

Nahum

150 years after later after Jonah's prophesy, Nahum, a prophet was sent, this time to foretell the definite destruction of the Ninevites as a comfort to the Jews. Nahum, whose name meant consolation or comforter hailed from a place probably called Elkosh since he was referred to as an Elkoshite, which was most likely somewhere in Judah. His name was significant because he was bringing peace to Judah through his message from the Lord. This book was most likely written after 663 B.C. and before 612 B.C. probably in the reign of king Manasseh of Judah. Nahum is also considered a minor prophet.

Why was the fall of Nineveh so important to Nahum and to the people of Judah?

Since the middle of the eighth century B.C. the Assyrians had been their greatest enemy. For 300 years as a world power, they oppressed the Jews for about 100 years from the 7th to the 8th century B.C.

Verse 1

The burden **(trouble, affliction)** against Nineveh.

Zephaniah 2:13

***And He will stretch out His hand against the north, Destroy Assyria,
And make Nineveh a desolation, As dry as the wilderness.***

- The book of the vision **(revelation, supernatural appearance)** of Nahum **(God the comforter)** the Elkoshite.

- When Assyria began to expand their empire, king Hezekiah rebelled against them under king Sennacherib, who divested the countryside but was turned back by the Lord outside the walls of Jerusalem. (**Isaiah 36 and 37 and 1 kings 18 and 19**). Though Sennacherib was defeated, he carried away many people into exile. (**The lost 10 tribes of Israel**)
- In 2 chronicles we see the Assyrians return and make Judah one of their subjects. They even carried away Manasseh, the wicked king, who later repented and was restored as king.
- In short, for Judah, the fall of Nineveh, one of the major cities of the Assyrian empire, meant freedom from oppression.

Verse 2

- God is jealous (**zealous, protective**), and the Lord (**the just one**) avenges (**retaliates, repays, punishes**); The Lord avenges and is furious (**angry, enraged, wrathful, provoked**). The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries (**enemies**), and He reserves wrath for His enemies;
- The central theme of the prophesy is given to us when Nahum portrays the Lord as a God of vengeance who unleashes his raging anger against His enemies.

Verse 3

- The Lord is slow to anger and great in power (**strength, might, authority**), and will not at all acquit (**exempt, excuse, pardon**) the wicked.
- Elsewhere, when the phrase "slow to anger" is used of God , it is usually followed by the expression "abounding in love". As seen in Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Nehemiah 9:17, etc.
- Nahum alters the usual statement, slow to anger and abounding in love to omit God's forgiving nature. Why?
- By ending the statement with great in power instead, Nahum was showing that the Lord's patience with Nineveh had run out. His willingness to love and forgive was exhausted. Nineveh would experience His unrestrained power and justice from the Lord's judgment.
- The Lord has His way in a whirlwind (tornado) and in the storm, and the clouds are dust of His feet.
- A whirlwind can be upto 4.2 km in size and can have winds moving upto 480km per hour and can cause a lot of damage and loss of life. (show images).

Verse 4

- He rebukes (**terrifies and paralyzes**) the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers.
- The Lord arrives on the scene, this time not as a peace maker but as a warrior who, at the sound of His battle cry has power to dry up great seas and mighty rivers.
- Bashan and Carmel wither. Lebanon wilts.
- Bashan lay on the east side of the Jordan and was famous for its oak trees and for its livestock and rain (see Ezekiel 27:6 and Deuteronomy. 32:14). It was a very fertile area.
- Carmel was a very fruitful mountain famous for its rich pastures. The same place Elijah contended and destroyed the baalites with fire from heaven.
- Lebanon in this case was a huge mountain that stretched for 125 miles. It was also famous for its fruitfulness. The flower of Lebanon wilts. Meaning, that whatever flourished, (trees, flowers, soils, etc) and was beautiful would be no more.

Verse 5

- The mountains quake (shake, tremble, shiver) before Him (the mighty, the powerful one), the hills melt (dissolve, liquefy), and the earth heaves (moans, groans) at His presence. Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.

Psalm 97:5 The Mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

- Melted rock or lava can get hot up to 700 to 1,200 °C. (show image)
- No mountains, as strong and stable as they are, no kings, as rich and powerful as they are can withstand the power and angry attack of the Lord.

Verse 6

- Who can stand before His indignation (anger, wrath, fury), who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.

Jeremiah 10:10 But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.

Malachi 3:2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderer's soap.

Verse 7

- The Lord (merciful one, kind one) is good (though terrible to His enemies, unrepentant sinners, yet he is gentle and kind to His people, Israel. Psalm 73:1 Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart.) , a stronghold (refuge, safe hold, fortress) in the day of trouble; and He knows (cares, approves, owns) those who trust (believe, depend, wait) in Him.
- Nahum, here changes his tone. First he portrays God as the angry warrior judge but here he portrays Him as the protector of His people in Judah.
- Nahum's message focuses on the judgment of Nineveh because the judgment of Nineveh would mean the deliverance and freedom of Judah.
- The Lord is good and proves to be a refuge in times of trouble who cares for those who trust in Him.
- The Lord recognizes our allegiance to Him and He rewards us for it.

Verse 8

- But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place, and darkness (death) will pursue (chase, follow, run after relentlessly) His enemies.
- In this verse, the prophet returns to his theme of judgement.
- When the Lord comes as a judge, he annihilates, destroys totally, His enemies and chase them into darkness, into death.

Verse 9

- What do you conspire (scheme, plot) against the Lord (Omniscient all knowing, omnipotent all powerful)? He will make an utter end of it.
- The prophet speaks directly to the Lord's enemies and assures them that the Lord would frustrate their efforts and quickly destroy them.
- Affliction (tribulation, adversity) will not rise up a second time.
- When the Lord is done with evil, no other shall arise. No other evil city would arise out of the ashes of Nineveh.

Verse 10

- For while tangled like thorns, and while drunken like drunkards, they shall be devoured (consumed, burnt) like stubble (stalks of cut grain) fully dried.
- While folded together like thorns that are hard to untangle, they help destroy each other and are cast together in fire.
- The Assyrians were drunk with pleasure and pride. Like drunken men they would be unable to help themselves. They would be easily destroyed.
- Just as fire destroys dry stubble, so shall the wrath of God destroy the enemies of God and Israel.

Verse 11

- From you (Nineveh) comes forth one (the king of Assyria) who plots evil against the Lord (holy, righteous, omniscient, omnipotent). A wicked counselor (adviser, instructor, mentor).
- One who is full of blood, injustice, oppression, fraud and deceit. One who ruins his neighbors for his own greatness and advancement.

Verse 12

- Thus says the Lord (almighty, all powerful), Though they are safe (secure, fear no danger), and likewise many, yet in this manner they will be cut down when he (angel of the Lord) passes through. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.
- The Lord used the Assyrians as a rod of affliction upon the Jews for a long time but He assures them that He would not use that same rod again.

Verse 13

- For now I will break off his (Sennacherib, Assyria, Nineveh) yoke (enslavement) from you (Judah) and burst (break) your bonds (chains, ropes, shackles) apart.
- The time of affliction is over.

Verse 14

- The Lord (the all mighty one) has given a command (order, directive) concerning you. Your name (Sennacherib, Assyria, Nineveh) shall be perpetuated (sustained, continued) no longer. Out of the house (temple) of your gods I will cut off the curved image (wooden/ stone idol) and the molded image (gold, silver, bronze idol). I will dig (desecrate) your grave, for you are vile (disgusting, offensive, nasty).
- The Lord announces that He would eradicate the Assyrian royal dynasty, destroy the idols in the temple and desecrate the royal tomb or grave.
- Receiving a proper burial was considered very important in this culture. Tombs were protected by curses.
- By violating the Assyrian king's tomb, the Lord would show utter dislike towards them and the gods charged with protecting it. This was a sign of intense hostility from the Lord towards the Assyrian King and people.

Verse 15

- Behold (observe, witness, pay attention, see), on the mountains The feet of him who brings good tidings (news), Who proclaims (announces) peace (rest, salvation)! O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; He is utterly cut off.
- Turning back to Judah, the Lord tells her to look towards the mountains (towards Assyria) for a messenger brings good news of Assyria's destruction.
- Never again would the land of Assyria invade Judah.
- The people were again free to celebrate their festivals and to repay their vows they had made to the Lord in their prayers for deliverance.

Conclusion

All in all The Lord once showed great mercy to a once great city called Nineveh by warning them through the prophet Jonah to repent and there was all out repentance and the land was spared. They, however forgot what their parents and grandparents had done and became even more vile and wicked. God is merciful and long suffering. But He also has a breaking point when it comes to tolerating sin. Let's not test God's tolerance for the sin in our lives.