

# Nahum 3:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln.

## Analysis

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**Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds** (mei matzor shi'avilak chazzeqi mibtzerayik)—Nahum ironically commands Nineveh to prepare for siege: draw (sha'av, שָׁאַב) water for siege (matzor, מַצּוֹר) and strengthen (chazaq, חָזַק) fortifications (mivtzar, מִבְצָר). Sieges required massive water storage since supply lines would be cut. Fortifications needed reinforcement against assault.

**Go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln** (bo'i vatit verimsi bachomer chazqi malben)—go into clay (tit, טִיט), trample mortar (chomer, חֹמֶר), strengthen the brick-mold (malben, מַלְבֵּן). This describes manufacturing bricks to repair walls—the complete cycle of defensive preparation. But the commands are deeply ironic: do everything possible to defend yourself—it won't help. When God decrees judgment, no human preparation avails. This echoes 2:1 where similar ironic commands appear. The repetition emphasizes futility: prepare all you want; you will still fall.

## Historical Context

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Ancient siege warfare was war of attrition. Cities needed vast water reserves, strong walls, and ability to manufacture building materials for repairs. Nineveh had sophisticated defenses and supply systems. Yet Nahum prophesies all preparations will prove useless. In 612 BC, despite three years of preparation and three months of resistance, Nineveh fell. The Babylonian Chronicle records the siege and conquest. All the water storage, wall reinforcement, and defensive

preparation couldn't prevent God's decreed judgment. The irony proved accurate—Nineveh did everything humanly possible to defend itself, yet fell completely. This demonstrates divine sovereignty: when God purposes to judge, no human effort prevents it.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. What does the ironic command to prepare defenses that will fail teach about the limits of human effort when opposed to divine purposes?
2. How should believers understand the relationship between human responsibility (proper preparation) and divine sovereignty (ultimate outcomes)?
3. In what ways do people today similarly engage in futile 'preparation' and 'fortification' against consequences that God has decreed for unrepented sin?

## Interlinear Text

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מֵי יַם	מִצֹּר	שָׁאֲבִי	לְךָ	הִחַזְּתִי יְקִי	מִבְצָרֶיךָ יְיָ	בֹּא אֲנִי
thee waters	for the siege	Draw	H0	fortify	thy strong holds	go
H4325	H4692	H7579		H2388	H4013	H935
בֶּטֶן יֹט	וְרָמַסְתָּ	בַּח מֹר	הִחַזְּתִי יְקִי	מִלְכֵּן:		
into clay	and tread	the mortar	fortify	the brickkiln		
H2916	H7429	H2563	H2388	H4404		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Nahum 2:1** (Parallel theme): He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily.

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