

Nahum 3:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

Analysis

Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women (hinneh ammekh nashim beqirbek, הִנֵּה עַמֶּךָ נָשִׁים בְּקִרְבֶּךָ)—Nahum declares Nineveh's warriors have become like women. In ancient warfare culture, this wasn't denigrating women generally but using gendered language to describe military weakness and fear. Warriors expected to fight courageously instead cower like non-combatants. The verb suggests complete loss of martial spirit—those trained for war unable or unwilling to fight.

The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies (la'oyevaikh pathoach niphtechu sha'arei artzekh)—gates (sha'ar, שַׁעַר) stand wide open (pathoach niphtechu, intensive opening) to enemies. This depicts either surrender, panic-driven flight leaving gates open, or successful breach. **The fire shall devour thy bars** (akhelah esh bericheykh)—fire consumes gate bars (beriach, בְּרִיחַ), the heavy wooden or metal bars securing gates. Without defenders, with open gates and burned bars, the city is utterly vulnerable.

Historical Context

Nineveh's defenders, descendants of the warriors who conquered the ancient Near East, would have considered any suggestion of cowardice deeply insulting. Yet Nahum prophesied their courage would fail when judgment came. In 612 BC, after months of siege, when walls were breached, resistance collapsed. Historical

accounts suggest panic and confusion rather than organized defense. The city's gates, meant to keep enemies out, either were opened by terrified inhabitants or burned by attackers. The prophecy proved accurate—Nineveh's military prowess vanished when faced with divinely-ordained judgment. Archaeological evidence of burning confirms fire devoured the city, including its gates and bars.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does the failure of Nineveh's military courage teach about the source of true strength and security?
2. How does this verse illustrate that without God's protection, even the most formidable military forces become powerless?
3. In what ways do modern societies similarly trust in military might or security systems that could fail instantly if God withdraws His restraining hand?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| הִנֵּה הַ | עַמִּי הַ | נָשִׁים | בְּקִרְבִּי הַ | לֹא יָבִי יְיָ | | |
| H2009 | Behold thy people | of thee are women | in the midst | unto thine enemies | | |
| | H5971 | H802 | H7130 | H341 | | |
| וְנִפְתָּח וְ | נִפְתָּח וְ | שַׁעַר יְ | אֶרֶץ הַ | אֵשׁ | בָּרִיחֶיךָ: | |
| open | open | the gates | of thy land | shall devour | the fire | thy bars |
| H6605 | H6605 | H8179 | H776 | H398 | H784 | H1280 |

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 51:30 (Parallel theme): The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken.

Isaiah 19:16 (Parallel theme): In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it.

Jeremiah 50:37 (Parallel theme): A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.

Nahum 2:6 (Parallel theme): The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.