

Nahum 1:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.

Analysis

There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD (mimekh yatsa choshev al-YHWH ra'ah, מִמֶּךָ יָצָא חֹשֵׁב עַל־יְהוָה רָעָה). The "one" likely refers to a specific Assyrian king, possibly Sennacherib who invaded Judah (701 BC) and blasphemed YHWH (2 Kings 18:28-35; Isaiah 36-37), or could represent Assyrian imperial policy generally. Chashav (חָשַׁב, "devise/imagine") indicates deliberate planning, not accidental opposition. Ra'ah (רָעָה, "evil/wickedness") describes plotting against God Himself—not merely attacking Judah but assaulting YHWH's honor and authority.

A wicked counsellor (yo'etz beliyya'al, יוֹעֵץ בְּלִיַּיָּאֵל). Beliyya'al (בְּלִיַּיָּאֵל, "worthless/wicked") often describes those who reject God's authority and counsel wickedness. This "counsellor" gives evil advice—perhaps to kings, certainly to populations—leading them in rebellion against God. Sennacherib's Rabshakeh (chief officer) blasphemed YHWH and counseled Judah to surrender, claiming no god could deliver from Assyria (2 Kings 18:29-35)—classic beliyya'al counsel.

The verse personalizes Nineveh's guilt. It wasn't merely national policy but individuals making deliberate choices to oppose God. This establishes moral culpability—they weren't innocently following cultural norms but actively devising evil against the Creator. Such deliberate wickedness demands judgment. God doesn't capriciously destroy nations but judges those who knowingly rebel against Him and lead others astray.

Historical Context

Multiple Assyrian kings blasphemed YHWH and oppressed Judah. Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC) invaded Israel. Shalmaneser V and Sargon II destroyed Samaria (722 BC). Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem (701 BC), sending messages mocking God and claiming YHWH couldn't deliver Judah (2 Kings 18:28-35). Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal continued Assyrian aggression and pride. The prophetic indictment applies to this pattern of deliberate opposition to God. Second Kings 19:10-13 records Sennacherib's letter challenging God—textbook example of 'imagining evil against the LORD.' God's miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35-36) demonstrated His power, but Assyria persisted in wickedness, sealing their doom.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'imagine evil against the LORD'—how do individuals and nations do this today?
2. How does deliberate opposition to God differ from ignorance or cultural blindness, and why does it merit severer judgment?
3. Who are modern 'wicked counsellors' leading others in rebellion against God, and how should we respond to their influence?

Interlinear Text

מִי הַ	יֵצֵא	חֲשֵׁב	עַל	יְהוָה
H4480	There is one come out	of thee that imagineth	H5921	against the LORD
	H3318	H2803		H3068
רָעָה	יֵעֹזֵר	בְּלִעְלָהּ		
evil	counsellor	a wicked		
H7451	H3289	H1100		

Additional Cross-References

Nahum 1:9 (References Lord): What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

2 Chronicles 13:7 (Parallel theme): And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them.

2 Kings 18:30 (References Lord): Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

1 Samuel 2:12 (References Lord): Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

2 Samuel 20:1 (Parallel theme): And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.