
NAHUM 1: 1 An oracle about Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

Nahum, the seventh of the twelve minor prophets, was a native of Elkoshai, a little village of Galilee, whose ruins were still in being in the time of St. Jerome. However there are some who think that Elkoshai is rather the name of his father, and that the place of his birth was Bethabor, or Bethabara, beyond Jordan. They used to show the tomb of the prophet at a village called Beth-gabre, now called Gibbin, near Emmaus. The Chaldee calls him Nahum of Beth-koshi, or of Beth-kitsi; but the situation of this place is as much unknown as that of Elkoshai.

The particular circumstances of the life of Nahum are altogether unknown. His prophecy consists of three chapters, which make up but one discourse, wherein he foretells the destruction of Nineveh. He describes it in so lovely and pathetic a manner, that he seems to have been upon the spot to declare to the Ninevites the destruction of their city.

Opinions are divided as to the time in which he prophesied. Josephus will have it that he foretold the fall of Nineveh one hundred and fifteen years before it happened, which will bring the time of Nahum to that of King Ahaz. The Jews say that he prophesied under Manasseh. We are inclined to be of St. Jerome's opinion, that he foretold the destruction of Nineveh in the time of Hezekiah, and after the war of Sennacherib in Egypt, mentioned by Berosus. Nahum speaks plainly of the taking of No-Ammon, a city of Egypt; of the haughtiness of Rabshakeh; of the defeat of Sennacherib; and he speaks of them as things that were past. He supposes that the Jews were still in their own country, and that they there celebrated their festivals. He speaks of the captivity, and of the dispersion of the ten tribes. All these evidences convince us that Nahum cannot be placed before the fifteenth year of Hezekiah, since the expedition of Sennacherib against this prince was in the fourteenth year of his reign.

This prophet gives us a fine description of the destruction of Nineveh. He says that this city should be ruined by a deluge of waters, which should overflow it and demolish its walls.

Diodorus Siculus and Athenaeus relate, that during the time this city was besieged by Belshazzar and by Arbaces, under Sardanapalus, the river Tigris swelled so as to overthrow twenty furlongs of the walls of Nineveh. But as the siege mentioned by Nahum was long after the taking of Nineveh under Sardanapalus, it must needs be that the same thing happened to Nineveh at the second and last siege, under Nebuchadnezzar and Astyages. Probably the besiegers at this second siege determined the course of the waters, and brought on the same fate to the city by the same means as at the first siege. And as the walls of those ancient cities were generally formed of brick kneaded with straw and baked in the sun, a flood of waters could easily effect their dissolution. Babylon was built in the same manner; and this is the reason why scarcely any vestiges of those cities are to be found. See on Nah 3:14 (note).

The time of the prophet's death is not known. The Greek moneologies and the Latin martyrologies place his festival on the first of December. Petrus Natalis places it on the twenty-fourth of the same month, which he says was the day of his death, without acquainting us whence he had learned this circumstance.

The conduct and imagery of this prophetic poem are truly admirable.

The exordium sets forth with grandeur the justice and power of God, tempered by lenity and goodness, Nah 1:1-8.

A sudden address to the Assyrians follows; and a prediction of their perplexity and overthrow, as devisers of evil against the true God, Nah 1:9-11. Jehovah himself then proclaims freedom to his people from the Assyrian yoke, and the destruction of the Assyrian idols, Nah 1:12-14. Upon which the prophet, in a most lively manner, turns the attention of Judah to the approach of the messenger who brings such glad tidings, and bids her celebrate her festivals and offer her thank-offerings, without fear of so powerful an adversary, Nah 1:15. Nah 2:1-13. In the next place Nineveh is called on to prepare for the approach of her enemies, as instruments in the hands of Jehovah; and the military array and muster of the Medes and Babylonians, their rapid approach to the city, the process of the siege, the capture of the place, the captivity, lamentation, and flight of the inhabitants, the sacking of the wealthy city, and the consequent desolation and terror, are described in the true spirit of Eastern poetry, and with many pathetic, vivid, and sublime images, Nah 2:1-10.

A grand and animated allegory succeeds this description, Nah 2:11, Nah 2:12; which is explained and applied to the city of Nineveh in Nah 2:13.

Chap. 3. The prophet denounces a wo against Nineveh for her perfidy and violence, and strongly places before our eyes the number of her chariots and cavalry, her burnished arms, and the great and unrelenting slaughter which she spread around her, Nah 3:1-3.

He assigns her idolatries as one cause of her ignominious and unpitied fall, Nah 3:4-7.

He foretells that No-Ammon, (the Diospolis in the Delta), her rival in populousness, confederacies, and situation, should share a like fate with herself, Nah 3:8-11; and beautifully illustrates the ease with which her strong holds should be taken, Nah 3:12, and her pusillanimity during the siege, Nah 3:13.

He pronounces that all her preparations, Nah 3:14, Nah 3:15, her numbers, her opulence, her multitude of chief men, would be of no avail, Nah 3:15-17.

He foretells that her tributaries would desert her, Nah 3:18.

He concludes with a proper epiphonema; the topics of which are, the greatness and incurableness of her wound, and the just triumph of others over her on account of her extensive oppressions, Nah 3:19.

To sum up all with the decisive judgment of an eminent critic: "Not one of the minor prophets equals the sublimity, genius, and spirit of Nahum. Besides, his prophecy is a perfect poem. The exordium is exceedingly majestic. The apparatus for the destruction of Nineveh, and the description of that catastrophe, are painted in the most glowing colours, and are admirably clear and powerful." Lowth, *Praelect. Hebrews* 21, p. 282.

It must be farther observed, that this prophecy was highly interesting to the Jews; as the Assyrians had often ravaged their country, and I suppose had recently destroyed the kingdom of Israel. See *Calmet*.

This chapter opens the prophecy against the Assyrians and their metropolis with a very magnificent description of the infinite justice, tender compassion, and uncontrollable power of God, Nah 1:1-8. To this succeeds an address to the Assyrians; with a lively picture of their sudden overthrow, because of their evil device against Jerusalem, Nah 1:9-11. Then appears Jehovah himself, proclaiming deliverance to his people from the Assyrian yoke, and the destruction of the Assyrian

idols, Nah 1:12-14; upon which the prophet, with great emphasis, directs the attention of Judah to the approach of the messenger who brings such glad tidings; and exultingly bids his people to celebrate their solemn feasts, and perform their vows, as a merciful Providence would not suffer these enemies of the Jewish state to prevail against them, Nah 1:15.

Verse 1

The burden of Nineveh - נִשָּׂא massa not only signifies a burden, but also a thing lifted up, pronounced, or proclaimed; also a message. It is used by the prophets to signify the revelation which they have received from God to deliver to any particular people: the oracle - the prophecy. Here it signifies the declaration from God relative to the overthrow of Nineveh, and the commission of the prophet to deliver it.

As the Assyrians under Pul, Tiglath-pileser, and Shalmaneser, three of their kinds, had been employed by a just God for the chastisement of his disobedient people; the end being now accomplished by them, God is about to burn the rod wherewith he corrected Israel; and Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, is to be destroyed. This prediction appears to have been accomplished a short time after this by Nebuchadnezzar and Cyaxares, the Ahasuerus of Scripture.

Nahum, נַחֻם Nachum, signifies comforter. The name was very suitable, as he was sent to comfort the people, by showing them that God was about to destroy their adversaries.

NAHUM 1: 2 The LORD is a jealous God and avenges. The LORD avenges and is full of wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries, and he maintains wrath against his enemies.

Verse 2

God is jealous - For his own glory.

And - revengeth - His justice; by the destruction of his enemies.

And is furious - So powerful in the manifestations of his judgments, that nothing can stand before him.

He reserveth wrath - Though they seem to prosper for a time, and God appears to have passed by their crimes without notice, yet he reserveth - treasureth up - wrath for them, which shall burst forth in due time.

NAHUM 1: 3 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. The LORD has his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

Verse 3

The Lord is slow to anger - He exercises much longsuffering towards his enemies, that this may lead them to repentance. And it is because of this longsuffering that vengeance is not speedily executed on every evil work.

Great in power - Able at all times to save or to destroy.

The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm - These are the effects of his power; and when they appear unusual, they may be considered as the immediate effects of his power: and although he be in them to punish and destroy, he is in them to direct their course, to determine their operations, and to defend his followers from being injured by their violence. The pestilential wind which slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians did not injure one Israelite. See 2Kgs 19:35.

The clouds are the dust of his feet - This is spoken in allusion to a chariot and horses going on with extreme rapidity: they are all enveloped in a cloud of dust. So Jehovah is represented as coming through the circuit of the heavens as rapidly as lightning; the clouds surrounding him as the dust does the chariot and horses.

NAHUM 1: 4 He rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan languishes, and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languishes.

Verse 4

He rebuketh the sea - The Red Sea and the rivers: probably an allusion to the passage of the Red Sea and Jordan.

The description of the coming of Jehovah, from the third to the sixth verse, is dreadfully majestic. He is represented as controlling universal nature. The sea and the rivers are dried up, the mountains tremble, the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence. Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon are withered and languish: streams of fire are poured out, and the rocks are cast down to make him a passage. If then, the seas, the rivers, the mountains, the hills, the rocks, and the earth itself, fail before Jehovah, or flee from his presence, how shall Nineveh and the Assyrian empire stand before him?

NAHUM 1: 5 The mountains quake before him, and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, yes, the world, and all who dwell in it.

NAHUM 1: 6 Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the fierceness of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken apart by him.

NAHUM 1: 7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knows those who take refuge in him.

Verse 7

The Lord is good - In the midst of judgment he remembers mercy; and among the most dreadful denunciations of wrath he mingles promises of mercy. None that trust in him need be alarmed at these dreadful threatenings; they shall be discriminated in the day of wrath, for the Lord knoweth them that trust in him.

NAHUM 1: 8 But with an overflowing flood, he will make a full end of her place, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

Verse 8

But with an overrunning flood - Bishop Newcome thinks this may refer to the manner in which Nineveh was taken. The Euphrates overflowed its banks, deluged a part of the city, and overturned twenty stadia of the wall; in consequence of which the desponding king burnt himself, and his palace, with his treasures. - Diodor. Sic., Edit. Wessel., p. 140, lib. ii., s. 27.

Darkness shall pursue - Calamity. All kinds of calamity shall pursue them till they are destroyed.

NAHUM 1: 9 What do you plot against the LORD? He will make a full end. Affliction won't rise up the second time.

Verse 9

Affliction shall not rise up the second time - There shall be no need to repeat the judgment; with one blow God will make a full end of the business.

NAHUM 1: 10 For entangled like thorns, and drunken as with their drink, they are consumed utterly like dry stubble.

Verse 10

While they be folden together - However united their counsels may be, they shall be as drunken men - perplexed and unsteady in all their resolutions; and before God's judgments they shall be as dry thorns before a devouring fire.

NAHUM 1: 11 There is one gone out of you, who devises evil against the LORD, who counsels wickedness.

Verse 11

Imagineth evil against the Lord - Such were Pul, 2Kgs 15:10, Tiglath-pileser, 2Kgs 15:29; Shalmaneser, 2Kgs 17:6; and Sennacherib, 2Kgs 18:17; 2Kgs 19:23.

A wicked counsellor - Sennacherib and Rabshakeh.

NAHUM 1: 12 Thus says the LORD: "Though they be in full strength, and likewise many, even so they will be cut down, and he shall pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.

Verse 12

Though they be - many - Sennacherib invaded Judea with an army of nearly two hundred thousand men.

Thus shall they be cut down - The angel of the Lord (a suffocating wind) slew of them in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand 2Kgs 19:35.

NAHUM 1: 13 Now will I break his yoke from off you, and will burst your bonds apart.”

Verse 13

Now will I break his yoke from off thee - This refers to the tribute which the Jews were obliged to pay to the Assyrians, 2Kgs 17:14.

NAHUM 1: 14 The LORD has commanded concerning you: “No more descendants will bear your name. Out of the house of your gods, will I cut off the engraved image and the molten image. I will make your grave, for you are vile.”

Verse 14

No more of thy name be sown - No more of you shall be carried away into captivity.

I will make thy grave; for thou art vile - I think this is an address to the Assyrians, and especially to Sennacherib. The text is no obscure intimation of the fact. The house of his gods is to be his grave: and we know that while he was worshipping in the house of his god Nisroch, his two sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, smote him there that he died, 2Kgs 19:37.

NAHUM 1: 15 Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace! Keep your feasts, Judah! Perform your vows, for the wicked one will no more pass through you. He is utterly cut off.

Verse 15

Behold upon the mountains - Borrowed probably from Isa 52:7, but applied here to the messengers who brought the good tidings of the destruction of Nineveh. Judah might then keep her solemn feasts, for the wicked Assyrian should pass through the land no more; being entirely cut off, and the imperial city razed to its foundations.