

# Nahum

## **Author:**

1. Little is known for sure besides what is revealed in 1:1. His name means “consolation” or “compassion.”
2. His home is Elkosh. The location of this place is greatly debated. There are four primary theories:
  - a. Jerome and Eusebius identified it as Elkosi or El Kauze in Galilee.
  - b. Others identified it as Capernaum, since it is translated as “village of Nahum.”  
According to this theory, Elkosh would have later been renamed Capernaum after its most famous citizen.
  - c. Some identified it with Alqush near Mosul in Assyria, though there is little evidence.
  - d. Others have identified it with Ecleasei, which was a village of Judah in the territory of Simeon between Jerusalem and Gaza. This has some credibility because the text indicates that the author was a native of the kingdom of Judah, rather than the region of Galilee.

## **Date:**

1. There is considerable debate as to the dating of Nahum. In this debate the dates range from an extreme of 650 B.C. to about 612 B.C. The reference to the capture of Thebes (3:8; No-Amon) would prevent the book from being dated earlier. Esarhaddon entered Egypt about 670 B.C. and Thebes was taken by Ashurbanipal about 667 B.C. He finally destroyed Thebes about 661 B.C.
2. The fall of Nineveh is seen as a future event. This would put the other extreme just before 612 B.C. Assyria is still seen as powerful; forcing us to see a date prior to 626 B.C. at which time they went into a period of decline.
3. Considerable evidence supports a date between 654 B.C. and 630 B.C. as the best date.

## **Canonicity:**

1. The canonicity and text of Nahum has never been seriously challenged. Some critical scholars have claimed that 1:2-10 was not originally a part of the original text, but was later redacted into the text. Those who believe this indicate that it was a corrupted acrostic. They believe so because vs. 2 begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and by the presence of subsequent letters at or near the beginning of succeeding lines.

2. However, since only two of these letters occur in their expected position (vs. 2a, 3b), there appears to be insufficient grounds for seeking an acrostic, let alone for attempting to rearrange the text to form one.
3. Jack P. Lewis indicates that fragments of a commentary on 2:11-13 were found in Cave 1 at Qumran near the Dead Sea. This would provide the earliest evidence to the text of Nahum. The Qumran community applied phrases from the text to problems subsequent to the Greek period and to evils in Jerusalem.

### **The Message:**

1. Denny Petrillo:

*Nahum revealed that Nineveh's days of grace were past. About 150 years earlier, Jonah preached to Nineveh when Assyria was experiencing difficult days, and his message produced repentance and salvation. In Nahum's day, the empire and its capital city were at the height of their glory. Nineveh's wealth and pride left no room for repentance.*

*The message is just the opposite of Jonah's. In Jonah we see God's forgiveness of the Assyrian capital. In Nahum, God announces and executes judgment.*

*Nahum sees the judgment of God as being deferred, but now sure and final. Vengeance belongs to God! God is still in active control of this world. When he lifts his finger in judgment the greatest nation with the greatest and most elaborate defenses is doomed to fail.*

2. The immediate purpose of Nahum is to pronounce the doom that was to fall on Nineveh. The ultimate purpose of the book is to set forth God's vengeance and sovereign righteousness.
3. Some have sharply criticized Nahum because he doesn't condemn Israel for her sin and extends no call for her repentance.
4. Others represent Nahum as malicious and proud. Sandmel indicated that the book of Nahum is a "blood-curdling song of rejoicing that Nineveh has fallen." Patterson accuses Nahum of writing in order to express his own personal delight over the destruction of Nineveh, Israel's greatest oppressor. Smith said, *Nahum, however, was writing to express the relief and gratitude of the entire body of God's people over the prospect of the fall of an oppressor who had humiliated them and mocked their God for decades.*

<b>The Structure of Nahum</b>		
<b>The Verdict of Vengeance</b>	<b>The Vision of Vengeance</b>	<b>The Vindication of Vengeance</b>
<b>Judgment on Nineveh Declared</b> Ch. 1	<b>Judgment on Nineveh Described</b> Ch. 2	<b>Judgment on Nineveh Defended</b> Ch. 3

### **Background:**

1. Nahum's prophecy is rooted in God's revelation of himself at Sinai as a God of judgment and mercy. This revelation is seen in 1:2-6 and receives even more application in the remainder of the book. Nahum stands firmly in Israel's prophetic tradition as one inspired to interpret the complexities of the present and future in the light of the past. The law belonged to every member of the covenant; the details of its working throughout history were understood by those who of that covenant (Jer. 23:18; Amos 3:7).
2. Nahum prophesies in the context of a long period of oppression at the hands of Assyria. Although God was the ultimate source of this oppression, Assyria was the tool He used. Now, however, the "pendulum swings" and Assyria is to be on the receiving end of God's wrath.
3. Assyria had a long history of oppression. As early as the ninth century B.C., Shalmanesar III (858-824) received tribute from Jehu in one of his western campaigns. Smith provides the following quote from the ANET, p. 281: *The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri; I received from him silver, gold, a golden saplu-bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king.*
  - a. Adad-nirari III (810-782) also claimed the submission of Israel among his Palestinian vassals. However, Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727) represents the first major oppressor of Israel. He invaded the land during the reign of Menahem (752-732; cf. 2 Kgs. 15:29; 1 Chr. 5:6, 26; 2 Chr. 30: 6, 10; Isa. 9:1). His campaign is also recorded in ANET: *Israel..all its inhabitants and their possessions I led to Assyria. They overthrew their king Pekah and I placed Hoshea as king over them. I received from then 10 talents of gold, 1000 talents of silver as their tribute and brought them to Assyria.*
  - b. Tiglath-Pileser III extended his authority into Judah, where Ahaz (735-715) pursued a policy of submission to Assyria (also well documented in ANET). Ahaz incurred the opposition of both Pekah, king of Israel (740-732), who favored the anti-Assyrian condition of his predecessor Ahab, and Isaiah, who denounced his faithlessness in depending on Assyria, rather than on the Lord when faced with Pekah's aggression (2 Kgs. 16:5-18; 2 Chr. 28:16-25; Isa. 7:1-25; cf. Jer. 2:36). Therefore, during the reign of Ahaz Judah was faced with the issue of submission or resistance to Assyria – an issue they faced for over a century.
  - c. Pekah was murdered by Hoshea (732-722), who adopted a vacillating pro-Assyrian policy. His decision to rely on Egypt and reject his allegiance to Assyria provoked an invasion from Shalmanesar V (727-722).
4. Samaria fell after a long siege by Shalmanesar's successor, Sargon II (721-705). The northern kingdom was destroyed and Israel was carried into Assyrian captivity (2 Kgs. 17:3-6; 18:20-21; Isa. 7:8; 8:4; 19:11; 36:20; Hos. 9:3; 10:6). Biblically, this is clearly shown to be God's wrath on them (2 Kgs. 17:7-20; 18:9-12), as were the problems of Ahaz in the same era (2 Chr. 28:19-20). Israel experienced great suffering under Sargon II before facing the full brunt of Assyria's hostility in the reign of Sennacherib (704-681).

5. Hezekiah (728-687) succeeded Ahaz and abandoned his pro-Assyria policy (2 Kgs. 18:7-20). Sennacherib therefore invaded Judah (701), conquering the fortified cities and threatening Jerusalem until he was divinely prevented.
6. In the next century Esarhaddon (681-669) and his son Ashurbanipal (669-633) exercised dominion over Judah. This may correspond to the biblical incident of Manasesh's bondage, further indicating God's involvement in this affliction at the hand of the Assyrians (2 Chr. 33:1-11).
  - a. The stability of Ashurbanipal's long reign was followed by instability in the reigns of his sons Ashur-etil-ilani and Sinshumlishir who were succeeded after short reigns by the former's son, Sinshar-ishkun (621-612). During this time Nabopolassar established himself as the king of Babylon (625-605), attacking and capturing the pro-Assyrian cities of Babylonia and gaining independence from Assyria by 616.
  - b. In 614 Ashur was seized in a brutal massacre by the Medes under Cyraxares. After this an alliance was formed by Nabopolassar and Cyraxares against Assyria. The siege and destruction of Nineveh, completed in 612, were the outcome of this alliance and Assyria's failure to maintain its hold on the hostile elements of its empire.

# Nahum

## Outline

### I. The Verdict of Vengeance

A. Title of the Book (1:1)

B. The Great Judge (1:2-8)

1. Disposition of Yahweh (vs. 2-3a)

2. Manifestation of Yahweh (vs. 3b-5)

3. Power of Yahweh (vs. 6-8)

C. The Verdict of the Judge (1:9-14)

1. Address to Nineveh (vs. 9-11)

2. Address to Judah (vs. 12-13)

3. Address to Nineveh's ruler (vs. 14)

D. The Reaction to the Verdict (1:15)

### II. The Vision of Vengeance

A. Preliminary Declaration (2:1-2)

B. Vision of the Conflict (2:3-5)

C. Vision of the Conquest (2:6-10)

D. Responses to the Vision (2:11-13)

### III. The Vindication of Vengeance

A. Evil declared (3:1-3)

B. Evil described (3:4-7)

C. Evil defeated (3:8-13)

D. Evil disparaged (3:14-17)

E. Evil destroyed (3:18-19)