

Nahum 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

Analysis

For while they be folden together as thorns (ki ad-sirim sevukim, כִּי עַד-סִירִים סְבֻכִים). Sirim (סִירִים, "thorns") and sevukim (סְבֻכִים, "entangled/interwoven") create an image of dense, twisted thornbushes—impossible to penetrate but easily burned. This may describe Nineveh's defenders packed tightly together in formation, seeming formidable but actually vulnerable. Thorns appear strong when intertwined but provide poor defense against fire.

And while they are drunken as drunkards (uchesovam sevuim, וְכַסְבָּאָם סְבָואִים). Sava (סַבָּא, "drunkard") describes complete intoxication—impaired judgment, reduced coordination, false confidence. Whether literal (Assyrian defenders drunk during the siege) or metaphorical (spiritually/morally intoxicated by pride and power), drunkenness indicates vulnerability masquerading as strength. The drunk feel invincible but are easily overcome.

They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry (ukhullu qash male yovalu, אַכְלֻוּ קָשׁ מָלֵא יָוָלָע). Qash (קָשׁ, "stubble") is dried crop remnants after harvest—completely dry, instantly flammable. Male yavesh ("fully dry") emphasizes extreme flammability. The image is devastating: Nineveh's mighty armies, despite appearing strong (entangled thorns, numerous drunkards), will be consumed as quickly and completely as fire burns dry stubble. Ancient historians record that Nineveh was indeed burned during its conquest—palaces, temples, and buildings set ablaze. Archaeological evidence confirms massive fire destruction layers.

Historical Context

Assyrian military might was legendary—disciplined armies, advanced siege weapons, brutal tactics that terrorized enemies into submission. Yet Nahum prophesies total defeat. Historical accounts describe chaos during Nineveh's final siege: demoralized defenders, failed counterattacks, and ultimately catastrophic defeat. The Babylonian Chronicle records the city's burning. Excavations reveal destruction by fire throughout Nineveh's ruins. God used the Babylonian-Median coalition to fulfill His word—the thorns and stubble imagery proved literally accurate. The mighty fell swiftly and completely.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the imagery of entangled thorns and drunk defenders illustrate false confidence based on apparent strength?
2. What modern 'thorns' and 'stubble'—sources of false security—might appear strong but are actually vulnerable to God's judgment?
3. How does this prophecy encourage believers facing seemingly overwhelming opposition—what appears invincible to us is utterly vulnerable before God?

Interlinear Text

סִירֵיִם עַד כִּי	סְבִכִּים	וְכִסְכָּא מִ
H3588 H5704 as thorns	For while they be folded together	as drunkards
H5518	H5440	H5435

סְבִואִים	אֵלֶּה	מְלָאָה: יְבָשָׁה כְּלָשׁ
and while they are drunken	they shall be devoured	as stubble dry

H5433 H398 H7179 H3002 H4390

Additional Cross-References

Micah 7:4 (Parallel theme): The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.

Isaiah 5:24 (Parallel theme): Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 9:18 (Parallel theme): For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke.

Nahum 3:11 (Parallel theme): Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.

Malachi 4:1 (Parallel theme): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Jeremiah 51:57 (Parallel theme): And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.