

9. Nahum favored an alliance with _____ for Judah.
10. In his political views, Nahum seems to differ with _____.
11. Nahum's prophecy, in the original language, formed an incomplete _____.
12. The theme of Nahum is _____.
13. It is helpful in studying Nahum to separate the facts of the prophecy from the _____ of Nahum himself.
14. Nahum's prophecy is reminiscent of that of _____.
15. The chief aim of the Assyrian empire, of which Nineveh was the capital was _____.
16. Describe the walls of Nineveh.
17. Nineveh's ability to rule the world did not match _____.
18. Israel became a vassal of Assyria in _____ and was destroyed by her in _____.
19. _____ was king of Israel at this time and so became her last king.

CHAPTER XII

INTRODUCTION

NAHUM 1:1 . . .

RV . . . The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

LXX . . . The burden of Nineve: the book of the vision of Naum the Elkesite.

COMMENTS

When Jonah, about 100 years previous to Nahum, foretold the overthrow of Nineveh the great royal seat of Assyrian monarchy, the city repented and was spared. Now, having fallen from their repentance, possibly deceived by their rise to world domination, Nineveh receives a written warning of irreversible doom. The repentance has not been continued, neither will the reprieve from judgement.

As we saw above in the introductory preface (Chapter XI), Elkoshite has not been identified by modern archeology, although Jewish tradition situates it at the site of Alkosh, some thirty miles north of the present town of Mosul. The tomb of Nahum (traditional) is venerated there by present day Judaism.

Jerome located Elkoshite at the site of Helkesei in Galilee, in his commentary on Nahum. This Helkesei is probably present day Elkauzeh between Rameh and Biut Jebeih.

The *De Viris Prophetarum*, of the Pseudo-Epiphanius, locates Elkoshite east of the Jordan river near *Begabor* and connects it with the tribe of Simeon. Nestle concluded that Begabor is to be identified with present day *Beit Jibrim* in southern Israel.

The important words in this verse are *burden of Nineveh* and *vision of Nahum*. They constitute a claim to direct inspiration and a positive identification of the author.

The word *massa* (burden) was most frequently used to denote a threatening prophecy. (eg. *Isaiah 30* and *Zechariah 9:12*)

The idea seems to be that of a burden laid by God upon Nineveh.

The word may also mean to "utter forth" or "call," eg. *Psalms 15:3* and *II Kings 9:27*.

Paul speaks of the beauty of the feet of those who bring God's good news (*Romans 10:15*). There is a certain inherent ugliness about a bearer of the message of doom. There are few if any passages in the Bible to match Nahum for sheer hopelessness.

"*The book of the vision*" indicates that Nahum *saw* the destruction of Nineveh before it actually took place. The terror of God's wrath cannot be aptly described, it must be experienced for its full deadliness to be grasped.

THE COMING OF THE LORD OF JUDGEMENT . . . Nahum 1:2-8

RV . . . Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. Jehovah is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty: Jehovah hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers; Bashan languisheth, and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him. Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that take refuge in him. But with an over-running flood he will make a full end of her place, and will pursue his enemies into darkness. LXX . . . God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; the Lord avenges with wrath; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries, and he cuts off his

enemies. The Lord is longsuffering, and his power is great, and the Lord will not hold any guiltless: his way is in destruction and in the whirlwind, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He threatens the sea, and dries it up, and exhausts all the rivers: the land of Basan, and Carmel are brought low, and the flourishing trees of Libanus have come to nought. The mountains quake at him, and the hills are shaken, and the earth recoils at his presence, even the world, and all that dwell in it. Who shall stand before his anger? and who shall withstand in the anger of his wrath? his wrath brings to nought kingdoms, and the rocks are burst asunder by him. The Lord is good to them that wait on him in the day of affliction; and he knows them that reverence him. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end: darkness shall pursue those that rise up against him and his enemies.

COMMENTS

JEHOVAH, GOD OF WRATH . . .

The wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against His enemies at the same time His favor and mercy are assured to His faithful, loyal people. His almighty power in both make His wrath exceedingly terrible and His grace very much to be desired.

JEHOVAH IS JEALOUS . . .

The Assyrian empire had desolated Israel and harrassed Judah repeatedly. It seemed their idols had overcome the people of Jehovah. The poetic prophet warns that God is jealous. He will not allow the seeming power of false gods to go unchallenged.

Here is an echo of Jehovah's own evaluation of Himself in *Exodus* 20:5, 34:14, *Deuteronomy* 4:24, 5:9, 6:15.

There is a certain affection expressed here. Jealousy is of those we love. It is His wounded heart that brings about Nineveh's destruction. God's wrath is always God's love reacting to unfaithfulness.

JEHOVAH AVENGETH . . .

Only God is qualified to avenge. He does so in complete justice. In the case of Nineveh, He had gone to great lengths (cf. *Jonah*) to warn them of the consequence of their sin.

JEHOVAH IS FULL OF WRATH . . .

Paul, in *Romans* 1:18-ff, speaks of God's wrath being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. *Romans* 2:5-ff

pictures God's wrath as being stored up against the day of wrath when it will be released in a burst of pent-up power. John the Baptist spoke of fleeing from the wrath to come (*Matthew 3:7, Luke 3:7*). John, the apostle of love, indicates that the wrath of God remains on those who do not believe and obey the Gospel. Jesus spoke of God's wrath in His foretelling of the destruction of Jerusalem. (*Luke 21:22*)

In light of these, and many more New Testament passages, we must conclude that Jehovah as a God of wrath was not, as some have taught, a primitive notion limited to the Old Testament. The loving God of the New Testament is the same God and wrath is yet one of the facets of His nature.

Verses 2-3(a) indicate that while Jehovah is a jealous God, avenging and full of wrath, His wrath is never impetuous or petulant. His wrath is reserved for His enemies: those who have set themselves against His purposes and His people. He is slow to anger, as indeed a God of love Who demands patience of His people must be. Nevertheless, His patience and slow anger must never be misunderstood as weakness or tolerance of enmity toward Himself.

Verses 3(b)-7 . . . Jehovah is great in power, as witness His control over the forces of nature, the whirlwind, the storm, the clouds, the sea. Even the weather is in His power. The rivers run dry and the most verdant areas of the land, Bashan and Carmel and Lebanon languish and do not produce at His command.

The immovable mountains quake before Him, the hills melt, and the very earth itself is upheaved in His presence . . . even the whole world and all who inhabit it. Rocks break asunder at the outpouring of His wrath.

In the day of God's wrath, they are kept safe who are in Him, but those who attempt to flee will find their hiding places swept away as in a flood.

This entire passage of Nahum is a poetic picture of the wrath of God. Such vividness could scarcely be achieved by the more literal language of prose. It is reminiscent of the apocalyptic description in *Revelation 6:12-17* of the opening of the sixth seal.

(*Verse 8*) The image of an over-running flood is possibly an allusion to Nineveh's capture by the Medo-Persian armies through a flood in the river which destroyed her walls. More likely it is a poetic reference to the overwhelming armies. The figure is also used quite normally to simply suggest calamity. (cp. *Psalms 32:6, 42:7, 90:5*)
her place . . . (RV)

This phrase is a direct reference to Nineveh. The city is figured as a queen. Her place (of dwelling) is to be utterly demolished.

THE UTTER ANNIHILATION OF NINEVEH . . . Nahum 1:9-13

RV . . . What do ye devise against Jehovah? he will make a full end; affliction shall not rise up the second time. For entangled like thorns, and drunken as with their drink, they are consumed utterly as dry stubble. There is one gone forth out of thee that deviseth evil against Jehovah, that counseleth wickedness. Thus saith Jehovah: and likewise many, even so shall they be cut down, and he shall pass away. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. And now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

LXX . . . What do ye devise against the Lord? he will make a complete end: he will not take vengeance by affliction twice at the same time. For the enemy shall be laid bare even to the foundation, and shall be devoured as twisted yew, and as stubble fully dry. Out of thee shall proceed a device against the Lord, counselling evil things hostile to him. Thus saith the Lord who rules over many waters, Even thus shall they be sent away, and the report of thee shall not be heard any more. And now will I break his rod from off thee, and will burst thy bonds.

COMMENTS

Durant records that two hundred years after the fall of Nineveh, Xenophon's Ten Thousand marched across the site of the city "and never suspected that these (mounds) were the site of the ancient metropolis that had ruled half the world." This utter annihilation is here foresworn by Nahum, as his poetic prophecy moves on.

WHAT DO YE DEVISE? . . . v. 9

There is no defense against Jehovah's wrath, once it has been incurred. The armies of Assyria, led by the great king-general Sennacherib, fell like ten-pins before the walls of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. (Cf. *II Kings 18:13—19:36*, *II Chronicles 32:1—32:22*) Nahum envisions Nineveh doing likewise a century later. In both cases the defeat of the Assyrians is attributed to divine intervention.

The destruction would be so final that Nineveh, "the affliction," shall not rise up the second time.

. . . DRUNKEN WITH THEIR DRINK . . . v. 10

As Babylon would later fall (c. 539 B.C.) with her playboy king in a drunken stupor, so Nineveh fell before Babylon (c. 612 B.C.) with her leaders drunk and "entangled like thorns." They could no more resist the conquering army than can dry stubble resist the spread of a prairie fire.

ONE GONE FORTH OUT OF THEE . . . v. 11

Nahum sees Sennacherib's attempts against Judah as the beginning of her own ruin. He is the "one gone forth . . . that deviseth evil against Jehovah." It was Sennacherib who implemented the designs of Nineveh against God and His people. (cf. *II Kings 19:22-23*)

Sennacherib and his spokesman, Rabshakeh, framed an evil letter and an evil speech, not only against Hezekiah, but against God Himself. He insinuated God was level with the idols of Assyria and unable to protect His people. In this way, the Assyrian sought to dissuade Jehovah's people from confidence in Him, and urged them rather to cast their lot for protection with the great king of Assyria, namely himself.

No one has ever more daringly and blasphemously affronted the Lord than Sennacherib. Nahum therefore counts him a wicked counsellor who has outwitted himself. The great destruction which God will bring against Nineveh because of this wickedness was deferred for a time, but it was the beginning of the end.

(Verse 12-13) In one fatal stroke, when the measure of Nineveh's iniquity was full, the Assyrian empire will be "*cut down and he shall pass away.*"

The contrast here between "they" and "his" on the one hand and "thee" on the other delineates between "they," the Assyrians, and "thee," Judah. *Their* punishment was final and utter destruction. Judah's was the chastizing by the Lord of His people. It would therefore be temporary. (cp. *Isaiah 40:1-2, 52:1-2*)

God had used the Assyrians as a yoke on His people, chastening them in the attempt (futile as it proved to be) to call them back to His covenant. But the yoke had been exceedingly wicked and must now be burst asunder. Assyria would burden God's people no more, after the destruction of Nineveh.

DESTRUCTION OF FALSE GODS AND VILE MEN . . .

Nahum 1:14-15

RV . . . And Jehovah hath given commandment concerning thee, that

no more of thy name be sown; out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image; I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows; for the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

LXX . . . And the Lord shall give a command concerning thee; there shall no more of thy name be scattered: I will utterly destroy the graven images out of the house of thy god, and molten images: I will make thy grave; for they are swift. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings glad tidings, and publishes peace! O Juda, keep thy feasts, pay thy vows: for they shall no more pass through thee to thy decay.

COMMENTS

JEHOVAH HATH GIVEN COMMANDMENT . . . v. 14

The decree has gone forth . . . even memory of the Assyrian kings will dim. Their fame will no more be spread abroad. The name *ie.* the house and lineage of Sennacherib, will be sown no more.

Actually, Sennacherib's son succeeded him to the throne in Nineveh. It seems Nahum's poetic prophecy here personifies the empire in the king. It was only shortly after Sennacherib that Nineveh, the capital, was destroyed.

. . . OUT OF THE HOUSE OF THY GODS . . . v. 14

Not only will the king and his country be cut off, the gods he worshipped will also perish. In the ancient near-east, as in the contemporary city states of Greece, the defeat of an empire was not just the disgrace of a people, it was the overthrow of a god.

In the case of Assyria, both the dynasty and the deity fell together. The two sons of Sennacherib were killed in the temple while worshipping their chief god, Nisroch. No doubt the desecration of the temple occurred at the same time. Nahum's prophecy that the graven and molten images would be cut off was fulfilled very literally.

Not only in the temple, but throughout the land, the conquerers, unlike the later Greeks and Romans who absorbed local gods, smashed the deities of Assyria wherever they were found.

I WILL MAKE THY GRAVE . . .

Some take the latter part of verse 14 to mean that Sennacherib's

grave was actually to be made in the temple of Nisroch. In view of the fact that the temple remained in use some time following his death this seems unlikely.

It is more likely Nahum intends here to foretell the ignominious fall of the Assyrian dynasty itself. When Babylon was later building on the ruins of Assyria much was said about the grave of that once formidable empire.

Just how despicable were the sins of Nineveh is described in *Ezekiel* 31:3, 11, 15, 16. Her downfall was commensurate with the heinousness of her sin. Nahum says simply "thou art vile" and in this vileness sees the reason for her destruction.

BEHOLD UPON THE MOUNTAIN . . . v. 15

With these words so familiar to the Christian, Nahum introduces the contrasting comfort of God's people in comparison to the utter ruin of her enemies. We find these same words in *Isaiah* 52:7 and again in *Romans* 10:15. In each case they are words of deliverance.

The destruction of Nineveh, brought on the marching feet of the Babylonian army, burst asunder the bonds of vassalage and set Jerusalem free, albeit her freedom was short-lived, for her sins, as we saw in Micah, were becoming as great as those of Nineveh.

It is no strange thing that three writers inspired by the same Spirit, should use the same words. By so doing they simply give their *consent to wholesome truths* (*I Timothy* 6:3) and concur in the *same forms of sound words*. (*II Timothy* 1:13)

KEEP THY FEASTS . . . PERFORM THY VOWS . . .

Along with Nahum's assurance that they will have no more trouble with Assyria is the subtle warning to remain faithful to God's covenant. He could not but be aware, as were the other prophets, that Judah herself stood in the way of God's wrath unless she stood firm in her faith.

During the troublesome days of Assyria's invasion, the feasts had been interrupted. They had made vows to God, that if He would deliver them out of their distress, they would do Him extraordinary service. Now the poet reminds them to perform that which they have promised.

We may also learn a valuable lesson here from Nahum. We are prone, in times of trouble to plead prayerfully for succor and promise service only to forget when the burden has been lifted.