See *IBHS* 593-94 §35.5.1; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 42, §211.

¹⁷ **tc** The *BHS* editors suggest revocalizing the Masoretic noun מַצְרָה (*m’isarah*, “rampart”) to the noun מַצְרָה (*matsarah*, “the watchtower”) from the root נָצַר (*natsar*, “to watch, guard”). This would create a repetition of the root נָצַר which immediately precedes it: נֹצֵר מַצְרָה (*natsor matsarah*, “Watch the watchtower!”). However, the proposed noun מַצְרָה (“the watchtower”) appears nowhere in the Hebrew Bible. On the other hand, the Masoretic reading מַצְרָה (“rampart”) and the related noun מַצְרֵר (*matsor*, “rampart”) appear often (Pss 31:22; 60:11; Hab 2:1; Zech 9:3; 2 Chr 8:5; 11:5, 10, 11, 23; 12:4; 14:5, 21:3; 32:10). Thus, the Masoretic vocalization should be preserved. The LXX completely misunderstood this line. The LXX reading (“one who delivers out of tribulation”) has probably arisen from a confusion of the MT noun נֹצֵר (“guard”) with the common verb נָצַר (“deliver”). It also reflects a confusion of MT מַצְרָה (“road, rampart”) with מַצְרָה (*mits’rah*, “from distress”).

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “Make strong your loins,” an expression which could refer (1) to the practice of tucking the ends of the long cloak (outer garment) into the belt to shorten it in preparation for activities like running, fighting in battle, etc. (cf. NAB, NRSV “gird your loins”); (2) to preparing oneself physically for the onslaught of the enemy (cf. NASB “strengthen your back”); or (3) to a combination of mental and physical preparation for battle (cf. NIV “brace yourselves”).

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “Make [your] strength exceedingly firm.”

2:2 For the LORD will restore¹ the majesty² of Jacob, as well as³ the majesty of Israel, though⁴ their enemies have plundered them⁵

and have destroyed their fields.⁶

Prophetic Vision of the Fall of Nineveh

2:3 The shields of his warriors are dyed red;⁷ the mighty soldiers are dressed in scarlet garments.⁸ The metal fittings⁹ of the chariots¹⁰ shine

¹ **tn** The Qal perfect **שָׁבַע** (*shav*, “restore, return”) is an example of the so-called “prophetic perfect.” In this case, the perfect tense does not denote past-time action, but a future-time action that is pictured as complete (certain) and independent (not contingent upon other factors). The so-called “prophetic perfect” or “perfect of confidence” vividly expresses a future action that is deemed “as good as done” (Num 24:17; Isa 5:13; 8:23 HT [9:1 ET]; 9:1 HT [9:2 ET]). See R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 33, §165; *IBHS* 489-90 §30.5.1. Though the transitive use of the Qal of this verb is problematic, most scholars derive **שָׁבַע** from the root **שׁוּב** (*shuv*, “to turn, to return, to restore”). However, W. A. Maier (*Nahum*, 232) contends that **שָׁבַע** is derived from **שׁוּבָב** (*shavav*, “to cut off, to destroy, to smite”) which is related to Arabic *sabba* (“to cut”), Aramaic *sibba* (“splinter”), and New Hebrew. Maier admits that this would be the only occurrence of a verb from **שׁוּבָב** in the OT; however, he argues that the appearance of the plural noun **שׁוּבָבִים** (*shvavim*, “splinters”) in Hos 8:6 provides adequate support. There are several problems with Maier’s proposal. First, his support from Arabic, Aramaic (Targum) and New Hebrew is all late. Second, it creates a *hapax legomenon* (a word that occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible) for a well-known Hebrew word which frequently appears in climactic contexts in prophetic speeches, as here. Third, the root **שׁוּב** (*shuv*, “to turn, to return, to restore”) makes perfectly good sense in this context. The meaning of this usage of **שָׁבַע** (from the root **שׁוּב**) is debated. The LXX took it in the negative sense “has turned aside.” On the other hand, it is nuanced in a positive, salvific sense by the Vulgate, Targum, and Syriac. The salvific nuance is best for the following reasons: (1) its direct object is **מָאֵז** (*ge’on*) which should be understood in the positive sense of “majesty; exaltation; glory” (see following note on the word “majesty”); (2) the motive clause introduced by causative/ explanatory **כִּי** (*ki*, “for”) would make little sense, saying that the reason the LORD was about to destroy Nineveh was because he had turned away the pride of Judah; however, it makes good sense to say that the LORD would destroy Nineveh because he was about to deliver Judah; and (3) a reference to the LORD turning aside from Judah would be out of harmony with the rest of the book.

² **tc** The BHS editors propose emending the MT reading **מָאֵז** (*ge’on*, “majesty; pride”); to **גִּפְנָן** (*gefen*, “vineyard”) due to the mention of “their branches” (**עֲנַבֵּיהֶם**, *uzvmorehem*) in the following line (so HALOT 169 s.v. **מָאֵז** [2.b]). However, the LXX supports the MT.

tn While **מָאֵז** (*ge’on*) sometimes has the negative connotation “pride; arrogance; presumption” (Isa 13:11, 19; 14:11; 16:6; 23:9; Jer 13:9; 48:29; Ezek 16:49, 56; 32:12; Hos 5:5; 7:10; Amos 6:8; Zeph 2:10; Zech 9:6; 10:11; 11:3; Ps 59:13; Job 35:12; 40:10), it probably has the positive connotation “eminence; majesty; glory” (e.g., as in Exod 15:7; Isa 2:10, 19, 21; 4:2; 24:14; 60:15; Mic 5:3; Ps 47:5) in this context (BDB 145 s.v. 1.a).

³ **tn** The preposition **כִּי** (*kaf*) in **כִּי־מָאֵז** (*ki’g’on*, “the glory of Israel”) may be comparative (“like the glory of Israel”) or emphatic (“the glory of Jacob, indeed, the glory of Israel”). See J. O’Rourke, “Book Reviews and Short Notes: Review of Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic by Kevin J. Cathcart,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 397.

⁴ **tn** Or “for.” The introductory particle **כִּי** (*ki*) may be causal (“because”), explanatory (“for”), or concessive (“although”). KJV adopts the causal sense (“For”), while the concessive sense (“Although”) is adopted by NASB, NIV, NJPS, NRSV.

⁵ **tn** Heb “plunderers have plundered them.” The Hebrew root **בָּקַעַ** (*baqaq*, “to lay waste, to empty”) is repeated for emphasis: **בָּקַעַי בָּקַעַי בָּקַעַי** (*vʿbaqum boqʿqim*, “plunderers have plundered them”). Similar repetition of the root **בָּקַעַ** occurs in Isa 24:3: “[The earth] will be completely laid waste” (הִבּוֹק הִבּוֹק, *hibboq tibboq*).

⁶ **tn** Heb “their vine-branches.” The term “vine-branches” is a figurative expression (synecdoche of part for the whole) representing the agricultural fields as a whole.

⁷ **tc** The MT reads **מְאֵדָם** (*me’adam*, “reddened”) from **אָדָם** (*’adam*, “red”). The LXX confused the roots **אָדָם** (“man”) and **אָרָם** (“red”): **ἐξ ἀνθρώπων** (*ex anthrōpōn*, “from among men”) which reflects **מֵאֲדָם** (*me’adam*, “from man”) from **אָדָם**.

tn The Hebrew term **מְאֵדָם** (“reddened”) from **אָדָם** (“red”) refers to clothes made red with dye (Exod 25:6; 26:14; 35:7, 23; 36:13; 39:34) or made red from bloodshed (Isa 63:2). The parallelism between **מְאֵדָם** (“reddened”) and **מְאֵלָאִים** (*me’ulla’im*, “clad in scarlet colored clothing”) suggests that the shields were dyed prior to battle, like the scarlet dyed uniforms. Nahum 2:1-10 unfolds the assault in chronological sequence; thus, the spattering of blood on the warrior’s shields would be too early in the account (R. D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* [WEC], 65).

sn As psychological warfare, warriors often wore uniforms colored blood-red, to strike fear into the hearts of their enemy (see Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 6.4.1; Ezek 23:5-6).

⁸ **tn** The Pual participle **מְאֵלָאִים** (*me’ulla’im*, “dressed in scarlet”) from **אָלָא** (*’alal*, “scarlet”) is used elsewhere of clothing dyed red or purple (Isa 1:18; Lam 4:5).

⁹ **tc** The MT reads **פְּלָדוֹת** (*pʿladot*, “steel”; see the following **tn**). The LXX’s **ἡλιβῆναι** (*hai hēlēnai*, “the reins”) and Vulgate’s *habenai* (“reins”) confused **פְּלָדוֹת** (*pʿladot*) with **כְּלָיוֹת** (*kʿlayot*, “reins, kidneys”). The BHS editors suggest emending the MT’s **פְּלָדוֹת** (*pʿladot*) to **לַפִּידוֹת** (*lappidot*, “torches”) to create the simile **כְּבַשֵּׁט לַפִּידוֹת** (*kʿesh lappidot*, “like torches of fire” or “like flaming torches”) which is reflected in the Syriac Peshitta and Symmachus (so KJV, RSV, NJPS). The problem with this is that **לַפִּיד** (*lappid*, “torch”) is masculine in gender, so the plural form is not **לַפִּידוֹת** but **לַפִּידִים** (*lappidim*) – which appears in Nah 2:4 (BDB 542 s.v. **לַפִּיד**; HALOT 533 s.v. **לַפִּיד**). Others propose a complete reversal of the consonants to **דַּלַּף** from the root **דָּלַף** (*dalaf*, “to drip, to trickle, to leak, to weep”) and translate **כְּבַשֵּׁט דַּלַּפוֹת** (*kʿesh dʿlafot*) as “like flickering fire” (so NEB). Against this proposal is the fact that **דָּלַף** is usually used in reference to water, but it is never used in reference to fire (HALOT 223 s.v. **דָּלַף**; BDB 196 s.v. **דָּלַף**).

tn Heb “the steel.” The Hebrew term **פְּלָדוֹת** is a *hapax legomenon*. The corresponding noun **פְּלָדָה** (*pʿladah*) probably means “metal, steel” (BDB 811 s.v. **פְּלָדָה**; HALOT 761 s.v. **פְּלָדָה**), and it is probably related to Arabic *puladu*, Syriac *pldʿ*, and early Persian *fulad* (all of which mean “steel”). This rendering is followed by NASB, NIV, NRSV. The term **פְּלָדוֹת** (“steel”) probably refers to the metallic pole attachments for the chariot spears, the side armor of the chariots, or the steel scythes fastened to the axle of a chariot. Xenophon described the army of Cyrus in a similar manner; the side armor of the chariots and the breastplates and thigh-pieces of the chariot-horses were “flashing with bronze” (Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 6.4.1). On the other hand, Cathcart connects Hebrew **פְּלָדָה** to Ugaritic *paladu*, which means “a garment made of linen hair,” and suggests that **פְּלָדוֹת הַרֶכֶב** (*pʿladot harekhev*) refers to the coverings, blankets, or caparisons of chariot horses (K. J. Cathcart, *Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic* [BibOr], 88). This demands that **הַרֶכֶב** be nuanced “chariot horses” – a problem when it means “chariots” in Nah 2:4; 3:2.

¹⁰ **tn** The collective singular **רֶכֶב** (*rekhev*, “chariot”) refers to all of the chariots in the army as a whole: “chariots; chariotry” (BDB 939 s.v. 1; HALOT 891 s.v. 1). The singular form rarely refers to a single chariot (BDB 939 s.v. 2; HALOT 891 s.v. 3). The collective use is indicated by the plural verb “they race back and forth” (**יִתְהַלְּלוּ**, *yitholʿlu*) in v. 5 (GKC 462 §145.b). The term **רֶכֶב** usually refers to war chariots (Exod 14:7; Josh

like¹ fire² on the day of battle;³
the soldiers brandish⁴ their spears.⁵

2:4 The chariots⁶ race madly⁷ through the streets,

they rush back and forth⁸ in the broad
plazas;
they look⁹ like lightning bolts,¹⁰
they dash here and there¹¹ like flashes of
lightning.¹²

2:5 The commander¹³ orders¹⁴ his officers;

11:4; 17:16, 18; 24:6; Judg 1:19; 4:3, 7, 13; 5:28; 1 Sam 13:5; 2 Sam 1:6; 8:4; 10:18; 1 Kgs 9:19, 22; 10:26; Jer 47:3; 50:37; 51:21; Ezek 23:24; Nah 2:3, 4, 13).

¹ **tc** The MT reads the preposition כ (bet, “are [like]”), but several Hebrew MSS read the comparative preposition כ (kaf, “like”). This textual variant probably arose due to the visual similarity of the two letters (orthographic confusion) and the relatively rare use of כ in metaphors – the comparative preposition כ (“like”) is much more common in metaphors. The MT is the more difficult reading and best explains the origin of the variant.

tn Heb “The chariots are...” The preposition כ באש (b^eesh) denotes essence: “The chariots are...” (GKC 430 §133.c; HALOT 104 s.v. כ 3). The use of this preposition creates a metaphor, comparing the steel fittings of the chariots to flashes of fire.

² **tn** Or perhaps “The chariots are [like] flaming torches.”

³ **tn** Heb “on the day of its preparation.” The Hiphil infinitive construct הִכְיָנוּ (hakhino; from כָּן, kun) means “to prepare, to make ready” (HALOT 465 s.v. כָּן; BDB 466 s.v. כָּן). The Hiphil verb is used of preparing weapons and military equipment for the day of battle (2 Chr 26:14; Ps 7:13 [HT 7:14]; 57:6 [HT 57:7]). The 3rd person masculine singular suffix (“its preparation”) is a collective singular, referring to the chariotry as a whole.

⁴ **tc** Some scholars adopt the variant reading הַפְּרוֹשִׁים (happ^roshim, “the horses”) and relate הִרְעִילוּ (hor^ralu) to Arabic ra’ala (“to stand in row and rank”): “the horses stand in row and rank,” that is, at attention. However, it is preferable to retain the MT for the noun, with the verb given its normal Hebrew meaning.

tn Heb “the spears quiver”; or “the spears are made to quiver.” Alternately, “the horses quiver” or “the horses shake [with excitement].” The Hophal perfect הִרְעִילוּ (hor^ralu, “are made to quiver”) is from הרעל (ra’al, “to quiver, to shake”) which appears elsewhere only in Hab 2:16 (BDB 947 s.v. רָעַל; HALOT 900 s.v. הרעל); the related noun רַעַל (“reeling”) appears only once (Zech 12:2). This Hebrew root is related to the Aramaic רַעַל (r^eal, “to quiver, to shake”). The action of the spear-shafts quivering is metonymical (effect for cause) to the action of the spear-shafts being brandished by the warriors. In the translation the words “the soldiers” are supplied for clarity.

⁵ **tc** The MT reads הַבְּרוֹשִׁים (habb^roshim, “the cypresses”). A variant textual tradition (preserved in several Hebrew MSS) reads הַפְּרוֹשִׁים (happ^roshim, “spears, horses, horsemen”) which is reflected in the LXX and Syriac. The variant noun הַפְּרוֹשִׁים is derived either from IV פָּרוֹשׁ (“horse, horseman”; see BDB 831 s.v. פָּרוֹשׁ; HALOT 977 s.v. פָּרוֹשׁ) or II פָּרוֹשׁ (“spear, staff”) which is related to Akkadian parussu (“spear-staff”; see BDB 831 l.v. פָּרוֹשׁ). The LXX connects הַפְּרוֹשִׁים to IV פָּרוֹשׁ (“horsemen”) as indicated by its translation οἱ ἵππεις (hoi hippēis, “the horsemen”). While some English versions follow the MT (KJV, NASB, NIV, NJPS), others adopt the alternate textual tradition (RSV, NEB, NJB, NRSV).

tn Heb “the cypresses”; alternately, “the horses.” The Hebrew noun הַבְּרוֹשִׁים (“the cypresses”) is probably from the root ברוש (b^rosh, “cypress, fir”) and is a figure of speech (synecdoche of material) in which the thing made (spear-shafts) is intended by the use of the term for the material out of which it is made (cypress wood). See K. J. Cathcart, *Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic* (BibOr), 89.

⁶ **tn** Heb “the chariot.” The Hebrew noun הֶרֶקֶב (harekhev, “the chariot”) is a collective use of the singular, as indicated by the plural verb “[they] race madly” (see GKC 462 §145.b).

⁷ **tn** The Hitpolel imperfect יִתְרוֹלְלוּ (yithol^rlu, “they rush wildly”) is from the root ירול (“to be foolish, to be senseless, to be insane”). The Hitpolel stem describes seemingly insane actions: “to pretend to be insane; to act like a madman” (1 Sam 21:14; Jer 25:16; 50:38; 51:7; see HALOT 249 s.v. ירול). When used in military contexts, it describes the wild,

furious action of war-chariots charging forward to attack the enemy (Jer 46:9). The Hitpolel stem is the equivalent to the Hitpaal stem for geminate verbs (see *IBHS* 425-26 §26.1.1). The Hitpolel stem expresses energetic, intense, and rapid action; it gives special energy and movement to the verbal idea (J. Mulienburg, “Hebrew Rhetoric: Repetition and Style,” *VT-Sup* 1 [1953]: 101).

⁸ **tn** The Hitpaal imperfect יִשְׁתַּקְשְׁקוּ (yish^taqsh^equn, “they rush back and forth”; see GKC 153 §55.g) is from שָׁקַק (shaqaq, “to rush upon; to rush forth”); cf. Prov 28:15; Isa 33:4; Joel 2:9 (HALOT 1009 s.v. שָׁקַק). The Hitpaal is the Hitpaal stem for geminate verbs (see *IBHS* 425-26 §26.1.1). The Hitpaal stem gives special energy and movement to the verbal idea; it connotes intense, furious, and energetic action (e.g., Deut 9:20; Jer 5:22; see J. Mulienburg, “Hebrew Rhetoric: Repetition and Style,” *VTSup* 1 [1953]: 101). The nun ending on יִשְׁתַּקְשְׁקוּ may denote additional energy and emphasis (see *IBHS* 516-17 §31.7.1).

⁹ **tn** Heb “Their appearance is like.”

¹⁰ **tn** Or “like torches.” The Hebrew term לַפִּיד (lappid) often means “torch, flame” (Gen 15:17; Judg 7:16, 20; 15:4, 5; Isa 62:1; Ezek 1:13; Zech 12:6; Dan 10:6), but sometimes refers to “lightning bolts” (Exod 20:18; Job 12:5; see HALOT 533 s.v. לַפִּיד; BDB 542 s.v. לַפִּיד). Most English versions render this usage as “torches” (KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NJPS). However, the parallelism with בְּקִרְבֵּימָם (kabb^rraqim, “like lightning flashes”) suggests that in this context בְּקִרְבֵּימָם (kalappidim) may be nuanced “like lightning bolts.”

¹¹ **tn** Or “they flash here and there.” The Polel imperfect יִרְדּוּ צִוּוֹת (yirots^etsu, “they dash here and there”) is from the root רוץ (ruts) which means “to run quickly” in reference to men (Gen 18:2; 2 Kgs 23:12; Prov 4:12) and “to gallop” in reference to horsemen (Joel 2:14). The Hiphil stem denotes “to drive off with haste” (Jer 49:19; 50:44). The Polel stem, which is used here, means “to race about swiftly; to flash by speedily; to run to and fro” (HALOT 1208 s.v. רוץ; BDB 930 s.v. רוץ).

¹² **tn** Or simply, “like lightning.” The term “lightning flash” (בָּרָק, bara^raq) is often used to compare the brightness of an object to the flash of lightning: the glory of Yahweh (Ezek 1:13), the splendor of an angel (Dan 10:6), the glitter of swords (Deut 32:41; Ezek 21:15; Nah 3:3; Hab 3:11), and the gleam of arrowheads (Job 20:25). It is also used as a figure (hypocatastasis) for speed, such as the swift destruction of an enemy (Zech 9:14). Perhaps both images are suggested here: the bright glitter of the chariots (v. 4b) and the speed of the chariots as suggested by the verb “they dash here and there” (yirots^etsu, v. 5b).

¹³ **tn** Heb “he”; the referent (the commander) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ **tc** The MT reads the Qal imperfect 3rd person masculine singular יִצְוֶה (yizkor, “he commands”) from II צָוָה (zakkar, “to command”); see above. The rarity of this homonymic root in Hebrew has led to textual variants and several proposed emendations. The LXX misunderstood יִצְוֶה and the syntax of the line: ἀνάμνησται οἱ ἐμῶν (mnēsthē-sontai hoi megistates, “And their mighty men will be remembered”; or “will remember themselves”). The LXX reflects the Niphal imperfect 3rd person common plural יִצְוֶה (yizzakhu, “they will be remembered”). The *BHS* editors suggest emending יִצְוֶה on the basis of the LXX. The *BHK* editors proposed emending to pilpel imperfect 3rd person common plural יִצְוֶה (yizkar, “they prance, they whirl”) from II כָּרָר (karar, “to dance”). None of the emendations are necessary once the existence of the homonym II כָּרָר (“to order”) is recognized.

tn The Hebrew verb II כָּרָר is related to Akkadian zakartu (“to give an order”; see CAD 2:17). This is distinct from the more common root zakar I (“to remember”) which is related to Akkadian zakaru. The English versions are split between the

they stumble⁴ as they advance;²
they rush to the city wall³
and they set up⁴ the covered siege tower.⁵

2:6 The sluice gates⁶ are opened;

two roots: “he commands” (NJPS) and “he summons” (NIV) versus “he recounts” (KJV), “he remembers” (NASB), and “he calls” (NRSV).

1 tc The MT reads the Niphal imperfect 3rd person masculine plural יִכְשְׁלוּ (*yikoshlu*, “they stumble”) from the root כָּשַׁל (*kashal*, “stumble”). G. R. Driver argues that the MT makes little sense in the portrayal of a successful assault; the motif of stumbling warriors usually connotes defeat (Isa 5:27; Jer 46:6). Driver argues that MT’s יִכְשְׁלוּ (“they stumble”) arose from metathesis (reversal of consonants) from an original יִשְׁלַחְכוּ (*yishalkhu*, Niphal from שָׁלַח *shalakh*, “to cast forth”) which also appears in 1 Kgs 13:24, 25, 28 (“hurled himself,” i.e., rushed headlong). Driver suggests that this is related to Arabic *salaka* VII (“to rush in”). He notes that the emendation would produce a tighter parallelism with the following noun: יִמְהָרוּ (*imaharu*, “they hasten”). See G. R. Driver, “Linguistic and Textual Problems: Minor Prophets II,” *JTS* 39 (1938): 270. On the other hand, Armerding argues that the anomalous MT reading יִכְשְׁלוּ (“they stumble”) can be explained without recourse to textual emendation. The stumbling of the attacking army is caused, not by their weakness, but by the corpses of the Assyrians strewn in their path which obstructs their advance. Armerding suggests that this motif appears in Nah 3:3 (C. E. Armerding, “Nahum,” *EBCT* 7:475).

tn Alternately, “they rush forward.”

2 tn Or “in their trenches”; or “in their columns”; *Heb* “in their advance”; or “in their march.” The noun הַלִּיכָה (*halikhah*, “procession, journey”) is nuanced “march; advance” in a military context (BDB 237 s.v. 1.a; HALOT 246 s.v. 1.a). Similarly, the related verb הִלַּךְ (*halakh*) means “to march, to advance” in battle contexts (Judg 1:10; Hab 1:6). This is related to the Assyrian noun *alaktu* (“to advance”) which is often used of military advances (CAD 1.1.2.99). The related Assyrian noun *aliku* means “detachment of soldiers” (CAD 1.1.346). HALOT suggests that הַלִּיכָה is related to an Assyrian noun which is a technical military term: “trenches, columns” (HALOT 246 s.v. *הַלִּיכָה). This line could be rendered, “They stumble in their trenches” or “They stumble in their columns.”

3 tc The MT reads הוֹמַתָּה (*homatah*, “her wall”). On the other hand, several Hebrew mss, Targum Jonathan, and the Syriac Peshitta omit the *mappiq* and preserve an alternate textual tradition of the directive *-he* ending: הוֹמַתֵּי (“to the wall”). The directive sense is seen in the LXX. Although the MT lacks the directive *-he* (ה) ending, it is possible that the MT’s הוֹמַתָּה functions as an adverbial accusative of direction meaning “to her wall.” The adverbial accusative of direction often occurs after verbs of motion (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 13-14, §54; *IBHS* 169-71 §10.2.2).

tn *Heb* “to her wall,” referring to Nineveh.

4 tc The MT reads the Hophal perfect 3rd person masculine singular הִכְיָן (*hukhan*, “and [it] is prepared”). On the other hand, the LXX reading reflects the Hiphil perfect 3rd person common plural הִכְיָנוּ (*hekhinnu*, “and they will prepare”). Arguing that the active sense is necessary because the three preceding verbs are all active, K. J. Cathcart (*Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic* [BibOr], 95) suggests emending to the Hiphil infinitive absolute הִכְיָן (*hakhin*, “and [they] prepare”). However, the Masoretic form should be retained because it is the more difficult reading that best explains the origin of the LXX reading. The shift from active to passive verbs is common in Hebrew, marking a cause-result sequence (e.g., Pss 24:7; 69:14 [15]; Jer 31:4; Hos 5:5). See M. Weinfeld, “The Active-Passive (Factitive-Resultive) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic,” *JBL* 84 (1965): 272-82.

tn *Heb* “the mantelet is prepared.”

5 tn *Heb* “mantelet.” The Hebrew noun סֶכֶךְ (*sokhekh*, “mantelet”) is a military technical term referring to a large movable shelter used as a protective cover for soldiers besieging a fortified city, designed to shield them from the arrows shot down from the city wall (HALOT 754 s.v.; BDB 697 s.v.). This noun is a hapax *legomenon* (a word that only occurs once in the Hebrew Bible) and is derived from the verb III סָכַךְ (*sakhakh*, “to

cover; to protect”; *TWOT* 2:623-24). K. J. Cathcart (*Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic* [BibOr], 95) suggests that the translation “mantelet” is supported by the use of the verb III סָכַךְ in Ps 140:7 [8]: “Yahweh, my Lord, my fortress of safety; shelter (בִּקְיָה, *sakoiyah*) my head in the day of arms.” This is reflected in several recent English versions: “wheeled shelters” (NJPS), “protective shield” (NIV), “covering used in a siege” (NASB margin), and “mantelet” (ASV, NAB, NASB, NRSV). Cf. also TEV “the shield for the battering ram.”

sn The Hebrew term translated *covered siege tower* probably does not refer to a battering ram, but to a movable protective tower, used to cover the soldiers and the siege machinery. These are frequently depicted in Neo-Assyrian bas-reliefs, such as the relief of Sennacherib’s siege of Lachish. The Neo-Assyrians used both small, hut-like shelters that could be carried by a few men, as well as larger, tower-like structures rolled on wheels to the top of siege embankments. These mantelets protected the attackers while they built the embankments and undermined the foundations of the city walls to hasten their collapse. Siege towers were equipped with machines designed to hurl stones to smash the fortifications and firebrands to start conflagrations (see A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 2:281-86).

6 tn Or “river dam gates”; NAB, NIV, NRSV, NLT “river gates.”

sn Nineveh employed a system of dams and sluice gates to control the waters of the Tigris and Khoser Rivers which flowed through the city (R. C. Thompson and R. W. Hutchinson, *A Century of Exploration at Nineveh*, 120-132). However, the Tigris often flooded its banks inside the city, undermining palace foundations and weakening other structures. To reduce this flooding, Sennacherib changed the course of the Tigris inside the city. Outside the city, he dammed up the Khoser and created a reservoir, regulating the flow of water into the city through an elaborate system of double sluice gates (D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylon*, 99-100; J. Reade, “Studies in Assyrian Geography, Part I: Sennacherib and the Waters of Nineveh,” *RA* 72 [1978]: 47-72; idem, “Studies in Assyrian Geography, Part II: The Northern Canal System,” *RA* 72 [1978]: 157-80). According to classical tradition (Diodorus and Xenophon), just before Nineveh fell, a succession of very high rainfalls deluged the area. The Khoser River swelled and the reservoir was breached. The waters rushed through the overloaded canal system, breaking a hole twenty stades (about 2.3 miles or 3.7 km) wide in the city wall and flooding the city. When the waters receded, the Babylonians stormed into Nineveh and conquered the city (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 2.26-27, especially 27.1-3; Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 3.4.12; P. Haupt, “Xenophon’s Account of the Fall of Nineveh,” *JAOS* 28 [1907]: 65-83). This scenario seems to be corroborated by the archaeological evidence (A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, 637).

her slave girls moan¹ like doves² while
they beat³ their breasts.⁴

2:8 Nineveh was like a pool⁵ of water⁶

smoke).” The MT reads the Hophal perfect 3rd person feminine singular *העֲלִינָהּ* (*ho’alatah*, “she is carried away”) from *עָלָה* (*alah*, “to go up”). The Hiphil stem of *עָלָה* often describes a military commander leading a group of forced workers out of a town (1 Kgs 5:13 [HT 5:27]; 9:15, 21; 2 Chr 8:8); likewise, the Hophal stem may denote “to be led away into exile” (HALOT 830 s.v.; BDB 748 s.v. *עָלָה*).

1 tc The MT reads the Piel participle *מְנַהֲגוֹת* (*mⁿnahagot*, “sobbing, moaning”) from *נָהַג* (“to moan, to lament”; HALOT 675 s.v.; BDB 624 s.v. *נָהַג*). This root is related to Assyrian *nagagu* (“to cry”; *AHW* 2:709.b). This harmonizes well with the following cola: “Her maidservants moan like doves, they beat upon their breasts.” This is adopted by several English versions (NASB, NIV, NRSV). On the other hand, an alternate vocalization tradition (represented by several Hebrew MSS, Targum Jonathan, LXX, and Vulgate) reads the Pual participle *מְנֻהָגוֹת* (*mⁿnohagot*, “forcibly removed”) from the more common root *נָהַג* (“to drive away, to lead away”; HALOT 675 s.v. *נָהַג*). This root is often used of conquerors leading away exiles or prisoners of war (Gen 31:26; Deut 4:27; 28:37; Isa 20:4; Lam 3:2). This picture is clearly seen in the LXX reading *καὶ αἱ δοῦλαι αὐτῆς ἤγοντο* (*kai hai doulai autēs ēgonto*, “and her maidservants were led away”). This textual tradition harmonizes with the imagery of exile in the preceding colon (see translator’s note on the word “exile” in this verse). This approach is adopted by several English versions (KJV, NJPS).

tn Or “her maidservants are led away [into exile].”

2 tn Heb “like the sound of doves.”

3 tn The Poel participle *מִתְבַּפֵּט* (*m^ttoḥ^fot*, “beating continuously”) is from *תָּבַף* (“to beat”; HALOT 1037-38 s.v. *תָּבַף*; BDB 1074 s.v. *תָּבַף*). Elsewhere it is used of beating timbrels (Ps 68:26; 1 Sam 21:14). The participle describes a circumstance accompanying the main action (“her maidservants moan”) and functions in a continual, repetitive manner (see *IBHS* 625-26 §37.6; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 43, §221).

4 tc The MT reads *מִתְבַּפֵּט עַל־לִבְבָהֶן* (*m^ttoḥ^fot ‘al-livvehen*, “beating upon their hearts [= breasts]”). The LXX reading *φθγγόμενα ἐν καρδίαις αὐτῶν* (*phthengomenai en kardiais autōn*, “moaning in their hearts”) reflects either an alternate textual tradition or simple textual confusion. The Greek participle *φθγγόμενα* seems to reflect either: (1) the Qal participle *הוֹגָה* (*hogah*) from *הָגַה* (*hagah*, “to moan”) as reflected in Targum Jonathan and Vulgate or (2) the Poel participle *מְנַהֲגוֹת* (*mⁿnahagot*, “moaning”) from *נָהַג* (“to moan”) which appears in the previous line, pointing to a transposition of words between the two lines.

tn Heb “upon their heart.” The term “their heart” (*לִבְבָהֶן*, *liv-vehen*) is a figure of speech (synecdoche of the inner organ for the outer body part) representing their breasts/chests (e.g., Dan 4:16 [13]; see HALOT 516 s.v. *לִב*; BDB 523 s.v. *לִב* II.1). The singular noun is used collectively for all the maidservants as a whole, as the plural suffix indicates (see *IBHS* 113 §7.2.1; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 7, §2).

5 tn The term “pool” (*בְּרֵכָה*, *b^rekhah*) usually refers to a man-made artificial water reservoir fed by water aqueducts rather than to a natural pond (HALOT 161 s.v.). For example, it is used in reference to man-made water reservoirs for the royal gardens (Eccl 2:6; Neh 2:14); man-made water reservoirs in Jerusalem, some of which were fed by aqueducts (2 Kgs 18:17; 20:20; Isa 7:3; 22:9, 11; 36:2; Neh 3:15, 16); the pool of Gibeon (2 Sam 2:13); the pool of Hebron (2 Sam 4:12); the pool of Samaria (1 Kgs 22:38); and the pools of Heshbon (Song 7:5). The pool of Siloam, built by Hezekiah and fed by the underground aqueduct known as Hezekiah’s Tunnel, is designated by the term *בְּרֵכָה* in 2 Kgs 20:20 and the Siloam Inscription (line 5).

sn Nineveh was like a pool of water. This is an appropriate simile because Nineveh was famous for its artificial pools, many of which serviced the royal gardens. Two rivers also flowed through the city: the Tobbaitu and the Khoser.

6 tn Or “Nineveh [is] like a pool of water.” Either a present tense or a past tense verb may be supplied.

throughout her days,⁷
but now⁸ her people⁹ are running away,¹⁰
she cries out:¹¹ “Stop! Stop!” –
but no one turns back.¹²

2:9 Her conquerors cry out:¹³

7 tc The MT reads *מִימֵי הַיּוֹם* (*mime hi*, “from her days”). The form *מִימֵי* is composed of the assimilated preposition *מִן* (*min*, “from”) prefixed to the plural construct of *יוֹם* (*yom*, “day”; see HALOT 399 s.v. *יוֹם*). The preposition *מִן* is used temporally, marking the beginning of a continuous period (“since, from”; see HALOT 597 s.v. *מִן*; BDB 581 s.v. *מִן* 4.a). Several scholars suggest that the third-person independent pronoun *הִיא* (*hi*) functions as a possessive genitive (“her”), a usage attested in Ugaritic, Akkadian, and elsewhere in Hebrew (2 Kgs 9:18; Isa 18:2; Nah 2:12). See K. J. Cathcart, *Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic* (BibOr), 100-101; *IBHS* 291 §16.2 n. 9; T. Longman, “Nahum,” *The Minor Prophets*, 2:807. The plural of *יוֹם* (“day”) here denotes “lifetime” (HALOT 400 s.v. *יוֹם* 6.c). The phrase *מִימֵי הַיּוֹם* probably means “from the beginning of her days” or “throughout her days” or “during her lifetime.” This is similar to “from the beginning of your days” or “since your days began” or “as long as you live” (1 Sam 25:28; Job 38:12; see HALOT 400 s.v. *יוֹם* 6.c; 597 s.v. *מִן* 2.a; BDB 581 s.v. *מִן* 4.a). Several English versions adopt this: “throughout her days” (NASB), “from earliest times” (NJPS), and “[Nineveh] of old” (KJV). In contrast to the Masoretic vocalization, the consonantal text *הִיא מִימֵי הַיּוֹם* is rendered “her waters” by the LXX and critical scholars. The reading of the LXX *τὰ ὕδατα αὐτῆς*, *ta hudata autēs*, “her waters”) reflects the alternate vocalization *מִימֵהָ* (*memeha*, “her waters”). The BHS editors suggest emending the MT to *מִימֵהָ* (“her waters”). Saggs suggests that the original form was *מִימֵהָ* (*memeha*, “her waters”) which he explains thus: *מִימֵי* is the plural construct of *מַיִם* (*mayim*, “waters”); *הִיא* is the 3rd person feminine singular suffix on the plural noun, as in Ezek 41:15 (GKC 107 §32.1); the *yod* (י) of Masoretic *הִיא* (*hi*) is a secondary *matres lectionis* inserted into wrongly-duplicated and misunderstood *הִיא* (W. H. F. Saggs, “Nahum and the Fall of Nineveh,” *JTS* 20 [1969]: 220-25). These alternative approaches are followed by several English versions: “its water is draining away” (NIV); “whose waters run away” (NRSV); and “its waters are fleeing” (NJB).

tn Heb “from days of her” or “from her days.”

8 tn The translation takes the *vav* וְהִקְבָּה (*v^hhemmah*) in a temporal sense. This approach is also adopted by NJPS: “Now they flee.”

9 tn Heb “they”; the referent (the people of Nineveh) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

10 tn Or “fleeing away”; or (maintaining the imagery of the pool of water) “draining away.”

11 tn The introductory phrase “she cries out” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

12 tn Or “can turn [them] back.” The Hebrew verb *פָּנָה* (*panah*, “to turn”) often describes the fearful flight from an attacking enemy army (Josh 7:12; Judg 20:42, 45, 47; Jer 46:5, 21; 47:3; 48:39; 49:8, 24). Nahum pictures the people of Nineveh fleeing from their attackers; nothing can be done to stop their fearful flight. The Hiphil participle *מִפְנֵה* (*mafneh*) may be taken in an intransitive (Jer 46:5, 21; 47:3; 49:24) or transitive sense (Judg 15:4; 1 Sam 10:9; Jer 48:39), i.e., “no one turns back” or “no one can turn [them] back,” respectively (see *IBHS* 436-43 §27.2).

13 tn The phrase “Her conquerors cry out” has been supplied from context.

“Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold!”
There is no end to the treasure;
riches of every kind of precious thing.

2:10 Destruction, devastation, and desolation!⁴
Their hearts faint,²
their knees tremble,³
each stomach churns,⁴ each face⁵ turns⁶
pale!⁷

Taunt against the Once-Mighty Lion

2:11 Where now is the den of the lions,⁸
the feeding place⁹ of the young lions,

where¹⁰ the lion, lioness,¹¹ and lion cub
once prowled¹²
and no one disturbed them?¹³
2:12 The lion tore apart as much prey as
his cubs needed¹⁴
and strangled prey to provide food¹⁵ for
his lionesses;
he filled¹⁶ his lairs with prey
and his dens with torn flesh.

1 tn Heb “Emptiness and devastation and being laid waste.” Several English versions attempt to reproduce the assonance, alliteration, and paronomasia of three similarly sounding Hebrew words: בִּזְיוֹן וּבְהִלָּה וּבְהִלָּה (buqah um^vvuaqah um^vvullaqah; NJPS “Desolation, devastation, and destruction!”; NRSV: “Devastation, desolation, and destruction!”).

sn Destruction, devastation, and desolation. The feminine form of each of these terms is used, referring to Nineveh (e.g., NASB: “She is emptied! Yes, she is desolate and laid waste!”). Conquered cities are often personified as a desolated woman (e.g., Isa 47:1; 54:1).

2 tn Heb “and melting heart.”

3 tn Heb “and tottering of knees.”

4 tn Heb “and shaking in all of the loins.”

5 tn Heb “all of their faces.”

6 tn Heb “gather” or “withdraw.” The Piel perfect קָבְצוּ (qibb^etsu) from קָבַץ (qavats, “to gather”) may be nuanced in the intensive sense “to gather glow; to glow [in excitement]” (HALOT 1063 s.v. קָבַץ pi. 4) or the privative sense “to take away, withdraw” (BDB 868 s.v. קָבַץ Pi.3). The phrase קָבְצוּ פָּאֵר רֹר (qibb^etsu pa^rur) is very difficult; it occurs only here and in Joel 2:6 which also describes the fearful facial reaction to an invading army. It probably means: (1) to grow red in fear; (2) to grow pale in fear; or (3) to turn ashen in fear. This difficult phrase may be translated by the modern English idioms: “every face grows pale” or “every face flushes red in fear.”

7 tn The Hebrew term פָּאֵר (pa^rur) occurs only here and in Joel 2:6 where it also describes a fearful facial reaction. The meaning of פָּאֵר is debated and numerous etymologies have been suggested: (1) From פָּרַר (parur, “cooking pot”; HALOT 964 s.v. פָּרַר): LXX τὸ προσκόπρον πάντων ἡδὺς προσκαυμα χυτρας, “all their faces are like a blackened/burned pot”; Vulgate et facies omnium sicut nigredo ollae (“all their faces are like a black pot”); Targum Jonathan (“covered with black like a pot”). This approach is adopted by the KJV and AV: “the faces of them all gather blackness.” (2) From פָּאֵר (pa^rur, “beauty”). Taking קָבַץ (qavats) in a private sense (“gather in”), several scholars propose: “to draw in beauty, withdraw color,” hence: “their faces grow pale” (NASB, NIV); see K&D 26:192-93; A. Haldar, *Studies in the Book of Nahum*, 59. (3) From פָּרַר (parur, “break in pieces”). Due to fear, their faces have gathered wrinkles. (4) From IV בָּרַר (“to boil”), related to Arabic *pr* and Syriac *npr* (“to boil”); “their faces glow red in excitement” (HALOT 860 s.v.). (5) From פָּאֵר (“grey, ash grey”): “their faces turn grey” (J. J. Gluck, “*parur* – *pa^rur*: A Case of Biblical Paronomasia,” OTWSA 12 [1969]: 21-26). The NJPS translation appears to adopt this approach: “all faces turn ashen.”

8 tn Or “What has become of the den of the lions?”

9 tc The Masoretic form וּמִינֵהּ (umir^eeh, “the feeding ground”) is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls: וּמִינֵהּ (4QpNah). It is also reflected in the LXX reading ἡ νομῆ (he nomē, “the pasture”). The BHS editors suggest emending to וּמִינֵהּ (um^earah, “the cave”), which involves the metathesis of ר (resh) and נ (ayin). This proposed emendation is designed to create a tighter parallelism with מִינֵהּ (me^eon, “the den”) in the preceding line. However, this emendation has no textual support and conflicts with the grammar of the rest of the line: the feminine noun וּמִינֵהּ (um^earah, “the cave”) would demand

a feminine independent pronoun instead of the masculine independent pronoun הוּא which follows. Nevertheless, several English versions adopt the emendation (NJB, NEB, RSV, NRSV), while others follow the reading of the MT (KJV, NASB, NIV, NJPS).

10 tn Alternately, “the lion...[once] prowled there.” The construction שָׁם ... אֲשֶׁר (‘asher...sham) denotes “where...there” (BDB 81 s.v. אֲשֶׁר). This locative construction is approximately reflected in the LXX interrogative ποῦ (pou, “where?”).

11 tn The meaning of the term לַבִּיָּא (lavi) is debated. There are three basic approaches: (1) The MT reads לַבִּיָּא, which is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah) which preserves the consonantal form לביא (see DJD 5:38). Most English versions render לַבִּיָּא as “lioness,” the parallel term לַאֲרִיָּה (‘aryeh, “lion”); so RSV, NASB, NIV, NJPS; in contrast, KJV has “old lion.” Indeed, the noun לַבִּיָּא (“lioness” or “lion”; BDB 522 s.v. לַבִּיָּא) occurs frequently in poetic texts (Gen 49:9; Num 23:24; 24:9; Deut 33:20; Isa 5:29; 30:6; Joel 1:6; Job 4:11; 38:39). The problem is the absence of a vav (ו) conjunction between the two nouns and the presence of a singular rather than plural verb: לַבִּיָּא לַאֲרִיָּה לַבִּיָּא (halakh ‘aryeh lavi, “lion [and] lioness prowled”). Furthermore, the term for “lioness” in the following verse is not לַבִּיָּא but לַבִּיָּא (liv^eah; see HALOT 515 s.v. לַבִּיָּא; BDB 522 s.v. לַבִּיָּא). (2) Due to the grammatical, syntactical, and lexical difficulties of the previous approach, several scholars propose that the MT’s לַבִּיָּא is a Hiphil infinitive construct form shortened from לַבִּיָּא (l^ehavi, “to bring”); cf. Jer 27:7; 39:7; 2 Chr 31:10; HALOT 114 s.v. בּוֹא. Because the Hiphil of בּוֹא (bo) can depict an animal bringing food to its dependents (cf. 1 Kgs 17:6), they treat the line thus: “where the lion prowled to bring [food]” (Ehrlich, Haldar, Maier). The Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah) reading לַבִּיָּא does not solve the problem because the peshet to this line uses לַבּוֹא (“to enter”), and it is not clear whether this is a literal translation or creative word-play: “Its peshet concerns Demetrius, king of Greece, who sought to enter (לַבּוֹא) Jerusalem” (col. 1, line 4). (3) The LXX translation τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν (tou eiselthein, “would enter”) seems to have confused the consonantal form לַבּוֹא with לַבִּיָּא which it viewed as Qal infinitive construct לַבּוֹא לַבִּיָּא (“to enter”). This approach is followed by at least one modern translation: “where the lion goes” (NRSV).

12 tn The verb הָלַךְ (halakh, “to go, to walk”) is occasionally used of animals (1 Sam 6:12). Here it is nuanced “prowled” in the light of the hunting or stalking imagery in vv. 12-13.

13 tn Or “and no one frightened [them].” Alternately, reflecting a different division of the lines, “Where the lion [and] lioness [once] prowled // the lion-cub – and no one disturbed [them].”

14 tn Heb “as much as he needs.” The term בְּדִי (be^edi, “as much as he needs”; HALOT 219 s.v. 2a) is composed of the preposition בֵּ (bet) and the noun דֵּי (day, “enough, what is required”). This idiom means “to satisfy the hunger of [something]” (cf. Jer 51:58; Hab 2:13).

15 tn The words “to provide food” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity.

16 tn The Piel verb מָלַא (malle) is a preterite with vav (ו) consecutive which depicts a sequence of events.

Battle Cry of the Divine Warrior

2:13 "I am against you!" declares¹ the LORD who commands armies;² "I will burn your chariots³ with fire;⁴ the sword will devour your young lions;⁵ you will no longer prey upon the land;⁶ the voices of your messengers⁷ will no longer be heard."

¹ **tn** The term נָאֵם (*n^eum*) is a fixed formulaic term meaning "oracle" (Isa 14:22-23; 17:3; 22:25; Jer 8:3; 25:29; 31:38; 49:26; Zech 13:2, 7).

² **tn** Traditionally, "the LORD of hosts." The title pictures God as the sovereign king who has at his disposal a multitude of attendants, messengers, and warriors to do his bidding. In some contexts, like this one, the military dimension of his rulership is highlighted. In this case, the title pictures him as one who leads armies into battle against his enemies.

³ **tc** The MT reads the 3rd person feminine singular suffix on a singular noun: רִכְבָּה (*rikhbah*, "her chariot"). However, the BHS editors suggest emending to the 2nd person feminine singular suffix on a plural noun: רִכְבֶּךָ (*rikhbekh*, "your chariots") due to the use of 2nd person feminine singular suffixes throughout this verse and the anomaly of the singular noun. On the other hand, the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah) read רִכְבָּה ("your abundance") which is the *plene* spelling of רִכְבָּה (*rov^vkhah*). This reflects the transposition (metathesis) of כ (*kaf*) and ב (*bet*) in the consonantal forms רִכְבָּה and רִכְבָּה. The textual tradition attested at Qumran is reflected in the LXX's πλεθός σου (*plēthos sou*, "your abundance") which reflects a reading of רִכְבָּה ("your abundance") as well. It should be noted that the *plene* form of the 2nd person feminine singular suffix appears elsewhere in the MT of this verse: מַלְאֲכֵיכֶם (*mal'akhekheh*, "your messenger"). Although there is good evidence for the alternate traditions, the MT reading may be retained for three reasons: (1) The burning of enemy chariots was a common threat in ancient Near Eastern warfare (see D. R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*, 60; K. J. Cathcart, "Treaty-Curses and the Book of Nahum," *CBQ* 35 [1973]: 182). (2) The singular רִכְבָּה (*rekhev*, "chariot") is often used collectively to refer to all the chariots of a nation (Exod 14:7; Josh 11:4; 24:6; Judg 4:7, 13; 5:28). (3) The abrupt shift from the 2nd person feminine singular suffix on אֵלַיִךְ (*elayikh*, "I am against you!") to the 3rd person feminine singular suffix on רִכְבָּה ("her chariot") is an example of a common poetic/stylistic device: heterosis of second to third person (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 525 [4.5]). The 2nd person feminine singular suffix in the translation above is used simply for smooth literary style. This is a good example of how sensitivity to figures of speech, ancient Near Eastern backgrounds, and syntax can prevent unnecessary textual emendations.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "with smoke." The term "smoke" (עָשָׁן, *'ashan*) is a figure of speech (metonymy of effect for the cause) representing the fire which produces the smoke (Josh 8:19-20; Isa 65:5; cf. Rev 14:11). In the translation this has been replaced with "fire" since most English readers would find the expression "to burn [something] with smoke" unfamiliar.

⁵ **tc** The MT reads וּבְיַרְיִיכָה (*ukh^virayikh*, "and your young lions"), as reflected by the LXX. The BHS editors emend to וּבְיַבֵּי רִיךְ (*ugibborayikh*, "and your warriors"); this lacks textual support and is unnecessary.

sn The Assyrian warriors are pictured as *young lions* in Nah 2:11-13. The Assyrians often pictured themselves with lion imagery (see D. Marcus, "Animal Similes in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," *Or* 46 [1977]: 87).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "I will cut off your prey from the land."

⁷ **tc** The MT reading מַלְאֲכֵיכֶם (*mal'akhekheh*, "your messengers") has a very unusual ending: the plural ending of the noun is spelled defectively (short spelling), while the 2nd person feminine singular pronominal suffix is spelled *plene* (long spelling); see GKC 258 §91.I. It is possible that the final ה (*hey*) is due to dittography with the first letter of the first word of the next verse, הוֹי (*hoy*, "Woe!"). On the other hand, the LXX reads τὰ ἔργα σου (*ta erga sou*, "your deeds") which re-

Reason for Judgment: Sins of Nineveh

3:1 Woe to the city guilty of bloodshed!⁸ She is full of lies;⁹ she is filled with plunder;¹⁰ she has hoarded her spoil!¹¹

Portrayal of the Destruction of Nineveh

3:2 The chariot drivers will crack their whips;¹² the chariot wheels will shake the ground;¹³ the chariot horses¹⁴ will gallop;¹⁵ the war chariots¹⁶ will bolt forward!¹⁷

fects מַלְאֲכֵיכֶם (*mal'akhayikh*, "your deeds") – a confusion of מַלְאֲכֵיכֶם (*mal'akh*, "messenger") for מַלְאֲכֵיכֶם (*mal'akhah*, "deed") due to the unusual Hebrew ending here.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "of bloods." The plural noun דָּמִים (*damim*, "bloods") connotes "bloodshed" or "blood guilt" (BDB 196-97 s.v. דָּם 2.f; HALOT 224-25 s.v. דָּם 5; DCH 2:443-47 s.v. דָּם). Human blood in its natural state in the body is generally designated by the singular form דָּם (*dam*, "blood"); after it has been spilled, the plural form is used to denote the abundance of blood in quantity (iBHS 119-20 §7.4.1; BDB 196-97 s.v. דָּם 2.f). The plural is often used with the verb שָׁפַךְ (*shafakh*, "to spill, to shed") to connote bloodshed (Gen 9:6; 37:22; Lev 17:4; Num 35:33; Deut 21:7; 1 Sam 25:31; 1 Kgs 18:28; 2 Kgs 21:16; 24:4; 1 Chr 22:8; Ezek 16:38; 22:4, 6, 9, 12, 27; 23:45; 33:25; 36:18; Prov 1:16). The plural often denotes bloodshed (Gen 4:10; 2 Sam 3:27, 28; 16:8; 20:12; 1 Kgs 2:5; 2 Kgs 9:7, 26, 33; 2 Chr 24:25; Job 16:18; Isa 1:15; 4:4; 9:4; 26:21; 33:15; 34:3, 6, 7; Ezek 7:23; 16:9, 36; 21:37 HT [21:32 ET]; 22:13; 24:8; Hos 1:4; 4:2; Hab 2:8, 12, 17; Mic 3:10; Zech 9:7) or blood-guilt (Exod 22:1; Lev 20:9; Num 35:27; Deut 19:10; 22:8; Judg 9:24; 1 Sam 25:26, 33; 2 Sam 21:1; Isa 33:15; Ezek 9:9). The term can refer to murder (2 Sam 16:7, 8; Pss 5:7 HT [5:6 ET]; 26:9; 55:24 HT [55:23 ET]; 59:3 HT [59:2 ET]; 139:10; Prov 29:10) or more generally, connote social injustice, cruelty, and oppression (Deut 21:8, 9; 1 Sam 19:5; 2 Kgs 21:6; 24:4; Pss 94:21; 106:38; Prov 6:17; Isa 59:7; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Joel 4:19 HT [3:19 ET]; Jonah 1:14). The term may refer to blood that has been shed in war (1 Kgs 2:5) and the unnecessary shedding of blood of one's enemy (1 Kgs 2:31), which is probably the intended meaning here. The phrase "city of bloodshed" (עִיר דָּמִים [*ir damim*], "city of bloods") is used elsewhere to describe a city held guilty before God of blood-guilt and about to be judged by God (Ezek 22:2; 24:6).

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "All of her [is] lying."

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "full of plunder."

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "prey does not depart."

¹² **tn** *Heb* "the sound of a whip."

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "the shaking of a chariot wheel."

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "a horse."

¹⁵ **tn** Albright argues that the term דוּרֵר (*doher*) should be translated as "chariot driver" (W. F. Albright, "The Song of Deborah in Light of Archaeology," *BASOR* 62 [1936]: 30). More recent research indicates that this term denotes "to dash" (HALOT 215 s.v.) or "to gallop, neigh" (DCH 2:417 s.v. דוּרֵר). It is used as a synonym for רָקַד (*raqad*, "to skip"). This Hebrew verb is related to Egyptian *thr* ("to travel by chariot") and Arabic *dahara* VII ("to hurry"). The related noun דַּהָרָה (*daharah*) means "dashing, galloping" (Judg 5:22; HALOT 215 s.v.; DCH 2:417 s.v. דַּהָרָה).
¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "a chariot."

¹⁷ **tn** The Piel participle מְרַקְדָּה (*m^rraqqedah*, "jolting") is from רָקַד (*raqad*); this verb means "to dance, to leap" (of children, Job 21:11), "to skip about, to dance" (Ecc 3:4), and "to leap" (of chariots, Joel 2:5). In related Semitic languages (Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Arabic) the root *raqad* means "to dance, to skip about." Here, the verb is used as a figurative expression (hypocatastasis) to describe the jostling of the madly rushing war-chariots.

3:3 The charioteers¹ will charge ahead;²
 their swords³ will flash⁴
 and their spears⁵ will glimmer!⁶
 There will be many people slain;⁷
 there will be piles of the dead,
 and countless casualties⁸ –
 so many that people⁹ will stumble over
 the corpses.

Taunt against the Harlot City

3:4 “Because¹⁰ you have acted like a wan-
 ton prostitute¹¹ –
 a seductive mistress who practices sor-
 cery,¹²
 who¹³ enslaves¹⁴ nations by her

harlotry,¹⁵
 and entices peoples by her sorcery¹⁶ –
 3:5 I am against you,” declares the LORD
 who commands armies.¹⁷
 “I will strip off your clothes!¹⁸
 I will show your nakedness to the nations
 and your shame to the kingdoms;
 3:6 I will pelt you with filth;¹⁹
 I will treat you with contempt;
 I will make you a public spectacle.
 3:7 Everyone who sees you will turn away
 from you in disgust;
 they will say, ‘Nineveh has been devas-
 tated!
 Who will lament for her?’
 There will be no one to comfort you!”²⁰

¹ **tn** Heb “a horseman.” Although the Hebrew term פָּרָס (*paras*, alternately spelled פָּרִישׁ [*paras*] here) could denote “horse” (1 Sam 8:11; Joel 2:4; Hab 1:8; Jer 46:4), the Hiphil participle מִפְּעֵלָה (*ma’aleh*, “cause to charge”) – the subject of which is פָּרָס – suggests that פָּרָס refers here to “horsemen” charging their horses (2 Sam 1:6; 1 Kgs 20:20; Jer 4:29; 46:4).

² **tn** The term מִפְּעֵלָה (*ma’aleh*; the Hiphil participle “cause to charge”) refers to charioteers bringing war-horses up to a charge or attack (e.g., Jer 46:9; 51:27). On the other hand, the KJV translates this as “lifteth up [both the bright sword and the glittering sword],” while RV renders it as “mounts [his horse (or chariot)].”

³ **tn** Heb “a sword.”

⁴ **tn** Heb “flash of a sword.” Alternately, “swords flash.” Although לָהֵב (*lahav*) can mean “blade” (Judg 3:22; 1 Sam 17:7), it means “flash [of the sword]” here (e.g., Hab 3:11; see HALOT 520 s.v.) as suggested by its parallelism with וַיִּרְקַע (*uv’raqa*, “flashing, gleaming point [of the spear]”); cf. Job 20:25; Deut 32:41; Hab 3:11; Ezek 21:15.

⁵ **tn** Heb “a spear.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “and flash of a spear.” Alternately, “spears glimmer” (HALOT 162 s.v. פָּרָס).

⁷ **tn** Heb “many slain.”

⁸ **tc** The MT reads לַגֵּייתָ (*lagge-viyah*, “to the dead bodies”). The LXX reflects לַגֵּייתָ (*l’goyah*, “to her nations”) which arose due to confusion between the consonant ו (*vav*) and the vowel ו (*holem-vav*) in an unpointed text.

⁹ **tn** Heb “There is no end to the dead bodies.”

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “they.”

¹¹ **tn** The preposition בֵּן (*min*) on מְרֹב (*merov*; Heb “from the abundance of harlotries”) is causal: “because of; in consequence of” (HALOT 598 בֵּן 6; BDB 579-80 s.v. בֵּן 2.e). See, e.g., Exod 2:23; 15:23; Deut 7:7; 2 Sam 3:11, 37; Job 22:4; Isa 6:4; 43:4; 53:5; Ezek 28:5, 18; Nah 1:5; Zech 2:8; see also IBHS 213 §11.2.11.d; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 58, §319. The causal sense is supported by the LXX’s ἀπό (*apo*, “from, because of”). Most English versions adopt the causal sense (KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NJPS).

¹² **tn** Heb “Because of the many harlotries of the harlot.” The MT connects v. 4 with vv. 5-6; however, the LXX connects v. 4 with vv. 1-3. The Masoretic division is followed by NRSV and NJPS; the LXX division is followed by KJV and NIV; and the NASB division equivocates on the issue. It is best to connect v. 4 with vv. 5-6 (following the MT) because: (1) vv. 1-3 constitute a self-contained woe-oracle; and (2) the theme of the harlot unifies vv. 4-6: the accusation against the harlot (v. 4) and the stereotypical punishment of the harlot (vv. 5-6).

¹³ **tn** Heb “fair of form, a mistress of sorceries.”

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “she.” This has been translated as a relative pronoun for stylistic reasons. The shift from 2nd person feminine singular (“you”) to 3rd person feminine singular (“she”) is an example of heterosis of persons, a common literary/poetic device used in Hebrew poetry and prophetic literature.

¹⁵ **tc** The MT reads the Qal participle הַמְכַרֶּת (*hammukheret*) which is derived from מָכַר (*makhar*, “to sell, to betray”): “the one who sells/betrays [nations].” The MT is supported by the LXX. The Dead Sea Scrolls read הַמְכַרֶּת (4QpNah 2:7): “the one who sells/betrays [nations]” (see *DJD* 5:38). Dahood

repoints the MT as a Hophal participle, הַמְכַרֶּת (*hammukheret*) from נָכַר (*nakhnakar*, “to know, to recognize”): “the one who is known [by the nations for her harlotries]” (M. Dahood, “Causal Beth and the Root NKR in Nahum 3.4,” *Bib* 52 [1971]: 395-96). The BHS editors suggest emending the MT, due to metathesis, to הַמְכַרֶּת (*hakkomeret*) from II כָּמַר (“to ensnare”; HALOT 482 s.v. II כָּמַר) which is related to Assyrian *kamaru* [A] (“to ensnare”): “The one who ensnares [nations].” The related nouns “snare; net” (מִכְמָר, *mikhmar*) and “net” (מִכְמֶרֶת, *mikhmeret*) are used as metaphors of the wicked destroying their victims (Ps 141:10; Isa 51:20; Hab 1:15, 16). This approach is adopted by NJPS: “who ensnared nations.” Others suggest emending to the Qal participle הַמְכַרֶּת from III כָּמַר (“to destroy, to overthrow”; BDB 485 s.v. III כָּמַר) related to Assyrian *kamaru* [B] (“to destroy; to annihilate”): “the one who destroys nations.” The MT may be retained due to strong external support (LXX and 4QpNah) and adequate internal support; the conjectural emendations are unnecessary.

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “sells.” Alternately, “enslaves”; or perhaps “deceives.” Most scholars derive the Qal participle הַמְכַרֶּת from מָכַר (“to sell, to betray”): “who sells nations.” When used in reference to people, this verb may denote three things: (1) to sell slaves or prisoners of war (Exod 21:8; Deut 21:14; 24:7; Joel 4:3, 6 HT [3:3, 6 ET]); (2) to sell off someone into the hands of the enemy, that is, to give someone entirely into their power (Exod 21:7; 22:2; Deut 32:30; Judg 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; 10:7; 1 Sam 12:9; Isa 50:1; Joel 4:8 HT [3:8 ET]; Ps 44:13); and (3) to betray someone (possibly the meaning here in Nah 3:4?); see HALOT 581-82 s.v. מָכַר; BDB 569 s.v. מָכַר. This is related to Assyrian *makara* (“to carry out trade; to make merchandise of”). Some English versions nuance הַמְכַרֶּת as “who sells nations” (KJV, NASB); others nuance it metonymically, “who enslaves nations” (NIV, NRSV). Thomas derives הַמְכַרֶּת from II כָּמַר (“to deceive, to beguile, to betray”) which is related to Arabic *makara* (“to betray”): “who deceives the nations” (D. W. Thomas, “The Root mkr in Hebrew,” *JTS* 37 [1936]: 388-89; idem, “A Further Note on the Root mkr in Hebrew,” *JTS* 3 [1952]: 214).

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “the one who sells nations by her harlotries.”

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “and clans by her sorceries.”

¹⁹ **tn** Traditionally, “the Lord of hosts.” See the note on the expression “the Lord who commands armies” in 2:13.

²⁰ **tn** Heb “I will uncover your skirts over your face.”

sn Strip off your clothes. In the ancient Near East, the typical punishment for a prostitute was to strip her of her clothes publicly to expose her to open shame, embarrassment, and public ridicule. Because Nineveh had acted like a prostitute, the LORD would punish her as a prostitute.

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “detestable things”; KJV, ASV “abominable filth”; NCV “filthy garbage.”

²⁰ **tc** While the MT reads 2nd person feminine singular לָךְ (*lakh*, “for you”), the LXX reads αὐτῆς (*hautē*, “for her”). The Dead Sea Scrolls from Wadi Murabba’at read לָךְ (“for you”). The MT reading is preferred for several reasons: (1) it is supported by the scrolls from Wadi Murabba’at; (2) it is the most difficult reading; and (3) it explains the origin of the LXX which probably harmonized this with the preceding 3rd person femi-

Nineveh Will Suffer the Same Fate as Thebes

3:8 You are no more secure¹ than Thebes² – she was located on the banks of the Nile; the waters surrounded her, her³ rampart⁴ was the sea, the water⁵ was her wall.

3:9 Cush⁶ and Egypt had limitless strength,⁷ Put and the Libyans⁸ were among⁹ her¹⁰ allies.¹¹

nine singular pronoun. Abrupt switches from third to second person are commonly found in poetic and prophetic literature (e.g., Deut 32:15; Isa 5:8; Jer 29:19; Job 16:7) as well as in Northwest Semitic curses (see S. Gevirtz, “West-Semitic Curses and the Problem of the Origins of Hebrew Law,” VT 11 [1961]: 147, n. 4).

tn Heb “From whence shall I find comforters for you?”

1 **tn** Heb “Are you better than Thebes?”

2 **tn** Heb “No-Amon.” The name is transliterated by NAB, NASB; many other English versions employ the equivalent “Thebes.”

3 **tn** The relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר (*asher*) is functioning in a possessive sense: “whose” (Job 37:17; Ps 95:5; Isa 5:28; 49:23; Jer 31:32; see HALOT 98 s.v. 4).

4 **tn** The consonantal form חֵל is vocalized in the MT as חֵל (*khel*, “rampart”). The LXX translation ἡ ἀσπίς (*hē aspīs*, “strength”) reflects confusion between the relatively rare חֵל and the more common חַיִל (*khayil*, “strength”); see HALOT 310-12.

5 **tn** Heb “from (the) sea.” The form should be emended to מַיִם (*mayim*, “water”). This is a figurative description of the Nile River: It functioned like a fortress wall for Thebes.

6 **sn** Cush is the Hebrew name for the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia (also known as Nubia) along the Nile valley south of Aswan in Egypt. Many modern English versions render this “Ethiopia,” but this area is not to be confused with modern Ethiopia (i.e., Abyssinia).

7 **tn** Or “Cush was limitless and Egypt was strong.” The NIV treats the two nations (“Cush and Egypt”) as a hendiadys of the predicate and translates them as one clause. On the other hand, NJPS treats them separately and translates them in two different clauses.

8 **tn** Heb “Lubim.” Most modern English versions render this as “Libya” or “the Libyans.”

9 **tn** The preposition ב (*bet*) in בְּעִזְרֶיךָ (*b^eezratekh*) should probably be taken as a *bet* of identity rather than in a locative sense (DCH 2:84 s.v. ב 7; HALOT 104 s.v. ב 3).

10 **tn** Although the LXX and Syriac read a 3 fs suffix, the 2 fs suffix on MT בְּעִזְרֶיךָ (*b^eezratekh*, “your strength”) should be retained because of the support of 4QpNah, which reads בְּעִזְרֶיךָ. The MT is the more difficult reading and best explains the origin of the variants, which attempt to harmonize with the preceding 3 fs suffix.

tn Heb “your strength.”

sn This is an example of enallage – a figure of speech in which a speaker addresses a party who is not present. Here, the prophet Nahum addresses the city of Thebes.

11 **tn** The Hebrew noun עִזָּר (*azar*) has been understood in two ways: (1) In the light of the Ugaritic root *gzr* (“hero, valiant one, warrior”), several scholars posit the existence of the Hebrew root עִזָּר (“warrior”), and translate בְּעִזְרֶיךָ (*b^eezratekh*) as “in your army” (M. Dahood, *Psalms*, 1:210; P. Miller, “Ugaritic GZR and Hebrew ‘ZR II,’” UF 2 [1970]: 168). (2) It is better to relate the Hebrew עִזָּר to Canaanite *iziru* (“military help”) which appears several times in the El-Amarna correspondence: “Let him give you soldiers and chariots as help for you so that they may protect the city” (EA 87:13) and “I have provided help for Tyre” (EA 89:18); see K. J. Cathcart, “More Philological Studies in Nahum,” JNWSL 7 (1979): 11.

3:10 Yet she went into captivity as an exile;¹² even her infants were smashed to pieces¹³ at the head of every street.

They cast lots¹⁴ for her nobility;¹⁵ all her dignitaries were bound with chains.

3:11 You too will act like drunkards;¹⁶ you will go into hiding;¹⁷ you too will seek refuge from the enemy.

12 **tn** The MT reads לַגְּלוּלָהּ (*laggolah*, “as a captive”) with the preposition ל (*amed*) denoting essence/identity. On the other hand, 4QpNah reads בְּגוֹלוּלָהּ (“as a captive”) with the preposition ב (*bet*) denoting essence/identity (“as a captive”). The LXX’s αἰχμαλώτος (*aixmalōtos*, “as a prisoner”) does not reveal which preposition was the original.

13 **tn** The past-time reference of the context indicates that the Pual verb יִרְטְשׁוּ (*y^rrut^sshu*) is a preterite describing past action (“they were smashed to pieces”) rather than an imperfect describing future action (“they will be smashed to pieces”). The past-time sense is supported by the Syriac and Vulgate. The LXX, however, misunderstood the form as an imperfect. Not recognizing that the form is a preterite, the BHS editors suggest emending to Pual יִרְטְשׁוּ (*rut^sshu*, “they were smashed to pieces”). This emendation is unnecessary once the possibility of a preterite is recognized. The Masoretic reading is supported by the reading יִרְטְשׁוּ found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah 3:10).

14 **tn** The MT reads יָדוּ (*yadu*, “they cast [lots]”) from יָדָה (*yadad*, “to cast [lots]”). On the other hand, the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah) read יָרָה (“they threw, cast [lots]”) from יָרָה (*yarah*, “to throw, cast [lots]”) (e.g., Josh 18:6). The textual variant arose due to orthographic confusion between ד (*dalet*) and ר (*resh*) – two Hebrew letters very similar in appearance. The root יָרָה is relatively rare – it occurs only two other times (Obad 1:7; Joel 4:3 [3:3 ET]) – therefore, it might have been confused with יָדָה, which appears more frequently.

15 **tn** The MT and Dead Sea Scrolls (4QpNah) read וְעַל נֹבְלֵיהָ (“for her nobles”). The LXX reflects בְּנִבְדֵיהָ וְעַל כָּל נִיחְבַּדְדֵיהָ (*al kol nikhabdēha*, “for all her nobles”), adding כָּל (“all”). The LXX addition probably was caused by the influence of the repetition of כָּל in the preceding and following lines.

16 **tn** The editors of BHS suggest emending the MT reading, the Qal imperfect תִּשְׁכַּרְיָה (*tishkar^rya*, “you will become drunk”) from תִּשְׁכַּרְיָה (*shakhar*, “to become drunk”; BDB 1016 s.v. שָׁכַר; HALOT 971 s.v. שָׁכַר). However, there is no external textual support for the emendation. The imagery of drunkenness is a common figure for defeat in battle.

tn Heb “you will be drunken.”

sn You...will act like drunkards. The imagery of drunkenness is frequently used to describe defeat in battle (Isa 49:26; Jer 25:27; 51:21). It is an appropriate use of imagery: Drunkards frequently pass out and wine drenches out of their mouth; likewise, slain warriors lie fallen and their blood flows out of their mouths.

17 **tn** The MT reads the Niphal participle עֹלְפָה (*al^aalah*) from אָלַם (*alam*, “to conceal”). This is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls, עֹלְפָה (4QpNah 3:11), and is reflected by the LXX. Several scholars suggest nuancing the Niphal in a passive sense: “you will be concealed” or “you will be obscured” (BDB 761 s.v. א. עָלַם 2). However, the reflexive sense “you will conceal yourself; you will hide yourself” (e.g., Ps 26:4) is better (HALOT 835 s.v. עָלַם). On the other hand, the BHS editors suggest emending to the Niphal participle עֹלְפָה (*ne^ealafah*) from אָלַף (*alaf*, “become faint”): “you will become faint,” “you will pass out,” or “you will swoon” (HALOT 836 s.v. עָלַף; BDB 761 s.v. א. עָלַם 2). This is unnecessary and lacks textual support.

tn Heb “you will hide yourself.”

The Assyrian Defenses Will Fail

3:12 All your fortifications will be like fig trees¹ with first-ripe fruit:² If they are shaken,³ their figs⁴ will fall⁵ into the mouth of the eater!⁶
 3:13 Your warriors will be like women in your midst; the gates of your land will be wide open⁷ to your enemies; fire will consume⁸ the bars of your gates.⁹
 3:14 Draw yourselves water for a siege!¹⁰ Strengthen your fortifications! Trample the mud¹¹ and tread the clay!

¹ **sn** Ironically, Sennacherib had recently planted fig trees along all the major avenues in Nineveh to help beautify the city, and had encouraged the citizens of Nineveh to eat from these fruit trees. How appropriate that Nineveh's defenses would now be compared to fig trees whose fruit would be eaten by its enemies.

² **sn** This extended simile compares the siege of Nineveh with reapers shaking a tree to harvest the "first-ripe fruit." Fruit that matured quickly and ripened early in the season dropped from the trees more easily than the later crop which developed more slowly (Isa 28:4). To harvest the later crop the worker had to climb the tree (sixteen to twenty feet tall) and pick the figs by hand from each branch. On the other hand, the fruit from the early harvest could be gathered quickly and with a minimum of effort by simply shaking the trunk of the tree (G. Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palestina*, 1:378-80). The point of this simile is that Nineveh would fall easily and quickly.

³ **tn** This conditional sentence expresses a real anticipated situation expected to occur in the future, rather than an unreal completely hypothetical situation. The particle *im* ("if") introduces real conditions (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 75, §453). The imperfect tense verb *yinnu'u*, "they are shaken") depicts a future-time action conceived as a real situation expected to occur (see Joüon 2:629 §167.c; *IBHS* 510-11 §31.6.1).

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "they"; the referent (the first ripe fruit of the previous line, rendered here as "their figs") has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁵ **tn** The syntax of the concluding clause (apodosis) emphasizes that this action is expected and certain to occur. This clause is introduced by *vav* conjunction and the perfect tense verb *nyfalu* ("they will fall") which emphasizes the expected certainty of the action (see Joüon 2:627-33 §167; *IBHS* 526-29 §32.2.1).

⁶ **sn** This is appropriate imagery and highly ironic. After defeating their enemies, the Assyrian kings often encouraged their troops to consume the fruit of the conquered city's fruit trees.

⁷ **tn** Or "have been opened wide." The Niphal perfect *nyf'khu* (*nif'khu*) from *patach*, "to open") may designate a past-time action ("have been opened wide") or a present-time circumstance ("are wide open"). The present-time sense is preferred in vv. 13-14. When used in reference to present-time circumstances, the perfect tense represents a situation occurring at the very instant the expression is being uttered; this is the so-called "instantaneous perfect" (*IBHS* 488-89 §30.5.1). The root *patach* ("to open") is repeated for emphasis to depict the helpless state of the Assyrian defenses: *patoakh nif'khu*, "wide open")

⁸ **tn** Or "has consumed." The Qal perfect *akhalah* (*okhlah*) from *akhal*, "to consume") refers either to a past-time action ("has consumed") or a present-time action ("consumes"). The context suggests the present-time sense is preferable here. This is an example of the "instantaneous perfect" which represents a situation occurring at the very instant the expression is being uttered (see *IBHS* 488-89 §30.5.1).

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "your bars."

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "waters of siege."

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "go into the mud."

Make mud bricks to strengthen your walls!¹²

3:15 There the fire will consume¹³ you; the sword will cut you down; it will devour¹⁴ you like the young locust would.

The Assyrian Defenders Will Flee

Multiply yourself¹⁵ like the young locust; multiply yourself like the flying locust!
 3:16 Increase¹⁶ your merchants more than the stars of heaven!
 They are like¹⁷ the young locust which sheds¹⁸ its skin and flies away.
 3:17 Your courtiers¹⁹ are like locusts, your officials²⁰ are like a swarm of locusts!

¹² **tn** *Heb* "Take hold of the mud-brick mold!"

¹³ **sn** The expression *the fire will consume you* is an example of personification. Fire is often portrayed consuming an object like a person might consume food (Lev 6:3; 10:2; 16:25; Num 16:35; Deut 4:24; 5:22; Judg 9:15; 1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Kgs 1:10, 12, 14; 2 Chr 7:1; Isa 5:24; 10:17; 30:27, 30; 33:14; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5; 5:6).

¹⁴ **tn** The verb *akal* ("akhal", "to consume, to devour") is used twice for emphasis: "the fire will consume you, the sword...will devour you."

sn The expression *the sword...will devour you* is an example of personification; the sword is frequently portrayed as consuming or devouring a defeated enemy (Deut 32:42; 2 Sam 2:26; 11:25; 18:8; Hos 11:6; Jer 2:30; 12:12); see BDB 37 s.v. *akal* 4; HALOT 46 s.v. *akal*.

¹⁵ **tc** The root *kabed* (*kabbed*, "be numerous") is repeated for emphasis: the forms are the Hitpael infinitive absolute *hitkabbed* (*hitkabbet*) and Hitpael imperative *hitkabbedi* (*hitkabb'edi*), both translated here as "Multiply yourself". The infinitive absolute functions as an imperative (GKC §113.bb, 346). The *BHS* editors suggest emending the Hitpael infinitive absolute form *hitkabbedi* to the Hitpael imperative form *hitkabb'edi* in order to have two identical forms in this line. However, this is not necessary; the infinitive absolute is used for stylistic variation and often precedes imperatives to add urgency. The MT makes sense as it stands.

¹⁶ **tn** Or "Increase!" or "You have increased." The form and meaning of the MT perfect tense verb *harbet* (*harbet*; from *rahav* ["*rahav*"], "to increase") is debated. The LXX translated it as a simple past meaning. However, some scholars argue for an imperatival form or an imperatival nuance due to the presence of the two preceding volitive forms: *hitkabbed* (*hitkabbet*) and *hitkabb'edi* (*hitkabb'edi*, "Multiply...multiply!"). For example, the editors of *BHS* propose emending the perfect tense *harbet* to the imperative form *harvi* (*harvi*, "multiply!"). K. J. Cathcart (*Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic* [BibOr], 145) retains the MT perfect form but classifies it as a precative perfect with an imperatival nuance ("increase!"). Some scholars deny the existence of the precative perfect in Hebrew (G. R. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 25-26); however, others argue for its existence (*IBHS* 494-95 §30.5.4).

¹⁷ **tn** The words "they are like" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ **tn** The verb *pasah* (*pasah*, "to strip off") refers to the action of the locust shedding its outer layer of skin or sheaths of wings while in the larval stage (BDB 833 s.v.). In a similar sense, this verb is normally used of a person stripping off garments (Gen 37:23; Lev 6:4; 16:23; Num 20:26, 28; 1 Sam 18:4; 19:24; 31:8, 9; 2 Sam 23:10; 1 Chr 10:8, 9; Neh 4:17; Job 19:9; 22:6; Ezek 16:39; 23:26; 26:16; 44:19; Hos 2:5; Mic 2:8; 3:3).

¹⁹ **tn** Or "your guards." The noun *migšzarayikh*, "your courtiers") is related to Assyrian *manzazu* ("courtier"; *AHW* 2:639.a) or *massaru* ("guard"; *AHW* 2:621.a); see HALOT 601 s.v. *migšzar*. The nuance "princes," suggested by older lexicographers (BDB 634 s.v. *migšzar*), is obsolete.

²⁰ **tn** The noun *afšarayikh* (*afšarayikh*, "your scribes") from *afšar*

They encamp in the walls on a cold day,
yet when the sun rises, they¹ fly away;²
and no one knows where they³ are.⁴

Concluding Dirge

3:18 Your shepherds⁵ are sleeping, O king
of Assyria!

Your officers⁶ are slumbering!⁷
Your people are scattered like sheep⁸ on
the mountains
and there is no one to regather them!
3:19 Your destruction is like an incurable
wound,⁹
your demise is like a fatal injury!¹⁰
All who hear what has happened to you¹¹
will clap their hands for joy,¹²
for no one ever escaped your endless
cruelty!¹³

(*tīfsar*, “scribe, marshal”) is a loanword from Assyrian *tupsarru* and Sumerian *DUB.SAR* (“tablet-writer; scribe; official”); see BDB 381 s.v. מַכְתָּבָר; HALOT 379 s.v. This term is also attested in Ugaritic *tupsarru* and in Phoenician *dpsr*. As in Jer 51:27, it is used of military and administrative officials. This term designated military officials who recorded the names of recruits and the military activities of Assyrian kings (see P. Machinist, “Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah,” *JAOS* 103 [1983]: 736).

1 tn Heb “it flees.”

2 tc The BHS editors propose redividing the singular MT reading וְנִיָּדָה (v^e*nodad*, “and it flees”) to the plural וְנִיָּדָה (v^e*nod^edu*, “and they flee”) due to the difficulty of a singular verb. However, the LXX supports the singular MT reading. The subject is נֹב (gov, “swarm”), not individual locusts.

3 tc The MT reads the noun with 3rd person masculine singular suffix בְּקוֹמוֹ (m^e*qomo*, “its place”). The BHS editors suggest emending to 3rd person masculine plural suffix בְּקוֹמָם (m^e*qomam*, “their place”). The MT is supported by the LXX reading, which has a singular suffix. The 3rd person masculine singular suffix is not as awkward as the BHS editors claim – its antecedent is the singular אֲרֵבָה (*arbeh*, “locust”) and נֹב נְבִי (gov govay, “a swarm of locusts”), as reflected by the 3rd person masculine singular verb וְנִיָּדָה (translated “it flies away”).

4 tc The MT reads אַיִם (*ayyam*, “Where are they?”); see, e.g., Isa 19:12; DCH 1:202-3 s.v. אַי; HALOT 40 s.v. On the other hand, the LXX’s οὐαὶ αὐτοῖς (*ouai autois*, “Woe to them!”) seems to reflect a reading of אַיִם (*ayyam*, “Alas to them!”). The BHS editors suggest emending to אֵימָה (“Alas!” or “How?”) and join it to v. 18, or אֵי מָה (*oy mah*, “Woe! Why...?”) joined to v. 18. HALOT (40 s.v.) suggests the emendation אֵימָה (*ekha*, “Alas to you!”).

tn Heb “Its place is not known – where are they?” The form אַיִם has been taken in various ways: (1) an interrogative adverb with 3rd person masculine plural suffix (“where are they?”; GK 296-97 §100.σ; BDB 32 s.v. אַי 1.a); (2) an interrogative particle אַי (ay, “where?”) lengthened to אַיָּה (*ayyah*) and written with the enclitic particle ם (*mem*; GK 295 §100.g), similar to אַיָּמִי (“where?”) in Assyrian (CAD 1.1.220); see W. A. Maier, *Nahum*, 356; R. D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (WEC), 111; T. Longman, “Nahum,” *The Minor Prophets*, 2:826.

5 sn The term *shepherd* was frequently used in the ancient Near East in reference to kings and other leaders (royal,

political, military). Here, the expression *your shepherds* is an implied comparison (hypocatastasis) referring to the royal/military leadership of Assyria.

6 tn The Hebrew term אֲדִירִים (*addirakha*, “your officers”) from the root אָדַר (*addir*, “high noble, majestic one”) designates “prominent people” in society (Judg 5:13, 25; Jer 14:3; Ps 16:3; Neh 3:5; 10:30; 2 Chr 23:20) and prominent “officers” in the military (Nah 2:6; 3:18); see HALOT 14 s.v.; BDB 12 s.v. אָדַר. This is related to Assyrian *adaru* (“high noble official”).

7 tn The MT reads יִשְׁכְּנוּ (*yishk^enu*, “they are settling down; they are lying down”) from שָׁכַן (*shakhan*, “to settle down, to lie down”). The BHS editors suggest emending to יִשְׁכְּנוּ (*yashnu*, “they are slumbering”) in order to produce a tighter parallelism with the parallel verb נָמְנוּ (*namu*, “they are sleeping”). However, the MT has an adequate parallelism because the verb שָׁכַן is often used in reference to the dead lying down in the grave (Job 4:19; 26:5; Ps 94:17; Isa 26:19; see BDB 1015 s.v. שָׁכַן Qal.2.b). This is a figurative expression (hypocatastasis) for someone dying. Although the LXX misunderstood the syntax of this line, the LXX translation ἐκοίμισε (*ekoimise*, “he has laid low”) points to a form of the Masoretic verbal root שָׁכַן.

8 tn The words “like sheep” are not in the Hebrew text; they are added for clarification of the imagery. The previous line compares Assyria’s leaders to shepherds.

9 tc The MT reads the *hapax legomenon* בְּהָה (*kehah*, “relief, alleviation”). On the other hand, the LXX reads ἰασις (*iasis*, “healing”) which seems to reflect a reading of גְּהָה (*gehah*, “cure, healing”). In the light of the LXX, the BHS editors suggest emending the MT to גְּהָה (*gehah*) – which occurs only once elsewhere (Prov 17:22) – on the basis of orthographic and phonological confusion between Hebrew כַּ (*kaf*) and גִּ (*gimel*). This emendation would produce the common ancient Near Eastern treaty-curse: “there is no cure for your wound” (e.g., Hos 5:13); see HALOT 461 s.v. בְּהָה; K. J. Cathcart, “Treaty-Curses and the Book of Nahum,” *CBQ* 35 (1973): 186; D. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*, 64-66.

tn Heb “There is no relief of your fracture.”

10 tn Heb “your injury is fatal.”

11 tn Heb “the report of you.”

12 tn Heb “will clap their hands over you.”

13 tn Heb “For who ever escaped...?”