

# NAHUM

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## THE MAN

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- A. Name: Consolation or consoler.
- B. Home: Nahum the Elkoshite...but where is Elkosh located?
1. No one really knows.
  2. Capernaum, means “village of Nahum”.
- C. OCCUPATION of the prophet is unknown.
- D. CHARACTERIZATION:
1. MOST STUDENTS OF THE PROPHETS ACCLAIM Nahum’s writings to be one of the most poetic of them all.
  2. George A. Smith describes it; His language is strong and brilliant; his rhythm rumbles and rolls, leaps and flashes, like the horsemen and chariots he describes. (Vo. 11 p. 91).
  3. Knopf points out the fact that Hebrew poetry does not rhyme, but has measure cadences within the lines. “These cadences indicate emotion—two short, sharp beats for alarms; four beats for marching or dignity; three for ordinary; and five for deep feeling, joy or sorrow. Nahum’s sound pictures of a city’s fall are lost in current Bible translations. However, it is possible, by proper translation of the original Hebrew and arrangement of the English phrases, to imagine ourselves on the very walls of Nineveh, witnessing the whole gripping tragedy. Now the enemy has been sighted. The alarm is given (2:1), in the characteristic two-beat measure of agitation (read with accents indicated):

Se’t the wa’tch  
Gu’ard the wa’y  
Bu’ckly the a’rmor  
Mu’ster a’rms.

Now the tramp of the enemy is heard (2:3,4).

The shi’elds of the he’roes are dy’ed with re’d  
The warriors are cla’d in sca’rlet ga’rb  
The cha’riot me’tal gle’ams like fi’re  
In the da’y of ba’ttle the ho’rses are plu’nging.  
On the stre’ets the cha’riots ra’ttle  
They go lu’rching acro’ss the squa’re.

Short two-beat lines tell of the conflict (2:4-6)

They fla’sh as fi’re  
They da’rt as li’ghtning  
The no’bles atta’ck

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They ca'rry the ou'tposts  
They ru'sh to the wa'll  
They se't up the co'everings  
The wa'ter gat's are o'pened.

Then comes the doom of the city (2:6-8)

The pla'ce goes do'wn in ru'in  
The que'en is unve'iled and ca'rried o'ff  
Her mai'dens mo'an like mou'ring do'ves  
They are bea'ting upo'n their brea'sts  
Nineveh is li'ke a po'ol of wa'ter  
Her wa'ters are flo'wing awa'y.

In striking four-beat measure imitating the galloping horses, Nahum pictures the looting with the vividness of a news-reel (2:9; 3:2,3).

Lo'ot the si'lver, lo'ot the go'ld  
Endliss i's the pre'cious sto're  
H'ark! The whi'p and ra'ttling whe'el  
Ga'lloping ho'rse and cha'riot's re'el  
Ho'rsemen cha'rging with gla'sh of swo'rd  
Gli'ttering spe'ar and wou'nded ho'rde  
Pi'les of sla'in no e'nd of de'ad '  
They stu'mble upo'n their co'rpses dre'ad.

Try reading this with the rhythmic cadence indicated by accent marks, imagining galloping horses and lurching chariots.

The lines are quite different from those in the usual translations, yet here are the pictures and feelings that Nahum was trying to express to his readers.

(Carl Sumner Knopf, "Ask the Prophets," p. 76f).

4. The lesson of his beautiful worded yet dreadful prophecy is one to which the world could well give heed today. The prophet reveals the eternal principle of the omnipotent God that for a nation to survive it must be established upon and directed by principles of righteousness and truth.

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## DATE

1. The book identifies the fall of No-amon, the Egyptian Thebes (3:8) This was carried out by Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria about the year 663 B.C.
  2. And Nineveh was destroyed by Medes and Chaldeans, 612 B.C.
  3. Somewhere between these two dates Nahum wrote. (Aprox. 630 to 612 B.C)
  4. He was a contemporary of the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah.
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## BACKGROUND

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1. Does not touch upon the internal conditions in Judah and Jerusalem.
2. Deals with Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Homer Haily gives this information as immediate background of Assyria:
  - A. Tiglath-pileser III, 745-727 B.C. This monarch began a program of world conquest. He invaded the West and deported some of the inhabitants of northern Israel, removing them to an area north of Nineveh.
  - B. Shalmaneser V, 726-722 B.C. Shalmaneser began the siege of Samaria, 722 B.C., but died before the city fell.
  - C. Sargon II, 722-705 B.C. This king completed the siege of Samaria, 721 B.C., which had been begun by Shalmaneser. He was murdered 705 B.C.
  - D. Sennacherib, 705-681 B.C. Sennacherib boasted on his monuments that he had shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem “as a bird in a cage.” He was murdered by two of his sons in 681 B.C., who were then driven out by a younger son, Esarhaddon, who became king.
  - E. Esarhaddon, 681-668 B.C.
  - F. Ashurbanipal, 668-625 B.C. His campaign in Egypt resulted in the fall of No-amon (Nahum 3:8). Much booty was carried away by him into Assyria. According to the records this king was very cruel.
  - G. Assuretil-ilani, 625-620 B.C.
  - H. Sin-shar-ishkeen (Esarhaddon II) 620-612 B.C. when Nineveh was being besieged by the Medes and Chaldeans, Esarhaddon II gathered his wives and children and wealth into the palace and set fire to it. He perished in the fire. (A Commentary on the Minor Prophets, Homer Hailey, pp 250)

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## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

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- A. NINEVEH’S DOOM - BY THE DECREE OF JEHOVAH; chap. 1.
  1. The goodness and severity of Jehovah, vv. 2-8.
    - a. Vengeance and mercy of God. vv. 2,3.
    - b. The terribleness of His anger against sin, vv. 4-6.
    - c. The greatness of His mercy, stronghold to faithful, v. 7.
    - d. The pursuer of His enemies, v. 8.
  2. The complete overthrow of Nineveh, vv. 9-15.
    - a. God’s faithfulness in the present crises: affliction not again to come from Assyria (as in the past), vv. 9-11.

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- b. Judah delivered from the yoke of Assyria by destruction of Nineveh's power, vv. 12, 13.
    - c. Rejoicing in Zion, v. 15.
  - B. SIEGE AND DESTRUCTION OF NINEVEH - Decreed by Jehovah, ch. 2.
    - 1. Assault upon Nineveh: doom of the city, vv. 1-7.
      - a. Furious preparation for battle, vv. 1-4.
      - b. Hopelessness of resistance, vv. 5,6. The city, as a queen, is captured and moans, v. 7.
    - 2. Flight of the people and sack of the city. vv 8-13.
      - a. The inhabitants flee, the city is plundered, vv. 8-10.
      - b. The destruction is complete vv. 11-13.
  - C. NINEVEH'S SINS AND HER INEVITABLE DOOM; chap. 3.
    - 1. Nineveh's fate brought upon herself as retribution of crimes vv. 1-7.
      - a. The graphic description of the battle, vv. 1-3.
      - b. The cause: He sins, v. 4.
      - c. The uncovering of her shame is of Jehovah, vv. 5-7.
    - 2. The fate of No-amon is to be the fate of Nineveh, vv. 8-11.
    - 3. Inability of Nineveh's resources to save the city. vv. 12-19.
      - a. Fall of the outlying strongholds, vv. 12,13.
      - b. Siege and destruction of the city, vv. 14-19.
      - c. Universal exultation over the fall of Nineveh v. 19b.
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## THEME

- 1. The theme of his prophecy was the approaching fall of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire.
- 2. The character of the Assyrian rulers and people in general was that of excessive cruelty.
- 3. Farrar give a vivid and clear description of their general character: Judged from the vaunting inscriptions of their kings, no power more useless, more savage, more terrible, ever cast its gigantic shadow on the page of history as it passed on the way to ruin. The kings of Assyria tormented the miserable world. They exult to record how 'space failed for corpses'; how unsparing a destroyer is their goddess Ishtar; how they flung away the bodies of soldiers like so much clay; how they made pyramids of human heads; how they burned cities; how they filled populous lands with death devastation; how they reddened broad deserts with carnage of warriors; how they scattered whole countries with the corpses of their defenders as with chaff; how they impaled 'heaps of men' on stakes, and strewed the mountains and choked rivers with dead bones; how they cut off the hands of kinds and nailed them on the walls, and left their bodies to rot with bears and dogs on the entrance gates of cities;

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how they employed nations of captives in making brick in fetters; how they cut down warriors like weeds, or smote them like wild beats in the forests, and covered pillars with the flayed skins of rival monarchs.

(Farrar - The Minor Prophets, pp. 147,148.)

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## **Book Preserved Because**

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### A. IT TEACHES US THAT GOD IS:

1. The God of the world, not just the God of one people or nation.
2. That “the soul that sinneth shall die.”
3. That “the wages of sin is death.” (Rom. 6:23).

### B. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD IS SURE:

1. “It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this cometh judgment” (Heb. 9:27).
  2. There is no escape. (Rev. 6:16-17).
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