

Nahum 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.

Analysis

Nahum's vision of Nineveh's attackers is vivid and terrifying: 'The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet' (magen gibborav me'adam anshei chayil metullai'im). Shields painted or covered in red leather, warriors clothed in scarlet—either literal military attire or imagery of bloodshed—create a picture of overwhelming force. 'The chariots shall be with flaming torches' (barishei esh harekev) depicts either literal torches attached to chariots (to terrify defenders) or the gleam of metal in sunlight appearing like fire. The cedar spears 'shall be terribly shaken' (haberoshim horah'alu) suggests cypress or fir wood spears brandished menacingly. This overwhelming military display demonstrates that God uses real human armies, with actual weapons and tactics, to accomplish His purposes. He doesn't need to supernaturally destroy Nineveh; He ordains the Babylonian-Median coalition to be His instrument of judgment. This shows divine sovereignty working through human agency—God's purposes accomplished through historical events and human decisions, yet without compromising human responsibility or freedom.

Historical Context

Historical accounts confirm Nahum's prophetic accuracy. The Babylonian Chronicle describes the coalition forces besieging Nineveh in 612 BC. Archaeological evidence reveals the city's massive destruction—palace complexes burned, walls breached, and evidence of intense combat. The Median cavalry was

particularly feared, and Babylonian infantry was renowned for discipline and effectiveness. Together, these forces overwhelmed Nineveh despite its legendary defenses. The prophecy's detailed fulfillment demonstrates God's sovereign control over historical events. What appeared to be merely political-military conflict was actually divine judgment executed through human armies. This pattern appears throughout Scripture and history: God raises up and brings down empires according to His purposes.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of human armies to accomplish His purposes demonstrate His sovereignty over history without violating human agency?
2. What does this passage teach about God's relationship to warfare and violence—using it for His purposes while not approving cruelty or injustice?
3. How should Christians understand modern geopolitical conflicts in light of God's sovereignty over nations and history?

Interlinear Text

מָגִן	גִּבּוֹרֵי יְהוָה	מְאֻדָּם	אֲנָשֵׁי	חַיִּל	מְתַלַּעֵי יָם
The shield	of his mighty men	is made red	H376	the valiant	are in scarlet
H4043	H1368	H119		H2428	H8529
בְּאֵשׁ	פְּלִדֵּי ת	הֶקָּחָם	בֵּי יוֹם	הַכִּיּוֹן	
shall be with flaming	torches	the chariots	in the day	of his preparation	
H784	H6393	H7393	H3117	H3559	
וְהִבְרָשׁ יָם	הִרְעָלוּ:				
and the fir trees	shall be terribly shaken				
H1265	H7477				

