

Nahum

The book of Nahum appears to have been written around 650 B.C., just a few decades before the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. Nineveh is the capital of Assyria, which is the nation Israel, the northern Kingdom, has been exiled to for roughly 70 years.

The opening of Nahum resembles a type of psalm, known as a Divine Warrior Hymn (Psa 98) (Nah 1: 2-8). This type of hymn was sung in the aftermath of a victory. Nahum has placed the hymn at the beginning of the book, thus celebrating the victory before the battle has even begun. Nahum reminds us in verse 3 that God is slow to anger, yet most of this book is about God being angry enough with Nineveh to destroy it. This indicates God has given Nineveh both time & warnings to repent. One of these warnings came from Jonah nearly 100 years prior to this book. Verses 3 & 4 describe God's mighty power & verse 5 describes the effect of His awesome presence on the earth. Verse 6 then reflects on these qualities of God & asks the question, who is capable of standing before Him? Nahum has used imagery in these verses to compare God to some of the most devastating forces of nature: windstorms, earthquakes & volcanoes. In verse 7, Nahum pivots from showing God's power as devastating to showing it as a stronghold of protection. Finally, verse 8 seems to foreshadow God's destruction of Nineveh with water.

Nahum addresses Nineveh in verses 9-11. Verse 9 acknowledges that the Assyrians have plotted against God & His people in the past. This time, however, their plans will be stopped. This was likely intended to be a message of hope for the people of Judah. Verse 10 uses the imagery of drunkards in thorns to describe the Assyrians. Thorns are frequently used in the OT to describe

cities or people when God has judged against them or thwarted their plans (Hos 9:6). God used Assyria as an instrument of His wrath, to punish Israel. Because the Assyrians do not recognize God & are full of sin, they have become the object of His wrath.

In verses 12 & 13, an oracle of salvation is delivered to Judah. At the time this book was written, Assyria was at the height of their power. Their political influence stretched to several surrounding nations. Though they did not conquer Judah, they controlled Judah as a kind of puppet kingdom. This oppression by Assyria is what is being referred to in verse 13 as the yoke around their necks. With Assyria exhibiting such great power & influence over the region, it would have been laughable for anyone else to declare a coming destruction of their empire. Yet this is exactly what God is doing.

Verse 14 shows how complete the destruction is to be: they will have no descendants & God is preparing their grave. Rather than being punished & rebuilt as Israel & Judah, God is declaring He will simply end their existence.

Verse 15 celebrates the coming of good news & seems to echo Isaiah (Isa 52:7). In this chapter, Isaiah is envisioning a time when Judah will live under the oppression of the Babylonians. Therefore, the fulfillment of Isaiah 52 came with the defeat of the Babylonians at the hands of the Persians. At this time, the faithful Jews were allowed to return to & begin rebuilding Jerusalem under Ezra & Nehemiah. The end of the verse, Nahum 1:15, would be more accurately translated, "No more will the wicked one invade you." This implies the verse is referring to Assyria instead of any wicked nation.

Chapter 2 begins with a warning to Nineveh to prepare for a battle. Any preparation would be wasted since, as we see in verse 2, God is the one fighting against them. From the context, this call to arms appears to actually be used as a taunt song.

Nahum relates a vision God has given him of Nineveh's destruction (Nah 2:3-10). Verse 3 describes an army wearing red. Ezekiel tells us the Babylonians wore red, so this seems a likely connection (Eze 23:14-17). In verse 6, Nahum describes the destruction of the city coming with its being flooded by a river. About 2 decades after this was written, Assyria & Babylon began a political struggle which lasted roughly 15 years. Babylon was able to defeat Assyria after the city was flooded in 612 B.C. The flooding was actually the result of the Medes, who had formed an alliance with Babylon, diverting the waters of the Tigris to Nineveh.

Verse 8 refers to the city as a pool being drained.

Who is the water referring to? Soldiers and/or citizens

The city is left vulnerable to be plundered.

Records indicate the Medes did, in fact, plunder the city, leaving its occupation to the Babylonians. In verse 10, we see all who witnessed the city's destruction are filled with fear.

Nahum asks about the lions & their den in verses 11 & 12. Who are the lions? The Assyrians, a military machine, who felt invincible.

In verse 13, God declares judgement against Assyria. What does it mean that He will leave them no prey on the earth? Maybe that they will no longer be strong enough to oppress any nation or group.

Chapter 3 begins by describing Nineveh with negative

attributes. What do these attributes mean? (2 Chron 28:20-21)

Murderers, Politically deceitful, plundering those they oppress
"never without victims" refers back to the prey of the lions

(Read verses 2+3) What is this depicting? the battle during the fall of Nineveh

(Read verse 4) Who is the prostitute? Nineveh

In verse 5, why does God say He will lift their skirts & show their nakedness? God will expose them & reveal their nature & crimes.

Verse 6 continues with common punishment for exposed harlots. Then, in verse 7, God says that no sympathy need be wasted on Nineveh.

(Read verses 8-10) Here, Nahum is comparing Nineveh to Thebes, a city that fell around 663 BC (13 years before this book).

What are the similarities between Nineveh & Thebes?

Both capitals of great nations, both thought themselves impenetrable

Verse 11 says they too will become drunk. Who was the first drunk?
Thebes

Why are they drunk? Maybe overconfidence or sin

Verse 12 echoes Isaiah (Isa 28:3-4). What does it mean by ripe fruit falling when touched or shaken?

Nineveh will fall & be consumed by her enemies. They will be defeated quickly & easily, like fruit falling from a branch when shaken.

Nahum tells the Assyrians to prepare for battle in verse 14.

However, in verse 15, we see all efforts are wasted as they will still be destroyed.

Nahum describes the military + political leaders as locusts in verse 17. What does this mean?

They have no loyalty, in times of danger, they fly away or flee.

Finally, in verses 18 + 19, we see the city has been defeated + the survivors are scattered in the mountains. Nahum tells them their wound is fatal, there is no hope. The surrounding nations who have been oppressed will rejoice at their demise.