

Nahum

An Exegetical Commentary by Nate Wilson



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Developed as a sermon series for Christ The Redeemer Church
of Manhattan, KS, in the year of our Lord 2025

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INTRODUCTION:

This project presents the studies behind the sermons which I delivered to Christ the Redeemer Church of Manhattan, Kansas, between January and March 2025 A.D.

Special thanks to Christ The Redeemer Church for supporting this project, and to Hope Victoria Wilson for corroborating the DSS with the MT on my study sheets.

My translation philosophy in making a new English translation is:

1) To make a fresh translation based on the agreement of the oldest-known manuscripts, rather than merely on the modern Hebrew text.

2) I wanted to make a contemporary word-for-word translation from Hebrew into English, counteracting the trend toward summarizing and paraphrasing found in most contemporary translations.

One of the most noticeable applications of this is in the Hebrew *vav* conjunction: Older English translations tended to render an English conjunction every time there was a conjunction in Hebrew, whereas contemporary English versions tend to drop a lot of them out to reflect the fact that in contemporary English, we don't use conjunctions as frequently as ancient Hebrew did. I don't believe that diminishing conjunctions is necessarily compromising God's word, but I still chose in favor of the word-for-word approach, translating as many of the Hebrew conjunctions and particles as possible into English, using a wide range of English conjunctions for the all-purpose Hebrew *vav* conjunction.

Another prominent application of my word-for-word approach was in rendering the second person plural pronouns as "y'all." In many cases, the distinction which Hebrew makes between the plural and singular is lost when both are translated "you" in English, so I tried to make that distinction clear in my translation. Another application you'll notice is that of emphatic words in the Hebrew text which are not usually translated in contemporary versions, but which I have endeavored to bring back into my English version.

3) I have tried to use English roots which support, as nearly as possible, the same range of meaning of the Hebrew roots, and to use those English words consistently so that the reader can see in English when the same Hebrew root is being used. This is to counteract the trend in most English translations of using different English words to translate the same Hebrew word throughout the book. I could only do this up to a point, but I have tried to take it further than other contemporary English translators have, and I hope it will contribute to a deeper understanding of meaning and connections between thoughts as well as a deeper appreciation of Hebrew prose.

4) I wanted to offer a translation which has contemporary vocabulary, using words we use today to describe things in our lives rather than automatically copying over words from older English versions. Those older English versions were, as a rule, excellent translations, worthy of study, and often there is no better word in English than what has already been discovered in them, but sometimes word meanings have changed, and some new words have come along to replace old words, such that using the old words can begin to communicate quaintness rather than immediate meaning.

5) As for the exegesis, it was written to be read aloud as homilies, so, underlining denotes places to give verbal emphasis. The exception to this application of underlining is when Scripture is quoted, in which case, underlining denotes matches in Greek or Hebrew word roots between the periscope in Nahum and the scripture cited.

Nahum 1:1-4 – God’s Power To Avenge

v.1 Introduction

- Nahum is the next prophetic book after Micah. Nahum doesn’t show up in the history books of the Bible, nor does he talk about himself in his book, so we know very little about him.
 - The name Nahum means “comfort” in the Hebrew language, which may have something to do with his message.
 - The only other piece of information he gives us about himself is that he is “the Elkoshite,” but it is not known with certainty what that name “Elkosh” refers to. Most Bible scholars think it is the name of an obscure town lost to antiquity, although some think it is a forefather’s name¹. There are some interesting theories, though:
 - The great Latin Bible translator Jerome wrote around 400 AD of a Jewish tradition that Elkosh was an old town in Galilee. His contemporary, Cyril of Alexandria, however, said that it was in Judea.
 - Others have even suggested that Caperneum in the New Testament is Nahum’s hometown, because “*Caper*” means “village” and so Caper-neum could mean “village of Nahum” – which would put him in Samaritan land outside of Judea. C.F. Keil, however, in his 1891 commentary on Nahum called the Caperneum theory “altogether visionary” – *meaning they were imagining things*.
 - Others have suggested that Elkosh refers to an Assyrian city ‘al-Kush’ on the banks of the Tigris River near Nineveh². However, Homer Hailey, in his 1972 commentary said that was “most doubtful” because archaeologists have not discovered any town there by that name existing until some 2,500 years after Nahum.
 - The Jewish Soncino commentary on Nahum published in 1994 says that “internal evidence points to his hailing from Judah,” that “he was among the captives taken by the Assyrian conqueror, and that he died somewhere on the banks of the Tigris.” The great 19th century Hebrew scholar C. F. Keil took issue with that theory, commenting that Judah is too central to the book for it to be written by an exile, and there are no “allusions to the situation and circumstances of the exiles” outside of Judea, such as are in the book of Lamentations, for instance. Based on the many similarities with the book of Isaiah, Keil thought that Nahum was originally from Galilee but lived in Judea.
- Of all the other prophets in the Bible, the Prophet Isaiah alone shares all three prophecy descriptions that are found in the first verse of Nahum:
 - “Burden/oracle” – literally “that which is carried” – this word was used in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, as well as Habakkuk, Zechariah, and Malachi as a prophecy of coming punishment.
 - The second descriptive word for Nahum’s prophecy is “book” – literally a “record,” which could have been written on clay tablets, parchment scrolls, or papyrus books, like the

¹ According to Lehrman, “Ibn Ezra conjectures that it may be a patronymic... Judging from Targum Jonathan ‘Nahum of the house of Koshi’ ... it appears to be either a patronymic or a family name.” He also cited Abarbanel’s theory that it just meant “the latter,” as in, the prophet after Jonah. (Soncino) Keil emphatically denied that it was patronymic.

² Including Michaelis (1814), Eichhorn (1780’s?), Ewald (1881), and Michael Barrett (2021).

prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah.

- The third word is “vision” – which was supposed to be a revelation from God to a prophet, such as that also given to Isaiah, Daniel, Habakkuk, and Obadiah.
- The time and place of Nahum’s prophecy can be narrowed down to about a hundred-year timeperiod between the destruction of the Northern kingdom of Israel and the destruction of the Southern kingdom of Judah, but commentators are not agreed on anything more specific than that.
 - 100 to 150 years before Nahum, God had told the prophet Jonah to “Get up, Go to Nineveh (the great city), and Call upon her, for their evil has gone up before my face.” (Jonah 1:2, NAW) *I’m assuming you know the story of Jonah*: The king of Assyria paid attention to Jonah’s warning and commanded his nation to humble themselves and to worship Jonah’s God and to plead for mercy, and so God was merciful to them and held back His judgment.
 - Now Nahum comes along in the mid-to-late 600’s (maybe early 700’s BC)³, with another prophecy concerning Nineveh, but this time the message is delivered to Judah, not to Nineveh, *and there is no mercy*.
 - As for definite historical events that can be used to date Nahum, there are three mentioned in Nahum:
 1. The main theme of the book of Nahum is the fall of Nineveh, which happened around 609 B.C., when Josiah was King over Judah.
 2. Nahum chapter 3 mentions Assyria’s victory over Egypt at No-Amon, which historians have pegged at 664 BC, when Josiah’s father Manasseh was king over Judah.
 3. And the end of chapter 1 seems to prophecy God’s deliverance from the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem, which happened around 701 B.C. when Manasseh’s father Hezekiah was king over Judea.
 - So we have three definite events in history with well-known dates; the problem is deciding whether Nahum was predicting them as future events or whether he was writing a history of past events, and how far in advance or retrospect was he from those events.
 - The commentaries I read suggested a wide range of possibilities, but I will mention two:
 - Several commentators worth mentioning placed Nahum during Josiah’s reign, after the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem and after the Assyrian campaign against No-Amon, but a decade or two before Nineveh’s fall.
 - Nahum’s argument in chapter 3 that “if No-Amon wasn’t un-conquerable, then Nineveh isn’t un-conquerable” makes the best sense if it was delivered after No-

³ Many commentators (incl. Hailey, NASB, Lehman, Barrett, Hitzig, Whitcomb) place Nahum’s prophecy shortly before the fall of Nineveh, which was around 610 BC (give or take two years), although there are higher critics like Ewald who placed it afterwards. Josephus seems to be the most notable exception, claiming that Nahum was in the 730’s BC under Jotham. Calvin critiqued this by noting that if it were before Assyria had destroyed Israel it wouldn’t have made sense to be comforting the Israelites about God revenging Israel for Assyria’s destruction of Israel.) Abarbanel (1400’s), Calvin (1559), Vitranga (1730’s), Newcome (1785), Pusey (1880), and Keil (1891) all opted for a date late in Hezekiah’s reign or early in Manasseh’s (after Sennacherib’s death in 681 BC), whereas Henry (1714), Gill (1766) and Fausset (1871) thought it was early in Hezekiah’s reign (“720-714 b.c.”). *Seder Olam* ch. 20 claims he was a contemporary of Joel and Habakkuk during Manasseh’s reign.

Amon was conquered, and most commentators believe this refers to Ashurbanipal's conquests in Egypt in the year 663⁴.

- The Jewish Soncino commentary on Nahum suggested that, since Nahum doesn't mention the need for Israel to repent, perhaps Nahum prophesied during the revival that happened in Josiah's reign⁵, but there were also revivals in Hezekiah's, so that doesn't help us narrow the date down between the two of them.
- Most of the commentators I read placed Nahum during Hezekiah's reign, before all three events occurred, since Nahum's writing style concerning the earliest event – the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem – seems to be in future tense, and it only makes sense as a consolation to God's people if it hadn't happened yet. (After the fact, people wouldn't be worried any more about the Assyrians being a threat and wouldn't need Nahum's message that God was more powerful than Nineveh.)
- Placing Nahum during Hezekiah's reign would date his book a little less than 100 years before the fall of Nineveh, and it would also make him a contemporary of the Prophet Isaiah, which would make sense of how much Nahum's writing has in common with Isaiah.
- I am open to the idea, however, that Nahum may have written chapters 1-2 early in life before Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem (in the early 700's BC), and then may have written chapter 3 late in life (in the mid 600's BC) after his compatriots came back from helping Ashurbanipal conquer Thebes but before Nineveh was conquered in the early 600's BC.
- At any rate, this prophecy was made while Assyria was the superpower of the world, but shortly after this prophecy was made, Assyria was taken over by factions within its own empire – the northern Medes and southern Chaldeans, and shortly thereafter they destroyed the Assyrian capitol city of Nineveh, fulfilling Nahum's prophecy down to the last detail.
- Nahum is so specific with details – and he prophesied such unexpected details – that it couldn't possibly have been the product of human guesswork about the future of Nineveh.
 - For instance, there was no army in the world capable of threatening Nineveh. According to first century Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, Nineveh had 1,200 towers, each 200 feet high, its ordinary wall 100 feet high – and so wide that it could support three lanes of cars. Famine could not reduce it, for its 60 miles of circumference enclosed space for plenty of cattle, and it could, within its walls, grow enough grain for its population of 600,000. So, when Cyaxeres' parched-together army approached Nineveh, the Ninevites just scoffed at them. *And yet, Nineveh lost, just as Nahum prophesied.*
 - Moreover, Nahum prophesied that the city would be breached due to flooding and that the city would be burned, neither of which would have been expected, but that is exactly what happened.
 - Furthermore, E. B. Pusey, in his commentary on Nahum, pointed out that, in those days,

⁴ The Assyrians conducted quite a few campaigns against Egypt, but Keil was the only commentator I found to diverge from identifying Nahum's account with Ashurbanipal's siege of Thebes. Keil identified it with Sargon's conquests in Egypt in the early 700's, before Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, during Hezekiah's reign, comporting with the many commentators advocating for dating Nahum during Hezekiah's reign.

⁵ cf. M. Barrett: "...most likely it was nearer the time of Nineveh's fall."

conquerors didn't destroy cities after conquering them. It would be foolish to put all that construction to waste by destroying it! Armies would always keep the cities they conquered to make them into another fort for themselves, and yet Nahum's prophecy came true that Nineveh would be made a wasteland instead of another fortress for the Medes and Persians.

- Liberal scholars say that Nahum so specifically and accurately described the surprising and unexpected events of the fall of Nineveh, that he must have been an eyewitness writing his book after the fact, but if that were the case, there would be no reason to pretend that he was a prophet who had seen it in a "vision," because it would have already happened! Furthermore, the Jews wouldn't have given his book a place in the Bible if he had committed such an obvious pretense. No, this vision came before the destruction of Nineveh, and God intended it to be a testament to His sovereignty in the affairs of nations.
- What was going on in the world at this time?
 - Since Jonah's time, the Assyrians had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel (with its capitol city of Samaria) and had resettled it with foreigners, then they had invaded the southern kingdom of Judah, almost (but not quite) conquering Jerusalem.
 - John Calvin's commentary on Nahum (published in 1559) notes, "Though indeed they were [a foreign country], God was pleased to show them favor by teaching them through the ministry and labours of JONAH; and their repentance was not altogether feigned. Since then they were already endued with some knowledge of the true God, the less excusable was their cruelty, when they sought to oppress the kingdom of Israel. They indeed knew that nation was sacred to God: what they did then was... an outrage against God Himself."
 - E. B. Pusey, in his voluminous commentary on Nahum (published in 1880) also commented on this: "The prophet twice repeats the characteristic expression, 'What will he devise so vehemently against the LORD?' [D]evising evil against the LORD... was exactly the character of Sennacherib, whose wars, like those of his forefathers (as appears from the cuneiform inscriptions) were religious wars, and who blasphemously compared God to the local deities of the countries which his forefathers or himself had destroyed."
 - F.W. Farrar, in his commentary on *The Minor Prophets* (p.148, published in 1890), wrote, concerning Assyrian culture at its prime, "Judged from the vaunting inscriptions of her 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 and devastation; how they reddened broad deserts with carnage of warriors; how they scattered whole countries with impaled 'heaps of men' on stakes, and strewed the mountains and choked rivers with dead bones; how they cut off the hands of kings and nailed them on the walls, and left their bodies to rot with bears and dogs on the entrance gates of cities; how they employed nations of captives in making brick in fetters; how they cut down warriors like weeds, or smote them like wild beasts in the forests, and covered pillars with the flayed skins of rival monarchs."
- Nahum's prophecy of the downfall of Nineveh is portrayed as good news, so his prophecy is not directed towards Ninevites, as Jonah's had been. Rather, through Nahum, God supernaturally

informs His people in Judea about His sovereignty and justice in current events.

- “Nahum has one sentence to pronounce, the judgments of God upon the power of this world, which had sought to annihilate the kingdom of God. God, in His then-kingdom in Judah, and the world, were come face to face. What was to be the issue? The entire final utter overthrow of whatever opposed God. Nahum opens then with the calm majestic declaration of the majesty of God...” ~E. B. Pusey, 1880 AD
- With that introduction, please follow along in your Bibles as I read my translation of Nahum 1:1-4: Nineveh’s judgment-prophecy, the record of Nahum the Elkoshite’s vision: ***Yahweh is a super-jealous and avenging God. Yahweh is an avenger and a master of fury! Yahweh is an avenger against His adversaries, indeed He is a grudge-holder against His enemies! Yahweh is long-suffering, yet great in power, and He will certainly not acquit the guilty. As for Yahweh, His way is in the storm-wind and in the tempest, and the clouds are the dust under His feet. When He rebukes the sea, He makes it become dry land, and He dries up all the rivers. Bashan withers, and also Carmel; even the blossom of Lebanon withers!***

v. 2 Yahweh gets really mad at His enemies

- The only other time in the Hebrew Bible that the word translated “jealous” is spelled the way Nahum spells it here in v.2 (*kinvo* instead of *kinna*) is in **Joshua 24:19-20**, when “Joshua said to the people, ‘You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good.” *This should give anyone who knows history pause for thought:*
 - Well, no wonder the northern kingdom of Israel got destroyed by the Assyrians after covenanting to be God’s people and then worshipping golden calves and Baals and Asherahs instead!
 - And, if the Assyrians in Nineveh also say they are going to honor Yahweh after Jonah’s prophecy, but then turn back to the Assyrian gods, then, of course, the Lord is going to bring judgment on them too.
 - You don’t get to commit to God and enjoy His blessings... and then walk away from it all without consequences. God is a jealous God. He hates it when people say they love Him and then fall in love with some other thing besides Him.
 - In the New Testament, **Hebrews 6:4-6** puts it this way: “...[I]t is impossible to renew again into repentance those once having been enlightened, both having tasted of the heavenly gift... and having tasted the good word of God and also of the powers of the coming age, yet having fallen aside, who are re-crucifying to themselves – and shaming – the Son of God.” (NAW)
- In Nahum 1:2, he repeats three times that the LORD is “vengeful/avenging⁶.”
 - To those of us who have grown up in a culture that emphasizes God’s love, this may sound strange, but God used that word to describe Himself and His relational ways back in His covenant-making ceremony with the people of Israel in **Leviticus 26:23-25** “If... y’all keep walking defiantly in relation to me, then I... will strike y’all sevenfold because of y’all’s sins, and I

⁶ Rashi suggested that the three mentions of vengeance were intended to match the three incursions of Sennacherib into Israel.

will cause a sword to come upon y'all avenging the vengeance of the covenant..." (NAW)

- "Vengeance" is the process of punishing a wrongdoer for the wrong they have done and setting right an injustice. The threefold name of the LORD may be a way of communicating that all three persons of the Trinity engage in such vengeance. (Pusey)
- God promised this "vengeance," not only upon Israel if it apostatized (Isa. 1:24; Jer. 5:9ff), but also upon Babylon after it had pledged to worship Yahweh under Daniel's influence, then started mistreating God's people again (Jer. 51:36; Ezek. 24:8).
- **Micah 5:15** "Thus will I execute vengeance in anger and in fury with respect to the nations which have not heeded." (NAW, cf. Psalm 7:11)
- **Isaiah 59:18** "As it is with paybacks, so He will bring closure: wrath⁷ to His adversaries – payback to His enemies..." (NAW)
- In v.2, Nahum literally calls Yahweh a "Master of wrath" (*ba'al khamah*).
 - God has perfect mastery over the emotion of wrath and knows how to use it with perfect precision to execute justice without pity upon His enemies.⁸
 - With His omnipotent power, nothing is going to be able to stop Him when He gets angry. *If that doesn't strike the fear of God in you, I don't know what will, except seeing it for yourself – and I don't want to be anywhere near when that happens!*
- Nahum ends verse 2 by saying that God "keeps/maintains/reserves wrath/is a grudge-holder against His enemies."
 - We read the end of the book of Micah and like to focus on God as the one who "will have com-
passion on us... and will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea," and that is indeed true for the "remnant of His inheritance" – the true church, but that is not true for the rest of mankind.
 - God will remember in photographic detail every cotton-pickin' thing that every human being has ever done wrong. The language Nahum uses paints the picture of God, not merely keeping a record with clinical accuracy of every sin, but God actually nursing grudges over every single offense! *That is terrifying – the amount of anger that the almighty God could be building up – and building up – against me over the course of my lifetime if I am an enemy of His. I can't think of anything more frightening!*
 - Using a synonym of the Greek word used to translate Nahum's word for the "wrath" of God, the Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 1:18** "For the wrath [οργη] of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness," and **Romans 2:6-9** "[God] will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil..." (NKJV)
 - And the Apostle John, using the same Greek word used to translate Nahum's word for

⁷ See also Jer. 23:19; 30:23; Ezek. 5:15; 16:38; 24:8; and 25:17 for other instances of God's *chamah* wrath – mostly against Israel.

⁸ cf. M. Henry: "[H]e has fury (so the word is), not as man has it, in whom it is an ungoverned passion (so he has said, Fury is not in me (Isa. 27:4), but he has it in such a way as becomes the righteous God, to put an edge upon his justice, and to make it appear more terrible to those who otherwise would stand in no awe of it."

“vengeance⁹” reminds us in **Revelation 19:2** that when Jesus returns and judges the world, it will be vengeance: “[T]rue and righteous *are* His judgments... He has avenged the blood of His servants...” (NKJV)

- And verse 3 tells us He’s not going to miss a thing!

v. 3 Although He Doesn’t Get Mad Quickly, Yahweh has the Power to Punish

- Nahum’s doctrinal statement about the LORD in v.3 is rooted in **Exodus 34:6-7** “Then the LORD passed by in front of him [Moses] and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished...’ (NASB) *That’s how we know about God: He tells us in His Word about Himself.*
- The earlier prophet Jonah also knew this doctrine about God being “gracious, compassionate, and long-suffering/slow to anger,” for he also quoted from Exodus 34 in the last chapter of his book¹⁰, and Jonah must have shared that doctrine with folks in Nineveh, because Jonah 3:9 tells us that the Ninevites pinned all their hopes upon God compassionately “turn[ing] away from His burning anger” towards them, and that’s what God wanted, so He relented.
- In Jonah 1:2¹¹, God’s commission to Jonah to go to Nineveh uses the same wording found in **Deuteronomy 20:10-12**¹² requiring a diplomatic mission be sent to offer terms of peace first before attacking a city, in hopes that the city might join the covenant community of God’s people instead.
- The point is that God’s punishment of Nineveh prophesied by Nahum is no surprise-attack from a vengeful god; rather it comes from a God who does not have a short fuse when it comes to people doing things that bother Him – from a God who goes to great lengths to redeem and reconcile sinners to Himself, so Nahum’s message of doom against Nineveh follows a substantial warning and disclosure of God’s revelation about Himself to Nineveh, and it follows a substantial amount of time given to Nineveh to take action to get right with God.
- At the same time, Nahum tells us in v.3, that God shouldn’t be trifled with, and that for a couple of reasons, first:
 - He has “power” “great” enough to overcome any opposition thrown up against Him, so there’s no point in trying to fight with Him.
 - “His delay in executing judgment is not out of weakness but power. If he had less power, he would be less patient. Divine patience is not evidence of inability or indifference, but rather that which is designed to lead to repentance (Rom 2:4) and to

⁹ Cf. other uses of this same word: Eph. 5:6 and Heb. 10:30, which quotes from **Deut. 32:35** “Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them... 41 If I whet My glittering sword, And My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, And repay those who hate Me.” (NKJV)

¹⁰ **Jonah 4:2** “...Oh please, Yahweh, wasn’t this my saying while I was still on my turf? Because of this I went ahead to abscond to Tarshish: for I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate god, slow to anger, and full of kindness, and you are made sorry over the evil.” (NAW)

¹¹ https://www.ctrchurch-mhk.org/sermons/Jonah1_02.htm

¹² “When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall... serve you. However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.” (NKJV)

remove any excuse from sinners.” ~Barrett, 2021 AD

- The “whirlwind... storm... and clouds” are awe-inspiring things in creation used throughout the Bible to symbolize God’s awesome power to destroy sinners in judgment:
 - It’s my opinion that the “of” in “dust of His feet” is not the ablative “of” – in other words, the dust isn’t coming “from” His feet, rather it’s the locative “of” – located under His feet. In other words, you see those clouds way up in the sky above us? God is so big that those clouds don’t even reach to the top of His feet!¹³ *He’s an intimidatingly-big God – that’s the point.*
 - **Job 21:17-18** Job said, “How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? How often does their destruction come upon them, The sorrows God distributes in His anger? They are like straw before the wind, And like chaff that a storm carries away... **9:17-19** “...He crushes me with a tempest ... He will not allow me to catch my breath... If it is a matter of strength, indeed He is strong...” (NKJV, cf. Prov. 1:23-27)
 - The prophets Hosea (8:7), Jeremiah (4:13), Amos (1:14), and especially Isaiah also describe invading armies as “whirlwinds” sent by God to bring down wicked cities: **Isaiah 17:13** “The communities roar like the roaring of many waters, but He will rebuke it, and it will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the face of a storm-wind.... **29:6-7** You will be visited from Yahweh Commander of armies with thunder and with commotion and a loud sound, storm-wind and tempest and a flame of consuming fire. And it will be like the night-mare-vision, the multitude of all the nations which are fighting, and all of them fighting against Ariel and ensnaring her and causing distress toward her.” (NAW, cf. 66:14-16)
 - God should not be trifled with, first because He is “powerful” enough to win every fight He picks, without fail...
 - Secondly, He is also so attentive that “He will certainly not acquit the guilty/by no means clear the guilty/not at all leave the guilty unpunished,” *so there’s no point in hoping He will overlook or miss an offense against Him – you won’t be able to hide anything from Him.*
 - **Deut. 5:11** “...the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.”
 - **Proverbs 6:29b** “...Whoever [violates his neighbor’s wife] will not go unpunished.”
 - **Proverbs 16:5** “Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.”
 - **Proverbs 19:5** “A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who tells lies will not escape.” (NASB)
 - **Proverbs 11:21** “Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished, But the descendants of the righteous will be delivered.” (NASB)
- Verse 4 continues to impress us with God’s power, using the merism of water and land to show that He is God over every inch of the planet.

¹³ Calvin understood it differently that when God “moves,” the “whole heaven” fills with dust. Keil and M. Henry saw it more as I did, “[H]e treads on them, walks on them, raises them when he pleases, as a man with his feet raises a cloud of dust. It is but by permission, or usurpation rather, that the devil is the prince of the power of the air, for that power is in God’s hand.”

v. 4 Yahweh has Power over Land and Sea

- The wording of v.4 about God “rebuking the sea, making it become dry land” calls to mind the parting of the Red Sea for the Hebrews to escape from Egypt on dry ground¹⁴:
 - **Psalm 106:9** puts it in the same words Nahum used: “He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up; So He led them through the depths, As through the wilderness.” (NKJV)
 - Likewise, the “drying up of rivers” reminds us of the Israelites’ crossing of the Jordan river at flood season into the Promised Land in **Joshua 3:15-16** “...the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), [and] the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap... and the people crossed over opposite Jericho.” (NKJV)
 - It also brings to mind when Jesus, in **Matthew 8:26** “...rebuked the storm-winds and the sea, and they became incredibly calm.” (NAW)
 - These historical demonstrations of God’s power over bodies of water teach us that He has the power to do anything He wants, and, indeed, not only Nahum, but also the prophets Isaiah, Zechariah, and Jeremiah¹⁵ drew upon this image of “drying up rivers/seas” when they prophesied of the future downfalls of Egypt (Isa. 19:5), Assyria (Zech. 10:11), and Babylon (Jer. 51:36). Here’s **Zechariah 10:11** “He shall pass through the sea with affliction, And strike the waves of the sea: All the depths of the River shall dry up. Then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, And the scepter of Egypt shall depart.” (NKJV)
 - *God, in His justice, controls the rise and fall of even the mightiest nations on earth!*
- The second half of Nahum 1:4 recognizes God’s power over land as well as sea.
 - Three places in northern Israel are mentioned: Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon. The latter two are mountains, but beside Mount Carmel and Mt. Lebanon are some very fertile lowlands, which, on many maps are shaded green. Bashan is also a fertile, green flatland that stretches North and East from the Sea of Galilee.
 - The destructive power Nahum describes God possessing to make every crop in the breadbasket of a nation to “wither,” should give pause to anyone who thinks they can rebel against God and get away with it!
 - And again, Nahum isn’t the only prophet to use this image to impress us with God’s power to judge nations:
 - **Amos 1:2** “...The LORD roars from Zion... The pastures of the shepherds mourn, And the top of Carmel withers.” (NKJV)

¹⁴ cf. Exodus 14:22. Calvin was the only commentator surveyed who disagreed, but his English translator, Owen, in contradiction to Calvin, wrote that he saw in the past tense of these verbs “reference... to the past works of God, and in some instances to those performed in the wilderness.”

¹⁵ **Isaiah 19:4-5** “and I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master, and a fierce king will rule over them, declares Yahweh GOD Commander of armies. And the waters of the sea will be dried up, and the river will be desolate and dry... **50:2** Why was there not a man when I came? I called but there was not one answering. Does my hand come up so very short from the redemption, and is there not strength in me to deliver? Look, by my rebuke I dry up the sea; I replace rivers (with) desert; their fish stink from there not being water, and they die in their thirst.” (NAW)

Jeremiah 51:35-36 “‘Let the violence done to me and my flesh be upon Babylon,’ The inhabitant of Zion will say; ‘And my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea!’ Jerusalem will say. Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will plead your case and take vengeance for you. I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry.’” (NKJV)

- **Isaiah 33:9-10** “The land mourned and drooped; Lebanon blushed; it withered. The Sharon became like the desert, and Bashan and Carmel shook. ‘Now I will get up,’ says Yahweh. ‘Now I will lift myself up; now I will be exalted!’” (NAW)

Conclusion

- In the face of a God powerful enough to punish any sinner and attentive enough to punish every sin, our only hope is for Him to be patient and merciful toward us.
- And for those who have found God’s mercy through Jesus, we need never worry that the wicked might get away with doing wrong things.
- Furthermore, the book of Ephesians uses the same Greek word, used to translate the word “power” in Nahum 1:3, to remind us that all that divine power resides in Jesus and is intent upon your good: **Ephesians 1:18-22** “the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, resulting in [you] knowing: what the hope of His call is, what the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints is, and what the hyperbolic greatness of His power into us believers is, according to the energy of the might of His strength, which He worked in the Christ when He raised out of the dead and seated Him in His right hand in the heavens above every ruler and authority and power and lordship and every name being named (not only in this age but also in the one which is about to be), and everything He subordinated under His feet, and to Him He gave headship over everything in the church... [and so he says in] **6:10** y’all be made mighty in the Lord and in the power of His strength!” (NAW)
- **1 Peter 4:11** elaborates on this power which Jesus shares with His people: “When someone speaks, let it be like God's words; when someone serves, let it be like it's out of the strength which God stages, in order that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom belong the glory and the power forever and ever, Amen.” (NAW)

Nahum 1:1-4 – Side-by side comparison of versions^A

| Douay ^B (Vulgate) | LXX ^C | Brenton ^D (Vaticanus) | KJV ^E | NASB ^F | NIV ^G | ESV ^H | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew ^I | Bauscher ^J (Peshitta) | Cathcart ^K (Targums) |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| 1 The burden of Ninive. The book of the vision of Nahum, the Elcesite. | 1 Ἀθήματα Νινευη· βιβλίον ὁράσεως Ναουμ τοῦ Ἐλκεσαίου. | 1 The burden of Nineve: the book of the vision of Naum the Elkesite. | 1 The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. | 1 The oracle of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. | 1 An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. | 1 An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh. | 1 Nineveh's judgment-prophecy , the record of Nahum the Elkoshite's vision: | L מַצָּא (א) יִינִיגָה מִסְפָּר נַחֻם נַחֻם הָאֶלְקִשִּׁי. | 1 The plague of Nineva that is [in] the scroll of the vision[s] of Nakhum the Alqushite | 1. The oracle [of the cup of malediction to be given to] Nineveh [to drink. Previously Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher, prophesied against her and she repented of her sins; and when she sinned again there prophesied once more against her] Nahum of [Beth] Koshi, [as is recorded in this] book. |
| 2 The Lord is a jealous God, and a revenger : the Lord is a revenger , and hath wrath: the Lord taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he is angry with his enemies. | 2 Θεὸς ζηλωτὴς καὶ ἐκδικῶν κύριος, ἐκδικῶν κύριος μετὰ Χ θυμοῦ ἐκδικῶν κύριος τοὺς ὑπεναντίους αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐξαίρων ^P αὐτὸς τοὺς ἐχθρούς αὐτοῦ. | 2 God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; the Lord avenges with X wrath; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries, and he cuts off X X his enemies. | 2 God <i>is</i> jealous, and the LORD revengeth ; the LORD revengeth , and <i>is</i> X furious; the LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. | 2 A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful . The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves [wrath] for His enemies. | 2 The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains [his] wrath against his enemies. | 2 The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful ; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. | 2 Yahweh is a super-jealous and avenging God. Yahweh is an avenger and a master of fury! Yahweh is an avenger against His adversaries, indeed He is a grudgeholder against His enemies! | 2 (ב) אֵל קְדוֹם וְנִקְמָה יְהוָה יְהוָה וְכַעַס יְהוָה לְצָרוֹ וְנוֹסֵף הוּא לְאִבּוֹ. | 2 God is zealous and an avenger . LORD JEHOVAH avenges, X LORD JEHOVAH avenges in X passion, LORD JEHOVAH on his haters, and he watches X his enemies | 2. God is judge and an avenger is the Lord; the Lord takes vengeance , and there is great might [before him]; the Lord will take vengeance on the enemies of his [people], and on his adversaries with fierce anger . |
| 3 The Lord is patient , and great in power, and will not [cleanse [and] acquit [the guilty]]. The Lord's ways are in a tempest, and a whirlwind, and clouds are the dust of his feet. | 3 κύριος μακρόθυμος, καὶ μεγάλη ἡ ἰσχύς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἄθωδὸν οὐκ ἄθωώσει κύριος, ἐν συντελείᾳ ^X καὶ ἐν συσσεισμῷ ἡ ὁδὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ νεφέλαι κονιορτὸς ποδῶν αὐτοῦ. | 3 The Lord is long-suffering , 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. | 3 The LORD <i>is</i> slow to anger , and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked : the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. | 3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; And the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished . In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet. | 3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished . His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. | 3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty . His way is in whirlwind and X storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. | 3 Yahweh is long-suffering , yet great in power, and He will certainly not acquit the guilty . As for Yahweh, His way is in the storm-wind and in the tempest, and the clouds are the dust under His feet. | 3 (ג) יְהוָה שָׂדֵה אֶשְׁמֵה וְגִדּוּלֵכֶם וְנִקְמָה לֹא יִנְקֵם יְהוָה בְּסוֹפָה וּבְשַׁעֲרָה דְרָכּוֹ וְעָנָן אֲבָק רִגְלָיו. | 3 Patient is [the Spirit of] LORD JEHOVAH and great is his power, and he does not declare innocent to declare innocent; LORD JEHOVAH is in the whirlwind and his way is in the tempest, and the clouds are the dust of his feet | 3. The Lord removes anger , and there is great might before him; and he pardons those who return to his law, but does not leave unpunished those who do not return ; the Lord goes forth in storm and wind, and a dark cloud is the path before X X him. |
| 4 He rebuketh the sea and drieth it up; and bringeth all the rivers to be a desert . Basan languisheth and Carmel: and the flower of Libanus fadeth away. | 4 ἀπειλῶν ^{AA} θαλάσσης καὶ ξηραίνων αὐτήν καὶ πάντα τοὺς ποταμούς· ἐξηρημῶν ὧλιγώθη ἡ Βασανίτις καὶ ὁ Κάμμηλος, καὶ τὰ ἐξανθοῦντα τοῦ Λιβάνου ἐξέλιπεν. | 4 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 . | 4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth , and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth . | 4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; X He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither X; X The blossom[s] of Lebanon wither X. | 4 He rebukes the sea and dries it up; X he makes all the rivers run dry . Bashan and Carmel wither X and the blossom[s] of Lebanon fade X. | 4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; X he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither X; X the bloom of Lebanon withers . | 4 When He rebukes the sea, He makes it become dry land, and He dries up all the rivers. Bashan withers , and also Carmel; even the blossom of Lebanon withers ! | 4 (ד) גּוֹעַר בָּיָם וּנְקִישָׁהוּ וְכָל הַנְּהָרוֹת הִסְרִיב אִמְלָג בְּשָׁן וְכַרְמֵל וּפְרַח לְבָנוֹן אִמְלָל. | 4 He rebuked the Sea and dried it up and he laid waste to all the rivers; Mathnain and Karmela howled and the fruit of Lebanon dried up | 4. He rebukes the sea and dries it up, and he makes all the rivers dry ; Mathnaan and Carmel are desolate , and the tree[s] of Libanus are withered . |

- ^A NAW is my translation. When a translation adds words not in the Hebrew text, but does not indicate it has done so by the use of italics or greyed-out text, I put the added words in [square brackets]. When one version chooses a wording which is different from all the other translations, I underline it. When a version chooses a translation which, in my opinion, either departs too far from the root meaning of the Hebrew word or departs too far from the grammar form of the original text, I use ~~strikeout~~. And when a version omits a word which is in the original text, I insert an X. I also place an X at the end of a word if the original word is plural but the English translation is singular. I occasionally use colors to help the reader see correlations between the various editions and versions when there are more than two different translations of a given word. The only known Dead Sea Scrolls containing Nahum 1 are 4Q82 (containing parts of verses 7-9 and dated between 30-1 BC), The *Nahal Hever* Greek scroll (containing parts vs. 13-14 and dated around 25BC), and the Wadi Muraba'at Scroll (containing parts of verses 1-15 and dated around 135 AD).
- ^B Douay Old Testament first published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609, Revised and Diligently Compared with the Latin Vulgate by Bishop Richard Challoner, Published in 1582, 1609, 1752. As published on E-Sword.
- ^C "Septuagint" Greek Old Testament, edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Published in 1935. As published on E-Sword.
- ^D English translation of the Septuagint by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, 1851, "based upon the text of the Vaticanus" but not identical to *Vaticanus*. As published electronically by E-Sword.
- ^E 1769 King James Version of the Holy Bible; public domain. As published electronically by E-Sword.
- ^F Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
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- ^H Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- ^I From the Wiki Hebrew Bible
https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%94_%D7%90/%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA.
DSS text comes from <https://downloads.thewaytoyahuwah.com>
- ^J The Peshitta Holy Bible Translated by Glenn David Bauscher, Copyright © 2018 Lulu Publishing, 3rd edition Copyright © 2019 as found on <https://biblehub.com/hpbt/nahum/1.htm>
- ^K From *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, Volume 14, 1989, Cathcart, Kevin J; Gordon, R. P. As found on https://wbsg8v.xyz/d3/y/1715385560/100/u/ia/annas-archive-ia-2023-06-acsm/t/targumofminorpro0014unse.pdf/~f8jMjv18tRB-fitiyGs6_g/The%20Aramaic%20Bible%3A%20The%20Targum%20of%20the%20Minor%20Prophets%20--%20Cathcart%2C%20Kevin%20J%3B%20Gordon%2C%20R_%20P%20--%20Volume%2014%2C%201989%20--%20Wilmington%2C%20Del_%3A%20M_%20Glazier%20--%209780894534898%20--%202c2211ab706b64db6d34be810eef40da%20--%20Anna%E2%80%99s%20Archive.pdf on 10 May 2024
- ^L Literally "that which is carried" – used as a prophecy of coming punishment in Isa. 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1; 30:6; Jer. 23:33-38; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 12:10; 24:25; Hab. 1:1; Zech. 9:1; 12:1; and Mal. 1:1. Owen of Thruddington wrote the following footnote in Calvin's commentary: "Some regard it as the message carried or borne by the Prophets from God to the people, and hence the same as Prophecy. Others consider it to be the judgment to be borne by the people respecting whom it was announced. The latter seems to be its meaning here, where it is said, 'the burden of Nineveh.' It was the judgment laid on them, and which that city was to bear, endure, and undergo." Matthew Henry poetically called this "burden" "a dead weight to Nineveh, a mill-stone hanged about its neck." Keil's more practical gloss was "threatening words."
- ^M Literally "record," but refers to notes written on tablets, messages in scrolls, as well as books. Other biblical prophets had such "records," notably David (Psalm 40:8), Isaiah (Isa. 29:11-18; 30:8; 34:16), and Jeremiah 51:60.
- ^N This kind of "vision" was supposed to be a revelation from God to a prophet, such as that to Daniel (8:1), Isaiah (1:1), Habakkuk (2:2), and Obadiah (1:1), although there were also false prophets who claimed to have such visions (Jer. 14:14; 23:16; Ezek. 12:24; 13:16). Pusey saw eschatological application in Nahum as a word from God to bring comfort to God's people upon the final judgment of the wicked.
- ^O Both "Nahum" and "Elkoshi" are *hapex legomena*, with no cross-reference in the Bible.
- ^P 2nd Century Greek translators Aquila and Symmachus rendered this verb εἶχον [θύμῳ] ("having [wrath]") – which is more like the MT, although the MT reads "it" instead of "wrath."
- ^Q Verses 2-8 roughly follow the Hebrew alphabet acrostic poetry form, with the second letter (*beth*) coming in the second line of v.3, then *gimmel* starting v.4. The second line of v.4 is irregular because there is no *daleth*, but *he* and *vav* start the first and second lines of v.5. *Zayin* starts the second (rather than the first) word of v.6, but *chet* starts the second line of v.6; *tet* starts the first line of v.7; *yod* starts the second line of v.7 (if you ignore the *vav* consecutive), and *caph* can be found starting the middle of v.8. This theory is advanced by the layout of the BHS, although, with five of the 11 letters

having irregularities, it is worth considering whether or not such a construction was actually intended. In the Soncino commentary, Lehrman called it “misplaced ingenuity” and “violence” to the text to “force the diction of Nahum into the straitjacket of a supposed alphabetical arrangement...” The alleged acrostic letters are highlighted with yellow in the chart.

^R Pusey noted this is the intensive spelling of the word for “jealous.” This form is only found here and in Josh. 24:19.

^S Avenging: “Its meaning here is to watch the opportunity to take vengeance on his enemies.” ~Owen of Thrussington

^T MT cantillation places a minor punctuation here, associating YHWH with “God,” “Jealous,” and “Avenging.”

^U MT cantillation places a major punctuation here, separating the first from the second half of the verse. Nowhere else in the Bible is God called a “Baal of Wrath” (although the Proverbs mention a wicked men who is a Baal of Wrath a couple of times Prov. 29:22 cf. 22:24), but the prophets are clear that God will judge with “wrath,” e.g. Isaiah 59:18.

^V “...‘adversaries’ ... rather, his oppressors; the oppressors of his people were his own oppressors.” ~John Owen of Thrussington in Calvin’s commentary (cf. Acts 9:4)

^W Although the Vulgate and Targum (followed by all the English versions) insert the word “wrath,” the MT, LXX, and Peshitta read “it,” but neither can be correct because this pronoun (“he”) is masculine, whereas “wrath” is a feminine noun and there is no other masculine noun in the vicinity that would make sense. Furthermore, this pronoun is in the subject position and has no direct object indicator, so it seems only natural to translate it as the subject of the participle “keeping.” As for that participle, its root only occurs about half a dozen times, half of them denoting “grudge-keeping” (Lev. 19:18; Ps. 103:9; and Jer. 3:5 & 12), and the other half – all in Song of Solomon – denoting “vineyard-tending” (Cant. 1:6; 8:11-12).

^X cf. 2nd century Greek translator Symmachus (Sym.) καταιγιδος (“tempest”) και λαίλαπος (“hurricane”).

^Y DSS וַגִּדֹּל Qere = לַגִּדֹּל – a more standard way of spelling this adjective, but no difference in meaning.

^Z MT cantillation has the major punctuation here, making YHWH the one whose way is in the storms rather than the subject of “he will not leave the guilty unpunished.” Vulgate, Peshitta, Targums, and KJV all follow the MT cantillation, but NASB, NIV, and ESV follow the LXX in putting the line break before rather than after YHWH.

^{AA} Aquila and Sym. chose the synonym ἐπιτιμῶν.

^{AB} In the Hebrew acrostic scheme, this word would be expected to begin with a *daleth* instead of an *aleph*. That substitution wouldn’t actually change the meaning, as לָלוּ would mean “they languish/droop low.”

^{AC} The Aramaic versions read with a different name “Mathnin,” but LXX and Vulgate support the MT. (The word is not visible in any known DSS). This singular location is the subject of the 3rd singular Pulpal perfect verb which comes before it, so KJV is correct. The NASB and NIV change the Hebrew singular verb to an English plural verb both times it occurs in this verse, whereas the ESV renders one of the Hebrew singulars as an English plural and the other as an English singular.

Nahum 1:5-8 – God’s Power To Protect

Introduction

- For a quick synopsis of the opening of Nahum, here’s Michael Barrett, professor of Old Testament at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Michigan, from his 2021 commentary on Nahum: “God is gracious to whom he is gracious, but he withholds his mercy from whom he wills (Rom. 9:14–18). He is sovereign in both salvation and judgment. Nahum’s oracle against Nineveh is timeless because God always deals with sinners and saints the same way. Sinners of every age and place must learn not to trifle with God, and saints of every age must learn to rest secure in divine grace and in the certainty of God’s unfailing plan and purpose of redemption.”

v. 5 Yahweh Has Power Over The Whole World

- Modern Jewish commentator Dr. Lehrman wrote, “Theophany is accompanied, in Biblical descriptions, by a disturbance of nature, as if the very elements tremble at His approach.”
- Verse 5 opens with a litany of vast geological features shaking and shrinking away from God as He enters the scene to punish the violent wickedness of the Assyrians.
- I say “shrinking away” because the *mem*-prepositions in this Hebrew text picture the mountains moving “away from” the Lord, to get out of His way, as He rages through. (Alternately the *mem*-prepositions could be translated causally, as the NASB did, picturing them being melted and shoved out of the way because He is raging through the land.) This is no face-off between God and the mountains; there is no contest; not even the mountains nor “all the inhabitants of the earth” combined stand a chance of stopping the LORD!
- The “mountains” and “hills” may be literal mountains and hills to impress us with the mighty power of God over the world, but I think they are more probably figurative for big, powerful cities and their kings (which is what they stood for in Micah). They are in parallel with “inhabitants of the earth” at the end of v.5, and only wicked persons would really have a reason to shy away from God, as they are doing in v.5, so I’m inclined toward that figurative interpretation¹⁶.
- The verbs are all in past tense in Hebrew: “quaked... melted... heaved,” but Nahum’s words do not match any particular historical event in the Bible¹⁷. What they do seem to match is a judgment-picture, which recurs throughout the Psalms and Prophets, of God wreaking havoc on the earth as He punishes evil. A great variety of Hebrew words are employed in these prophetic word-pictures of God’s anger and judgment, but the general picture is the same:
 - Psalm 18:7** “Then the earth crashed¹⁸ and buckled, and foundations of mountains trembled. They crashed themselves because he was angry... **46:6** Nations roared; kingdoms were overthrown. He projected with his voice; the earth melted.” (NAW)
 - Psalm 97:5** “The mountains melt¹⁹ like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence

¹⁶ Rashi also interpreted the mountains and hills metaphorically as princes and nobles, but Calvin interpreted them literally as though Nahum were making a commentary on how God holds the elements of nature together here – a true enough assertion but too far afield of Nahum’s logic in this passage.

¹⁷ The closest one might get is Exodus 19:18 “Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked [חָרַד] greatly.” (NKJV)

¹⁸ רָעַשׁ, a synonym to Nahum’s רָעַשׁ.

¹⁹ מָסַח, a synonym to Nahum’s מָסַח.

of the Lord of the whole earth... **104:32** He looks on the earth, and it trembles²⁰; He touches the hills, and they smoke.” (NKJV)

- **Micah 1:4** “Then the mountains will melt beneath Him, and the valleys will burst open like wax from flames of fire, like water being poured through a precipice.” (NAW)
- **Isaiah 13:13** “Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will shake out of her place, at the wrath of Yahweh Commander of armies in the day of his fierce anger...
24:1&20 “Look, Yahweh: empties the land and desolates her, and He will distort her face, and scatter her inhabitants... The earth staggers like a drunk; She sways like a hammock; Her sin is heavy upon her, and she falls, and she will never again stand.” (NAW)
- **Joel 2:10** “The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness... **3:16** The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.” (NKJB)
- And I could read similar passages from Amos, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk too.
 - **Amos 9:5** The Lord GOD of hosts, He who touches the earth and it melts, And all who dwell there mourn; All of it shall swell like the River, And subside like the River of Egypt.” (NKJV)
 - **Jeremiah 4:24-27** “I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, And all the hills moved back and forth²¹. I beheld, and indeed there was no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled. I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were broken down At the presence of the LORD, By His fierce anger. For thus says the LORD: ‘The whole land shall be desolate; Yet I will not make a full end.’” (NKJV)
 - **Habakkuk 3:6-12** “He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered, The perpetual hills bowed. His ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; The curtains of the land of Midian trembled²²... The mountains saw You and trembled²³... You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger.” (NKJV)
- This same picture carries on into the New Testament describing the coming of Christ:
 - **Luke 3:5** “Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth...” (NKJV)
 - **Hebrews 12:25-29** “...He has promised saying, ‘Once more I myself am shaking [not only] the earth [but] also heaven.’ Now, the ‘Once more’ shows the replacement of the things being shaken (in this case, of things which have been created) such that the things which are not being shaken may remain....” (NAW)
 - **Matthew 24:29-30** “And immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give off her glow, and the stars will fall from the heavens, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will be revealed in the sky, and then all the families of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of the heavens with power and much glory...” (NAW, cf. Luke 21:26)
 - **Revelation 6:12-17** “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a

²⁰ רעד, a synonym to Nahum’s רעש.

²¹ קלל, a synonym to Nahum’s רעש with more emphasis on the insubstantiality of what is moving.

²² רגז, a synonym to Nahum’s רעש with more emphasis on back-and-forth motion.

²³ חול, a synonym to Nahum’s רעש with more emphasis on circular motion.

mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved²⁴ out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (NKJV)

- *This is Biblical Judgment Day genre of writing.*

v. 6 The Wicked Won’t Survive God’s Anger

- Nahum 1:2 already informed us that “Yahweh is... a master of fury,”
- and the words of v.6 dwell on the passion of God’s anger when He invokes judgment: “...rage/indignation... burning/heat/fierceness of His anger... wrath fury rained down/poured out like fire...” *Anyone who really understands what it means for God to be this angry against sin should rightly tremble in fear.*
- Nahum asks, “who will stand before His rage, and who can abide/endure/literally rise up in/against the fierceness of His anger?” The answer is no-one. *If not even the mountains can stand in His way, you’ll be as powerless to stand against Him as a piece of paper in a tornado!*
 - **Psalm 76:7** “You, Yourself, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence When once You are angry?” (NKJV)
 - **Malachi 3:2** “But who can endure²⁵ the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire...” (NKJV)
 - **Joel 2:11** “...the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; Who can endure²⁶ it?” (NKJV)
- The wrath of God “poured out/rained down like fire” reminds us of what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah: Their wickedness got so great that God rained “fire and brimstone” down from heaven and destroyed them all (Gen. 19).
 - Archaeologists have found structures around the Dead Sea dating back to the time of Abraham, and with all of them, the fire started on their roofs²⁷. *It’s the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah. The wrath of God is real!*
- The “breaking down” of “rocks” is the other illustration of God’s wrath mentioned by Nahum in v.6.
 - The Hebrew word for “rocks” here is for big rocks – big enough to be a landmark (Ex. 17:6, 1 Sam. 24:2, 2 Sam. 21:10) or to have caves in them in which you could hide (1 Chr. 11:15, Ps. 31:2, 62, etc.).
 - The two main ways the verb associated with these rocks is used in the history books of the Old Testament is in the “breaking down” of pagan altars²⁸ and in the “tearing down” of city walls during their overthrow²⁹.
 - Nahum speaks of God Himself doing this.
 - The only pagan rock-altar that God broke down by Himself, as far as I can remember, was the one King Jeroboam of Israel had erected in 1 Kings 13, although the “breaking

²⁴ κινέω, a synonym to the LXX of Nahum’s σείω with more emphasis on movement in one direction.

²⁵ כָּבַל, a synonym to Nahum’s קָם, with more emphasis on “keeping it together.”

²⁶ כָּבַל (see previous footnote)

²⁷ See, for instance, <https://christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a007.html>

²⁸ Exod. 34:13, Deut. 7:5; 12:3; Jdg. 2:2; 6:28, 30-32; 9:45; 2 Ki. 10:27; 11:18; 23:7-8, 12, 15; 2 Chr. 23:17; 31:1; 33:3; 34:4, 7; Ezek. 16:39

²⁹ Judges 8:9-17, 9:15, 2 Kings 25:10, 2 Chron 36:19, Ezekiel 26:9-12

- apart” of that altar is described with a different Hebrew word – a synonym to the one Nahum uses here³⁰.
- The only city rock-walls, to my knowledge, which God broke down by Himself, were those of Jericho, although again, the “falling down” of the walls of Jericho is described with a different verb [נפל] than the one Nahum uses.
 - Of course, God isn’t limited to “breaking” “walls” and “altars;” we see, in Genesis 7, Him “breaking up”³¹ the vast tectonic plates of the earth to open the “fountains of the deep” and flood the entire earth.
 - This God can overcome anything that stands against Him. No city wall, no supernatural power, and no measly man will be able to stop God’s wrath when it is time for them to be punished for their sin.
 - **Isaiah 13:9** “Look, the day of Yahweh comes, Cruel wrath and fierce anger, to make the land into a desolation and to destroy her sinners from her.... **30:27** Look, the Name of Yahweh has come from afar: His anger is burning³², and there is heavy smoke rising. His lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is like a consuming fire... **66:15** For look, Yahweh will come with fire, and like the whirlwind His chariots will be, to return in the fury of His anger, and His rebuke will be with flames of fire.” (NAW)
 - **Jeremiah 4:4** “Circumcise your... hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn³³ so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings.” (NKJV)
 - And in the New Testament: **Revelation 6:17** “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand? ... **14:10** [worshipers of a false god] shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured³⁴ out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” (NKJV) *This is the God with Whom we have to deal.*
 - A century prior to Nahum, the people of Nineveh had heard about this part of God’s character and nature, through the Prophet Jonah, so they said in **Jonah 3:9** “Who knows? The god may turn back... from his burning anger, and we will not perish.” (NAW) *They fasted and put on mourning clothes and begged God to have mercy on them – and, sure enough, He did! But there was no such repentance going on in Nineveh any more; now was the time for judgment.*
 - And yet, God’s mercy is still available. Verse 7 shifts from focusing on God’s wrath to focusing on His merciful kindness as Savior:

v. 7 God Is Good, Safe, & Intimate With Those Who Trust Him

- The phrase “day/days/time of trouble/crisis” in v.7
 - is used to describe God’s judgment coming upon Jerusalem in the form of foreign armies: the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and later the Romans³⁵.
 - But also, Nahum’s phrase, “day of crisis,” is used in eschatological passages in the Bible, such

³⁰ נָתַץ; compare with Nahum’s נָתַץ.

³¹ בָּקַע, a synonym to Nahum’s נָתַץ.

³² בָּעַר, a synonym to Nahum’s חָרַן.

³³ בָּעַר, a synonym for Nahum’s חָרַן.

³⁴ κεράννυμι, a synonym for the LXX of Nahum’s τήκει.

³⁵ The Assyrian siege: 2Ki. 19:3 || Isa. 37:3. The Chaldean siege: Obad. 1:12-14, Hab. 3:16, Zeph. 1:15, Jer. 16:19. The Roman siege: Mark. 13:19.

as Matthew 24 (29), Revelation 2 (10), and Psalm 50, where the Lord, in fierce wrath, comes and gathers all the nations to the final judgment.

- And yet, even in the midst of that, God says in Psalm 50:15, “call out to me during a time of crisis. I will rescue you, then you will glorify me!” (NAW) *Don't wait until Judgment Day to call upon Jesus to be your refuge; do it now!*
- There is a translation difficulty in the middle of v.7: How does the word “stronghold” relate to the rest of the sentence?
 - Most English translations separate it from the clause, “God is good.” But in all the manuscripts, the preposition “for” occurs just before the noun “stronghold,” and the Hebrew punctuation associates “for a stronghold” with “Yahweh is good.”
 - It may not make much difference in meaning, but I think that “a stronghold during a day of crisis” defines what Nahum means by “good.” God is, of course “good” for many things, but Nahum is commenting particularly about what God can do that is “good,” in light of the terrifying threat of judgment which he has just attributed to God³⁶. *Nahum is reminding us that our only hope for refuge from God's wrath is in God Himself!*
 - **Psalm 31:19** “How great is Your goodness, which You have hidden away for those who respect You, [which] You worked out for the ones who take refuge in You before the children of mankind!” (NAW, cf. 25:8)
- Throughout the Bible, God is called the “stronghold” of His people:
 - **Psalm 27:1** “Yahweh is my light and my salvation. Of whom shall I be afraid? Yahweh is the stronghold of my life; Of whom shall I be in dread?” (NAW, cf. Isa. 17:10)
 - **Psalm 37:38-40** “...transgressors will be altogether destroyed... But the salvation of righteous men is from Yahweh; He is their stronghold in a time [עַד] of crisis. Yahweh will also help them and deliver them...” (NAW)
 - **Joel 3:16** “...The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.” (NKJV)
 - God is the place to go to find safety and protection because He is the strongest person there is. His power is omnipotent, and there is none who can compete with Him. If He is protecting you, then you are truly safe!
- So whom does God protect with His almighty power? “...those who trust/take refuge in Him.”
 - **Psalm 2:12** Pay homage without hindrance, otherwise He will become angry and y'all will perish in the way, for His anger rages like a short [fuse]. Oh the blessings of all who take refuge in Him!
 - **Psalm 18:30** This God has integrity in His ways; the speech of Yahweh is pure. He is a shield for all those who take refuge in Him.” (NAW, cf. v.2)
 - **Psalm 34:8** How good Yahweh is! Y'all taste and see! Oh the blessings of the champion who takes refuge in Him! (cf. 36:7)
 - **Psalm 46:1** “It is God who has truly been found to be a refuge, a strength, and a helper for us in crises...” (NAW)
 - **Proverbs 18:10** “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe... **29:25** The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts [בִּטְחָה] in the LORD shall be safe.” (NKJV)

³⁶ cf. Owen: “The object here is not to assert generally that God is good, but that he is good for aid...”
Keil: “The predicate טוב is more precisely defined by the apposition לְקִיעוֹתָהּ, for a refuge.”

- Think about the imagery of “taking refuge.”
 - It means going towards your Judge rather than trying to get away from Him. “Ironically, the Lord who is the source of wrath is the only refuge against that wrath. Safety is found not by trying to escape but by fleeing to the Lord.” ~Michael Barrett, 2021 AD
 - It means trusting that He will indeed change His stance from angry judgment against you to loving care and protection for you.
 - It also means surrendering yourself into His power. You’re the refugee; you’re at His mercy, and merciful He will be, but Lord He will also be!
- One last point in v.7: it says that the LORD “knows those who take refuge in Him.”
 - The New Testament also affirms this knowledge:
 - **1 Corinthians 8:3** “but if someone loves God, He is known by him.” (NAW)
 - **2 Timothy 2:19** “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” (NKJV)
 - **John 10:27** “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” (NKJV)
 - We hear news reports about the millions of refugees seeking to escape from violence and poverty into the borders of a stable country – especially when it’s our country! It’s not humanly possible to know that many people well. For starters, most of us wouldn’t even be able to pronounce their names correctly, but God says He “knows” whoever comes under His protection.
 - What it also means is that He knows who the hypocrites are, as well – who hang out with God’s people for the benefits they get out of it in this life, but who are not really taking refuge in the Lord. He’s not fooled by outward appearances; He knows your heart. Jesus says in **Matthew 7:23** that in that day He will say, “Depart from me, workers of lawlessness; I never knew you!”
 - And the Hebrew verb for “know” is much more intimate than just knowing some things about someone. It is the same word used in Hebrew for how a husband and wife “know” each other. God’s knowledge of us spiritual refugees is intimate and comprehensive and is a result of His eternal commitment to love us.
 - If you ever get hung up on the judgment and wrath of God, all you need do is meditate on God’s intimate “knowing of all who take refuge in Him,” and your anxieties will melt into worship.
- Verse 8 returns to the previously-established fact that God will punish His enemies, further underscoring our need to take refuge in Him.

v. 8 God’s Enemies Will Be Destroyed

- In verses 5-6, Nahum’s prophecy mentioned God’s use of earthquakes and fire in punishment; now, in v.8, he brings in two more factors of flooding and of darkness.
- The Hebrew word Nahum uses for “flood” reminds us of the worldwide cataclysm of God’s judgment in Noah’s day, when the only people who escaped a watery grave were those who entrusted themselves to the ark – the singular refuge which God provided.
 - God made a “complete end” of that world and started everything anew with Noah’s family

on an earth wiped clean of human wickedness.

- Almost every ethnic group on earth still carries in their traditions the memory of this event, which affected us all, and it is well worth remembering, because God will bring an end to this world too, and only those who take heed to the singular refuge which God has provided in Jesus Christ will survive to start fresh in the new world after God wipes this one out by fire.
- But, as is typical of most of the Old Testament prophets, I think Nahum has a near-term fulfillment to his prophecy which serves as a type of the ultimate eschatological fulfillment of his prophecy.
 - As E. B. Pusey, the Regius professor of Hebrew at Oxford in the mid 1800's put it in his famous commentary on the Minor Prophets, "[T]he first destruction and the last which it pictures, meet in the same words."
 - The near-term fulfillment of his prophecy of an "overflowing/overwhelming/ overrunning flood" which brings an "end" can be found in the history of Nineveh, which was conquered only after the river it was located next-to flooded and eroded the earth under part of its city wall, causing the otherwise-impenetrable wall to collapse, and opening the city to the Medo-Persian troops which had been unsuccessfully besieging it for years.
 - In the first century BC, Diodorus Siculus, published an account of the fall of Nineveh. Translated into English, it reads, "The Siege continu'd Two Years, during which time nothing was done to any purpose, save that the Walls were sometimes assaulted, and the Besieg'd pen'd up in the City. The Third Year it happened that Euphrates overflowing with continual Rains, came up into a part of the City, and tore down the Wall Twenty Furlongs in length. The King hereupon conceiving that... the River was an apparent Enemy to the City, utterly despair'd, and therefore that he might not fall into the Hands of his Enemies, he caus'd a huge Pile of Wood to be made in his Palace Court, and heapt together upon it all his Gold, Silver, and Royal Apparel, and enclosing his Eunuchs and Concubines in an Apartment within the Pile, caus'd it to be set on Fire, and burnt himself and them together, which when the Revolters came to understand, they enter'd through the Breach of the Walls, and took the City..."³⁷
 - And, as we saw in the previous sermon, Nineveh – as a city – was indeed "made an end of," rather than being maintained as a city or fortress. *It is still a ruin today*³⁸.
 - Diodorus Siculus' descriptions of the utter debauchery and sexual degeneracy of the king of Assyria are enough to make the reader blush, and the carvings the Assyrians made all over their walls of them torturing their enemies in so many gruesome ways are enough to make the viewer nauseated. God made an "end" to this wicked kingdom, and it stands as a warning to mankind that God will bring a like end to all who do not find refuge in Him.
- There has been debate for thousands of years as to whether Nahum wrote "an end to its place" or "and end to its adversaries."
 - The ESV and NLT followed the ancient reading of the Septuagint and Targums with "adversaries,"

³⁷ *Bibliotheca Historica*, Translated into English by G. Booth in 1700 AD, Book 2, Ch. 2, pp. 67-68.

³⁸ cf. 2nd Century Greek secular historian Lucian, as quoted by J. Owen, "Nineveh has already been destroyed, and there is no vestige of it remaining, nor can you say where formerly it was." This is true in terms of its above-ground appearance, although modern archaeologists have discovered remnants of it underground.

- while all the other English versions followed the ancient reading of the Vulgate, Peshitta, and Masoretic Hebrew which read “her place” – some of them replacing the literal word “place” with the name of the city, “Nineveh.”
- The confusion lies in the fact that, in the unpointed Hebrew, the word for “place” is spelled the same as the word for “uprising,”
- but since the Hebrew word has a 3rd singular pronoun at the end of it³⁹, I think that “He will make an end of her place” makes more sense, regarding Nineveh.
- Isaiah also prophesied the end of the Assyrian empire:
 - **Isaiah 10:22-25** “...Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord Yahweh Commander of armies will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth. Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh Commander of armies: ‘O my people, who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. For in a very little while my fury will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction.’” (NAW)
 - But as much as God promised to end wicked nations, He also promised not to bring an end to His people, for instance **Jeremiah 30:11** “‘...I am with you,’ says the LORD, ‘to save you; Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, Yet I will not make a complete end of you...’” (NKJV, || 46:28, cf. Neh. 9:31; Jer. 4:27; 5:10, 18; & Ezek. 20:17)
- Our passage closes with the promise that those who do not take refuge in the Lord will be banished/chased into “darkness.”
 - Now, if you are reading a Bible printed after the year 1850, and it’s not the New King James or the American Jewish Version, it will say, “He will pursue his foes/enemies into darkness,” but if you are reading a Bible printed before 1850, it will say, “darkness will pursue his enemies.”
 - The Hebrew wording does leave some uncertainty as to whether “God” or “darkness” is the subject of the word “pursue,” but what is certain is that the Hebrew word “darkness” does not have the word “into” before it, and that the ancient Latin, Greek, and Aramaic translators all thought that “darkness” was the subject doing the “pursuing⁴⁰,” so I prefer the older way of translating it, but either way it leaves God’s enemies in “darkness.”
 - There is one other place in the Bible where the “pursuing/hunting down” of the wicked is correlated with “darkness” and that is **Psalms 35:6** “Their way will be dark and slippery while the angel of Yahweh hunts them down [רָדָה]” (NAW)
 - **Job 18:18** used synonyms to say the same thing: “The wicked... is driven [הוֹדָה] from light into darkness, And chased [נָדָה] out of the world.” (NKJV)
 - In the New Testament, we see that there are supernatural powers of darkness – Satan and his demons, who exercise control over the ungodly, “ruling over the darkness”:

³⁹ cf. Calvin: “A feminine pronoun is here added, because he speaks of the [feminine] kingdom or nation, as it is usual in Hebrew.” His English translator, John Owen comments: “As the vision is the ‘burden of Nineveh,’ that city is no doubt referred to.” cf. Keil, a half-century later: “‘her place’ ... The suffix in מְקוֹמָהּ refers to Nineveh... either... personified as a queen (Nah. 2:7; 3:4)... or, what is much more simple, the city itself...” (which was also Pusey’s position).

⁴⁰ Kimchi commented that this “darkness” is a metaphor for calamity, and Daath Mikra that it is a metaphor for destruction. Pusey, on the other hand, in his commentary published in 1880, argued cogently for the position taken by the modern English versions, that the *maqef* (hyphen) in the phrase מְקוֹמָהּ הַחֹשֶׁךְ indicated that “darkness” is the object rather than the subject of “pursue,” adding that “Darkness is, in the O.T., the condition, or state in which a person is, or lives; it is not an agent, which pursues. Isaiah speaks of the *inhabitants of darkness, entering into darkness; those who are in darkness...*” Keil, followed in Pusey’s footsteps a decade later, adding that “*chōshekh* is an accusative either of place or of more precise definition...”

- **Ephesians 6:12** “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (NKJV)
- **Colossians 1:13** “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love...” (NKJV)
- So it is to the darkness of Satan and his demons that one is banished if he/she does not take refuge in God, who is the “light.”
- In **Isaiah 8:22** those who “curse God” “will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; thrust into thick darkness.” (NAW)
- And Jesus said in **Matthew 8:12** that even Jews who do not believe in Him “...will be thrown out into the outer darkness. Weeping and the gnashing of teeth will be there.” (NAW)
- The apostles Peter and Jude also used the same word to portray hell as a place of eternal “darkness” for unbelievers: **2 Peter 2:17** “These guys are fountains without water and clouds propelled by a storm, for whom the gloom of eternal darkness has been kept...” - **Jude 1:13** “... for whom the gloom of darkness has been kept for eternity.” (NAW)

CONCLUSION

- The message should be clear by now: God should be feared because His power is unstoppable and He will not fail to punish everyone for breaking His laws.
 - Commenting on the hills melting and the rocks being broken before God in vs.5-6, John Calvin said, “We must be aware how great our brittleness is. Since there is no hardness which melts not before God, how can men, who flow away of themselves like water, be so daring as to set themselves up against him? ... This comparison ought ever be remembered by us whenever a forgetfulness of God begins to creep over us, that we may not excite his wrath by self-complacencies, than which there is nothing more pernicious.”
 - *Keep in mind who God is as the Almighty Judge, as He has revealed Himself through the Bible, and show respect for Him.*
- But secondly, keep in mind who God is as the merciful refuge for sinners and boldly go to Him for salvation. “[L]et not those that trust in God tremble before him. For... He is slow to anger (Nah. 1:3), not easily provoked, but ready to show mercy to those who have offended him and to receive them into favour upon their repentance... The same almighty power that is exerted for the terror and destruction of the wicked is engaged, and shall be employed, for the protection and satisfaction of his own people... those that trust in him in the way of their duty, that live a life of dependence upon him, and devotedness to him; he knows them, he owns them for his, he takes cognizance of their case, knows what is best for them, and what course to take most effectually for their relief...” ~M. Henry, 1714 AD

Nahum 1:5-8 – Side-by side comparison of versions^{AD}

| Douay ^{AE} (Vulgate) | LXX ^{AF} | Brenton ^{AG} (Vaticanus) | KJV ^{AH} | NASB ^{AI} | NIV ^{AJ} | ESV ^{AK} | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew ^{AL} | Bauscher ^{AM} (Peshitta) | Cathcart ^{AN} (Targums) |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| 5 [The] mountains tremble at him, and the hills are made desolate: and the earth hath quaked at his presence, and the world, and all that dwell therein. | 5 [τὰ] ὄρη ἐσεισθήσαν αὐτὸν· αὐτοῦ, καὶ οἱ βουνοὶ ἐσαλεύθησαν· καὶ ἡ γῆ ἀνέστανται αὐτοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ, ἡ σύμπασα καὶ κατὰ οὐρανὸν ἐν αὐτῇ. | 5 [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. | 5 [The] mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. | 5 Mountains quake because of Him And the hills dissolve; Indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, X The world and all the inhabitants in it. | 5 [The] mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. X The earth trembles at his presence, X the world and all who live in it. | 5 [The] mountains quake before him; the hills melt; X the earth heaves before X X him, X the world and all who dwell in it. | 5 /The\ mountains bucked away from Him, and the hills dissolved. The very earth heaves away from His face, indeed the world and all the inhabitants in it! | AQ הָרִים (ח) רָעְשׁוּ מִפְּנֵי הַתְּהוֹמֹת הָאָרֶץ תִּשְׁאָרַן מִפְּנֵי הָאֵל וְכָל יְשֻׁבֵי בָהּ. | 5 Mountains shook from before him and the hills are broken apart; X the Earth shook from before him, X the world and all its inhabitants | 5. [The] mountains quake before him, and the hills are torn asunder, and the earth is laid waste before him, even the world and all that dwell in it. |
| 6 Who can stand before the face of his indignation? and who shall resist in the fierceness of his anger? his indignation is poured out like fire: and the rocks are melted by him. | 6 ἀπὸ προσώπου ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ τίς ὑποστήσεται; καὶ τίς ἀντιστήσεται ἐν ὀργῇ θυμοῦ αὐτοῦ; ὁ θυμὸς αὐτοῦ ἔθηκε ἄρχας, καὶ αἱ πέτραι διεθρύβησαν αὐτὸν. | 6 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. | 6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. | 6 Who can stand before His indignation? X Who can endure X the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are broken up by Him. | 6 Who can withstand X his indignation? X Who can endure X the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him. | 6 Who can stand before his indignation? X Who can endure X the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him. | 6 Who will stand before His rage? And who will rise up during the fierceness of His anger? His fury is rained down like fire, and the landmark-rocks are broken down by Him. | (ו) לִפְנֵי יַעֲמוּ מִיַּעֲמוּד וְמִי קָדָם בְּחֵרוֹ אִפּוֹ תִּתְּקֶה כְּאֵשׁ וְהִצְרִים תִּתְּצֶה מִמֶּנּוּ. | 6 Who is standing before his passion and who endures X the heat of his passion? His anger burns like fire and the mountains melted from it | 6. [If the world shook thus before him when he revealed himself in love to give the law to his People then when he reveals himself in anger to take vengeance on the enemies of his people,] who shall stand before his vengeance and who shall endure in the indignation of his wrath? His anger dissolves like fire, and rocks are torn asunder before him. |
| 7 The Lord is good, and [giveth] strength in the day of trouble: and knoweth them that hope in him. | 7 χρηστός κύριος τοῖς ἐπομένουσιν αὐτὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ θλίψεως καὶ γινώσκων τοὺς εὐλαβουμένους αὐτόν. | 7 The Lord is good to them that wait on him in the day of affliction; and he knows them that reverence him. | 7 The LORD is good, X A stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. | 7 The LORD is good, X A refuge in time[s] of trouble. X He cares for those who trust in him, | 7 The LORD is good, X a stronghold in the day of trouble; X he knows those who take refuge in him. | 7 The LORD is good, X a stronghold in the day of trouble; X he knows those who take refuge in him. | 7 Yahweh is good for a stronghold during a day of crisis, and He knows those who trust upon him | (ז) טוֹב יְהוָה לְמַעַן יָדוּעַ חֲסִי בּוֹ. | 7 Good is LORD JEHOVAH to help in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust upon him | 7. The Lord is good [to Israel] that they may lean [upon him] in time of affliction, and it is revealed [before him] that they are relying upon his [Memra]. |
| 8 But with a flood that passeth by, he will make an utter end of the place thereof: and darkness shall pursue his enemies. | 8 καὶ ἐν κατακλυσμῷ πορείας συντέλειαν ποιήσεται τοὺς ἐπεγειρομένους, καὶ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς αὐτοῦ διώξεται σκότος. | 8 But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end: X darkness shall pursue those that rise up against him and his enemies. | 8 But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies. | 8 But with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site, And will pursue His enemies [into] darkness. | 8 but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of X Nineveh; X he will pursue his foes [into] darkness. | 8 But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies [into] darkness. | 8 But with a flood passing over, He will make an end of her place, and, as for His enemies, darkness will hunt them down. | (ח) וּבִשְׁטָף עֶבֶר כְּלָה יַעֲשֶׂה מְקוֹמָהּ וְאֵיבָיו יִרְדֹּף חֹשֶׁךְ. | 8 And in a X flood he makes an end; he shall remove to his place and the darkness will chase his enemies | 8. But in fierce anger [and in great wrath] he shall make an end of the [nations] which rose up [and utterly destroyed the Sanctuary], and he shall deliver his adversaries to Gehimam. |

^{AD} NAW is my translation. When a translation adds words not in the Hebrew text, but does not indicate it has done so by the use of italics or greyed-out text, I put the added words in [square brackets]. When one version chooses a wording which is different from all the other translations, I underline it. When a version chooses a translation which, in my opinion, either departs too far from the root meaning of the Hebrew word or departs too far from the grammar form of the original text, I use ~~strikeout~~. And when a version omits a word which is in the original text, I insert an X. I also place an X at the end of a word if the original word is plural but the English translation is singular. I occasionally use colors to help the reader see correlations between the various editions and versions when there are more than two different translations of a given word. The only known Dead Sea Scrolls containing Nahum 1 are 4Q82 (containing parts of verses 7-9 and dated between 30-1 BC), The *Nahal Hever* Greek scroll (containing parts vs. 13-14 and dated around 25BC), and the Wadi Muraba'at Scroll (containing parts of verses 1-15 and dated around 135 AD). Where the DSS are legible and in agreement with the MT or LXX, the text is colored **purple**. Where the DSS support the LXX/Vulgate/Peshitta with omissions or text not in the MT, I have highlighted with yellow the LXX and its translation into English, and where I have accepted that into my NAW translation, I have marked it with /forward and backward slashes\ . This chapter also has the letters of the hypothetical alphabet acrostic highlighted in yellow in the Hebrew text column.

^{AE} Douay Old Testament first published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609, Revised and Diligently Compared with the Latin Vulgate by Bishop Richard Challoner, Published in 1582, 1609, 1752. As published on E-Sword.

^{AF} "Septuagint" Greek Old Testament, edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Published in 1935. As published on E-Sword.

^{AG} English translation of the Septuagint by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, 1851, "based upon the text of the Vaticanus" but not identical to *Vaticanus*. As published electronically by E-Sword.

^{AH} 1769 King James Version of the Holy Bible; public domain. As published electronically by E-Sword.

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^{AL} From the Wiki Hebrew Bible

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%94_%D7%90/%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA. DSS text comes from <https://downloads.thewaytoyahuwah.com>

^{AM} The Peshitta Holy Bible Translated by Glenn David Bauscher, Copyright © 2018 Lulu Publishing, 3rd edition Copyright © 2019 as found on <https://biblehub.com/hpbt/nahum/1.htm>

^{AN} From *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, Volume 14, 1989, Cathcart, Kevin J; Gordon, R. P. As found on https://wbsg8v.xyz/d3/y/1715385560/100/u/ia/annas-archive-ia-2023-06-acsm/t/targumofminorpro0014unse.pdf~f8jMjv18tRB-fitiyGs6_g/The%20Aramaic%20Bible%3A%20The%20Targum%20of%20the%20Minor%20Prophets%20--%20Cathcart%2C%20Kevin%20J%3B%20Gordon%2C%20R_%20P%20--%20Volume%2014%2C%201989%20--%20Wilmington%2C%20Del_%3A%20M_%20Glazier%20--%209780894534898%20--%202c2211ab706b64db6d34be810eef40da%20--%20Anna%E2%80%99s%20Archive.pdf on 10 May 2024

^{AO} cf. synonyms in Aquila: Εφριξεν ("was rippling") and Symmachus: ἐκινῆθη ("was moved").

^{AP} Out of the 653 times this Hebrew verb occurs in the Old Testament, this is one of only two places where the KJV translates it with a form of the English verb "burn." (The other place is 2 Sam. 5:21.)

^{AQ} The only legible DSS has an additional -י prefix, denoting a definite article, which is also how the LXX reads. The Latin and Aramaic versions read like the MT without a definite article. However, the emphatic placement of this noun ("mountains") could be interpreted by a definite article (as Cathcart did in his English translation of the Targums and as the KJV did in its English translation of the MT), so meaning is not affected.

^{AR} I have highlighted in yellow the sequence of Hebrew letters identified as acrostic by the BHS. Some reasons against the idea are that they are not in metrically-similar lines, and, despite the layout of the BHS, it is not laid out acrostically in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and it takes a certain amount of fudging to get it to work, such as starting in some places at a letter other than the first letter of a word, and, it doesn't add to the meaning of the message.

^{AS} Calvin and the KJV referred to the Rabbinical tradition (Pusey attributed it to Rashi in particular) that this word means "to burn," meanwhile, Calvin's English editor (Owen) followed Newcome in interpreting the Hebrew word from the root נשח ("to lay waste") – which is also Cathcart's English translation of the Targums, then there is the reading of the NIV, which followed the Peshitta, Vulgate, and 2nd century Greek translations which interpreted it as "shook/moved," but the LXX, followed by Marchius, Henderson, Pusey, and Keil, followed by the NASB and NIV, interpret it more straightforwardly as being from the Hebrew root נשח ("to lift up").

^{AT} Metsudath David commented that Nahum used *tebel* instead of *erets* to denote the “inhabited earth.”

^{AU} “melts” cf. Aq. συνεχωνευσθη (“was bowed together?”) and Sym. & Theod: εσταξεν (“stood”).

^{AV} DSS = נַעַמַד, but there is no difference in meaning; both are forms of the 3rd person singular imperfect, and all the versions understood it that way, except for the Peshitta, which must have been looking at the *holem-vav* in the MT text and construed it as a participle.

^{AW} Of the 629 times the HOT uses this verb, the KJV doesn’t translate it “abide” anywhere else in the Bible, and the NASB only translates it “endure” in 3 other places (1Sa. 13:14; Job 8:15; 15:29). “Get up” is the primary meaning of this root. Owen cited the LXX, Newcome, and Henderson in support as he vouched for “rise up against... resist,” in opposition to Calvin in a footnote to his translation of Calvin’s commentary; Pusey noted that “stand up” was a better translation of the Hebrew than “abide,” and Keil took it for granted that it meant “rise up.”

^{AX} Most English translations remove the preposition “for,” but it is in the MT, Peshitta, Targums, and Septuagint (and even though the Vulgate has a different word there, it also witnesses that there is a word there in the Hebrew prefix to the word for “stronghold” which was dropped out by contemporary English versions). Consider how the same construction (*tov... l-*) was translated elsewhere: Genesis 2:9 & 3:6 “good for food,” Ex. 14:12/Num. 14:3/Deut. 6:24/10:13/etc. “good/better for us/you,” Lev. 27:33/2 Sam. 19:35/1Ki. 3:9/Isa. 5:20 “good instead of the bad,” Deut. 1:14 “word is good to do,” Deut. 9:6 “good land to possess,” 2Chr. 30:22 “good knowledge of the LORD,” Neh. 9:20 “Your good Spirit to instruct them,” Esther 5:8 “pleased/good to grant my request,” Esther 10:3 “seeking good for his people,” Psalm 73:1 “God is good to Israel,” Psalm 92:1 “It is good to give thanks,” Psalm 118:8ff “It is better to trust in the LORD,” Prov. 17:26/18:5 “not good to strike/overthrow,” Prov. 21:9 “Better to dwell,” Eccl. 7:2-5 “better to go... better to hear,” Eccl. 8:13-15 “not good for the wicked... nothing good for a man,” Eccl. 11:7 “good for the eyes to see,” Lam. 3:25-27 “good to those who wait... good for a man to carry,” Jer. 40:4 “good to go,” Hosea 10:1 “goodness of his land.”

^{AY} The MT cantillation places the major punctuation in the verse here, associating “for a stronghold” with “Yahweh is good,” rather than making “for a stronghold” an independent clause like most English translations do. Concerning the “Day of distress,” the same phrase is in Gen. 35:3 (describing Jacob fleeing for his life from his offended brother), Psalm 50 (a judgment-day scenario where in v.15, God says, “call out to me during a time of crisis. I will rescue you, then you glorify me!”), 2Ki. 19:3 || Isa. 37:3 (describing the city of Jerusalem besieged by the the Assyrian army), and Obad. 1:12-14, Hab. 3:16, Zeph. 1:15, Jer. 16:19 (describing the conquering of Jerusalem). Synonyms are in 2 Sam. 22:19 || Ps. 18:18 (“day of my נַאֲדָ/ wandering/calamity” when David was being hunted down by King Saul), Psalm 27:5 (“a bad/רַעָה day”), and Dan. 12:1 (the eschatological “נֶעֱתַר/time of crisis”).

^{AZ} Cf. synonym from Symmachus (παρερχομενω) & Theodotian (παρηλθε – Aorist tense of the same verb) = “going along.”

^{BA} This translation (“those who rise up”) stems from interpreting the root of the Hebrew word as the verb קוּם (“rise up”) rather than as the noun מְקוֹם (“place”). Aquila’s version (ανισταμενων) agrees with the LXX, as did the versions of Theodotion and “E,” and the ESV, NET, & NLT followed them. Symmachus, however, interpreted it the way the Vulgate, Peshitta, & Targums did with του τοπου αυτης (“its place”), and the GB, KJV, NASB, and NIV followed that.

^{BB} This word for “flood” only occurs here and Job 38:25; Ps. 32:6; Prov. 27:4; and Dan. 9:26; 11:22, all contexts that do not refer to a literal historical flood. The word for Noah’s flood is different: מַבּוּל, but, with only one exception (Ps. 29:10, which refers back to an event in Genesis) that word is only used in Genesis, so Nahum’s word could have been a replacement for an archaic word and could mean the same thing. The Greek Bible bears this out, translating Nahum’s word for “flood” with the same Greek word for “flood” (κατακλυσμὸς) found in the Psalms and Daniel, also using the same word in the accounts of Noah’s flood found in Genesis, Matt. 24:38-39; Lk. 17:27, and 2 Pet. 2:5. Interestingly, the Greek translations of the same Hebrew word in Job 38:25 (ὕετω “rain”) and Prov. 27:4 (ὀξεία “rapid”) are different.

^{BC} LXX, Targums, and ESV interpret this as a participle based on the verb קוּם meaning “rise up,” but the Vulgate, Peshitta, MT, KJV, NASB, and NIV render this from the noun מְקוֹם meaning (“place”). The 3rd singular feminine pronoun suffix (“her”) seems to rule out the interpretation of “enemies.” See two endnotes previous for more.

^{BD} The grammar of the sentence allows either “He” (the LORD) or “darkness” to be the subject of “shall pursue.” All the ancient versions made “darkness” the subject. It wasn’t until the 19th century that versions began making “He” the subject (based on the *maqfep*-hyphen between “pursue” and “darkness”), and that is the reading of NASB, NIV, NET, ESV, and NLT, but that requires inserting a preposition (“into”) which is not in the original text.

Nahum 1:9-15 God's Judgment Is Good News

Introduction

- Nahum starts this passage with a word of warning directed at anyone foolish enough to think that they can finagle themselves out of God's vengeance (v.2) or stand up against the might of God's power and escape punishment (v.3) or withstand the intensity of His indignation and burning anger (v.6) and avoid going down in darkness to hell (v.8). Anyone who thinks that it is not the end when God says, "That's the end of that" (v.8) is in for a rude awakening!

v. 9 Working At Cross-Purposes to God is Futile

- Humanity in rebellion against God likes to think it is free to do whatever it wants. We want our will to be done, so we spend vast amounts of time imagining/devising/planning how we are going to accomplish what we want apart from God.
 - Psalm 2:1-11** "What have the nations clamored for and peoples vainly meditate for? Kings of the earth set themselves up, and distinguished men establish unity against Yahweh and against His Anointed One. 'Let us burst their chains and let us throw their bindings from us.' The One sitting in the heavens laughs, the Master mocks at them... You will break them with a rod of iron; like a potter's vessel You will shatter them. So now, O kings, consider wisely. Be disciplined, O judges of earth. Serve Yahweh with fear and rejoice with trembling." (NAW)
- Whatever your plans are, God also has a plan, and He is sovereignly rolling it out and making His plan happen. You can either submit to Him as your God, align yourself with doing His will, and then enjoy His power to "cause all things to work together for good for those who love Him" (Rom. 8:28), or continue to pursue your plan, and get in His way, and get squashed like a bug.
- That's kind-of what Nahum is saying in the second half of v.9. God can put an effective stop to anything He doesn't want to keep happening, and in this case, He has decided to make a final end of the city of Nineveh because of its wickedness, oppression, and heedlessness to His warning. The termination of the city of Nineveh, He says, will be so complete that it will never again rise up to oppress/afflict/distress/trouble anyone ever again. There will be no second rise-to-power for Nineveh.
 - Regarding God's judgment on another city, **Isaiah 28:22** says, "And now, don't you scoff! Otherwise your bonds will become strong. For I have heard from my Lord, Yahweh Commander of armies; it is complete and decided over all the land." (NAW)
- In v.10, Nahum uses some very original and poetic language to describe the reason why God will put an end to Nineveh such that it cannot rise up to oppress anyone again.

v. 10 Enemies Will Be Destroyed

- It is unfortunate that the NAS, NIV, and NLT omit the word "because/for" but that word is there in all the manuscripts and in all the other versions at the beginning of v.10.
- Nahum compares the Assyrians to tangled⁴¹ thorns, to alcoholic drinks, and to dried-out hay-

⁴¹ According to Lehrman, Metsudath David explained the "entanglement" of these thorns in terms of the Assyrians' union with other political powers, and Kimchi explained it in terms of how much more likely you are to get pricked when

stalks, poetically using four words in a row that all start with the same sound in Hebrew.

- Why does he compare these people to briars, beer, and straw? All three share the same verb: they are all things which are easily “consumed:”
 - thorns and stubble catch fire easily and burn up quickly, and strong drink is guzzled down quickly by those who want to be drunk (as indeed the Assyrians were known for being hard drinkers⁴²).
 - This challenges the human pride of a nation that thought they were so strong that they would be impossible to consume; God says, “Nah, it’ll be a pushover. You are so dead in your sin and rebellion that I’ll light a spark, and poof you’ll be gone!”
- Furthermore, briars, wine, and leftover grain-stalks are all things that people want consumed:
 - we burn sticker-bushes because we want them gone so they don’t poke us,
 - drinkers drink because they want to consume that alcohol,
 - and stubble is basically trash that we want to dispose of.
 - **2 Samuel 23:6** “The ungodly, however, is like a thorn-plant: all of them are cast-away, because that’s not what folks take in hand...” (NAW, cf. Micah 7:4)
 - So, in saying this, God is insulting the nation that has rejected His mercy and attacked His people, saying that the world will be happy to see Nineveh brought to an end⁴³.
- But these warnings are not just for the Assyrians of the Ancient Near East; they are for everybody in every age.
 - The Prophet Isaiah delivered similar messages to the Jews: **Isaiah 5:11** “Woe to those who, early in the morning, pursue alcohol; after dusk wine inflames them... **5:22-24** Woe, those who are champions for drinking wine and men of valor for mixing alcohol⁴⁴ ... Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble, and flame withers⁴⁵ the dry grass, their root will be like rottenness, and their flower will go up like dust, for they have rejected the law of Yahweh Commander of armies, and the word of the Holy One of Israel they have despised... **10:17** The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and briars⁴⁶ in one day... **47:14** Look, they have become like stubble; a fire burns⁴⁷ them. They will not cause their own soul to be delivered from the agency of the flame...” (NAW)
 - Job (21:18), Malachi (4:1), and Joel (2:5) also contain similar warnings about how quickly God’s judgment can devour anyone at enmity with Him.
- Alcohol (and by implication, recreational drugs of any kind) is particularly called-out because of how commonly it is used by the ungodly to help them forget about God and forget about His

there’s a tangle of brambles instead of just one. Calvin leaned more toward Kimchi’s explanation, equating “tangled” with “difficult to be handled.” So did Henry: “They make one another worse, and more inveterate against God...” Pusey posited all of the above and even more, adding, “confused...sharp...rending...compact together...”

⁴² Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, Translated into English by G. Booth in 1700 AD, Book 2, Ch. 2, p. 67 describes how the Assyrian army was routed in the field by a coalition of forces that attacked them while they were all drunk. Pusey noted that Belshazzar was also drunk when conquered (Dan. 5), and so was Benhadad (1 Ki. 20:16).

⁴³ cf. Calvin: “[H]e derides here that haughtiness by which the Assyrians were swollen...”

⁴⁴ נָכַר, a synonym to Nahum’s word סָבָא.

⁴⁵ יָרַפָּה, a synonym to Nahum’s word יָבֵשׁ.

⁴⁶ שָׂמִיר... שִׁית, synonyms to Nahum’s word סִיר.

⁴⁷ שָׂרַף, a synonym for Nahum’s word אָכַל.

truth and justice.

- The prophets Micah (2:11), Joel (1:5), and Habakkuk (2:15) gave similar warnings about the folly of pursuing drunkenness instead of pursuing the ways of the Lord.
- Jesus also warned in **Luke 21:34** “...take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.” (NKJV)
- And the Apostle Paul wrote to the church
 - in **Romans 13:13** “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.” (NKJV)
 - and in **Ephesians 5:18** “...do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (NKJV).
- In typical Hebrew prose, the pronouns in the passage switch around a bit.
 - Assyrians in Nineveh are referred to in second person plural (“y’all”) in v.9, then as third plural (“they”) in v.10, and then as singular “you” in v.11. This makes it hard for us to follow in English, but it all seems to be referring to the same subject.
 - Think of it as reading a courtroom transcript. The judge is there in the courtroom with both the prosecutor and the defendant, and the judge alternates talking to one and then to the other. Sometimes the judge is talking to the prosecution (saying “you” referring to the prosecution and “them” referring to the defendant), and the other half of the time, the judge is talking to the defendant (referring to the defendant as “you” and the prosecution as “them”), and since we were not there in the courtroom when the judge was talking, we can’t see which person the judge was looking at when he spoke, so we have to figure out from the clues in the transcript which party he is talking to at any given point.

v. 11 The Ungodly Counselor Introduced

- In verse 11, Nahum builds on the word “plot/devise/imagine” from v.9 to single out one particular man who “went forth” from Nineveh⁴⁸ “plotting/devising/imagining evil against the Lord.” He ends verse 11 by calling this man a “counselor of Belial” – that is, of wickedness/worthlessness/ungodliness.
- Who is this man?
 - The verb “went forth” is usually used in the Bible to describe kings leaving their hometown to go out to war, so it is likely describing a particular king.
 - And the perfect tense of the verb “went forth” indicates that he is a historical figure from the past.
- 19th Century commentator E. B. Pusey explains, “[A]mid this mass of evil, one was eminent, in direct antagonism to God.... The prophet twice repeats the characteristic expression, *What will ye devise so vehemently against the LORD ... devising evil against the LORD*; and adds *counselor of evil*. This was exactly the character of Sennacherib, whose wars, like those of his forefathers (as appears from the cuneiform inscriptions) were religious wars, and who blasphemously compared God to the local deities of the countries which his forefathers or himself had destroyed.”
 - Isaiah’s earlier prophecy against Assyria bears this out: notice the repeated reference to what is going on in the Assyrian king’s “heart,” the use of the same word Nahum used for “devising/imagining/plotting,” and the extensive quote about what this king was thinking and planning: **Isaiah 10:5-12** God says, “Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is

⁴⁸ Calvin thought the singular should be supplied collectively to the whole Assyrian army, but it can just as well be of their leader.

my fury! Against a godless nation [that is, against Israel which had abandoned God] I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so imagine/plot/devise; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few; for he says: ‘Are not my commanders all kings? ... As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her images?’ When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes.” (NAW)

- Listen to the way this guy talked, and notice the way he plays mind games with God’s people, as quoted by Isaiah in chapter 36: “...Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, ‘What is this faith which you believed? You said, “Surely a word of the lips is counsel and strength for the war.” Now upon whom did you trust that you rebelled against me? Look, you trusted upon the support of this crushed reed, upon Egypt, which a man leans upon it and it goes into his palm and punctures it. Thus is Pharaoh, king of Egypt to all trust upon him. And if you should say to me, “To Yahweh our God we trusted.” Isn’t he the one whom Hezekiah removed – His high-places and His altars – and he said to Judah and to Jerusalem “to the face of THIS altar you shall bow”? So now, how about be nice... and let me give to you a thousand horses... And how will you turn the face of a single captain of my lord’s servants – even the small ones? ... And now, is it apart from Yahweh I come up against this land to destroy it? Yahweh has said to me, “Go up to this land to destroy it!” ...Do not let Hezekiah cause deception for you, for he is not able to deliver you... Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus said the king of Assyria, “Make a blessing with me and come out to me, and eat each of you of his vine and each of his fig-tree and drink each of you water of his cistern... Have any of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? ... Which are they among all the gods of these lands that delivered their land from my hand, that Yahweh will deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”’” (**Isaiah 36:4-20**, NAW)
- That sure sounds like the “wicked/ungodly/worthless counsel” Nahum is talking about in v.11, proclaimed to everyone in Jerusalem.
- Of course Sennacherib was not the only one in history to give ungodly counsel (see, for instance, **Ezekiel 11:2**), but his bad advice is typical⁴⁹.
- The Apostle Paul uses the same Greek words for “plotting/devising/imagining” and “counseling” that are in the Greek translation of Nahum. He tells us what to do with human thinking:
 - **2 Cor. 10:5** “we are casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...”
 - **Romans 6:11** “... reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NKJV)
 - **1 Corinthians 13:5** “Love... does not think evil...” (NAW)
 - **Philippians 4:8** “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (KJV)

⁴⁹ Pusey: “There was a more ‘evil counselor’ behind whose agent was Sennacherib. He, as he is the author of all murders and strife, so has he a special hatred for the church, whether before or since Christ’s Coming.”

v. 12 The End Of Affliction

- Now, after addressing the Assyrians and their ungodly strategy-leader in verses 9-11, God turns to address His people in verse 12.
- The feminine singular “you” at the end of verse 12 that God says He would “humble/afflict/ put in bondage” once, but never again, seems to be Jerusalem (This parallels the statement in v.9 that Nineveh would not “rise up” to be the “oppressor” “a second time”).
- V.12 is difficult to translate⁵⁰ because it is hard to correlate the three plurals that occur in parallel at the beginning: “shaloms” “many” and “those being cut.”
 - The first two sound positive – “peace” and “prosperity,” and most commentators interpret them as descriptions of Assyria’s peace and prosperity⁵¹, for instance the ancient Jewish Targum paraphrase reads, “...Though the nations which assemble to oppress you, O Jerusalem, are perfect in counsel and many in number, and though they cross the Tigris and pass over the Euphrates and come to afflict you, even if I have brought you into servitude I shall not enslave you again.” (Cathcart)
 - However, I think that the Hebrew grammar calls for us to interpret it as Judah’s “peace” and “prosperity” rather than the Assyrians’. One reason is that the third word in the list is in strong parallel with the second one⁵², so I think that at least the “many” and “those being cut” have to be describing the same group of people.
 - But that third word sounds negative. When we look at how that word *gzz* (“cut”) is used in the Bible, it is only ever used to describing cutting hair, so I think it should be interpreted in terms of some kind of loss, not of death and destruction.
 - Finally, whereas the three words – “shaloms,” “many,” and “those being sheared” - are plural, the “one who passes on/through/away” is singular, so I think that indicates a change of subject to the oppressor⁵³.
- Here’s how I put it all together: I think that the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian King Sennacherib could fit circumstances of “peace” and “plenty” in which God brought “affliction” upon His people and allowed the Assyrian army to give them a “close shave,” but then, God sent a plague upon the Assyrian army and caused the singular “strategist” (King Sennacherib, described in the previous verse⁵⁴) to “pass on” without actually destroying the people of Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:36).

⁵⁰ It is also a challenge to discern the best way to translate the three comparative words “although/likewise/thus/so” as well as the one conjunction which occurs four times in this Hebrew verse. English versions of this verse translate that one Hebrew conjunction with a wide variety of English words, including “and,” “yet,” “even,” “nevertheless,” “when,” “thus,” and “though.” How one translates that Hebrew conjunction can change the meaning of the verse. In many versions, the translators gave up and just dropped a word out.

⁵¹ Calvin interpreted “sheared” as “destroyed” and referred all three descriptors to Assyria, and with this Newcome, Owen, Henry, Pusey, Barrett, and even Keil agreed.

⁵² I realize it could be counter-argued that the first two words are adjectives and the third is a verb, and therefore the first two could refer to the Assyrians and the third to the Jews, but I am noting the parallel conjunctions in וְכֵן יִהְיֶה וְכֵן יִהְיֶה וְכֵן יִהְיֶה (“even so there will be many, even so they will be shorn”) which many translations ignore.

⁵³ Lehrman commented that Rashi and Abarbanel considered the singular subject of “pass” to be the people of Assyria, and Kimchi considered it to be the strength/power of Assyria. Henry oddly considered it to be the “destroying angel.” All seem to me to be a linguistic stretch.

⁵⁴ Calvin missed the shift to singular, but his English translator, Owen, caught it and agreed with my interpretation. Keil didn’t miss it, but lumped it in with the army’s destruction anyway.

- The only significant difficulty I see with that interpretation is how Nahum could say that God would not subjugate His people again after their “close shave” with Sennacherib when, in fact, a century later God did subjugate Judea again under King Nebuchadnezzar.
- The only way I see to reconcile that is to go back to the phrase in v.9 indicating that it would not be Assyria a second time, thus the Jews in Nahum’s audience need not fear that the Assyrian army would ever bother them again⁵⁵, and that would be historically true.
- Nahum’s point is that when God deals with our enemies, God can effectively neutralize them, so we don’t need to live in fear.
 - **Isa. 10:33-34** “Behold, the Lord Yahweh Commander of armies will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low...” (NAW)
 - “[W]hatever the Prophet has hitherto said against the Assyrians ought to be extended indiscriminately to all the enemies of the Church... whenever the ungodly cause trouble to us, they carry on war with God himself... God sets up himself as a shield and declares that He will protect us under the shadow of His wings all those who commit themselves to His protection.” ~J. Calvin
- Verse 12 also speaks to God’s sovereign work of sanctifying His people through sending affliction that will get them back to the right attitude of humility and dependence on Him to save and protect them.
 - **Lamentations 3:32** “Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies.” (NKJV, cf. Ps. 78:38)

v. 13 God Frees His People From Bondage

- Nahum pictures God’s salvation in v.13 like an animal-rescuer ripping off the halters and yoke-equipment from a horse so that it can run free.
- God is the savior of His people. He is the one you must go to if you want freedom.
- He delivered Israel from bondage in the past – such as slavery in Egypt, as **Jeremiah 2:20** says, “For of old I have broken your yoke and burst your bonds...” (NKJV)
- God freely admitted that He used foreign subjugation to discipline His people, but when that discipline had served its good purpose, He would renew their freedom: **Psalms 107:11-15** “Because they rebelled against the words of God, And despised the counsel of the Most High, Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; They fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, And broke their chains in pieces. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!” (NKJV)
- At Nahum’s point in history, the threat of foreign oppression was coming from the Assyrians up north in Nineveh, but God is promising that their domination will also be temporary. Isaiah also prophesied this in **Isaiah 10:27** “And in that day his burden [that of Assyria] will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke [עול] from your neck; and the yoke will be destroyed...” (NAW, cf. 9:4 & 14:25). *Indeed God wrought a marvelous deliverance for the people of Jerusalem when*

⁵⁵ Lehrman indicated that Rashi supported this explanation (and among the Christian commentators, Barrett seemed to hold this), but Lehrman preferred Rashi’s alternate explanation that it meant that this affliction would be so effective at achieving His purpose of refining His people that God would not need to bring further affliction to finish achieving that particular purpose. Calvin agreed with the latter, as did Henry, who cited Isa. 10:12 in support.

Sennacherib tried to besiege them in the year 701BC.

- And God would deliver His people in the future too, after they had once again fallen into rebellion and after God had sent correction through yet another foreign power. Jeremiah prophesied in **Jeremiah 30:7-11** “...it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it. ‘For it shall come to pass in that day,’ Says the LORD of hosts, ‘That I will break his yoke⁵⁶ from your neck, And will burst your bonds; Foreigners shall no more enslave⁵⁷ them. But they shall serve the LORD their God... Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says the LORD, ‘Nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, And your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, And no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,’ says the LORD, ‘to save you; Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, Yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, And will not let you go altogether unpunished.’” (NKJV)
- And this goes on into the New Testament, when Jesus delivered people from bondage to evil spirits (Luke 9:42, 13:16) and from bondage to sin by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11ff).
- And God’s deliverance will go on into the future, as we read Jesus’ command and promise in **Revelation 2:25-28** “[H]old fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations – ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels’” and **Romans 16:20** “...the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly....” (NKJV)
- Now in v.14, the pronoun “you” switches back from referring to Israel to referring to the singular “schemer” who was the “you” back in verse 9 and the “he” in verses 11-13⁵⁸.

v. 14 The Death Of Sennacherib

- Verse 14 is a very interesting prediction of the circumstances of the demise of this adversary against God who had afflicted God’s people. God decreed how it would happen in a very specific way:
 1. The adversary’s ability to propagate his name through having more children would be disallowed, so his dynasty as king would end,
 2. The carved (wooden) and cast (metal) idols in his pagan temple would be “cut off,”
 3. God would make the house of this guy’s gods become the place of his burial,
 4. and finally, it is explained that these three things would happen because this king would be considered contemptible/vile/despised – literally he would be considered a political “lightweight” that didn’t deserve any respect.
- This sounds very much like Sennacherib.
 - **Isaiah 37:36-38** “And the angel of Yahweh went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when they arose in the morning, ‘Look at all these dead bodies!’ Then Sennacherib king of Assyria pulled out and went and returned home and sat in Nineveh. And it happened that he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, and Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword. Now they themselves escaped to

⁵⁶ עול, a synonym for Nahum’s more-specialized term מוט.

⁵⁷ עבר, a synonym for Nahum’s ענה.

⁵⁸ Rashi, Kara, and Ibn Ezra agreed on this, as did most of the Christian commentators after them.

- the land of Ararat, and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.” (NAW)
- A king who looses a war and most of his army and comes home like a dog with its tail between his legs, is not considered a great king, so that could be the fulfillment of Nahum’s 4th point⁵⁹.
 - Historical accounts from the ancient Assyrians indicate that Sennacherib subsequently did conduct a successful war-campaign against Babylon, capping it off by removing Babylon’s patron-god-idol and adding it to his collection in Nineveh of idols of conquered countries, which is an interesting fit with Nahum’s reference to a temple with multiple idols of various types in it.
 - Then, of course, the fact that Sennacherib was murdered while worshiping in that temple perfectly fulfills the third point that Nahum prophesied, such that the temple of his gods became his grave. It is believed that due to the murder, all the idols in the temple of Nisroch were defiled and so had to be destroyed or removed⁶⁰, fulfilling the second point of Nahum’s prophecy.
 - Finally, in fulfillment of Nahum’s first point: Sennacherib’s two older sons who killed him are thought by many to have been upset at their father for passing over them and instead choosing their younger brother to be the next king. Sennacherib’s youngest son successfully took over the throne and killed his brothers, but within 70 years, his great grandson was killed in battle, and that ended Sennacherib’s dynasty forever – the kingdom of Assyria did not exist anymore⁶¹. **Ezekiel 32:22** “Assyria is there [in the “pit” of hell], and all her company, With their graves all around her, All of them slain, fallen by the sword.” (NKJV)
 - The future tenses of this prophecy are making me lean toward an earlier date for Nahum, that is, during King Hezekiah’s reign before Sennacherib was assassinated rather than during Josiah’s reign 40 years after Sennacherib was assassinated.
 - That seems to corroborate with how similar Nahum’s prophecies are to Isaiah’s – even to sharing the exact same sentence in Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15, and Isaiah prophesied during Hezekiah’s reign, not later during Josiah’s⁶².
 - Anyway, Nahum’s prophecy seems to be about the Assyrian King Sennacherib, and all four points came to pass in history, proving God’s sovereignty over the greatest empire in the world at that time and giving God’s people peace of mind as they trusted God.
 - But this is not just about some strange king in the dust of antiquity, it is about God’s character and God’s ways of justice and salvation. These kinds of things will happen to anyone who, like this “plotter” Sennacherib, is “against God,” and is characterized by “debauchery,” “oppression,” and “idolatry.” The restriction of offspring, the destruction of idols, untimely death, and shameful contempt that Nahum declares concerning Sennacherib are the kind of temporal punishments which God has been issuing in His justice throughout all of history.
 - **Job 18:17**, speaking of the “wicked:” “The memory of him perishes from the earth, And he has no name among the renowned.” (NKJV)
 - Also, of the empire that arose after Assyria, God said in **Isaiah 14:22** “I will... cut off from Babylon name and remnant, progeny and posterity...” (NAW)
 - And of the people in Jerusalem, God said in **Micah 5:13-14** “...I will cause to cut off your

⁵⁹ Keil was almost alone among the commentators in disputing Sennacherib as the fulfillment of this prophecy, although he agreed at least that this was speaking of Assyria.

⁶⁰ Lehrman, Calvin, Henry *in loc.* (although Henry suggested “it may be taken more generally to denote the utter ruin of Assyria” instead of only describing Sennacherib.)

⁶¹ Source material from <https://www.worldhistory.org/sennacherib/> accessed 15 Feb 2025.

⁶² The identical wording in Hebrew of Nahum 1:15 and Isaiah 52:7 is highlighted: “How fitting are the feet of an announcer upon the mountains, causing peace to be heard, announcing goodness, causing salvation to be heard, saying to Zion, your God reigns!” (NAW)

carved images and your monuments from your midst so you will not bow any more to the work of your hands..." (NAW)

- That's the bad news for those who are against God, but that bad news is good news for those who love and obey Jesus!

v. 15 Good News Of Peace For Judah

- Once again the "you" switches to refer to the Jews instead of to the scheming adversary.
- "on the mountains" could simply mean that God's people are in a scattered condition⁶³:
 - as we see later on in **Nahum 3:18** "...Your people are scattered on the mountains, And no one gathers them in" and also **2 Chronicles 18:16** "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd." (NKJV, cf. Lam. 4:19, Ezek. 32:5, Mat. 18:12)
 - Of course, the shrines for idol worship were also located "on the mountains"⁶⁴, so this could also be good news from the one true God coming to people mired in the bad news of idolatry.
- This good news of "peace"
 - seems most likely to me to be the messenger bearing news that Assyria has fallen and is no longer a threat to Judea, that the people can relax and go about normal life and regular worship rather than hunkering down in fear of another siege.
 - But **Isaiah 52:7** seems to expand this same phrase from the "now" of Nahum's time to 200 years later when the Jews returned from exile in Babylon: "How fitting are **the feet of an announcer upon the mountains, causing peace to be heard**, announcing goodness, causing salvation to be heard, saying to Zion, your God reigns!" (NAW)
 - and, in the New Testament, it is expanded again to describe the good news about Jesus Christ come to save His people from their sins: **Romans 10:9-15** "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved... For the Scripture says, 'WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME.' ... As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!'" (NKJV, cf. Acts 10:36)
- In v.15, the announcer-evangelist proclaims that it is time to "Keep/celebrate the feasts and make good on vows."
 - This isn't just any feast. The first time in the Bible we encounter this phrase is in Exodus 12:14, at the institution of the Passover festival⁶⁵,
 - and the other half-dozen times this phrase occurs in the Bible are in relation to the feast of Booths (Lev. 23:39, 41; Num. 29:12; Zech. 14:16, 18-19, & John 7).

⁶³ It is surprising to me not to find a single commentator who sought to interpret this phrase by its use elsewhere in Scripture. Calvin explained it that the messengers "ascended to the tops of mountains that their voice might be more extensively heard" (a position with which Keil surprisingly agreed), yet that would obscure them behind trees and put them away from population (Barrett's rebuttal was that the messenger was on the mountain in order to see the outcome of the battle better), and furthermore, the roads in those days followed valleys, not mountain ridges. (Calvin's rebuttal to that was: "all the roads had been before closed up.") Pusey oddly seemed to interpret it mystically: "above all the height of this world."

⁶⁴ Deut. 12:2, Isa. 65:7, Ezek. 18:15

⁶⁵ The Greek word in the LXX for "feast" is also used in the GNT to refer to Passover in Matt. 26:5; 27:15; Mk. 14:2; 15:6; Lk. 2:41-42; 22:1; Jn. 2:23; 4:45; 6:4; 11:56; 12:12, 20; 13:1, 29. (In John 5:1, it may refer to Hanukkah.)

- These annual feasts were the times when everybody – even those who lived too far away to come every week – would gather to worship in the temple in Jerusalem, so these feasts were also their opportunity to do business in God’s special presence at the temple. Throughout the year, they might have promised to give something special to God as a way to say “Thank You” for His kindness in rescuing them from a crisis, so it was at the annual feast that they would have the opportunity to present that special gift to God. It was important that they remember to follow-through on those promises and not forget or procrastinate (Psalm 50:14, Eccl 7:4-7).
- Then in the New Testament we have the same proclamation to “keep the feast,” only this time it refers to observing the Lord’s Supper at church after having excommunicated an unrepentant sinner: **1 Corinthians 5:7-8** “...Christ, our Passover has already been sacrificed. In this way let us keep the feast – not with old leaven and not with leaven of malice and wickedness, but rather with what is unleavened, of sincerity and truth.” (NAW)
- It is an interesting parallel to Nahum, who also connects observing the holy feasts in v.15 with knowing that the wicked/worthless/ungodly/Belial – that Gentile schemer against God – was gone and would not be back again to disseminate unholiness and defilement any more.
 - Isaiah voiced a similar sentiment regarding the Jews who, at a later time, would be released from captivity in Babylon. **Isaiah 52:1** “Awake, awake! Put on your strength, Zion! Put on your garments of splendor, Jerusalem, City of the Holy One, because the uncircumcised and unclean will not come at you any more!” (NAW, cf. Joel 3:17) *Once the defilement was over – once God has banished the evil, it is time to worship God and thank Him for His deliverance!*

Nahum 1:9-15 – Side-by side comparison of versions^{BE}

| Douay ^{BF} (Vulgate) | LXX ^{BG} | Brenton ^{BH} (Vaticanus) | KJV ^{BI} | NASB ^{BJ} | NIV ^{BK} | ESV ^{BL} | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew ^{BM} | Bauscher ^{BN} (Peshitta) | Cathcart ^{BO} (Targums) |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| 9 What do ye devise against the Lord? he will make an utter end: there shall not rise a double affliction. | 9 τί λογίζεσθε ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον; συντέλειαν αὐτὸς ποιήσεται, οὐκ ἐκδικήσεται δις ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ [ἐν] θλίψει. | 9 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. | 9 What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. | 9 What-[ever] you devise against the LORD, He will make a complete end [of it]. Distress will not rise up twice. | 9 What [ever] they plot against the LORD he will bring to an end; trouble will not come a second time. | 9 What do you plot against the LORD? He will make a complete end; trouble will not rise up a second time. | 9 What are y'all planning against Yahweh? He is making an end [of it.] The oppressor will not rise up a second time, | (ט) מה תחשבון אלהים? הנה עשה לא תקום פעמים צרה. | 9 What are you counseling against LORD JEHOVAH who makes the end, [and] suffering shall not rise a second time? | 9. [O nations who have plundered Israel], what are you reckoned before the Lord? He will make an end [of you; relief after] affliction will not be established twice [for you as for the house of Israel]. |
| 10 For as thorns embrace one another: so while they are feasting [and] drinking [together], they shall be consumed as stubble that is fully dry. | 10 ὅτι ὡς θάμνου ἀντιῶν χειρῶν θήσεται ^{BR} καὶ ὡς σμίλαξ περιπλεκ- ^{BS} μένη ^{BS} ὡς καλάμη ξηρασίας μεστή. | 10 For [the enemy] shall be laid bare even to the foundation, and shall be devoured as twisted-yew, [and] as stubble fully dry. | 10 For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken with their drink, They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. | 10 X Like tangled thorns, And like those who are drunken from their wine; they will be consumed As stubble completely withered. | 10 X They will be entangled among thorns and X drunk from their wine; they will be consumed like X dry stubble. | 10 For they are like entangled thorns, X like drunkards as they drink; they are consumed like stubble fully dried. | 10 because they are always bunched briars or like their beer they are imbibing: they will be consumed like fully-dried straw. | BT (י) כי עד צירים סבכים וקסבאם סבואים אכלו קקש יבש מלא. | 10 Because they are rebellious towards their Rulers and in their drunkenness they drink and they X eatX [and] they are filled with X dried stubble | 10. For X the princes [of the nations which plundered Israel and] made them go astray, as though led astray through X wine, destroyed [them] just as [fire ^{BX} destroys among] very dry stubble. |
| 11 Out of thee shall come forth one that imagineth evil against the Lord, contriving treachery in his mind. | 11 ἐκ σοῦ ἐξελεύσεται λογισμὸς κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου πονηρὰ λογιζόμενος ἐναντία ^{BY} . | 11 Out of thee shall proceed a device against the Lord, counselling evil things hostile to him. | 11 There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor. | 11 From you has gone forth One who plotted evil against the LORD, A wicked counselor. | 11 From you, [O Nineveh], has one come forth who plots evil against the LORD and counsels wickedness. | 11 From you came X one who plotted evil against the LORD, a worthless counselor. | 11 It was from you that the man who planned evil against Yahweh came forth – the counselor of ungodliness. | (יא) ממך יצא חשב על יהוה רעה יעץ בליעל. | 11 From you he will come forth who devises wickedness against LORD JEHOVAH, [and] feeds upon evil | 11. From you, [Nineveh], there has gone forth a [king] who plotted evil against the [people of th]e Lord; he gave evil counsel. |
| 12 Thus saith the Lord: Though they were perfect: and X many [of them so], yet thus shall they be cut off, and he shall pass; I have afflicted thee, and I will afflict thee no more. | 12 τάδε λέγει κύριος καταρχὼν ὕδατων X καὶ οὕτως X διασταλή- ^{CA} σονται, καὶ ἡ ἄκοή σου οὐκ ἐνακουσ- ^{CA} θήσεται ἔτι. | 12 Thus saith the Lord who rules over many waters, X X Even thus shall they be X X sent away, and the report of thee shall not be heard any more. | 12 Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. | 12 Thus says the LORD, "Though they are at full strength and likewise many, Even so, they will be cut off and X pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no longer. | 12 This is what the LORD says: "Although they have allies and X are numerous, X X they will be cut off and X pass away. Although I have afflicted you, [O Judah], I will afflict you no more. | 12 Thus says the LORD, "Though they are at full strength and X many, X X they will be cut down and X pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. | 12 Thus says Yahweh, "Although there are peaceful-circumstances even so there will be many even then, he will pass on. Thus will I humble you; I will not humble you again. | (יב) פה אמר יהוה אם שמים יכן רבים כן נגזר יעבר ענתה לא אענה עוד. | 12 Thus says LORD JEHOVAH concerning the sources of many waters: "X X X They have trickled and they have passed away, and though I have afflicted you, I shall afflict you no more | 12. Thus says the Lord, "Though [the nations which assemble to oppress you, O Jerusalem,] are perfect [in counsel] and X many [in number], and though they cross [the Tigris] and pass over [the Euphrates and come to afflict you], even [if] I have brought you into servitude I shall not enslave you again. |

| Douay (Vulgate) | LXX | Brenton (Vaticanus) | KJV | NASB | NIV | ESV | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew | Bauscher (Peshitta) | Cathcart (Targums) |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| 13 And now I will break [in pieces] his rod with [which he struck] thy [back], and I will burst thy bonds asunder. | 13 καὶ νῦν συντρίψω τὴν ῥάβδον αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ σοῦ καὶ τοὺς δεσμούς σου διαρρήξω. | 13 And now will I break his rod from off thee, and will burst thy bonds. | 13 For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder. | 13 "So now, I will break his yoke bar from upon you, And I will tear off your shackles." | 13 X Now I will break their yoke from your [neck] and tear your shackles away." | 13 And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart." | 13 And now, I will break his carrying-pole from off of you, and I will tear off your chains. | (יג) ועתה אֶשְׁבֵּר מִטָּהוּ מַעֲלִיךְ וּמוֹסְרֵיךְ אֶנְתֵּק. | 13 Therefore X I shall break his yoke from you and your bonds I shall cut off | 13. And now I shall break the yoke [of the nations] from your [necks] and shall cut away your chains. |
| 14 And the Lord will give a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name shall be sown: I will destroy the graven and molten thing out of the house of thy God, I will make it thy grave, for thou art disgraced. | 14 καὶ ἐντελεῖται ὑπὲρ σοῦ κύριος, οὐ σπαρήσεται ἐκ τοῦ ὀνόματός σου ἔτι· ἐξ οἴκου θεοῦ σου ἐξολεθρεύσω τὰ γλυπτὰ καὶ χωνευτά· θήσομαι ταφὴν σου, ὅτι ταχεῖς ^{CF} . | 14 And the Lord shall give a command concerning thee; there shall no more of thy name be scattered: I will [utterly] destroy the graven image[s] out of the house of thy godZ, and the molten image[s] I will make thy grave; for they are swift. | 14 And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: I will cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. | 14 X The LORD has issued a command concerning you: "X Your name will no longer be perpetuated. I will cut off idol and image From the house of your gods. I will prepare your grave. For you are contemptible." | 14 X The LORD has given a command concerning you, [Nineveh]: "You will X have no X descendants to bear your name. I will destroy the carved image[s] and cast idol[s] that are in the temple of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are vile." | 14 X The LORD has given commandment about you: "No more shall X your name be perpetuated; from the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the metal image. I will make your grave, for you are vile." | 14 And Yahweh will command concerning you, "Let there be no dissemination of your name again. I will cut off carved-image and cast-image from the house of your gods; I will appoint it to be your grave, because you are despised. | (יד) וצנה עֲלֶיךָ יְהוָה לֹא יִזְרַע מִשְׁמֶךָ עוֹד מִבֵּית אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶכְרִית פֶּסֶל וּמִסֵּכָה אֲשִׁים קִבְרְךָ כִּי קְלוֹת ^{CG} . | 14 And LORD JEHOVAH shall command concerning you, and the house of your godX will not be disseminated again from your name, [and] I shall destroy the carved image[s] and the smelted one[s], [and] I shall quickly make it your grave X X | 14. But the Lord will give commandment concerning you, [O king of Assyria, and] there will not be a remembrance ^{CH} of your name any more; I shall destroy image and molten image from the house of your idols, I shall make your grave [there], for that is a light matter [before me]." |
| 15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, [and] that preacheth peace: O Juda, keep thy festivals, [and] pay thy vows: for Belial shall no more pass through thee again, he is utterly cut off. | 2:1 Ἴδου ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη οἱ πόδες εὐαγγελιζομένου [καὶ] ἀπαγγέλλοντος εἰρήνην· ἐόρταζε, Ἰουδα, τὰς ἐορτάς σου, εὐχάας σου, διότι οὐ μὴ προσθήσωσιν ἔτι τοῦ διελθεῖν διὰ σοῦ εἰς παλαιώσιν συντετέλεσται, ἐξήρται. | 15 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. 2:1 It is all over [with him], he has been removed, | 15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Juda, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off. | 15 Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace! Celebrate your feasts, O Juda; Pay your vows. For never again will the wicked one pass through you; He is cut off completely. | 15 Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Juda, [and] fulfill your vows. X No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed. | 15 Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace! Keep your feasts, O Juda; fulfill your vows, for never again shall the worthless pass through you; he is utterly cut off. | 15 See, the feet of an announcer upon the mountains, causing peace to be heard! "Celebrate your feasts, Judea; make good on your vows, because the ungodly will not presume again to pass through you; he has been entirely cut off." | (ט) הנה על הקרים רגלי מבשר משמיע שלום תגיד יהודה מצוד שלמי גדרתך כי לא יוסיף עוד לעבור בך בליעל כלל נכרת. | 1:15 Behold, upon the mountains the feet of the Evangelist [and] him who announces peace! Perform your feasts, Yehuda, [and] finish your vows, because evil continues to work in you no more, because all of it is destroyed! | 2:1. Behold, on the mountains [of the land of Israel] the feet of him who announces good tidings, proclaiming peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, fulfil your vows, for the wicked shall never pass through you again; they are all destroyed. |

^{BE} NAW is my translation. When a translation adds words not in the Hebrew text, but does not indicate it has done so by the use of italics or greyed-out text, I put the added words in [square brackets]. When one version chooses a wording which is different from all the other translations, I underline it. When a version chooses a translation which, in my opinion, either departs too far from the root meaning of the Hebrew word or departs too far from the grammar form of the original text, I use ~~strikeout~~. And when a version omits a word which is in the original text, I insert an X. I also place an X at the end of a word if the original word is plural but the English translation is singular. I occasionally use colors to help the reader see correlations between the various editions and versions when there are more than two different translations of a given word. The only known Dead Sea Scrolls containing Nahum 1 are 4Q82 (containing parts of verses 7-9 and dated between 30-1 BC), The *Nahal Hever* Greek scroll (containing parts vs. 13-14 and dated around 25BC), and the Wadi Muraba'at Scroll, containing parts of verses 1-15 and dated around 135 AD. Where the DSS or NH are legible and in agreement with the traditional text, the MT or LXX is colored **purple**.

^{BF} Douay Old Testament first published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609, Revised and Diligently Compared with the Latin Vulgate by Bishop Richard Challoner, Published in 1582, 1609, 1752. As published on E-Sword.

^{BG} “Septuagint” Greek Old Testament, edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Published in 1935. As published on E-Sword.

^{BH} English translation of the Septuagint by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, 1851, “based upon the text of the Vaticanus” but not identical to the *Vaticanus*. As published electronically by E-Sword.

^{BI} 1769 King James Version of the Holy Bible; public domain. As published electronically by E-Sword.

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^{BM} From the Wiki Hebrew Bible

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%94_%D7%90/%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA. DSS text comes from <https://downloads.thewaytoyahuwah.com>

^{BN} The Peshitta Holy Bible Translated by Glenn David Bauscher, Copyright © 2018 Lulu Publishing, 3rd edition Copyright © 2019 as found on <https://biblehub.com/hpbt/nahum/1.htm>

^{BO} From *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, Volume 14, 1989, Cathcart, Kevin J; Gordon, R. P. As found on https://wbsg8v.xyz/d3/y/1715385560/100/u/ia/annas-archive-ia-2023-06-acsm/t/targumofminorpro0014unse.pdf~/f8jMjv18tRB-fitiyGs6_g/The%20Aramaic%20Bible%3A%20The%20Targum%20of%20the%20Minor%20Prophets%20--%20Cathcart%2C%20Kevin%20J%3B%20Gordon%2C%20R_%20P%20--%20Volume%2014%2C%201989%20--%20Wilmington%2C%20Del_%3A%20M_%20Glazier%20--%209780894534898%20--%202c2211ab706b64db6d34be810eef40da%20--%20Anna%E2%80%99s%20Archive.pdf on 10 May 2024

^{BP} This translation is based on the Hebrew root being **נקם** (“take vengeance”) with the first letter disappearing (as it is want to do). The Latin and Aramaic and English versions recognized the root as **קם** (“rise up”), as did the 2nd Century Greek translators Symmachus (ἀνθυποστῆσονται) and Theodotian (ἀναστήσεται).

^{BQ} 151 out of 156 times that this prepositional phrase occurs in the HOT it means “to the LORD.” This is one of the 5 times it means “against the LORD” (the other 4 being Isa. 3:8 & 32:6 and Jeremiah 35:16 & 50:29). Keil’s objection that it can never mean “against the LORD” seems mistaken.

There are three other places in the HOT where the same words for “plot against” occur: **Jer. 49:20** “Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD that He has taken against Edom, And His purposes that He has proposed against the inhabitants of Teman...” **Jer. 50:45** “Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD that He has taken against Babylon, And His purposes that He has proposed against the land of the Chaldeans...” (NKJV) and **Hosea 7:15** “... yet against me [the LORD] they plot what is evil.” (NAW)

^{BR} Symmachus rendered ‘ομοις στοιβη συμπελεγμενη (“like braided straw”).

^{BS} Sym. rendered ‘οὕτως καὶ το συμποσιον αυτων συμπινοντων (“and like their drinking-buddies drinking together”).

^{BT} This word is hard to translate. It usually means “until,” which is how the LXX translated it, but the Vulgate, Geneva, NASB, AJV, and ESV (as well as Owen and Keil, among the commentators) rendered it with the unusual meaning of a comparative (“like/as”). The more-unique versions are likewise unusual translations of this word: KJV (“when/while”), NIV (“among”), and NET (“certainly”). And some, like the NLT didn’t bother to translate it at all. I would point out that there is a homonym in Hebrew which means “always/forever/for a long time.”

^{BU} The only other places this word occurs in the HOT are Eccl. 7:6; Isa. 34:13; Hos. 2:8 (where it is translated “thorns”); and Amos 4:2 (where it is translated “fish hooks”). Also, this is the first of four words in a row in Hebrew starting with the “s”

sound, so there seems to be an intentional alliteration here.

^{BV} The only other place this word occurs in the HOT is Job 8:17, describing roots that “wrap/entwine.”

^{BW} This noun is followed by its verb form in the next word. The noun only occurs in the HOT here and Isa. 1:22; Hos. 4:18, where it is usually translated “drink” as in “strong drink.” The ensuing verb form occurs in Deut. 21:20; Prov. 23:20-21; Isa. 56:12; and Ezek. 23:42.

^{BX} This reads as though the Hebrew were שֶׁא (“fire”) instead of שֶׁק (“stubble”).

^{BY} cf. Aquila: ἀποστασιν (“revolt”).

^{BZ} See same word in v.15.

^{CA} The LXX’s confused translation is due to the fact that the Hebrew word for “humble/afflict” could also be translated “answer,” but no other version in history (that I’m aware of) has done so.

^{CB} The reading of the LXX and Peshitta could be obtained by putting the spaces in different places in the Hebrew: שְׁלָמִים אֲמָ = “although full/peaceful,” but מִשַׁל מִים אֲ = “? ruler of water.” The only other time this word “peace” is spelled exactly the same (that is, as a masculine plural adjective) is Genesis 34:21, where the people of Shechem were told that Jacob’s family was “at peace” with them. However, the singular form of this same word does occur three verses later in Nah. 1:15 “proclaiming peace.”

^{CC} Of the 15 times this verb occurs in the HOT, 80% refer to sheep-shearing and 20% refer to human hair-cutting.

^{CD} The only other places this word occurs are Num. 4:10-12 and 13:23, referring to poles used by multiple men to carry unwieldy objects. Commentators seem to think that this instance in Nahum must refer to part of a yoke by which a beast of burden is attached to a cart.

^{CE} This word also occurs in Job 39:5, Ps. 2:3 & 107:14, and Jer. 2:20, 5:5, 27:2, & 30:8. It denotes “chains/bonds/restraints/shackles/halters,” and is figurative in every instance except the one where Jeremiah is told to wear them literally, but even then it was as a symbol.

^{CF} 2nd Century Greek translators corrected to ητιμωθης (“dishonorable”). “E” rendered ‘υβρισθης (“be despised”).

^{CG} The idea of swiftness which the LXX and Peshitta got from this word is not its intrinsic meaning. The quickness is an extension of the more basic meaning of unimportance and disdain, which results in quick, cursory treatment of whatever is deemed abhorrent or unimportant.

^{CH} This translation reads as though the Hebrew word were זָכַר (“remember”) instead of זָרַע (“sow seed”). No other versions reads this way.

^{CI} Qere: לְעָבָר – this is just a shorter spelling of the same word. Both are Qal Infinitive.

^{CJ} The Aramaic versions interpreted it the same way the MT does as a substantive adjective with a pronomial suffix (“all of it/ them” - technically the object is singular, but could refer to a plurality). Vulgate and English versions interpreted it instead as an adverb (“completely”) - which is the Westminster morphology choice, and the LXX interpreted it as the verb “it finished” (jumping off the noun “an end” back in v.9). The unpointed Hebrew text could support any of these interpretations.

Nahum 2:1-10 God is Sovereign; Nineveh is Sacked

v. 1 The Ungodly Civilization Will Be Scattered

- Nahum chapters 2 and 3 are ostensibly about how the great civilization of Nineveh will be overthrown, but it is strikingly similar to the messages of other prophets throughout the Bible who warned ungodly cities that they, too, would be besieged and overthrown,
 - for instance, Jerusalem (in Isa. 29:3), Babylon (in Jer. 51:12), and Rome (in Rev. 18).
 - So, although Nahum's prophecy is against the Assyrian empire and its capitol city of Nineveh, it is part of a bigger picture of God's sovereignty over all nations throughout all time.
- In Nahum 2:1, there is a disruptive person who has approached the wall of the fortified city. The Hebrew wording pictures him "facing off against" the outer wall the city.
 - He is called "one who scatters" literally in the Hebrew.
 - It might simply refer to the fact that this dude has a history of successful sieges which have caused people in city after city to flee in all directions when their defenses have been broken through.
 - Or it may refer specifically to the Assyrian policy of removing conquered peoples from their native land and resettling them somewhere else, effectively scattering the national strength of all vassals.
 - Or it may refer to the new leadership of the Medo-Persian empire which systematically destroyed the Assyrian empire.
 - So, which is it?
 - In v. 6, the city wall being attacked was flooded by river-water to dissolve the foundations and to cause the wall to collapse; that matches the history of how Nineveh was conquered.
 - Also, the third chapter of Nahum has a lot of parallels to this second chapter, so it may be describing the same event. If it is, then the "you" is the king of Assyria (or its capitol city Nineveh), because in **Nahum 3:18** it says, "O king of Assyria, your shepherds sleep in death..." (NKJV)
 - And Nineveh is named explicitly in v.8.⁶⁶
 - Now, cities back then were built on hills so that any enemy would have to fight uphill if they attacked it, thus the verb "he has come up" in most English versions.
- The response of the people defending the city in the second half of v.1 is called out like a set of rapid-fire military orders:
 - ***Guard the fortifications!***
 - ***Watch the road!***
 - ***Tighten belts!***
 - ***Marshal extra strength!***

⁶⁶ Owen of Thrussington commented: "That the Babylonian power is meant by 'the destroyer,' or disperser, or scatterer, is the opinion of Jerome, Drusius, Grotius, Marckius, and Newcome. But Kimchi, Dathius, Henderson, and some others, regard the "destroyer" as the king of Assyria. What agrees best with the context is the former opinion." Pusey and Keil agreed.

- The men inside Nineveh needed to man their posts on top of the outer wall and protect the city from attackers by shooting at the enemy as it approached the city.
- There also needed to be watchmen carefully monitoring the road coming up to the city to keep track of how many enemy troops were coming in, what kind of weapons they were bringing in, and whether any allies were coming to join in the defense.⁶⁷
- The ESV “dress for battle” is a very loose interpretation of the literal “strengthen loins” but it explains what is otherwise an odd-sounding command in English.
- And they needed to be ready to engage in hand-to-hand combat,
 - perhaps they needed to organize backups to stand in the gap and fight if they get overwhelmed,
 - or perhaps they just needed to prepare mentally and screw up their courage against the fear of combat.
 - This phrase occurs only two other places in the Bible: Prov. 24:5 speaks in terms of intellectual strength while Amos 2:14 speaks of muscular strength, and both are useful in battle!
- The vividness of Nahum’s vision some one hundred years before it happened is a testament to the omniscience of the God who gave Nahum this vision. And you, if you “stand alone on the word of God,” the world may scoff at you now, but time will tell that your God knows what He’s talking about, and He is worth listening to.

v. 2 The City’s Defenders Mobilize

- There are two ways to read v.2:
 - One is to follow the literal past tense of the Hebrew and interpret the *gaon* of Israel and Judah as a negative thing: *prepare to defend your city from siege* “because Yahweh has turned back the arrogance of Jacob like the arrogance of Israel, for evacuator have evacuated them and have destroyed their pruned-grapevines.” This is the way Christians have read it in Latin and Greek for almost two millennia, and that is the sense of the earliest English versions⁶⁸.
 - In the mid-19th century, English versions started changing it to future tense and interpreting the *gaon* of Israel and Judah as a positive thing: “For the LORD will return the splendor/excellency/majesty of Jacob Like the splendor/excellency/majesty of Israel, Even though devastators/destroyers/plunderers have laid them waste and have ruined their vine branches.”
 - The Hebrew word *gaon* means anything that is raised “high,” so it could mean the “excellence” of Jacob (as it does in Ps. 47:5)⁶⁹, but more often it means the “haughty arrogance” of Jacob/Israel (as it does in Amos 6:8, Ezekiel 33:28, and Hosea 5:5)⁷⁰.
 - The traditional interpretation appears to point this prophecy as a warning to Judea that God

⁶⁷ There are only two other passages in the Bible where this phrase shows up in Greek or Hebrew: 1 Samuel 4:13 & Jeremiah 48:19, and both portray someone who has postured themselves to be the first to get news when it comes. The next phrase, “strengthen loins,” is not found as a phrase anywhere else in the Bible.

⁶⁸ Cf. Calvin “the Prophet shows, that it was the ripened time for the destruction of the city Nineveh..... *gaun*, for the most part, is taken in a bad sense, for haughtiness or pride. This then is the reason why God now declares, that the ruin of Nineveh was nigh at hand; it was so, because the Jews and the Israelites had been sufficiently brought down. This sense is the most suitable.” Calvin’s English translator, Owen, agreed, citing Marckius in agreement, and poking fun at Drusius, Newcome, and Henderson for translating it “excellency” and then complaining that it made no sense.

⁶⁹ “[T]he eminence and greatness or glory accruing to Israel by virtue of its election to be the nation of God, which the enemy into whose power it had been given up on account of its rebellion against God had taken away...” ~C. F. Keil

would discipline them for their pride by a foreign army destroying their farmland and then attacking the walled city of Jerusalem, just like what happened to the northern kingdom of Israel and its capitol city of Samaria. The fulfillment of this prophetic warning can be seen in the sieges of Jerusalem by the Assyrians around 700 BC and later by the Chaldeans around 600 BC.

- The only way to make the contemporary interpretation of v.2 work⁷¹ would be if you connect it with earlier foreign raids which partially devastated Judea (such as the Assyrian one around 700BC) and if you make the “excellence of Jacob” mean the southern kingdom during, say, Hezekiah’s reign, but make “the excellence of Israel” mean the previously-undivided kingdom under David and Solomon.
 - In that case, God can be saying that “the Assyrians have been abusive to J[udah]... as well as to Israel... [so] God's quarrel with [Assyria] is [as Habakkuk put it later] ‘for the violence done to Jacob.’” ~M. Henry⁷²
- Whichever it is, it is a reminder, in the middle of a prophecy against Nineveh, that God has not forgotten about His people back in Israel. He will deal justly with them and He will redeem them when they call on Him to save them, even while He deals justly with Israel’s chief enemy.
- The invading army is described in vivid detail in verses 3-4 as they set up for a siege.

vs. 3-4 The Enemy Invades

- First come the “mighty men” – probably army officers, carrying shields wrapped with red-dyed leather, together with their “infantrymen/valiant warriors/soldiers, clad in crimson/scarlet.”
 - “Scarlet... was especially the color of the dress of their nobles, one chief color of the Median dress, from whom the Persians adopted their’s [sic].” ~E. B. Pusey⁷³
 - *The red uniforms and shields look very striking on the bleak battlefield, a harbinger that much blood is about to be shed.*
- Next comes the cavalry, with ranks of horse-drawn chariots.
 - These chariots have newfangled steel plating that flashes like fire in the sun. That new technology from the research-and-development arm of their military complex will render

⁷⁰ Cf. **Zech. 10:11** “He shall pass through the sea with affliction, And strike the waves of the sea: All the depths of the River shall dry up. Then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, And the scepter of Egypt shall depart.” (NKJV)

Ezekiel 33:28 “For I will make the land most desolate, her arrogant strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through.” (NKJV)

Hosea 5:5 “The pride of Israel testifies to his face; Therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them... 7:10 And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, But they do not return to the LORD their God, Nor seek Him for all this.” (NKJV)

⁷¹ The liberal interpretation makes this a prophecy of hope to Israel and Judah after they have been devastated by foreign armies, which means it would be addressed to people who lived after the fall of Jerusalem, which would be after the fall of Nineveh too, making Nahum’s prophecy about Nineveh fraudulent.

⁷² Cf. Pusey: “Nineveh falls, because God restores His people, whom it had oppressed... His displeasure against her enemies is a token of His favor to her... Their forefather bore the name of *Jacob* in his troubled days of exile; that of *Israel* was given him on his return. It would then mean, the afflicted people (Jacob) shall be restored to its utmost glory as Israel.”

⁷³ Pusey cited Claudius Aelianus (3rd century A.D., *Varia Historia*, vi. 6), Valerius Maximus ii 6.2 (1st Century, which states that Greek soldiers wore red when attacking so that the enemy would not be able to tell if they were wounded or not), and Strabo’s *Geography* xi.13.9 (1st Century BC/AD, which states that the Persians derived at least some of their customs from the Medes).

their vehicles impervious to the threat of spears and arrows.⁷⁴

- The last phrase, according to the Hebrew Masoretic text is “cypress/pine/fir spears are shaken/brandished,” and that is what all the English versions since the 17th century read.
 - The oldest-known Hebrew manuscript (that is legible enough to read) is dated to the 900’s AD (the older Dead Sea Scrolls are obliterated at the key points in this verse),
 - but if you look at the Greek, Latin, and Aramaic manuscripts made hundreds of years before the Masoretic Hebrew manuscript, they all read that it is “horses” rather than “cypresses” that are doing the quivering.
 - There is only one letter difference in Hebrew between “horses” and “cypress-trees,” and it doesn’t change the meaning much whether it’s the horses or the spears quivering; both could be part of the description of a chariot-based cavalry and both indicate an eagerness to rush into battle.
- The description of the cavalry continues into v.4 – they are quite impressive, as the chariots
 - flash/rage/storm/race madly through the streets,
 - and jostle/rush wildly/back and forth through the broad ways/public squares/plazas,
 - looking like flashing torches in their shiny steel armor, speeding/darting/dashing/running like lightening-bolts⁷⁵.
 - Some say the Medes were the first to mount steel blades on the hubs of their chariot wheels to weaponize them.⁷⁶
 - By this point, the enemy has clearly entered the city and is trying to create shock and awe in the city streets to get the residents under their control as quickly as possible.
 - Later in chapter 3, Nahum writes: “There is the sound of the whip and the rumbling sound of the chariot-wheel and horse galloping and chariot bouncing! There is the horseman raising both the flash of the sword and the lightening-bolt of the spear, then the multitude of the wounded. There is the mass of dead-bodies, indeed there is no end to the bodies. They will stumble over their bodies...” (**Nahum 3:2-3**, NAW)
- Of course, Nineveh isn’t the last place this happened.
 - The rest of the Bible contains strikingly-similar descriptions of the overthrow of Jerusalem (Joel 2:1-9, Jer. 4:13, & Ezek. 23:14-15), of Babylon (Isa. 33:3-5), and of Tyre (Ezek. 26:10).
 - And it is also in descriptions of the second coming of Christ, such as **Isaiah 66:15** “For look, Yahweh will come with fire, and like the whirlwind His chariots will be, to return in the fury of His anger, and His rebuke will be with flames of fire.” (NAW, cf. Ps. 18:14)

⁷⁴ “[P]elâdôth are not scythes, which would suggest the idea of scythe-chariots (Michaelis, Ewald, and others); for scythe-chariots were first introduced by Cyrus, and were unknown before his time to the Medes... Pelâdôth probably denotes the steel covering of the chariots, as the Assyrian war-chariots were adorned according to the monuments with ornaments of metal.” ~C. F. Keil

⁷⁵ Kimchi suggested that the “fire” was sparks from the steel wheels hitting rocks. Pusey noted that the value of steel was in keeping an edge, so it must be speaking of “scythed chariots,” which, he observed from other historical accounts, were probably in use at that time in history. Keil’s rebuttal above was published 11 years after Pusey’s commentary. Pusey also maintained with (only a small minority of commentators) that this frenzied street scene describes the citizens of Nineveh rather than the invading army.

⁷⁶ David M. Levy’s commentary on Nahum 2 published in the Nov/Dec 2003 edition of *Israel My Glory* magazine, approvingly cites A. Tatford’s 1974 commentary on Nahum, *Prophet of Assyria’s Fall*, as the source of this information.

vs. 5-6 The City Is Breached

- In v. 5, I think “the scatterer/attacker” from v. 1 comes back into view as the general who orchestrates the attack against Nineveh⁷⁷.
- He watches as his noble knights/officers lead the charge against the city wall.
 - Something “trips” them up as they “go on their way:”
 - perhaps it is the “dead bodies” in the field that Nahum 3:3 mentions being a “tripping” hazard,
 - or perhaps it is just that they are getting hit by arrows from the defenders up on the wall⁷⁸,
 - but the faster they can cover that ground, the fewer casualties they will take, so they “rush” in.
- Once at the base of the wall, the attacking army erects a “protective covering” of some kind that will shield the next wave of attackers from the arrows and stones being rained down on them by the soldiers inside the city.
 - The ESV calls it a “siege tower,”
 - but the Hebrew word has more to do with “covering” than with scaling a wall, so I think the NASB “mantelet” is a better translation for it [*see picture of a mantelet*].
 - E. B. Pusey noted in his commentary on this verse that carvings from ancient Nineveh⁷⁹ “exhibit a shelter with a battering ram, mostly with a sharp point, by which they loosened the walls... To prevent... [its being set on fire], the workers of the ram... suspended from a pole in front of their engine, a curtain of leather or some other non-inflammable substance.”
- The next order of business for the invading army is to break through the city walls. This was usually done by hammering rocks out of the wall or digging under the foundation to make the wall collapse. But in v.6, a surprising technique is employed: the “river” is “opened up” against the city “wall” to erode it and make it fall!
 - Nowhere else does the Bible mention a “river” having “gates,” so I suspect that Nahum is describing a unique man-made diversion of the river⁸⁰.
 - And we know from history that this is how Nineveh’s mighty walls were brought down: “A 150-foot-wide moat surrounded Nineveh on three sides, with the Tigris River on the city’s west. The moat ran between two walls that protected Nineveh. In time of invasion, sluices were opened to fill the moat with water from the Khoser River, making the moat a barrier to protect the city. In the third year of the siege, heavy rains flooded the Khoser and Tigris Rivers. The invaders opened the sluices, causing floodwater from the reservoirs to break through the city walls and destroy the palace.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Grotius, Newcome, and M. Henry agreed with me, but the traditional Jewish commentators and Calvin, Piscator, Marck-ius, Henderson, Pusey, and Keil saw the main character of v.5 as the king of Nineveh taking defensive measures. (Pusey admitted, however, that the mantelet was not a defensive tool and must be describing the attackers. Keil suggested the Assyrians were simply running to the place where the Medians had set up the structure, but that doesn’t seem consistent with the flow of the verse.)

⁷⁸ Another possibility might be found in Jeremiah 46:12 “The nations have heard of your shame, And your cry has filled the land; For the mighty man has stumbled against the mighty; They both have fallen together.” (NKJV)

⁷⁹ And published in Rawlinson’s encyclopedic *Seven Great Monarchies Of The Ancient Eastern World* and in Layard’s *The Monuments Of Nineveh*.

⁸⁰ Keil, however, argued that Luther’s translation, “the gates [in the city walls] at the rivers” was the correct one.

vs. 7-10 Nineveh Is Plundered & Destroyed

- Verse 7 begins with three terse verbs, the first one masculine and the second two feminine. I think the masculine verb refers to the “scatterer” which opens chapter 2, and the feminine verbs refer to the feminine city of Nineveh and her inhabitants.
 - The first verb – the masculine one – in Hebrew, has to do with “being established,” and the second and third words have to do with “being stripped bare” and “being taken away.”
 - So I translate it: “Then he will be confirmed-victor; she will be exposed; she will be taken away...”
 - However, many translations ignore both the masculine and verbal form of the first word in the verse (and the disjunctive punctuation after it) to make it into a feminine noun, based on the belief that the Hebrew word, which is pronounced *huzzab*, was a reference to the matron-goddess of Nineveh and therefore stands for Nineveh itself.⁸²
 - Still other English translations agreed that the first word was a verb with a masculine subject, but it has been so many verses since the masculine “scatterer” in v.1 and the kingly supervisor-of-nobles in v.5, that they decided it was not related to the conqueror, so they rendered it, “It is fixed/decreed.”⁸³ *That still works and points to the sovereign word of God.*
- The latter half of v.7 is more straightforward, picturing the “maids/slave girls” being led off into captivity, captured by the invading soldiers to be wives or servants.
 - They are “lamenting/moaning like the sound of doves” [*imitate a dove call*]⁸⁴,
 - and “beating” themselves, the Hebrew says literally, “over their heart.”
 - *What a poignant portrayal of the grief of the conquered – of those who side with the kingdom of man against the kingdom of God and end up the worse.*
- Verse 8 portrays Nineveh as a has-been, combining the idea of the river flooding with the idea of the Assyrians fleeing from the city when it is conquered.
 - One of the Hebrew phrases in v.8 can be translated either “from her days” or it can be translated “her waters:”
 - The KJV and NASB⁸⁵ followed the Targums in opting for “from her days” (or less-accurately “from the days of old”), the idea being that Nineveh used to be a life-giving water source, but now it’s all going away.

⁸¹ David M. Levy <https://israelmyglory.org/article/ninevehs-destruction/> (accessed 22 Feb 2024). This was probably based on Diodorus Siculus’ account (ii. 27). E. B. Pusey’s commentary noted that just because the 4th century BC historian Ctesias exaggerated his account of the flooding of the river that brought down Nineveh’s walls in his book *Persica*, “[It] is not inconsistent with, but rather implies a basis of truth.”

⁸² This was Calvin’s position and that of the NASB and NIV. Traditional Jewish interpretation followed by the KJV and ESV did not make that last inference (of the name standing for the city) and instead saw it as referring to the queen. Keil asserted that this interpretation “is destitute of any tenable foundation.”

⁸³ Viz. Pusey, Keil, NASB, and NIV.

⁸⁴ Cf. **Isaiah 38:14** “Like a swallow or a crane I chirp; I moan like a dove. My eyes have become weary to the heights... **59:11** We growl like the bears – all of us; we mutter repeatedly like doves. We wait for the justice, but there is none – for the salvation – it is far from us.” (NAW) Isaiah uses the standard form for the Hebrew word for “moan” (הגה), whereas Nahum appears to have a non-standard form (גהג) found in no other author.

⁸⁵ And, among the commentators, Calvin, Henderson, Pusey, and Keil. Calvin’s application was noteworthy: “But from this passage we ought to learn that no trust is to be put in the number of men, nor in the defenses and strongholds of cities, nor in ancientness; for when men excel in power, God will hence take occasion to destroy them, inasmuch as pride is almost ever connected with strength.”

- Alternately, the NIV & ESV⁸⁶ followed the ancient Vulgate, Septuagint, and Peshitta by translating the phrase as “her waters,” in which case, the idea is that Nineveh is flooded, and the waters are running away and so are its people.
 - It always impresses me how variants in the Bible don’t end up making a difference in the overall gist of a verse, and this is no exception.
- Any Assyrian captain stupid enough to try to regain control of the city by rallying his fellow-Ninevites as they flee out of the city is blowing into the wind.
 - Nobody in their right mind is going to “about-face” when commanded to “Halt.”
 - Nahum 3:17 mentions that even the military officers are going to flee away.⁸⁷
 - Again, the city of human strength in opposition against God Almighty will end up losing everything. *It will be a complete rout.*
- God has the power to give such a perfect vision to Nahum that it’s as though Nahum is standing right there in the city of Nineveh while all this is happening, despite the fact that it didn’t occur until about a century after Nahum!
 - In verses 7 and 8, he has heard the voices of the Assyrian officers inside Nineveh trying to rally a defense, and the voices of captured victims moaning as they are led out of the city,
 - but now in v.9 he hears another voice. It’s the voice of Cyaxeres (or his invading army officers) encouraging the Medo-Persian soldiers to grab all the loot they can, as they secure one building after another in their systematic takeover of the once-great city of Nineveh.⁸⁸
 - This is their take-home pay for serving in this war campaign, so they’re grabbing all the “gold” and “silver” they can find in the abandoned homes and businesses of Nineveh.
 - The Hebrew wording of v.9 implies that there is such a “store/treasure/supply” of loot in the city of Nineveh that, even if the officers were to evenly divide it up among all their soldiers, there would be more “valuable/pleasant/desirable/precious things” than the soldiers could even make use of, so the officers are just telling them to “go for it” and take anything they want. *There was so much “wealth” in Nineveh that there would be more than plenty to go around amongst the conquerors.*
- So, all the work the Ninevites had done to acquire all that wealth was wasted and lost. (“The plunderer becomes the plundered.” ~Michael P. V. Barrett) They realized only too late how foolish it was for them to prioritize making money and getting things instead of discovering and investing in the ways of Jonah’s God which bring happiness forever.
 - And so the wealth changed hands, and God gave the new Medo-Persian empire the chance to hear His word, learn of His mercy, be warned not to rebel, and then be punished and plundered (just like the Assyrians) when they chose ungodliness.
 - Then their wealth changed hands to the next world power, and so God continues to lead the

⁸⁶ And, among the commentators, Newcome.

⁸⁷ Cf. **Jer. 46:5** “Why have I seen them dismayed and turned back? Their mighty ones are beaten down; They have speedily fled, And did not look back, For fear was all around... **47:3** At the noise of the stamping hooves of his strong horses, At the rushing of his chariots, At the rumbling of his wheels, The fathers will not look back for their children, Lacking courage...” (NKJV)

⁸⁸ Calvin made the good point that ultimately behind the commands of the army officers is the command of God Himself to them to spoil Nineveh.

march of history⁸⁹, accomplishing redemption and justice all along the way while the empires of man rise and fall.

- Verse 10 is a kind of recap, reviewing the status of being an Assyrian from Nineveh after God's judgment fell on that city:
 - Nahum uses a series of three closely-related Hebrew words that all have to do with being "empty," but since some of them are found nowhere else in the Bible, they are translated in a variety of ways: empty, void, waste, desolate, pillaged, plundered, stripped, ruin, torn.
 - All three words share a common Hebrew root⁹⁰, and the first is spelled like a noun, the second like a participle, and the third like a passive verb, so I translated them "Vacuousness," "evacuating," and "being evacuated."
 - It's as though an Assyrian is watching the once-proud, once-wealthy residents of Nineveh voluntarily evacuating the city – fleeing for their lives, while also watching other Assyrians involuntarily being evacuated as the Medes lead them captive out of the city as slaves, and the lesson from Ecclesiastes is dawning on him: "Vanity of vanities... all is vanity⁹¹!"
- God has located us at the turn of the 21st century in the United States of America – the wealthiest, most powerful nation in the world at our time. (You may not feel wealthy and powerful and privileged, but if you travel to any of the countries in the majority world, it will dawn on you how much more wealth and status and privilege you have than most of the rest of the world!) In the 20th and 21st centuries A.D., the U.S.A. is like Assyria was in the 7th and 8th centuries B.C.: The world power who couldn't be beat – the "top dog" who controlled the wealth and power of the world.
- But being an Assyrian was emptied of all its status when God had His day of reckoning with it, and there will come a day when being an American will mean nothing if America continues to ignore and insult the God who blessed her in the first place.
- In the end, all they are left with is their miserable self⁹²:
 - their "heart melted" and completely unstable,
 - their "knees wobbling/knocking together/trembling and giving way,"

⁸⁹ Cf. **Ezekiel 38:13** "Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?'"

Revelation 18:16 "...Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!" (NKJV)

⁹⁰ At least they share two strong letters "b" and "q" in all of their three-letter roots, and the third letters of their roots are "weak" letters which are prone to change or disappearance in Hebrew, so there is commonality below the root level.

⁹¹ Eccl. 1:2 - The word "vanity" there is הבל, a synonym for Nahum's words בקה/בלק.

⁹² Cf. **Joshua 2:11** "And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." (NKJV)

Joel 2:6 "Before them the people writhe in pain; All faces are drained of color." (NKJV)

Ezekiel 21:7 "And it shall be when they say to you, 'Why are you sighing?' that you shall answer, 'Because of the news; when it comes, every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it is coming and shall be brought to pass, says the Lord GOD.' ... **30:4** The sword shall come upon Egypt, And great anguish shall be in Ethiopia, When the slain fall in Egypt, And they take away her wealth, And her foundations are broken down." (NKJV, cf. v.9)

Isaiah 13:7-8 "Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every heart of man will be melted. They will be dismayed; pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman birthing. They will look aghast, each man to his friend; their faces will be aflame... **21:3** Therefore my loins filled with agony; pangs seized me, like birth pangs... **24:1** "Look, Yahweh: empties the land and desolates her, and He will distort her face, and scatter her inhabitants." (NAW)

- “everybody’s loins/sides/bodies in agony/pain/anguish,”
- and their faces all the wrong color – some versions read “pale,” some read “black,” but all the standard Hebrew-English lexicons translate it as a “blush,” consistent with shame and embarrassment.

Conclusion

- Seeing Nahum’s prophecy in the context of the entirety of the Bible helps us see that Nahum is not merely an ethnocentric Jew ranting against a foreign nation; rather, Nahum is representing the Almighty God Who has been interacting with mankind throughout history (and throughout the world) to instruct in righteousness, offer mercy, warn of judgment, punish evil, and redeem His people.
 - Nahum is reviewing one part of one specific example of God’s historic process. God had instructed Nineveh in righteousness and offered mercy and warned of judgment through the Prophet Jonah, and then God punished Nineveh and saved His people from being oppressed by the Ninevites, as outlined in Nahum.
- Considered by themselves, the numerous warnings of judgment in the Bible can appear void of grace, depressing without hope, and of no practical use to us, but considered within the whole Biblical context as one act in a larger play about God’s justice and mercy and redemption, we can see that the entire play is about the Gospel, and the play in its entirety is performed over and over again throughout history,
 - pointing us to worship the God who cares about humans,
 - pointing us to respect Him by obeying His standards of right and wrong,
 - pointing us to deep gratitude that He extends mercy to us,
 - pointing us to hear the warning messages He sends and to repent when we go off-track,
 - and pointing us to love and enjoy Him for rescuing us from evil.

Nahum 2:1-10 – Side-by side comparison of versions^{CK}

| Douay ^{CL} (Vulgate) | LXX ^{CM} | Brenton ^{CN} (Vaticanus) | KJV ^{CO} | NASB ^{CP} | NIV ^{CQ} | ESV ^{CR} | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew ^{CS} | Bauscher ^{CT} (Peshitta) | Cathcart ^{CU} (Targums) |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| 1 He is come up that shall destroy before thy face, that shall keep the siege: watch the way, fortify [thy] loins, strengthen [thy] power exceedingly. | 2 ἀνέβη εἰς πρόσ-ωπόν σου ἐξαιρού-μενος ἐκ θλίψεως· σκόπευσον ὁδόν, κράτησον ὀσφύος, ἀνδρῖσαι τῇ ισχύϊ σφοδρά, | 1 ... one who has been delivered from affliction has come up hastening into thy presence, watch the way, strengthen [thy] loins, be very valiant [in thy] strength. | 1 He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the muni-tion, watch the way, make thy loins strong , fortify thy power mightily. | 1 The one who scatters has come up against X X you. Man the fortress, watch the road; Strengthen [your] back, summon all your strength. | 1 An attacker advances against X X you, Nine-veh. Guard the fortress, watch the road, brace [your] selves, marshal all [your] strength! | 1 The scatters has come up against X X you. Man the ram-part[s]; watch the road; dress for battle; collect all [your] strength. | 1 One who scatters has come up against your front: guard the fort-wall! Monitor the road; tighten belts; marshal extra strength, | (ב) עלה ^{CW} מפניך על פניך נצור ^{CX} מצדה צפה דרך תזקק מתנים אמץ ^{CY} כח מאד. | 1 The Rule went up before you [and] he keeps guard, [and] he watches the road, [and] he fastens the loins [and] his power is very mighty | 2. For they were coming up and spreading themselves upon your land; [they encamped against you in siege], they set watchmen along [your] way[s]; streng-then (your) neck, increase [your] might exceedingly. |
| 2 For the Lord hath rendered the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel: because the spoilers have laid them waste , and have marred their vine branches. | 3 διότι ἀπέστρεψεν κύριος τὴν ὕβριν Ιακωβ καθὼς ὕβριν τοῦ Ισραηλ, διότι ἐκτινάσσοντες ἐξέτινάξαν αὐτοὺς καὶ τὰ κλήματα αὐτῶν, διέφθειραν | 2 For the Lord has turned aside the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel: for they have utterly rejected them, and have des-troyed their branches. | 2 For the LORD hath turned away the excellen-cy of Jacob, as the excel-lency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches. | 2 For the LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob Like the splendor of Israel, Even though devastators have deva-stated them And des-troyed their vine branches. | 2 X The LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines. | 2 For the LORD is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel, for plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches. | 2 because Yahweh has turned the arrogance of Jacob like the arrogance of Israel, for evacuators have evacu-ated them and have destroyed their pruned -grapevines. | (ג) כי ^{CZ} שב הנה את און יַעֲקֹב נָאֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל כי ^{DA} דקקום בַּקְקִים ^{DE} וּמְלִיָּהֶם שִׁחֲתוּ. | 2 Because X return the honor of Yaqob like the honor of Israel, because the oppressors have trodden them, and they have destroyed their shoots | 3. For the Lord has restored [his] strength to Jacob, X [his] greatness to Israel; for robbers have robbed them and have laid waste the eties [in which] they [glory]. |
| 3 The shield of his mighty men is like fire, the men of the army are clad in scarlet, the reins of the chariot are flaming in the day of his preparation, and the drivers are stupified . | 4 ὅπλα δυναστείας αὐτῶν ἐξ-ἀνθρώπων , ἀνδρας δυνατοὺς ἐμπαιζοντας X ἐν πυρί-αι ^{DC} ἡνία τῶν ἀρμά-των αὐτῶν ἐν ἡμέρα ἐτοιμασίας αὐτοῦ, καὶ οἱ ἵππεῖς ^{DO} θορυβη-θήσονται | 3 [They have destroyed] the arms of their power from among men, ^{DO} their mighty men sporting X with fire : the reins of their chariots [shall be destroyed] in the day of his prepara-tion, and the horsemen shall be thrown into confusion | 3 The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flam-ing torches in the day of his pre-paration, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken . | 3 The shield[s] of his mighty men are colored red, The warriors are dressed in scarlet, The chariots are envelop-ed in flash-ing steel . When he is prepared to march , And the cypress spears are brandished . | 3 The shield[s] of his soldiers are red; the warriors are clad in scarlet. The metal [on] the chariots X flashes on the day they are made ready; X the spears of pine are brandished . | 3 The shield of his mighty men is red; [his] soldiers are clothed in scarlet. The chariots [come] with flashing metal on the day he musters them; X the cypress spears are brandished . | 3 The shield of its mighty-men is red-colored; the infantry men are crimson-clad. The cavalry [comes] with fiery steel -plating since the day it was outfitted, and the /war-horses\ quiver . | (ד) מִגֶּן גִּבְרֵיהוּ מֵאֵדִם אֲנָשֵׁי סָלַל ^{DE} מִתְלַעִים בָּאֵשׁ ^{DF} פְּלֻדֹת הָרֶקֶב בְּיוֹם הַכִּינוּ ^{DG} וּבְרָשִׁים ^{DH} הָרָעָלוּ. | 3 The shield[s] of their mighty men are [stained] red and the men mighty men parade with torches of fire [and in] chariots in the day when they are prepared and the horsemen are encouraged | 4. The shield[s] of their warriors are [dyed] red, the men of war are dressed in crimson, the plates of [their] chariots are prepared in the fire for the day of their display, and their army commanders are attired in fine -coloured garments. |
| 4 X They are in con-fusion in the ways, the char-iot[s] jostle one against another in the streets: their looks are like tor-ches, like lightning ^{DI} running to and fro. | 5 ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς, καὶ συγχυθήσονται τὰ ἄρματα-καὶ συμπλακί-σσονται ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις· ἡ ὄρασις αὐτῶν ὡς λαμπάδες [πυρός καὶ] ὡς ἀστραταὶ διατρέχ-ουσαι . | 4 in the ways, and the char-iot[s] shall clash to-gether , and shall be en-tangled in each other in the broad ways: their appearance is as lamps [of fire, and] as gleaming ^{DI} lightnings. | 4 X The chariot[s] shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. | 4 X The chariot[s] race madly in the streets, They rush wildly in the squares, Their ap-pearance is like torches, They dash to and fro like lightning flashes. | 4 The char-iot[s] storm through the streets, flushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches; they dart about like lightningX. | 4 X The chariot[s] race madly through the streets; they rush to and fro through the squares; they gleam like torches; they dart like lightningX. | 4 And, as for the cavalry, they will flash through the streets; they will run to and fro through the plazas. Their appearance is like torches – speeding like lightning-bolts. | (ה) בחוצות יִתְהוֹלְלוּ ^{DK} הָרֶקֶב לְמַקְלָקוֹן ^{DL} קְרוֹבוֹת ^{DM} מְרֵאִיהֶן כְּלִפְיָדִם כְּבָרְקִים ^{DN} יִרוֹצְצוּ. | 4 And in the streets they sing [in their] chariot[s] and they are boasting X X X [and] their appearance is like lamps [and] they run lightningX | 5. X The chariot[s] rush to and fro in the streets, [the noise of the] rattling [of their weapons is heard] in the city squares; their appearance is like torches, like lightnings hurling forth . |

| Douay (Vulgate) | LXX | Brenton (Vaticanus) | KJV | NASB | NIV | ESV | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew | Bauscher (Peshitta) | Cathcart (Targums) |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| 5 He will muster up his valiant men, they shall stumble in their march: they shall quickly get upon the walls thereof: and a covering shall be prepared. | 6 [καὶ] ^{DO} μνηστῆσονται μέγιστοι αὐτῶν [καὶ φεύγονται ἡμέρας καὶ] ^{DO} ἀσθενήσουσιν ἐν τῇ πορείᾳ αὐτῶν καὶ σπεύσουσιν ἐπὶ τὰ τεῖχη καὶ ἐτοιμάσουσιν ^{DT} τὰς προφυλακάς ^{DU} [αὐτῶν]. | 5 [And] their ^{DV} mighty men shall be-think themselves [and flee by day; and] they shall be weak as they go; and they shall hasten to [her ^{DW}] walls, and shall prepare their defences. | 5 He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared. | 5 He remembers his nobles; They stumble in their march, They hurry to her wall, And the mantelet is set up. | 5 He summons his picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the city wall; X the protective shield is put in place. | 5 He remembers his officers; they stumble as they go, they hasten to the wall; X the siege tower is set up. | 5 He will keep in mind his noblemen; they will be weakened on their way; they will hurry to her wall, and the protective-cover will be set up. | DX (ו) תִּכְרֹךְ אֲדָרִי יִכְשְׁלוּ בְּהִלָּכֹתָם יִמְהָרוּ חֹמֶתָהּ וְהָכֵן הַסֵּכֶךְ. | 5 They shall seize their Rulers [and] they shall be stumbled in their marching [and] they shall hurry to the wall and they shall prepare the battlements | 6. They appoint their army commanders, They stumble as they go, they hasten on, [they break down] the wall and build tower[s]. |
| 6 The gates of the rivers are opened, and the temple is thrown down to the ground. | 7 πύλαι τῶν ποταμῶν ἐδιανοίχθησαν, καὶ τὰ βασιλεία διέπεσεν, ^{EB} | 6 The gates of the eities ^{EC} have been opened, and the palace[s] have fallen into ruin, | 6 The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved. | 6 The gates of the rivers are opened And the palace is dissolved. | 6 The riverX gates are thrown open and the palace X collapses. | 6 The riverX gates are opened; X the palace X melts away; | 6 The rivers' gates were opened, and the palace dissolved. | (ר) שַׁעְרֵי הַנְּהָרוֹת נִפְתְּחוּ וַיִּהְיֶיכָל נִמּוֹג. | 6 The gates of Judea were opened and the Temple shook | 7. The bridges (over) the rivers are opened, and [the king] trembles [in his] palace. |
| 7 And the soldier is led away captive; and her bondwomen were led away mourning as X doves, mumbling in their hearts. | 8 καὶ ἡ ὑπόστασις ^{EE} ἀπεκαλύφθη, [καὶ αὐτῇ] ἀνέβαιναν, καὶ αἱ ἐφ' ὁδὸν αὐτῆς ἦγοντο ^{EG} καθὼς X ^{EH} περιστρεφαί ^{EJ} ὡς ἀγγελία ἐν καρδίᾳ αὐτῶν. | 7 and the foundation has been exposed; and she has gone up, and her maid-servants were led away as X doves X moaning in their hearts. | 7 And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her hand-maids are moaning like as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts. | 7 X It is fixed: She is stripped, she is carried away, And her hand-maids are moaning like the sound of doves, Beating on their breasts. | 7 It is decreed [that the city] be exiled and carried away. X Its slave girls moan like X X doves [and] beat upon their breasts. | 7 X [its] mistress is stripped; she is carried off, X her slave girls lamenting, moaning like X X doves [and] beating their breasts. | 7 Then he will be confirmed-victor; she will be exposed; she will be taken away, even her maids moaning like the sound of doves, beating themselves over their heart. | (ח) וְהָצַב גְּלִיתָהּ הַעֲלִיתָהּ וְאַמְהָתֶיהָ מִנְּהֻגֹתֶיהָ כְּקוֹל יוֹנִים מִתְּפַפְתָּ עַל לְבָבָהּ. | 7 And she has set her horsemen and she went up and her maids were moaning X in their heart[s] like X X doves | 8. And the [queen] sits [in] a litter; she goes forth [among the exiles], and her maidservants [are led away; they go after her], moaning like the sound of doves, beating upon their breasts. |
| 8 And as for Nineve, her waters are like a great pool: but the men flee away. [They cry:] Stand, stand, but there is none that will return back. | 9 καὶ Nive-uh, ὡς ^{EN} κόλυμβήθρα ὕδατος τὰ ὑδάτεα αὐτῆς, καὶ αὐτοὶ φύγοντες ὅθ ^{EO} ἔστησαν, καὶ οὐκ ἦν ὁ ἐπιβλέπων ^{EP} . | 8 And as for Nineve, her waters shall be as a pool of water; and they fled; [and] staid het, and there was none to look back. | 8 But Nineveh is of X like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back. | 8 Though Nineveh was like a pool of water throughout her days, Now they are fleeing; "Stop, stop," But no one turns back. | 8 X Nineveh is like a pool X X, [and] its water X X is draining away. "Stop! Stop!" [they cry,] but no one turns back. | 8 X Nineveh is like a pool whose waters X X run away. "Halt! Halt!" [they cry,] but none turns back. | 8 So, as for Nineveh, her waters will be like a pool of waters when they are running away. "Stop! Stop!" but there is not one who will face-about. | (ט) וְיִינְוָה כְּבֵרְכַת מַיִם מִמֶּי הִיא הַמָּה נָסִים עֲמָדוּ עֲמָדוּ וְאִין מִפְּנֶה. | 8 And Nineva is like a lake of waters [and] she is [between the] waters, and those men have fled. Stand! Stand! And there is none who returns | 9. And from the days [of old] Nineveh is like a gathering of waters. X They run away. Halt! Halt! but there is none who turns back [and halts]. |
| 9 Take ye the spoil of the silver, take the spoil of the gold: for there is no end of the riches of X all the precious furniture. | 10 διήρπαζον τὸ ἀργύριον, διήρπαζον τὸ χρυσίον, καὶ οὐκ ἦν πέρας τοῦ κόσμου ἐν τῇς βεβάρυνται ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ σκευὴ τὰ ἐπιθυμητὰ [αὐτῆς]. | 9 They ^{ER} plundered the silver, they plundered the gold, and there was no end of their adorning; they were loaded with it upon all [their] pleasant vessel[s]. | 9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture. | 9 Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! For there is no limit to the treasure—Wealth from every kind of desirable object. | 9 Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! X X The supply is endless, the wealth from all its treasure[s]! | 9 Plunder the silver, plunder the gold! X There is no end of the treasure [or] of the wealth of all precious thing[s]. | 9 "Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! For there is no end to the opportunity; there is a load of every thing you could want!" | (י) בִּזּוּ כֶסֶף בִּזּוּ זָהָב וְאִין קֶצֶה לְתִכְוִנָּה כְּפִי מִכֹּל כְּלִי חֲמִדָּה. | 9 Plunder silver and plunder gold and there is no end to its jewel[s]. Abundant are all of the garment[s] of [its] desire | 10. Make spoil of silver, make spoil of gold! There is no end to the treasure[s]. All the desirable good[s] are-finished. |
| 10 She is destroyed, and rent, and torn: X the heart melteth, and the knees | 11 ἐκπναιγμός καὶ ἀναισθησία καὶ ἐκβρασμός καὶ καρδίας θραυσμός | 10 There is thrusting forth, and shaking, and tumult, and heart-break- | 10 She is empty, and waste: and the heart melteth, and | 10 She is emptied! Yes, she is desolate and waste! X Heart[s] are | 10 She is pillaged, X plundered, X stripped! X Heart[s] melt, X | 10 Desolate! X Desolation and ruin! X Heart[s] melt and | 10 Vacuousness and evacuating and being evacuated! | (יא) בִּזְיָה וּמְבוּזָה וּמְבִלָּקָה וְלִבְ נָמַס | 10 She is trampled and gangrenous and broken through and the heart is broken and | 11. She is plundered and spoiled, [the gate is] opened [to the enemy]; and the heart melts, and (there |

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| fail, and all the loins lose their strength; and the faces of them all are [as] the blackness of a kettle. | καὶ ὑπόλους γονάτων καὶ ὠδίνες ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ὀσφύν, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον πάντων [ὡς] πρόσκαυμα χύτρας. | ing, and loosing of knees, and pangs on all loins; and the faces of all are [as] the blackening of a pot. | the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness. | melting and knees knocking! Also anguish is in the whole bodyX And all their faces are grown pale! | knees give way, X X X bodies tremble, every X faceX grow[s] pale. | knees tremble; X anguish is in all loins; X all X faces grow pale! | So the heart melts and the knees wobble and everybody's sides are in agony, and the faces of all of them collect a blush. | וְכָל בְּרָכִים עֲזָבוּ וְכָל מַתְנֵים וְכָל פָּנֵי כָלם קָבְצוּ פָאָרָרָר . | knocking of the knees and trembling in all loins, and all faces+ shall make black [as the soot of] cedar wood | is) knocking of knees, and trembling of the loins, and all their faces are covered [with a coating of black like] a pot. |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|

^{CK} NAW is my translation. When a translation adds words not in the Hebrew text, but does not indicate it has done so by the use of italics or greyed-out text, I put the added words in [square brackets]. When one version chooses a wording which is different from all the other translations, I underline it. When a version chooses a translation which, in my opinion, either departs too far from the root meaning of the Hebrew word or departs too far from the grammar form of the original text, I use ~~strikeout~~. And when a version omits a word which is in the original text, I insert an X. I also place an X at the end of a word if the original word is plural but the English translation is singular. I occasionally use colors to help the reader see correlations between the various editions and versions when there are more than two different translations of a given word. The only known Dead Sea Scrolls containing Nahum 2 are 4Q82 (containing parts of verses 9-10 and dated between 30-1 BC), The *Nahal Hever* Greek scroll (containing parts of vs. 4-9 & 12-13 and dated around 25BC), and the Wadi Muraba't Scroll (containing parts of verses 1-13 and dated around 135 AD). Where the DSS are legible and in agreement with the MT or LXX, I have colored it **purple**. Where the DSS support the LXX/Vulgate/Peshitta with omissions or text not in the MT, I have **highlighted with yellow** the LXX and its translation into English, and where I have accepted that into my NAW translation, I have marked it with /forward and backward slashes\.

^{CL} Douay Old Testament first published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609, Revised and Diligently Compared with the Latin Vulgate by Bishop Richard Challoner, Published in 1582, 1609, 1752. As published on E-Sword.

^{CM} "Septuagint" Greek Old Testament, edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Published in 1935. As published on E-Sword.

^{CN} English translation of the Septuagint by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, 1851, "based upon the text of the Vaticanus" but not identical to the *Vaticanus*. As published electronically by E-Sword.

^{CO} 1769 King James Version of the Holy Bible; public domain. As published electronically by E-Sword.

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^{CS} From the Wiki Hebrew Bible

https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%94_%D7%90/%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA. DSS text comes from <https://downloads.thewaytoyahuwah.com>

^{CT} The Peshitta Holy Bible Translated by Glenn David Bauscher, Copyright © 2018 Lulu Publishing, 3rd edition Copyright © 2019 as found on <https://biblehub.com/hpbt/nahum/2.htm>

^{CU} From *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, Volume 14, 1989, Cathcart, Kevin J; Gordon, R. P. As found on https://wbsg8v.xyz/d3/y/1715385560/100/u/ia/annas-archive-ia-2023-06-acsm/t/targumofminorpro0014unse.pdf/~f8jMjv18tRB-fitiyGs6_g/The%20Aramaic%20Bible%3A%20The%20Targum%20of%20the%20Minor%20Prophets%20--%20Cathcart%2C%20Kevin%20J%3B%20Gordon%2C%20R_%20P%20--%20Volume%2014%2C%201989%20--%20Wilmington%2C%20Del_%3A%20M_%20Glazier%20--%209780894534898%20--%202c2211ab706b64db6d34be810eef40da%20--%20Anna%E2%80%99s%20Archive.pdf on 10 May 2024

^{CV} LXX translated as though the Hebrew word were פָּרַח instead of פָּרַח.

^{CW} The unanimity of the English versions over the idea of "destructive-scattering" belies the lack of agreement among the ancient versions as to how to translate this word. LXX translated it "breathing" (as though the root were פָּרַח instead of פָּרַח), Peshitta rendered it "ruler" (from דָּבַר), Targums render it with a word that means "scatter" (although Cathcart curiously rendered it "spread"), and Vulgate translated it "destroy."

^{CX} This word is found in only two other books of the HOT: 2 Chr. (11:10-11 & 23; 12:4; 14:5; 21:3) and Isa. (29:3). It consistently refers to the wall around a city which makes it a "fortified" city. (The KJV translation of an ammunition storehouse does not fit the use of the word.) But here, the Aramaic versions read as though this Hebrew word were not present, while the ancient Greek and Latin versions read according to the meaning of the stripped-down root of this Hebrew word, which is centered on "pressure/restriction/affliction." The relationship of the root meaning to the meaning of this special-

ized form of the word is that the outer wall of a fort “confines/hems in” the inhabitants, but it is for their own defense. MT cantillation places the major punctuation of this verse after this word, separating “defend the fortification” from “watch the road, tighten belts...”

^{CY} This same word “loins/waist/middle” is found in v.10. Here it is part of getting dressed for battle; there it is suffering after the loss of the battle.

^{CZ} This Hebrew word means “turn,” so some versions interpret it as “turn away,” and others have interpreted it as “will return.” The problem with “will return” is that the Hebrew verb is in the perfect tense, referring to a past event instead of to the future reconstruction of Israel. The Vulgate, LXX, Geneva, KJV, and Targums all render it past tense, the AJV & ESV render it present tense, and the NAS, NIV, NET, and NLT render it future tense, as does the Peshitta. The sense of the Vulgate seems to be that God is rewarding (“returning”) Israel’s pride with punishment, but I would have expected a different Hebrew word like נָגַל or נָקַם if that were the meaning.

^{DA} This word is only found here and in Isa. 19:3; 24:1, 3; Jer. 19:7; 51:2; & Hos. 10:1. “Empty” is the standard meaning. A related form is in v.10.

^{DB} This seems to be more specialized than the general meaning of “branch/vine;” it only occurs here and in Num. 13:23; Isa. 17:10, and Ezek. 8:17 & 15:2.

^{DC} Symmachus instead rendered this phrase “torches of fire” like the Peshitta did.

^{DD} The Hebrew word for “red” has the same root as the Hebrew word for “man.”

^{DE} *Hapex Legomenon*. The base meaning of this word is “fire,” which was the LXX’s and Peshitta’s interpretation, but an extended meaning can be the color of fire (as indeed there is a related word in Hebrew which, according to BDB, means “the [scarlet] dye made from the dried body of the female of the worm ‘coccus ilicis’”), which was the interpretation of the Latin and English versions and Targums.

^{DF} *Hapex legomenon*. Vulgate and LXX interpreted as related to כְּלִיָּה (“kidneys” – assuming the כ was a misprint for כ), KJV & Peshitta & Symmachus interpreted it as related to לָפִיד (“torches” – assuming the three root letters got re-arranged. This word for “torch/lamp” does appear later in v.4.), Parkhurst, Henderson, and Owen noted that this root means “cut” in Arabic, denoting “scythes or cutting instruments with which the chariots were armed,” Targum interpreted it as related to לִיָּה or פֶּחַ (a “plate” of metal), and contemporary English versions as related to פְּלִידָה (“iron/steel”). The latter makes the most sense to me. A major punctuation is also here in the cantillation of the MT.

^{DG} Vulgate, LXX, Peshitta, and Targums all read as though this Hebrew word were פָּרָשִׁים (“horsemen”) instead of צִפְרֵשִׁים (“cypress-instruments”); it is only in the 17th century (when English translations starting being made from the 10th century Masoretic manuscripts) that we start seeing “cypress-instruments” show up here instead of “horsemen.” This raises the question of which was the original spelling, although no modern commentator seems to question the MT. Both, however, can be related to the martial context, thus supporting the same overall meaning. Unfortunately, the first letter of this word has not survived in any of the DSS manuscripts to confirm or deny the MT.

^{DH} *Hapex Legomenon*. “Shaken” seems to fit either “horsemen” or “cypress-spears,” which leaves the Aramaic versions (Peshitta = “encouraged” & Targums = “arrayed in dyed garments”) as outliers.

^{DI} The Latin Vulgate rendered this plural noun as a plural, even if Douay rendered it singular in English.

^{DJ} Brenton mistranslated the LXX; it is not “gleaming” but “running,” and “running” is the Hebrew word too.

^{DK} Although the Vulgate and Peshitta associate “chariots” with the second phrase, the punctuation of the MT associates them with the first phrase (with being “mad/showing light” rather than with “rushing”). However, this is a singular subject and both verbs are plural. This verb only appears once in a plural spelling in the HOT (Canticles 1:9), so it may be a word which can portray either a singularity or a plurality (notably, the Vulgate, LXX, Peshitta, and Targums all used plural forms).

^{DL} Rare word, used only here and in Ps. 107:9 (“longing”), Isa. 29:8 (“craving”), Prov. 28:15 (“charging”), Isa. 33:4 & Joel 2:9 (“army running to and fro”). Calvin had an interesting comment: “The verb is derived from the hips; for he who hastens shakes the hips, and moves them with a quick motion; and if it be lawful to coin a word, it is, they shall hip; *Ils remueront les hanches*.”

^{DM} “The feminine suffix to מְרַאֲיָהּ can only refer to הָרֶכֶב, notwithstanding the fact that elsewhere רֶכֶב is always construed as a masculine, and that it is so here in the first clauses. For the suffix cannot refer to רֶחֱבוֹת (Hoelem. and Strauss), because הָרֶכֶב is the subject in the following clause as well as in the two previous ones. The best way probably is to take it as a neuter, so that it might refer not to the chariots only, but to everything in and upon the chariots.” ~Keil

^{DN} Although a fairly common verb with over 100 instances in the HOT, this is the only occurrence of this verb in Polel stem.

^{DO} There is no “and” in the Nahal Hever DSS manuscript or in the Hebrew manuscripts.

^{DP} Cf. *Nahal Hever*: δυναστων αυτου (“his mighty men”); this manuscript is 400 years older than the *Vaticanus*.

^{DQ} These extra words in the LXX are not in the N.H.

^{DR} *Nahal Hever* pluralizes this word, but the LXX is singular, matching the MT.

^{DS} *Nahal Hever* translated with the synonym ταχυν- (“hasten”).

- ^{DT} N.H. uses the same word but in the singular, matching the MT and Vulgate (and English versions). The Aramaic versions are plural like the LXX.
- ^{DU} N.H. translated with a synonym επικαλυμμα (“cover-over”).
- ^{DV} Aramaic versions also render this plural “their,” but *Nahal Hever* Greek DSS renders this singular “his” – technically matching the MT and Vulgate.
- ^{DW} This pronoun is in the MT and in *Vaticanus*, but not in the LXX.
- ^{DX} Curiously, the LXX, Peshitta, and Targums all render this verb as though it were plural. The Vulgate alone among the ancient versions reads singular, but it is singular in the DSS and MT.
- ^{DY} Qere = קִרְיָהּ – no difference in meaning from the Kethib.
- ^{DZ} Without Masoretic pointing, the reading of the Syriac versions “the wall” (followed by NIV and ESV) is a possibility, but the reading of the Vulgate (and *Vaticanus*) shows that the Masoretic pointing which makes the last letter a 3fs pronoun “her wall” is of antiquity.
- ^{EA} N.H. rendered with the simple form of this verb (without the prepositional suffix δια- in the LXX), but the meaning is practically the same.
- ^{EB} N.H. rendered nearly-synonymously with ναος εσαλευθη (“temple was shaken” – lacunae in grey) – supporting the ancient Aramaic versions over the Vulgate.
- ^{EC} “Rivers” is the reading of the LXX, but it is “cities” (πολεων) in *Vaticanus*. In Greek, the two words are spelled very similarly.
- ^{ED} The oldest Greek manuscript, the *Nahal Hever*, supports the Aramaic Peshitta and Targums with “shook/trembled.”
- ^{EE} N.H. = λημπηνη (“covered chariot”).
- ^{EF} N.H. employed the synonym αβραι (“maids”).
- ^{EG} N.H. supports the LXX (and Targums and KJV) with “being led,” but whereas the LXX is imperfect tense, N.H. is present tense αγωμεναι (grey letters are lacunae).
- ^{EH} Although this spot is illegible in the N.H., there is room for the word “voice” which is in the MT.
- ^{EI} N.H. spells “doves” in the genitive (-ων) rather than the LXX’s nominative case (-αι), and adds the preposition απο- to the next word (“mourning away”), but there is no significant difference in meaning.
- ^{EJ} The minor disjunctive punctuation in the MT here (as well as the switch from masculine subject to feminine subject) mitigates against connecting the second word of this verse with the first as the Vulgate, LXX, KJV, and ESV did. Some have gone so far as to group this word with the previous verse (Newcome: “Dissolved are the palace and the fortress.” and Henderson: “Dissolved is the palace although firmly established.”), but this is not necessary.
- ^{EK} In the MT, the major disjunctive punctuation in this verse lies here.
- ^{EL} BHS footnotes support the LXX, Vulgate, and Targums with changing the MT pointing so that it means “led away,” although the MT pointing supports “mourning.” Actually the consonants of the MT support “led away,” as that is the only meaning of the root נלה in all its other occurrences throughout the HOT. But that is close to the Hebrew root נלה (found in 1 Sam. 7:2; Ezek. 32:18; Mic. 2:4, meaning “mourn/moan/lament”), and the ensuing phrase “like a dove” suggests that this verb be rendered “moan” rather than “lead.”
- ^{EM} Psalm 68:26 is the only other occurrence of this word in the Hebrew O.T., and it is an instrument played by women. LXX & Peshitta interpreted this as a wind instrument, whereas Targums and English versions interpreted it as a percussion instrument. In Psalm 68, the LXX translated it as percussion (τυμπανιστριῶν) as did the Vulgate (*tympanistriarum*) and Peshitta (פלגא).
- ^{EN} N.H. drops this comparative, turning the simile into a metaphor, but it is present in the MT and all the other ancient versions.
- ^{EO} This is an error in the LXX. The N.H. is mostly illegible here, but it clearly does not support the word “not;” rather, it appears to support the MT, Vulgate, and Syriac versions with a repetition of the verb “stand.”
- ^{EP} What is legible of this word in the N.H. is -τρεφω-, which suggests “turned” rather than the LXX “looked,” but the Hebrew is literally “faced,” so either of those translations is accurate.
- ^{EQ} DSS 4Q82 adds ה- which isn’t proper spelling, but Wadi Murabaat supports the MT spelling. The unpointed Hebrew could mean “her waters” or “from her days.” The Geneva Bible, KJV, NASB, and NET Bible followed the Targums (and Westminster Morphology, OSHB Morphology, and Owens’ *Analytical Key*) in opting for “days,” while the NIV & ESV followed the Vulgate, LXX, and Peshitta with “waters.” Nowhere else in the HOT is the word “from the days of” in construct with a pronoun. It is always either in construct with a proper noun referring to the time after a particular point in history (2 Ki. 23:22; 2 Chr. 30:26; 35:18; Ezr. 4:2; 9:7; Neh. 8:17; 9:32; Ps. 94:13; Jer. 36:2; Hos. 10:9), or in construct with עולם or קדם referring to time out-of-mind (Isa. 23:7; 37:26; Lam. 1:7; 2:17; Mic. 5:1, 7:20). Contra the NASB, it never describes past time “during” or “throughout” a past event. Alternately, in the unpointed text, it occurs in construct with bodies of water: “the waters of the Jordan” (Josh 4:7), “the waters of Israel” (2 Ki. 5:12), “the waters of the springs” (2 Chr. 32:3), “the waters of Gihon” (2 Chr. 32:30), and “the waters of snow” (Job 24:19).

- ^{ER} N.H. (from the 1st century BC) supports this 3p indicative spelling “they plunder,” and that is a possible reading from the Hebrew text which was unpointed at that time, but the Masoretic pointing makes it a 2p imperative (“Plunder”), and with that the Latin and Syriac versions agree.
- ^{ES} This word, found in Nah. 2:10; 3:3 & 3:9 is only found in this form in one place outside of Nahum, and that is Isa. 2:7, in a description of apostate Judah. (There are some 90 other occurrences of other forms of this root, however.)
- ^{ET} This word only appears here and in Job 23:3 (where it is translated “seat/dwelling” – and it is disputed whether this is the same root in this passage) and Ezek. 43:11 (where it is translated “fashion/arrangement/structure”). It is based on the root תכן (“to measure out equally”). The idea is that there is so much loot in this city that even if the officers were evenly divide it up among all their soldiers, there would be more valuables than they could even make use of.
- ^{EU} This Hebrew word has a root meaning of “heaviness,” thus the LXX (“laden”) and Peshitta (“abundant”), but it also has a figurative meaning of “glory/wealth,” which the Latin and English versions used. The Targum stretched it too far with “finished.” The MT cantillation makes this the first word of the second half of the verse.
- ^{EV} LXX and Peshitta interpreted the final *he* as a 3fs possessive pronoun suffix, but Vulgate and Targum and MT did not.
- ^{EW} The first two words of this verse are *hapex legomena*; BDB says they are from an unused root meaning “empty.” But they are obviously related to the בקק root in verse 2 for “empty.”
- ^{EX} This word is very similar in meaning to the previous two. It is a rare word found only here and in Isaiah 24:1 “Look, Yahweh: empties the land and desolates her, and He will distort her face, and scatter her inhabitants.” (NAW) The major disjunctive punctuation for this verse is here in the MT. It should also be noted that there is alliteration of the “b” sound in the first three words of this verse.
- ^{EY} “*piq*” *Hapex Legomenon*, although related forms are in 1 Sam. 25:31 (“heart faltering”), Isa. 28:7 (“waver in judgment”), and Jer. 10:4 (“fasten so as not to wobble”).
- ^{EZ} This word is found only here and in Isa. 21:3 and Ezek. 30:4 & 9.
- ^{FA} Rare word only here and in Joel 2:6, also speaking of faces. All the ancient Latin, Greek, and Aramaic versions interpret this as the same as פרור (“cooking pot” – found in Num. 11:8; Judg. 6:19; and 1 Sam. 2:14). The gloss in BDB and Holladay is “glow,” and in Strong is “flushed,” which suggested “paleness” to the NASB, NIV, and ESV editors, but suggests a blushing “red” color to me and “ruddiness” to Keil. Calvin (following Ibn Ezra and followed by Marckius and Parkhurst) suggested modifying the verb to read “all faces shall withdraw their beauty/brightness,” but his English translator (following Kimchi) rightly objected that the verb means “gather,” not “withdraw.” KJV translated the color as “black,” which was supported by Dathius, Marckius, Newcome, Owen of Thrussington, and Pusey.

Nahum 2:11-3:4 - Woe To The Bloody City

Introduction

- Chapter 2 ends with a comparison of the mighty city of Nineveh to a den of lions.
- “[In] 2 Kings 18:34... the messengers of [the Assyrian] king had asked, ‘Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arphat: of Seharvaim, Hena and Ivah?’ But now of [him] it is asked, ‘Where is [that den of lions -] Nineveh?’” ~E. B. Pusey

2:11 – The Lion’s Den of Nineveh Is No Longer

- The Hebrew word *labiy* can mean “to go” or it can mean “lioness.” All the modern English versions translate it “lioness,” but all the ancient versions translated it “to go.” It doesn’t end up making a big difference: the verse is clearly describing the place where lions live – where they have babies and feed them and where nobody bothers them – nobody dares disturb a den of lions!
- Remember that Nahum’s prophecy is about the downfall of the Assyrian Empire and its capitol city of Nineveh. So what does that have to do with lions? Well, like many nations⁹³, the Assyrian kings used lions as their symbol.
 - Isaiah compared the Assyrian king and his army to lions in **Isaiah 5:29** “His growl is like a lion; like young lions he growls. He roars and seizes prey; he gets away, and there is no deliverer.” (NAW)
 - Lion images made of stone and copper have been found by archaeologists in the ancient ruins of Nineveh, and you may have seen a lamassu image of a lion’s body with the wings of an eagle, erected at the entrance to an ancient Assyrian palace.
 - The bass-relief panels on the walls of the old palace of Nineveh indicate that the kings of Nineveh were quite enamored with lion-hunting, too⁹⁴.
- And remember that this part of Nahum’s prophecy comes right after his prophecy of the siege and sack of Nineveh, so the first word of v.11 is the key: “where?” *Where indeed!* Nahum doesn’t say it is anywhere anymore.
 - The point is that the lion – the empire of Assyria, has no lair anymore. The mighty city of Nineveh is no longer.
 - The lion’s den that nobody dared disturb has been successfully invaded, the “lions” killed, and nobody needs to be afraid of them anymore!
- Verse 12 then steps back in time to when Nineveh was in the prime of its power, pictured as a lion’s lair stuffed full of victims for the enjoyment of the lioness and cubs.

2:12 – Retrospect of Nineveh’s Lion-like Oppression

- Three forms of the the Hebrew word *teref* occur in v.12:

⁹³ Including Israel (Ezek. 19:2).

⁹⁴ They made that sport against-the-law for their citizens. This might have been to bolster their image of lord-protector who is the only one who can deliver people from lions (an image which is also quite Davidic).

- First as a verb, which has a root meaning of “tearing/slashing” – the characteristic damage done by a lion.
- Then both the masculine and feminine noun forms of this verb occur at the end of this verse (and again in the first verse of chapter 3),
 - the masculine noun form often denoting “food” that has been hunted and maybe torn in pieces by a lion,
 - and the feminine noun form, always denoting an animal carcass that has been killed by a wild animal.
- Assyrian soldiers mangling victims is depicted frequently in the bas-relief wall panels of the ancient Assyrian palace, and this is probably what Nahum is referring to – at least in part.
- Another component of v.12 is the den stuffed “full” of “prey.” This probably refers to the practice of capturing victims of war campaigns alive and dragging them back to Nineveh as slaves.
- Of course, such predatory behavior was not unique to Nineveh:
 - Hundreds of years earlier, David had written that this was characteristic of all evil men in **Psalms 17:12** “...he is like a lion longing to tear and like a young lion dwelling [לִשְׁכּוֹן] in hiding places.” (NAW)
 - And later we see this kind of predatory behavior ascribed to Babylon in Jeremiah 51:34, and even of unfaithful Israel in Ezekiel 19:3.
 - And we see it all around us today: human beings torn, killed, taken advantage of, preyed upon, victimized, and then thrown away like trash.
- Will there be no end to the violence of the wicked? Listen, God sees, and God will bring the wicked to justice. Nahum – and all of Biblical prophecy – assures us of this great truth.
 - “Those are very foolish who form a judgment of God’s vengeance... according to the appearance of things at the time...” ~J. Calvin
- Conversely, God will rescue those He loves from the power of their oppressors after He has used those oppressors to bring discipline into our lives, even as the Apostle Paul testified in **2 Timothy 4:17** “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.⁹⁵” (NKJV)
- **Psalms 34:10** “The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.” (NKJV)

2:13 – God Silences Those He Is Against

- Back in chapter 1 verse 9, the king of Assyria was “plotting against the LORD,” so now in chapter 2 verse 13, the LORD says He is “against” the king of Assyria!
- The king of Nineveh had the most powerful army in the world, but God reminds them that He

⁹⁵ Some think this “lion” was the Roman Emperor. It is interesting to me that the Greek word for “prey” used to translate the last word of Nahum 2:12 was used by Jesus and the Apostles to refer to Christians being “robbed” by Jews in Matt. 23:25 (|| Lk. 11:39) and Heb. 10:34. Also, the Greek word in the LXX of Nahum 2:12 for the “snatching” which the lion does is also found in John 10:28 “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” (NKJV)

also is the “Commander of hosts of armies,” a force even more powerful than Nineveh’s (and still superior to the forces of any world power even today)!

- Four results of God’s antagonism are listed:
 1. God promises to “burn up” the cavalry with all its special tactical chariots, so that the strength of their army would go up “in smoke.” “See that cloud of smoke? That used to be the Assyrian cavalry! Now they have no army to defend them, and no army to conquer others!” *God would make Nineveh impotent.*
 2. God would have all the Assyrian noblemen slaughtered in battle. The “young lions” from v.11, as the Aramaic Targums interpret them, represent the “princes” of the land. Once slain in battle, there would be no viable leadership left to run Nineveh. *God would make Nineveh leader-less.*
 3. God promises to “cut off” Nineveh’s “prey.”
 - This refers back to the metaphor of Nineveh as a “lion’s den” with “caves” stuffed “full” of freshly-victimized “prey.” I think, in this case, that the victims were slaves (like the servant-girls mentioned in v.7) that the Assyrians had captured alive in battles and had brought home to Nineveh to do their menial work for them⁹⁶.
 - So, when God says that He would “cut [this] off,” He could be referring to the predatorial behavior, saying that, by the overthrow of Nineveh, He would end, once-and-for-all, the Assyrian’s enslavement of others.
 - However, I think it is more likely that God is referring to the slaves themselves as the “prey,” saying that, with the overthrow of Nineveh, He would “cut” them loose from the “land” of Assyria, so that they would no longer have to stay in Nineveh as slaves.
 - Whether the “prey” refers to “slavery” or to the “slaves” themselves, I don’t think Nahum is promising an end to all the predatory practices on the whole of planet earth here, as some of the English versions seem to indicate. Although Jesus will do that on a world-wide scale when He returns, Nahum seems to be outlining a more localized plan of God in which Nineveh will no longer prey upon other people, and the Hebrew word translated “earth” more-primarily means simply “land.”
 4. The fourth result of God being against them is that, “...the sound of your messengers will not be heard any more.” *Why no more messengers? Well, what kind of people can afford to retain messengers?* Kings and nobles! But Nineveh’s nobility will be slaughtered, so they can’t send messengers anymore.
 - Such “messengers” announced that a king was about to launch a war against you, as King Nahash the Ammonite did to Israel, back in 1 Samuel 11:4, and as Rabshakeh did to Jerusalem in Isaiah 37,
 - or they might be the kind of “messengers” sent by the king on a mission of political intrigue to assassinate you, like King Ahab did to try to knock off the Prophet Elijah, in 2 Kings 6:32.
 - No more messengers means no more nation of Assyria to “plot against” Israel or bother it ever again. *The silence means they’re gone; that’s the point.*
- Let it sink-in for a moment what it means for the LORD to be “against you”! Your resources up in smoke, your leadership destroyed, loss of control over all that you once controlled, and then

⁹⁶ 2 Kings 5 mentions this kind of slavery practiced by the Syrian army.

you are silenced, unable to even complain about it. *God is not an enemy to be trifled with!*
“Kiss... [and make up to Him while you can!] lest He be angry with you and you perish in the way.” (Psalm 2:12, NKJV)

- **Isaiah 31:8** “And Assyria will fall by a sword – not of men, and it will not be a human sword that will devour him...” (NAW)
- **Psalms 37:20** “...evil men will perish, and the enemies of Yahweh... will end in smoke...” (NAW)⁹⁷
- We also see it in the book of Revelation, chapters 18 & 19, when the world power at the end of time also ends up in “smoke” under the judgment of God Almighty⁹⁸.
- I want to continue on and step a few verses into chapter 3.

3:1 Woe Pronounced On Nineveh

- Verse 1 is Nahum’s only woe, and what follows is a list of the ways that the people of the city of Nineveh had offended God.
- At the top of the list is “blood,” which, in the Hebrew plural, as it is here, means the guilt of murder.
 - God created life (Gen. 1-2), so it shows disrespect to Him to wantonly destroy life,
 - and furthermore, God forbade mankind from murdering each other (Gen. 9:6, Ex. 20:13), so it is an outright violation of His law to shed innocent blood.
 - The weight of the guilt of bloodshed upon nations which, like Assyria, have achieved their greatness by slaughtering other nations is great indeed.
 - Equally heavy is the bloodguilt of nations which encourage their own people to end the lives of their offspring from the womb and of their infirm and elderly.
 - The wrath of God will inevitably fall heavily upon every nation which carries such bloodguilt and such disrespect for God!
- The next sin listed in v.1 is “lies.”
 - This is not the most common Hebrew for “lie/deception.” Together with words like “bloodshed,” “robbery,” and “prey,” it seems to have the connotation of the harm caused to those who have been lied to.
 - The poor who have no margin are the ones who experience the pain of hunger and exposure and despair when they are deceived.
 - And we’re not talking about just one lie here or there; lies are all there is!⁹⁹
 - When a culture believes that everybody can make up their own truth, that is a slap in the face to the God who is the truth (John 14:6) and who cares about true truth,
 - and when a people tells lies and forsakes God’s command not to bear false witness (Ex. 20:16), God is legitimately offended.

⁹⁷ Cf. same vocabulary regarding Edom (Isa. 34:1-10 “...her smoke will go up forever.”), Jerusalem (Jer. 21:13 & Ezek. 5:8 “Behold, I am against you ...”), and Babylon (Jer. 50:31 “Behold, I am against you...”).

⁹⁸ Revelation 18:18 “...cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ ... 19:3 Again they said, ‘Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!’” (NKJV)

⁹⁹ “She deceived the nations with vain promises of help and protection.” ~Keil, quoting Abarbanel and Strauss
“Consider the series of falsehoods of the Rabshakeh against Hezekiah as a case in point (2Kgs 19).” ~Michael Barrett

- There will be dire consequences from the “Lawgiver and Judge” of the world (Jas. 4:12).
- The next word in the Hebrew follows hard after “lying,” and that is the word translated “robbery/pillage/plunder” – it pictures something “diverted” from its rightful place to some place else.
 - This is a violation of yet another of the 10 Commandments: “Thou shalt not steal” (Ex. 20:15). By commanding this, God ordained private ownership of property.
 - There are also things and persons which God claims as belonging to Him. A nation which robs God of His honor as the Creator of the world and worships humans (or other things) will be repaid for insulting God, and a society which does not punish stealing is chaotic and self-destructive.
- The last phrase of v.1 is centered on the Hebrew word for “prey/victim” from chapter 2 verse 12 plus the negation of the Hebrew verb for “departing.”
 - (Unfortunately, the NIV and the ESV replaced the Hebrew word for “departing” in their translations with unrelated words such as “without” and “end.”)
 - I think it’s saying that the victims of Nineveh’s oppression were not able to get away. The systems of oppression were seamless. Once a slave in Nineveh, always a slave in Nineveh. Once in debt, always a debtor. There was no way out, unlike God’s law, which provides pathways to liberty¹⁰⁰.
- These sins, of course, are not unique to Nineveh.
 - The nation of Judah did not learn its lesson from Nahum’s prophecy to them, so a century later, Judah itself was punished by God for its own murder, lying, and stealing, as **Hosea 4:1-3** proclaimed, “Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: ‘There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing¹⁰¹ and committing adultery¹⁰², They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away...” (NKJV, cf. Jer. 6:6, 9:5, Ps. 12:2, Isa. 28:15)
 - And what can be said about our own country? Are there any of these sins not prevalent in our society? The only way to prevent the calamity surely coming upon us is to repent, like Nineveh did under Jonah! *O God, have mercy on us!*

3:2-3 Nineveh’s Final Battle

- Vs. 2-3 give us a brief, but vivid description of the battle by which God would destroy Nineveh¹⁰³:

¹⁰⁰Matthew Henry and C. F. Keil both disagreed, the former saying it means “they never know when they have got enough by spoil and oppression,” and the latter insisting that the verb must be translated intransitively “to depart... and not in a transitive sense, ‘to cause to depart,’ to let go; for if ‘*īr*’ (the city) were the subject, we should have *tāmīsh*.” (I would counter that *īr* cannot be the subject because it is feminine and the verb “depart” is masculine; rather, the masculine “prey” is the subject which “does not depart.”) I agree, however, with Henry’s comment on God’s law, “God has a quarrel with her Who, having made of one blood all nations of men, never designed one to be a nation of tyrants and another of slaves...”

¹⁰¹גנב, a synonym to Nahum’s קָדַח.

¹⁰²זָנָה, a synonym to Nahum’s זָנָה.

¹⁰³Jerome, Cocceius, and Newcome, however, interpreted this as a description of Nineveh’s customary oppression of its own people, but their opinion is a definite minority. Pusey was an absolute outlier among the commentators, adopting the full-allegorical hermeneutic and comparing the assault against Nineveh with the Christian mission of world evangelism, even finding seven harbingers of the destruction of Nineveh in this passage to parallel the seven trumpets in Revelation!

- First the approach of the invading army in v.2, focusing on all the “sounds” of “whips” cracking, “horses neighing/galloping,” and “chariots rumbling/clattering” across the ground, “jolting/bouncing” as they go.
 - We read of this same event earlier in Nahum, at the beginning of chapter 2, where it described the soldiers with red shields and crimson uniforms coming up with steel-outfitted chariots that flashed through the streets.
- Then, in the first half of v.3, the two armies meet, and the clash of arms ensues.
 - “Swords” and “spears” “flash” and “gleam,” falling with deadly accuracy upon the defenders of Nineveh.
- Finally, at the end of v.3 is the gruesome aftermath of the battle, as the staggering number of “casualties” – both “wounded” and “slain” – is realized, and they give up even trying to “count” them.
 - There are great “piles/heaps” of “dead bodies” all over the place; you can’t even walk from here to there without having to step over “carcasses.”
 - The ironic thing is that a century before Nineveh suffered its ultimate loss, the king of Nineveh suffered the loss of 185,000 of his best soldiers in a war campaign against Jerusalem. Isaiah 37:36 (and 2 Kings 19:35) record that the “angel of the Lord struck” the Assyrian army there and left “dead bodies” all over the place.
 - If the Assyrians had forgotten Jonah’s preaching, they at least should have paid attention to what happened to them when they defied Yahweh before the gates of Jerusalem and got massacred for it. But they didn’t heed; they remained in defiance of God and in pursuit of their sins, and so Nahum proclaimed they would be utterly wiped out.¹⁰⁴
- They say “war is hell,” and Nahum certainly does his part to make it sound horrifying.
 - Each carcasse represented a son, a father, a neighbor, a skilled workman, with an eternal soul, loved by family, friends, and co-workers, and either loved or hated by God personally.
 - Sending a multitude of souls into eternity should never be entered upon lightly, but this was God’s own plan to use an army from what is now called Iran to bring justice to bear upon a city in what is now called Iraq: Nineveh, which had shed the blood of countless others (viz. Amos 8:3), and so its own blood would be shed in countless measure in recompense.
 - This is similar to the description of the Chaldean army that Joel (2:5) prophesied later would come against Judah¹⁰⁵, and also similar to what the book of Isaiah¹⁰⁶ and the book of Revelation¹⁰⁷ prophesied will happen to all the nations of the world in opposition to Jesus when He returns.
- In verse 4, which is the last verse we’re going to look at for now, we circle back around to the reason why God had Nineveh wiped off the face of the earth. In verse 1 of chapter 3, we saw that God was punishing them for murder, lying, and stealing; now, in v.4, He expands the list of offenses to include adultery and idolatry¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁴Cf. Matthew Henry: “The destruction of Sennacherib’s army, which, *in the morning*, were all dead corpses, is perhaps looked upon here as a figure of the like destruction that should afterwards be in Nineveh; for those that will not take warning by judgments at a distance shall have them come nearer.”

¹⁰⁵And what Ezekiel 39:4 prophesied against Gog, and what Jeremiah 47:3 prophesied against Philistia.

¹⁰⁶**Isaiah 34:3** “And their slain will be cast out and their corpses; their stench will go up, and mountains eroded from their blood.”

66:16 “For with fire and with His sword, Yahweh will judge all flesh, and those pierced through by Yahweh will be many.” (NAW)

¹⁰⁷Rev. 9:9 & 16:15-19 use the same Greek words as the LXX of Nahum 3:2 to describing the noises of God’s final judgment, and Rev. 19:17-21 has a similar description of a battlefield full of dead bodies at Har-Mageddon.

¹⁰⁸He had already mentioned the worship of graven and cast images back in Nah. 1:14.

3:4 Judgment For Adultery

- There are two explicit verbal tie-ins between the punishment in v.3 and the offense in v.4:
 - first is the Hebrew preposition “*mem*” which begins verse 4 and it translated “because/for/resulting from/on account of” – it connects the stumbling over all the dead bodies with the reason in v.4, which is all the sexual and spiritual unfaithfulness of Nineveh.
 - The second verbal tie-in between the punishment in v.3 and the offense in v.4 is the Hebrew word “*rov*,” which means “many/much/multitude” and which occurs in both verses 3 and 4. Unfortunately it is not translated with the same English word in most versions, so it is easy to miss the connection, but here it is:
 - In verse 3 there will be “many/hosts/multitude of slain/wounded/casualties,” *Why?*
 - because in verse 4, they committed “a multitude/many/countless harlotries/whoredoms/prostitutions/unfaithfulnesses.”
 - The degree of punishment fits the degree of sin; God’s justice is perfect.
- The sin of which God convicts Nineveh here is sometimes used as a synonym for the Hebrew word in the Seventh Commandment (“Thou shalt not commit adultery”) speaking of sexual immorality, but more often in the Law, the word used here by Nahum refers to spiritual unfaithfulness, describing the problem of Israelites who had covenanted to make Yahweh their god, later forsaking Yahweh and worshipping other gods instead¹⁰⁹.
 - We know from history that in the ancient near-East, the two sins went hand-in-hand; many of the pagan temple ceremonies involved acts of sexual immorality.
 - **Leviticus 20:4-7** “And if the people... hide their eyes... when he allocates some of his offspring to Molech, failing to put him to death, then I myself will set my face against that man and against his family, and I will cut him off – along with all those who practice prostitution after him to prostitute themselves after Molech from the midst of their people. Also, the person who pays attention to the mediums and to the wizards to prostitute themselves after them, I will also set my face against that person and I will cut him off from the midst of his people. So be holy, because I am Yahweh your God...” (NAW)
 - Ishtar, the goddess of love and war, was the main goddess of Nineveh, and, incidentally, the lion was her symbol.
 - She became the basis for later goddesses like Aphrodite, Artemis, and Athena.¹¹⁰ Nineveh’s influence upon goddess-worship in other cultures may be what Nahum is referring to when he says that she “sold nations [and families] into her adulteries and... sorceries.”
- Nineveh is also called here a “well-favored/charming/alluring/graceful mistress, an expert at sorcery/witchcrafts.”
 - (The ESV “and of deadly charms” really has nothing to do with the Hebrew words, but at least it is not misleading.)
 - “Harlotry/prostitution/whoring” and “sorcery/witchcraft” are mentioned together, both here and in other parts of Scripture, and they were concurrent problems, not only in Nineveh, but

¹⁰⁹Viz. Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Num. 15:39; Deut. 31:16.

¹¹⁰<https://www.worldhistory.org/ishtar/> accessed 1 Mar 2025.

also in Israel¹¹¹ and in Babylon¹¹², and also in the Roman empire in which the New Testament church lived.

- **Revelation 17:1-2** “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’ ... **18:23b**For your merchants¹¹³ were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.... **19:2** true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.” (NKJV)
- But we must remember that even these sins can be repented of and forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ.
 - In **1 Corinthians 6:10-11**, the Apostle Paul declared, “Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually-immoral nor idol worshipers, nor adulterers, nor gays nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards nor abusive [speakers] nor graspers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of y'all, but you washed yourselves, but you were made holy, but you were made righteous in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”
- The “selling of nations by means of sorcery” might have to do with economic slavery¹¹⁴ but I think it more likely had to do with covenantal relationships between peoples and their gods.
 - Assyrians sold their gods to the world. They showed off the success story of their wealth and power and then said, “Don’t you want to be part of our movement?”
 - Remember what the Assyrian Rabshakeh said when he laid siege to Jerusalem during King Hezekiah’s reign? “Now don’t let Hezekiah cause you to trust in Yahweh by saying, ‘Yahweh will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’ Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus said the king of Assyria, ‘Make a blessing with me and come out to me, and eat each of you of his vine and each of his fig-tree and drink each of you water of his cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your land, a land of wheat and juice, a land of bread and vineyards... Have any of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Or did they thus deliver Samaria from my hand?’” (**Isaiah 36:15-19**, NAW)
 - The Assyrians were trying to talk the Jews out of living under the providence of Yahweh and into living under the providence of their gods Assur and Ishtar. *If they had been successful, the people would have been betrayed into spiritual slavery, and God would have been robbed of the glory of His people.*
 - According to Nahum, that’s yet another reason why God destroyed Nineveh: she was influencing too many people toward spiritual unfaithfulness. In time, Jesus will also bring down every other system which sells the world into spiritual unfaithfulness.

¹¹¹ **2 Kings 9:22** Jehu, during his coup, told King Joram: “...What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?” (NKJV) Cf. **Micah 5:12** “Furthermore, I will cause to cut off witchcrafts from your hand, and fortune-tellers will not exist for you.” (NAW) and **Ezekiel 16:25** “You built your high places at the head of every road, and made your beauty to be abhorred. You offered yourself to everyone who passed by, and multiplied your acts of harlotry.” (NKJV)

¹¹² **Isaiah 47:9** “So these two will come to you [Babylon] instantly in one day: bereavement and widowhood. They come upon you in their totality, in a multitude of your witchcrafts and in an exceeding abundance of your associations/magic powers.” Cf. Tyre in **Isaiah 23:17** “At the end of seventy years, Yahweh will visit Tyre, but she will return to her wages and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth.” (NAW)

¹¹³ ἔμποροι, a synonym to the LXX of Nahum’s verb “sold” (πωλοῦσα).

¹¹⁴ Cf. persons “sold” to “nations” in Neh. 5:8 and Joel 4:8, or sold to “families” in Lev. 25:47.

Conclusion

- It would be a mistake to say that Nahum is irrelevant because it is about the destruction of a city that no longer exists.
- We must remember that the people who heard Nahum preach in real time were also at the same time hearing prophecies from other prophets.
- This is true, whether you set Nahum at an earlier date with Micah, Isaiah and Hosea or whether you set him at a later date with Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Habakkuk.
- And although Nahum is ostensibly railing against Nineveh, what his listeners would certainly notice is that the other prophets were saying about Israel the exact same things Nahum was saying about Nineveh. All the same sins of which Nahum accused the Assyrians were sins Isaiah and Habakkuk also accused Israel of committing. Even most of the judgments God threatened against Nineveh through Nahum were also threatened against Judah by Isaiah and Habakkuk (and others).
- So, when the people of Nahum's day heard Nahum's prophecy, it would have caused any thinking person to say, "Wait, if God is going to send an army against Nineveh for their bloodshed, lying, cheating, adultery, and idolatry, what's that mean for us who are also guilty of bloodshed, lying, cheating, and adultery?"
- And shortly thereafter, when they heard the news that Nineveh had actually been destroyed, any thinking person would have said, "Uh oh, Nahum was right about Nineveh. That means we're next in line for God's judgment! We'd better fall on our faces before God quick and repent or we're going to get wiped off the earth just like Nineveh!"
- Likewise, although we are not living at the same time as Nahum, so we can't hear all the prophets delivering their messages in real time together, we can feel the same effect, because God has preserved all His prophets' messages together in the Bible, so we can read Isaiah right along with Nahum and see that sin and God's judgment and God's salvation are not just for Nineveh and Israel but God's judgment and salvation are for us too.
- Jesus raised the same point in **Luke 13:1-5** "There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish... **18:8** ... Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?'" (NKJV)
- Jesus is coming to judge the world, and He will condemn sin, but when He comes, He will also save all who respond to these prophecies with repentance and faith in Him.

Nahum 2:11-13 – Side-by side comparison of versions^{FB}

| Douay ^{FC} (Vulgate) | LXX ^{FD} | Brenton ^{FE} (Vaticanus) | KJV ^{FF} | NASB ^{FG} | NIV ^{FH} | ESV ^{FI} | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew ^{FJ} | Bauscher ^{FK} (Peshitta) | Cathcart ^{FL} (Targums) |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| 11 Where is now the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place X of the young lions, to which the lion went, to enter in thither, the young lion, and there was none to make them afraid? | 12 ποῦ ἐστὶν τὸ κατοικη- τήριον τῶν λεόντων καὶ ἡ νομὴ ἡ οὐσα τοῖς σκύμοις, οὗ ἐπορεύθη λέων τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν ἐκεῖ, σκύμνος λέοντος καὶ οὐκ ἦν ὁ ἐκφοβῶν; | 11 Where is the dwelling- place of the lions, and the pasture that belonged to the whelps? where did the lion go, that the lion's whelp should enter in ^{FM} there, and there was none to scare him away? | 11 Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace X of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid? | 11 Where is the den of the lions And the feeding place X of the young lions, Where the lion, lioness [and] lion's cub prowled, With no- thing to disturb them? | 11 Where now is the lions' den, X [the place where]-they fedX X their youngX, where the lion [and] lioness went, [and the] cub[s], with no- thing to fear? | 11 Where is the lions' den, X the feeding place X of the young lions, where the lion [and] lioness went, [where his] cub[s] were], with none to disturb? | 11 Where is the haunt of of lions and the feeding- place itself for the young- lions, where the lion walked to go to the lion-cub, and there was no one to disturb? | (יב) אִינָה מְעוֹן אֲרִיֹת וּמְרִיעָה הָיָה לְכַפְרִים אֲשֶׁר הָלַךְ אֲרִיָּה לְבֵיתֹו שָׁם גּוֹרֵם אֲרִיָּה וְאֵין מַחְרִיד. | 11 Where is the den of lions and the [house of] feeding X of whelps of lions where a lion [and] the whelp of a lion goes to- enter there? And there is none that harms | 12. Where are the dwelling- place[s] of the kings, and the princes'- residence X? Where the kings went, there they left their sons [like a lion which stays by its prey in safety] and there is none to scare it away. |
| 12 The lion caught enough for his whelps, and killed for his lionesses: and he filled his holes with prey, and his denX with rapine. | 13 λέων ἤρπασεν τὰ ἱκανὰ τοῖς σκύμοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπέπνιξεν τοῖς λέουσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπλησεν θή- ρας νοσιστέν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ κατοικη- τήριον αὐ- τοῦ ἤρπαιγῃς. | 12 The lion seized en- ough prey for his whelps, and strangled for his young lions, and filled his lairX with prey, and his dwelling- placeX with spoil. | 12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and stran- gled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin. | 12 The lion tore enough for his cubs, X Killed enough for his lionesses, And filled his lairX with prey And his dens with torn flesh. | 12 The lion killed enough for his cubs and strangled [the prey] for his mateX, X filling his lairX with the kill and his dens with the prey. | 12 The lion tore enough for his cubs and stran- gled [prey] for his lionesses; he filled his caves with prey and his dens with torn flesh. | 12 The lion was one who caught- victims enough for his lion-cubs and strangled some for his lionesses, and filled his caves with victuals and his haunts with dead- victims. | (יג) אֲרִיָּה טָרַף גְּדֵי וּמַחְסֵמֵי לְבֵיתֹו וּמִלְאָה טָרַף חַיִּי וּמַעֲנֵמֵי טָרְפָּה. | 12 A lion breaks apart enough [for the food] of his whelps and has killed also for his mates and filled his caves X and his dens with prey | 13. The king[s] brought spoil for their consorts and plunder for their children, and their storehouses were filled with spoil and their castles with plunder. |
| 13 Behold I [come ^{FV}] against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn thy chariots even to smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey out of the land, and the voice of thy messengers shall be heard no more. | 14 ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐπὶ σέ, λέγει κύριος παντο- κράτωρ, καὶ ἐκκαύσω ἐν καπνῷ πληθὺς σου, καὶ τοὺς λέοντάς σου καταφά- γεται ῥομφ- αία, καὶ ἐξ- ολεθρεύσω ἐκ τῆς γῆς τὴν θήραν σου, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῇ οὐκέτι τὰ X ἔργα σου. | 13 Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD Almighty, and I will burn up thy multitude in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy lions; and I will utterly destroy thy prey from off the land, and X X thy deeds shall no more at all be heard of. | 13 Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions; and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard. | 13 "Behold, I am against you," declares the LORD of hosts. "X I will burn up her chariots in smoke, X a sword will devour your young lions; X I will cut off your prey from the land, and no longer will the voice of your mes- sengers be heard." | 13 "X I am against you," de- clares the LORD Almighty. "X I will burn up your chariots in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions. X I will leave youX no prey on the earth. X The voice[s] of your mes- sengers will no longer be heard." | 13 Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions. X I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your mes- sengers shall no longer be heard. | 13 "Look at me; I am against you," declares Yahweh, Commander of armies. "and I will cause /your\ cavalry to burn up in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions. Fur- thermore, I will cut-loose your victims from your land, and the sound of your mes- sengers will not be heard any more." | (יד) הִנְנִי אֵלֶיךָ נָא יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְהַבְעַרְתִּי כַעֲשֵׂיךָ רַכְבֶּךָ וּכְפִירֶיךָ תֹאכֵל חֶרֶב וְהַבְרִיתִי מֵאֲרָצְךָ טָרְפֶךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע עוֹד קוֹל מִלְאֲכֶכָה. | 13 Behold, I am against you, says LORD JEHOVAH of Hosts, and I shall destroy your multitudes in smoke and your young lions shall X consumeX the sword, and I shall destroy your prey from the Earth, and the sound of your deeds shall not be heard again | 14. "Behold, I am [sending my wrath] upon you," says the Lord of hosts, "and I will burn your char- iots with fire, and the sword shall slay your princes, and I will des- troy your trade from the earth, and the sound of your emis- saries shall not be heard again." |

Nahum 3:1-4 – Side-by side comparison of versions

| Douay (Vulgate) | LXX | Brenton (Vaticanus) | KJV | NASB | NIV | ESV | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew ^{GB} | Bauscher (Peshitta) | Cathcart (Targums) |
|---|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| 1 Woe to thee, O city of bloodX, all X full of lies [and] violence : rapine shall not depart [from thee]. | 1 Ὡ πόλις αἱμάτων ὅλη X ψευδῆς ἀδικίας ^{GC} πλήρης, οὐ ψηλασθήσεται ^{GD} θήρα. | 1 O city of blood, X wholly false, full of unrighteousness ; the prey shall not be handled. | 1 Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery ; the prey departeth not; | 1 Woe to the bloody city, X completely full of lies and pillage ; Her prey never departs. | 1 Woe to the city of bloodX, X full of lies, full of plunder , never without victim[s] ! | 1 Woe to the bloody city, all X full of lies [and] plunder —no end to [the] prey ! | 1 Woe to the city of bloodshed! All of it is full of fraud — of misappropriation: no victim gets away. | 1 (א) הוי עיר דמים פלה פושט ^{GR} פרק ^{GG} מלאה לא ימיש טרף. | 1 Woe to the city of bloodX, [for] all of it is falsehood [and] it is full of evil , [and] the ruin [in it] is not searched-out! | 1. Woe to the city [which sheds innocent] blood! She is all lies (and) filled with plunder ; killing does not cease. |
| 2 The noise of the whip, and the noise of the ratling of the wheel[s], and [of] the neighing horse; and [of] the running chariot, | 2 φωνή μαστιγῶν καὶ φωνή σεισμοῦ τροχῶν καὶ ἵππου διώκοντος καὶ ἄρματος ἀναβράσσοντος | 2 The noise of whip[s], and the noise of the rumbling of wheel[s], and of the pursuing horse, and of the bounding chariot, | 2 The noise of a whip, and the noise of the ratling of the wheel[s], and [of] the pransing horse[s], and [of] the jumping chariot[s]. | 2 The noise of the whip, X The noise of the ratling of the wheel, X Gallop- ing horse[s] And bounding chariot[s]! | 2 The eraek of whip[s], X X X the clatter of wheel[s], X galloping horse[s] and jolting chariot[s]! | 2 The eraek of the whip, and X X rumble of the wheel, X galloping horse and bounding chariot! | 2 There is the sound of the whip and the rumbling sound of the chariot-wheel and horse galloping and chariot bouncing ! | 2 (ב) קול שוט וקול רעש אופן וסוס זמר ומרכבה מרננת. | 2 The sound of the whip and the sound of shaking of wheel[s], X the horse snorting and shaking chariot[s] | 2. The sound of [the cracking of] the whip and the noise of the jolting of wheel[s], and horse[s] galloping and chariot[s] bounding ! |
| [and] of the horsemen coming up, 3 And of the shining sword, and of the glittering spear, and of a multitude X slain, and of a grievous destruction: and there is no end of carcasses, and they shall fall down on their dead bodies. | 3 [καὶ] ὑπέρως ἀναβαίνοντος καὶ στυλβούσης ῥομφαίας καὶ ἑξαστραπτόντων ἅλων καὶ πληθους ^{GC} τραυματιῶν καὶ βαρείας ^{GC} πτώσεως καὶ οὐκ ἔν περας τοῖς ἐθνέσιν [αὐτῆς] ^{GA} , [καὶ] ἄσθενήσουσιν ^{GC} ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν αὐτῶν | 3 [and] of the mount- ing rider, and of the glittering sword, and of the gleam- ing arms , and of a multitude of slain, and of heavy fall- ing: and there was no end to [her] nations , but they shall be weak in their Xbodies | 3 The horse- man lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of car- cases ; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: | 3 Horse- m[e]n echarging, X Sword[s] flashing, X spear[s] gleaming, X Many X slain, X a mass of corpses, And count- less X dead bodies— They stum- ble over theX dead bodies! | 3 Charging cavalry, X flashing sword[s] and glittering spear[s]! X Many cas- ualt[ies], X pile[s] of dead, X bodies without X number, [people] stumbling over theX corpses-- | 3 Horse- m[e]n echarging, X flashing sword and glittering spear. X host[s] of slain, X heap[s] of corpse[s], dead bodies without end — they stumble over theX bodies! | 3 There is the horse- man raising both the flash of the sword and the lightening-bolt of the spear, then the multitude of the wound- ed. There is the mass of dead-bodies, indeed there is no end to the bodies. They will stumble over their bodies | 3 (ג) פרש מעלה ^{GR} ולהב ^{GL} חרב וברק ^{GM} חנית ורב חלל ופגד פגור ואיו קצה לגונה ^{GN} יכשלו בגויתם. | 3 The horseman who is driving and the sword that flashes and the javelin that shines and the multitude of the slain and the abundance of the corpses, and there is no end to the corpses; they will stumble [on them] among their corpses | 3. The horse- man kindles [a flame]; X there is flashing of sword[s] and the gleaming of lance[s], and the multitude of the slain, and the mass of corpses, and there is no end to the slain; they stumble among their slain. |
| 4 Because of the multi- tude of the fornications of the harlot that was beautiful [and] agree- able, [and that] made use of witchcraft , that sold nations through her fornications, and families through her witchcrafts . | 4 ἀπὸ πληθους ^{GC} πορνείας. πόρνη καλή [καὶ] ἐπιχαρῆς ^{GR} ἡγουμένη φαρμάκων ἡ παλοῦσα ^{GC} ἔθνη ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς καὶ φυλάς ^{GC} ἐν τοῖς φαρμάκοις αὐτῆς, | 4 because of the abundance of fornicationX X: she is ^{GR} a fair harlot, [and] well- favoured, skilled in sorcery , that sells nations through her fornication, and peoples ^{GS} by her sorceries . | 4 Because of the mul- titude of the whoredoms of the well- favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts , that sellets nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts . | 4 All because of the many harlotries of the har- lot, The X charming one, the mistress of sorceries , Who sells nations by her harlotries And families by her sorceries . | 4 [all] be- cause of the wanton lustX of a harlot, alluring X, the mistress of sorceries , who en- slaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft . | 4 [And all] for the countless whorings of the prosti- tute, grace- ful and of deadly charms, who be- trays nations with her whor- ings, and peoples with her charms . | 4 because of the multi- tude of the prostitute's adulteries. She is a well-fav- ored expert at witch- crafts . She is the one who sold nations by means of her adulter- ies, and families by means of her witch- crafts . | 4 (ד) מרב זנוניה ^{GT} טובת מן בעלת ^{GU} קשפים ^{GV} מנכרת גוים ^{GW} בזנוניה ומשפחות בכשפיה. | 4 From the abundance of the fornication of a harlot beautiful in appearance [and] Mistress of sorceries who trains up the nations with her fornicationX, and generations in her witch- craft X | 4. (And this) on account of the greatness of the [com- motion of the city which was like a] harlotX X, a street- walker, beau- tiful in ap- pearance, skil- led in sorcer- ies , betraying nations with her idols and kingdoms with her sorceries . |

- ^{FB} NAW is my translation. When a translation adds words not in the Hebrew text, but does not indicate it has done so by the use of italics or greyed-out text, I put the added words in [square brackets]. When one version chooses a wording which is different from all the other translations, I underline it. When a version chooses a translation which, in my opinion, either departs too far from the root meaning of the Hebrew word or departs too far from the grammar form of the original text, I use ~~strikeout~~. And when a version omits a word which is in the original text, I insert an X. I also place an X at the end of a word if the original word is plural but the English translation is singular. I occasionally use colors to help the reader see correlations between the various editions and versions when there are more than two different translations of a given word. The only known Dead Sea Scrolls containing Nahum 2 are 4Q82 (containing parts of verses 9-10 and dated between 30-1 BC), the *Nahal Hever* Greek scroll (containing parts of vs. 4-9 & 12-13 and dated around 25BC), and the Wadi Muraba'at Scroll (containing parts of verses 1-13 and dated around 135 AD). Where the DSS are legible and in agreement with the MT or LXX, I have colored the characters **purple**. Where the DSS support the LXX/Vulgate/Peshitta with omissions or text not in the MT, I have **highlighted with yellow** the LXX and its translation into English, and where I have accepted that into my NAW translation, I have marked it with /forward and backward slashes\.
- ^{FC} Douay Old Testament first published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609, Revised and Diligently Compared with the Latin Vulgate by Bishop Richard Challoner, Published in 1582, 1609, 1752. As published on E-Sword.
- ^{FD} "Septuagint" Greek Old Testament, edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Published in 1935. As published on E-Sword.
- ^{FE} English translation of the Septuagint by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, 1851, "based upon the text of the Vaticanus" but not identical to the *Vaticanus*. As published electronically by E-Sword.
- ^{FF} 1769 King James Version of the Holy Bible; public domain. As published electronically by E-Sword.
- ^{FG} Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
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- ^{FI} Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- ^{FJ} From the Wiki Hebrew Bible
https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%94_%D7%90/%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA.
DSS text comes from <https://downloads.thewaytoyahuwah.com>
- ^{FK} The Peshitta Holy Bible Translated by Glenn David Bauscher, Copyright © 2018 Lulu Publishing, 3rd edition Copyright © 2019 as found on <https://biblehub.com/hpbt/nahum/2.htm>
- ^{FL} From *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, Volume 14, 1989, Cathcart, Kevin J; Gordon, R. P. As found on https://wbsg8v.xyz/d3/y/1715385560/100/u/ia/annas-archive-ia-2023-06-acsm/t/targumofminorpro0014unse.pdf~/f8jMjv18tRB-fityGs6_g/The%20Aramaic%20Bible%3A%20The%20Targum%20of%20the%20Minor%20Prophets%20--%20Cathcart%2C%20Kevin%20J%3B%20Gordon%2C%20R_%20P%20--%20Volume%2014%2C%201989%20--%20Wilmington%2C%20Del_%3A%20M_%20Glazier%20--%209780894534898%20--%202c2211ab706b64db6d34be810eef40da%20--%20Anna%E2%80%99s%20Archive.pdf on 10 May 2024
- ^{FM} The Hebrew word for "to enter in" is spelled very similarly (לָבוֹא), but the 10 other times that this word "lioness" appears in the O.T., the LXX consistently translated it either "lion" or "cub" (σάμνος), so this just appears to be a mistake.
- ^{FN} This word has to do with where something (in this case, a lion) is located, not with any characteristics of the place itself.
- ^{FO} Targums interpret "lions" as "kings" and "cubs" as "princes." Keil said the latter was not the "princes" but the "citizens." The next three words in Hebrew are "and + feeding + he." Most English versions translated the participle as "feeding-place" and ignored the pronoun "he." The NIV made a commendable attempt to translate the "he" by translating the participle as a verb ("fed") and making the pronoun the subject of that verb. However, they made so many other errors, that they didn't end up with any better translation. Those errors included: 1) mistranslating vav as "where," 2) changing "he" to "they," 3) changing the present tense participle – "feeding" – into a past-tense verb – "fed," 4) adding the pronoun "their," which is not in any manuscript, 5) translating *cafirim* as "young" instead of "young lions," and 6) omitting the preposition ("to/for") before *cafirim*. The Septuagint made a more-commendable alternate translation of that preposition, rendering it "belonging to" – "and the feeding-area; it belongs to the whelps."
- ^{FP} All the ancient versions understood this word to mean "to go in," whereas all the modern English versions interpret it "lioness." The two words are spelled the same in the consonantal Hebrew text. The MT cantillation supports the ancient versions by having no punctuation between "the lion goes" and "to enter there," whereas it would have had punctuation if the phrase were "the lioness is there." Also, the verb "went/walked" is singular, so it can only refer to one lion. Calvin, in his commentary asserted that the word can't mean "lioness" but that it meant "old lion." Keil, on the other hand, asserted: "לָבוֹא is the full-grown male lion; לָבִיא, the lioness; לָבִיר, the young lion, though old enough to go in search of prey; לָבִירָה, *catulus leonis*, the lion's whelp, which cannot yet seek prey for itself." The second word in Keil's list is the only one I question.

- ^{FQ} This word is only found here and in Gen. 49:9 (describing the tribe of Judah), Deut. 33:22 (describing the tribe of Dan), Lam. 4:3 (describing jackals), and Ezek. 19:2-5 (describing the nobles of Israel).
- ^{FR} DSS Nahal Hever reads with the synonym *μανδραν* (“barn” – grey letters are lacunae).
- ^{FS} “Tearing” was the characteristic damage done by a lion (Deut. 33:20, Psalm 7:2, 17:12, & 22:13, Ezek. 19:3-6 & 22:25, Hos. 5:14, and Mic. 5:8), but twice it is also mentioned as characteristic of wolves (Gen. 49:27 & Ezek. 22:27). Both the masculine and feminine noun forms of this verb occur at the end of this verse, the former often denoting “food” that has been hunted or foraged, and the latter always denoting an animal carcass that has been killed by a wild animal.
- ^{FT} The only other place this verb occurs in the HOT is when Ahithophel hung himself in 2 Samuel 17:23.
- ^{FU} There is actually no verb in this phrase in the original Vulgate and Hebrew; the word “come” was supplied by Douay for this translation, since a verb was demanded to make sense in English.
- ^{FV} If the Hebrew were spelled a little differently *מלאכך*, it would mean “your works,” but, as it is spelled, it is “your messengers.”
- ^{FW} Keil was the only commentator I saw who did not translate this “against you.” He translated it “come to you.”
- ^{FX} Calvin said that “in smoke” emphasized instantaneous destruction. Dathius and Owen of Thrussington thought that “smoke” just stood for “fire.” But most commentators take it straightforwardly as “with smoke.”
- ^{FY} Although the Geneva, KJV, and NASB are correct in translating the MT as “her,” no other Bibles in world history translated it thus. LXX, Vulgate, Syriac, and Targums all translated it “your,” which raises questions about the originality of the MT spelling. Contemporary translations like the NIV, NKJV, NET, and ESV go with “your.” How the LXX and Peshitta got “multitudes” instead of “chariots” (MT, Vulgate, Targum) is harder for me to tell.
- ^{FZ} This word can mean “land” or it can mean the whole “earth.” Douay, NASB, and NET were the only English versions I found that rendered it the former; all the rest rendered it the latter (or, like the NLT, deleted it!). To say that all predatory work would be removed from planet earth seems to be saying more than Nahum intended here. Although true of God’s eschatological plan, Nahum seems to be outlining a more localized plan in which Nineveh would no longer prey upon other people.
- ^{GA} The ancient consonantal spelling of this word could mean either “works” or “messengers.” LXX and Peshitta interpreted it as the former, but the Vulgate, Targums, and English versions understood it as the latter. Calvin pointed out that it is not the proper spelling for “messengers,” so he suggested translating it “grinders/teeth,” but not even his English translator (Owen) was convinced, stating that the *ת*- at the end of the word might just be a “redundancy.” Keil agreed with Owen that it was a “lengthened form [of ‘messengers’], on account of the tone at the end of the section.”
- ^{GB} The only known Dead Sea Scrolls containing Nahum 3 are 4Q82 (containing parts of verses 1-3 & 17 and dated between 30-1 BC), The *Nahal Hever* Greek scroll (containing parts of vs. 1-3 & 6-16 and dated around 25BC), and the Wadi Muraba’at Scroll (containing parts of verses 1-19 and dated around 135 AD).
- ^{GC} Symmachus (*αποτομιας*=severity/*μελοκοπιας*=dismembering) rendered with a word closer to the meaning of the Hebrew word. (Aquila=*εξαυχениσμου*=empty-boasting?)
- ^{GD} Symmachus (*‘οπου αδιαλειπτος*=where is unceasing) renders with a meaning closer to the MT, even though the word “where” is not in the MT Hebrew.
- ^{GE} This is Nahum’s only Woe. Isaiah accounts for about half of the Woes in the HOT. The Woes of Hab. 2:12 and Zeph. 3:1 are the only other woes addressed to a “city.”
- ^{GF} Special word found only here and Job 16:8, Psa. 59:12, and Hos. 7:3; 10:13; & 11:12. The verb form occurs about 2 dozen times, and elsewhere I have translated it “be untrue.”
- ^{GG} This noun only occurs here and in Obadiah 1:14, where it is translated “crossroads/parting of ways.” Its verbal form occurs about 10 times. In one of the early Psalms I translated it “rip.”
- ^{GH} *Hapex Legomenon*. Vulgate & Peshitta considered it a sound characteristic of a horse, but KJV followed Strong with “irregular movement/prancing.” Nowadays, translators seem to agree on “gallop.”
- ^{GI} The unpointed Hebrew *גויה* could be interpreted as either “body” or “her nations,” but all the other translations made throughout history have agreed on “body.”
- ^{GJ} Symmachus translated with a word closer to the MT Hebrew: *σκανδαλισθησονται* (“shall be tripped”).
- ^{GK} Calvin agreed with the KJV translators that this “horseman” was making something to ascend, but he made the object the horse, which would go up the hill to the city when the horseman urged it on. With this Keil agreed.
- ^{GL} The only other places in the HOT where this word means “blade” instead of “flame” are Judges 3:22 and Job 39:23.
- ^{GM} cf. Nah. 2:4, which uses this word in a similar scene.
- ^{GN} This word evidently means the body of a living being in Gen. 47:18, Neh. 9:37, Ezek. 1:11 & 23, and Dan. 10:6, but of a dead person in Jdg. 14:8-9, 1 Sam. 31:10 & 12, and Ps. 110:6. Owen of Thrussington had an odd translation which strangely denied that *peger* and *halal* and *geviya* were dead bodies and instead had them “dancing”!
- ^{GO} Qere (and one of the Cairo Geniza manuscripts from a century before the MT and “several” other manuscripts referenced without name in the BHS notes) = *לָוַיְוֹ* - *vav* consecutive Qal perfect instead of the Ketib Niphal imperfect, but meaning the same thing.

^{GP} Aquila & Symmachus translated the MT Hebrew “Baal” as “owners of” (εχουσης) instead of the LXX “leaders of.”

^{GQ} Fields’ edition of the LXX reads λαους (“peoples”) here, but φυλας (“tribes”) is a better translation of the MT Hebrew *mishpachot*.

^{GR} This reflects the punctuation from the edition of the LXX that Brenton was reading. There is, however, no such disjunctive punctuation in the MT between “adulteries of” and “prostitute;” in the MT, the punctuation comes after “prostitute” and before “well favored.”

^{GS} The LXX Greek word is actually “tribes.” “Peoples” is a different word, both in Hebrew (עַמִּים) and in Greek (λαοι).

^{GT} This word is used as a synonym in places like Lev. 19:29, for זִנָּה (“adultery” - the thing forbidden in the Ten Commandments), but, more often in the Law, the word used here by Nahum was used to refer to spiritual unfaithfulness. It described the problem of Israelites, who had covenanted to make Yahweh their god, forsaking Yahweh and worshipping other gods instead (viz. Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Num. 15:39; Deut. 31:16).

^{GU} The only other place in the HOT where this phrase occurs is Prov. 22:1 (although the two words are in close connection also in Prov. 3:4 and 13:15), but, unlike Nahum, the phrase in Proverbs describes something godly.

^{GV} This word is the feminine form of Baal=Master/Lord and it is rare, occurring in the HOT only here, 1 Sam. 28:7 (בַּעֲלַת־אֹב – a woman who is an expert spiritual medium), and 1 Kings 17:17 (בַּעֲלַת הַבַּיִת – landlady). Nowhere else do we find it together with “sorceries,” but it seems to be compatible to the Witch of Endor in 1 Sam. 28.

^{GW} John Calvin saw these “sorceries” not as “witchcraft” but as the “juggleries and meretricious arts” of deceptive and predatory statecraft. Keil, agreeing with Calvin, wrote, “the love-making, with its parallel ‘witchcrafts’ (*keshâphîm*), denotes ‘the treacherous friendship and crafty politics with which the coquette in her search for conquests ensnared the smaller states’ (Hitzig, after Abarbanel, Calvin, J. H. Michaelis, and others). This policy is called *whoring* or *love-making*, ‘inasmuch as it was that selfishness which wraps itself up in the dress of love, and under the appearance of love seeks simply the gratification of its own lust’ (Hengstenberg on the Rev.).” On the other hand, Matthew Henry affirmed it was “spiritual” but that it had practical manifestations; Pusey agreed, and so would I.

Nahum 3:5-11 God's Justice Before The Nations

Introduction

- Nahum has already introduced us to God's judgment against the Assyrian city-state of Nineveh, giving us occasion to meditate on the patterns of God's judgment revealed to us in the Bible. This passage gives us even more occasion for that! Verses 5-7 call us to consider the way God judges through exposure, shame, and alienation, and there will be more in verses 10-11: loss of identity, barbarity, depersonalization, restriction, madness, shunning, and becoming a refugee.

v. 5 – Loss of Protection as God's Judgment

- For the second time since Nahum 2:13, God says, "I am against you..."
- Remember the reasons listed at the beginning of chapter 3 as to why God is against Nineveh:
 - They are guilty of much bloodshed of innocent life, they are completely full of lies, they have stolen and pillaged from other people, as well as enslaved and oppressed others.
 - All these things are bad enough in themselves, but they all stem from the worse problem of setting themselves at enmity against God, as chapter 1 describes. They are God's "adversaries" (v.2), who do not "seek refuge in Him" (v.7), but "plot evil against the LORD" (v.11), and worship "idols and images" (v.14).
 - That's why God is "against" them.
- Already up to this point, God has revealed through Nahum several temporal judgments which God is planning to execute upon the unrepentantly-sinful city-state of Nineveh. The most recent of these planned judgments was mentioned in verses 2-3 of chapter 3: the judgment of being massacred by a foreign army.
- To this is added another temporal judgement in verses 5-11, that of exposure and loss of protection. The metaphor Nahum uses is that of publicly stripping a woman of her clothes. The woman here is the city of Nineveh, and the clothes represent the ways that cities protect their citizens.
- Now, in our contemporary, secularized rape-culture, women are celebrated as brave when they expose their bodies in public, but in Biblical culture, ever since God provided animal skins to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve when they sinned, it is a shameful thing to have nakedness even partially uncovered in public.
- It's not that we should be ashamed of our bodies, for God said that He created us "very good" (Gen. 1:27-31, 2:25), and we need to believe Him on that! The problem is that we lost our glory when we sinned – we lost our original righteousness, and that makes us vulnerable to sin and exposes us to shame and liability to God's judgment, so what we need is to be covered with the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 3:22, 2 Cor. 5:21) to remove that vulnerability and liability, and, whether or not we realize that clothing is a symbol of the Gospel, God ordained clothing to symbolize that.
- But we're talking about the stripping of Nineveh now. What kinds of covering might a city have? Its army, its outer defensive wall, its alliances with other nations to help defend it, its network of supply-chains which keep a stable flow of food and goods coming into the city, its leadership that

can make plans to overcome problems and keep the city resilient, and its loaded treasuries which can smooth out any crisis with an infusion of cash. These are some of the protective measures a city or state provides for its citizens, and these are all good things that can be a benefit to any community, but God says that, in His punishment of Nineveh, He will strip all those protections away and leave the city in a very embarrassing and vulnerable position, so much so that all the other cities in the world will consider Nineveh “despicable.”

- This judgment of stripping away the protective covering of a nation and exposing it to shame among other nations is one of God’s temporal judgments frequently spoken-of throughout the prophets:
 - Not only is it threatened against Assyria here (and earlier in Nahum 2:7)¹¹⁵,
 - it is also threatened against Babylon (in Isaiah 47 and Jeremiah 13 and 50)¹¹⁶,
 - against Tyre (in Ezekiel 26:3),
 - against Egypt (in Isaiah 20)¹¹⁷,
 - against Israel (in Micah 1 and Ezekiel 23)¹¹⁸,
 - and even against Judah (in Lamentations 1 and Habakkuk 2)¹¹⁹.
- And the words in the Greek translation of Nahum 3:5 for the “nakedness” and “shame” that God exposes in judgment show up in the New Testament too, describing God’s judgments, as well as the way of salvation:
 - **Romans 1:22-26** “Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile [ἀτιμίας] passions...” (NKJV) *This is a judgment of God: “God gave them up to what is dishonorable.”*
 - **Philippians 3:18-19** “...many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame [αἰσχύνῃ]-- who set their mind on earthly things.” (NKJV, cf. 2 Cor. 4:2)

¹¹⁵Cf. **3 Maccabees 6:5** “When Sennacheri[b], the grievous king of the Assyrians, glorying in his countless hosts, had subdued the whole land with his spear, and was lifting himself against thine holy city, with boastings grievous to be endured, thou, O Lord, didst demolish him and didst shew forth thy might to many nations.” (Brenton)

¹¹⁶**Jeremiah 50:31** “Behold, I am against you, [Babylon,] O most haughty one!’ says the Lord GOD of hosts; ‘For your day has come, The time that I will punish you. **13:22** And if you say in your heart, “Why have these things come upon me?” For the greatness of your iniquity Your skirts have been uncovered, Your heels made bare... **26** Therefore I will uncover [תְּשַׁחֲתֶיךָ] your skirts over your face, That your shame may appear.” (NKJV)

¹¹⁷**Isaiah 20:4** “...the king of Assyria shall lead away the Egyptian captives and the Cushite exiles, children and elders, naked and barefoot, and their buttocks will be bare [תְּשַׁחֲתֶיךָ], the nakedness of Egypt.” (NAW)

¹¹⁸**Micah 1:6** “Therefore I will make Samaria into a pile in the field – into a place for planting a vineyard, and I will have her building-stones poured out into the ravine, and her foundations laid bare.” (NAW)

Ezekiel 23:9-10 “Therefore I have delivered her [Israel] Into the hand of her lovers, Into the hand of the Assyrians, For whom she lusted. They uncovered her nakedness, Took away her sons and daughters, And slew her with the sword; She became a byword among women, For they had executed judgment on her.” (NKJV)

¹¹⁹**Lamentations 1:8** “Jerusalem has sinned gravely, Therefore she has become vile. All who honored her despise her Because they have seen her nakedness; Yes, she sighs and turns away.” (NKJV, cf. Ezekiel 16:37 & 23:17-18)

Habakkuk 2:16 “You will be filled with shame instead of glory; you also must drink and be treated as uncircumcised [הַעֲרֵל]. The cup of Yahweh’s right hand will come around upon you, and intense shame will be upon your glory...” (NAW)

- So, what is the way of salvation from this judgment? Jesus explained to the church in Laodicea that didn't realize how "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" it was in **Revelation 3:17-18** "...I counsel you to buy from Me... white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness¹²⁰ may not be revealed..." (NKJV) *Jesus is the One to whom we must go to be saved from this judgment of exposure and loss of protection.*

v. 6 – Shame As Judgment From God

- In v.6, Nahum prophesies another temporal judgment upon Nineveh, and that is the judgment of "shame" and "despising" from other people. Three phrases describe this:
 1. The last phrase is that God will "set" Nineveh up to be a "spectacle/gazingstock" – a "sight" over which people gawk. That has literally come true. Nineveh ceased to be a functioning city after its overthrow in 612 BC, but, thousands of years later, its ruins are a tourist destination – people come to "stare" at it!
 2. The second phrase describing God's judgement of "shame" in v.6 is, "I will make you vile/treat you with contempt/make a fool of you."
 - The root meaning of this Hebrew verb has to do with being "hollow" or "lightweight" – not something to be taken seriously.
 - We encountered that verb once already in Nahum 1:14, where God says that the king of Nineveh is "foolish/despised/not to be taken seriously." Here God Himself pledges to be the one who makes Nineveh thus.
 - As I have perused archaeology magazines and museum showcases on Nineveh, I have noted phrases from the curators themselves which fulfill this prophecy:
 - The British Museum's *I Ashurbanipal* exhibition from 2019 was subtitled, "The greatest king you've never heard of." *Wild Frontiers*' blog about that exhibition calls the king of Nineveh a "PR...master" and "immodest."¹²¹ *Not particularly flattering descriptions!*
 - The Fall 2003 issue of *Bible & Spade* magazine entitled one of its articles, "Nahum, Nineveh, and Those Nasty Assyrians," pointing out the ironic reversals in which some of the very things that the Assyrians, in their records, boasted of doing to their rivals, ended up being done to them by their own enemies, heaping all the more shame on their memory.¹²²
 3. The first phrase in verse 6 (also detailing God's judgment of shame upon Nineveh) is, I think, particularly a jibe at Nineveh's false gods. The Hebrew word *shiqqutzim*, translated "filth/abominations" appears 47 other times in the Bible, and almost every time it occurs, a word for an idol or a false god appears alongside it. Nevertheless, most of the commentaries I read thought it was describing God throwing "mud/excrement/rotting food" at Nineveh. I think this is God littering the ground of Nineveh with the useless shapes of its own idols. *This is the one True God getting the last laugh against all the petty demonic rivals that stole worship from Him in Nineveh!*
- This judgment of shame is something God instituted, not only against Assyria and its idols, but

¹²⁰ γυμνότητός, a synonym for the word αἰσχύνην in the LXX of Nahum 3:5.

¹²¹ https://www.wildfrontierstravel.com/en_GB/blog/i-ashurbanipal accessed 6 Mar 2025.

¹²² <https://store.biblearchaeology.org/collections/bible-and-spade-magazine/products/abr-com-016>

also against:

- Judah (Mal. 2:9) and Babylon (Isa. 14:16, Jer. 51:37) and their idols,
- and, in the New Testament, we see it again: the humiliation of the demonic powers and principalities of this world by the Son of God: “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [the cross].” (**Col. 2:13-15**, NKJV)
- And we see the ultimate future triumph of Jesus, the Lamb of God, where “...there shall by no means enter [heaven] anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.” (**Rev. 21:27**, NKJV, cf. Luke 16:15)
- So, once again, the way out of this judgment is to go to Jesus and worship Him instead of the things of this world.
- Verse 7 continues to play out the natural consequence of shame, and that is: people distancing themselves from the one who is being shamed.

v. 7 – Alienation as Judgment From God

- The first half of v.7 describes people’s natural reaction to someone else on the receiving end of judgment: I don’t want to be anywhere near that person, because I don’t want any of that to rub off on me!
 - I have noticed in my house, whenever my wife or I single out one of our children for discipline, all the rest of the kids suddenly make themselves very scarce!
 - They’re like the merchants in **Revelation 18:10** “**standing at a distance** for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come!’” (NKJV)
- In the second half of v.7, the questions are posed, “Who will grieve?” and “Whence can comforters be sought?”
 - The problem, as v. 19 states, is that there is no one against whom Nineveh hasn’t done evil, so whoever wants to arrange a memorial service is going to have a really hard time finding anyone sorry to see Nineveh go. Any funeral parlor he checks into is going to say, “Sorry, we don’t provide services for Assyrians.” You couldn’t even pay anybody to pretend to mourn for Nineveh!
- This discipline of alienation is one of God’s temporal judgments intended to drive home to us that friends have become an idol to us and that what we need most is to be right with God.
 - God has also used alienation as a form of discipline to bring maturity to those He loves. In the Psalms, David wrote about his experience using the same verbs Nahum used:
 - **Psalms 31:11** “As a result of all my adversaries I was a stigma even more to my neighbors, and to those with whom I was intimately acquainted I was a terrorist. Upon seeing me in the outdoors they shrank/fled from me.” (NAW)
 - **Psalms 69:20** “Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none.” (NKJV)

- In the prophets, God describes using the same process to refine the Jews through the Babylonian exile. For instance, Jeremiah¹²³ wrote:
 - **Lamentations 1:21** “They have heard that I sigh, But no one comforts me. All my enemies have heard of my trouble; They are glad that You have done it...” (NKJV)
 - **Jeremiah 15:5** “For who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem? Or who will bemoan you? Or who will turn aside to ask how you are doing? ... **31:18-20** I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: ‘You have chastised me, and I was chastised, Like an untrained bull; Restore me, and I will return, For You are the LORD my God. Surely, after my turning, I repented; And after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, Because I bore the reproach of my youth.’ Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the LORD.” (NKJV)
- Once again, what is the way out of this judgment of alienation? *It is to return to the “Lord” Jesus and receive His “mercy.”*
- But this outcome was not-to-be, in the case of Nineveh. Instead, Nineveh would be destroyed, much as she had destroyed other cities and nations. One such city was No-Amon, in Egypt, which the Assyrians conquered during Nahum’s lifetime. God says in ...

v. 8 – If No-Amon Can Be Conquered, So Can You

- No-Amon was an ancient Egyptian city located on the Nile River in the highlands of the country.
- No-Amon means “city of [the God] Amon” in Egyptian. The Greeks called it Thebes¹²⁴, and Egyptians now call it Luxor¹²⁵.
- Nahum uses the words “water,” “sea,” and “river” to describe a key aspect of the city’s defensive strategy. (Some contemporary English versions also add the proper-name of the river, the “Nile.”)
 - The ancient Hebrews called any large body of water a “sea” – so most scholars think that Nahum’s words for “sea,” “water,” and “river” all refer to the Nile (and perhaps the canals built around it)¹²⁶, and that the ancient fortress actually sat on an island in the middle of the water. Any army that tried to attack that city would have to cross the river or canals and fight from the water, leaving them at a significant disadvantage.
 - By the way, there is another significant body of water, the Red Sea, about 50 miles to the East of No-Amon, so any attack from countries to the East would be significantly slowed down by

¹²³Cf. Isaiah 1:7-8 “Your country is wasted; your cities burned with fire. In front of you foreigners consume your ground; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners. And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber patch... 51:19 “...Who will sympathize for her? The violence and the breakup and the famine and the sword – How shall I comfort her?” (NAW)

¹²⁴Their attempt at pronouncing the Egyptian phrase “the seat.” They also called it the “city of 100 gates” and Diospolis (“city of god”). See Pusey’s commentary on Nahum for an extended description of the ancient city.

¹²⁵Some early church fathers and Medieval Jewish commentators thought it was Alexandria, and Calvin seems to have followed them. All commentators after Calvin seem to be agreed on Thebes.

¹²⁶It is possible, however, that the “defensive-rampart” on the “sea” that Nahum mentions might refer to a separate set of citadels located about 500 miles downriver in the lowlands of Egypt next to the Mediterranean Ocean. As we’ll see, those cities down on the delta had to be conquered before the Assyrians could make it up to the capitol city of No-Amon. One reason those delta cities were so easy for Assyria to conquer is that the Nubians had previously conducted a campaign against lower Egypt and weakened the defenses of that part of the country. I did not find a single commentator who suggested this possibility, however.

having to cross that sea. *So, water indeed was part of its defense.*

- Let me quote from the Fall 2003 issue of the archaeology magazine, *Bible & Spade*, which contains an article on the historical event behind this verse: “Esarhaddon [the king of Assyria while Manasseh was king of Judah] had taken Egypt on his second invasion in 671 BC. When he died, the Egyptians revolted and [Esarhaddon’s successor,] Ashurbanipal went to Egypt to put down this revolt. He cleared the Delta of the Cushites (Ethiopians) in 667/666 BC, and the Cushite ruler [Pharaoh], Taharqa, fled to [the city of] No-Amon... On his second campaign in 663 BC, Ashurbanipal went to No-Amon and defeated the city and razed it [to the ground]. There were Judeans in the Assyrian army that saw this event. When they heard or read the words of Nahum they would have been encouraged. The Assyrians were able to defeat a strong and impregnable Thebes, and God would now fulfill His Word and Nineveh would fall. Ashurbanipal commissioned a relief depicting the fall of No-Amon. It is labeled “an Egyptian fortress” in the British Museum.”¹²⁷
- The point is that if God could bring judgment against the fortress of No-Amon in Egypt through the Assyrian army, then God was perfectly capable of bringing the same judgment of destruction upon Nineveh through some other army.¹²⁸
 - God used the same logic with the Israelites in **Amos 6:2-8** “Go over to Calneh and see; And from there go to Hamath the great; Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? ...The LORD God of hosts says: ‘I abhor the pride of Jacob, And hate his palaces; Therefore I will deliver up the city And all that is in it.’” (NKJV)
 - And Jesus used the same logic against the Jews of his day in **Matthew 11:23-24** “And you, Capernaum, you won’t be lifted up to heaven will you? You will be brought down as low as Hell, because if the miracles which occurred in you had occurred in Sodom, it would have remained until today. Moreover, I’m telling y’all, that for the land of Sodom it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment than for you!” (NAW)
 - Paul also used similar logic against the Christians of his day in **Romans 11:19-22** “You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.” (NKJV)
 - If God “cut off” the Jews for “not believing” in Jesus, He can do it to you too. But notice who is saved in Romans 11: those who humbly “stand by faith” in God and “continue in His goodness.”
- This raises the question of whether the Assyrian conquest of No-Amon is past or future to Nahum. This would help us get a much more precise date for Nahum.
 - The argument for Nahum writing after the fall of No-Amon in 663BC is strong because the argument that, “if No-Ammon can fall, then Nineveh can fall,” works best if No-Ammon has already fallen. Nahum also wrote of the fall of No-Amon in the Hebrew past tense.
 - This argument isn’t airtight, however, because Nahum could be using the common technique of prophetic perfects to speak of the fall of No-Ammon as a future event just as he

¹²⁷<https://biblearchaeology.org/research/divided-kingdom/2744-nahum-nineveh-and-those-nasty-assyrians>

¹²⁸Perhaps it should be noted that, although the Assyrian conquest of this city was a huge setback from which it never did fully recover, it did not result in the absolute erasure of the city. It got rebuilt in time, and God revisited judgment on it later on, as Jeremiah 46:25 and Ezekiel 30:14 attest.

prophecied of the future fall of Nineveh¹²⁹, in which case his prophecy of the fall of No-Ammon before the fall of Nineveh would be a kind of “Easter egg” that only people in the future would understand, but when it did happen, it would underscore the sovereign foreknowledge of God all the more.

- The argument for Nahum writing before the fall of No-Amon in 663 BC is supported by the way Nahum uses the Hebrew future tense in chapter 1 to speak of the end of Sennacherib’s siege against Jerusalem and of Sennacherib’s ignominious death. If Nahum were writing after the 663BC downfall of No-Amon, it would seem odd for him to still be encouraging Jews to trust God to deliver them from Assyria with assurances that Sennacherib would be assassinated, two decades after the threat of Sennacherib had passed.
- The more I think about it, the more I wonder if Nahum’s chapters might have been written at different times in his life: perhaps chapters 1 and 2 as a young man under king Hezekiah, then chapter 3 decades later under king Josiah.
 - In that case, God’s deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib could have been future to him when he wrote chapter 1, and then the Assyrian overthrow of Thebes could have been past to him when he wrote chapter 3.
 - This could also explain why there is so much repeated material between chapters 2 and 3 – perhaps it had been a long time since he had written chapter 2 and he felt the need as an old man to review some of it in his last writing.
 - That is just a hypothesis. What’s important is that there are plausible explanations for the difficulty in figuring out when Nahum was written, so we don’t have to conclude that it was a fraud-prophecy.
- Verse 9 focuses on the military alliances that No-Amon had, but

v. 9 – It Doesn’t Matter How Strong You Are, God Can Punish You

- No-Ammon, located in middle Egypt, could get the help and support of:
 - the army of Cush (a.k.a. Ethiopia) to the South,
 - the army of Egypt to the North,
 - and the armies of Put (now called Sudan) and Libya to the West.
 - (Remember, they had the Red Sea to protect them on the East.)
- They had an alliance with every neighboring nation. They must have thought, “Surely no one can possibly challenge us. Our combined strength makes us safe!” But they were wrong. God had-it-out for them, so, despite all that united strength, they were decimated by the Assyrians under King Ashurbanipal.
- It’s a lesson every nation should learn. While it is good to have wise relationships with your neighbors, it is not your human allies who keep you secure; it is God who protects you and keeps you safe.
 - **Psalms 127:1-7** “...From whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber... The LORD is your keeper... The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.” (NKJV)

¹²⁹It is also possible that the event could be one of Sargon’s raids against Egypt between 705-722 BC, before Sennacherib’s attempted siege of Jerusalem around 700, a position held by C. F. Keil.

- **Proverbs 16:7** “When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” (NKJV)
- Israel had to learn it the hard way, much like No-Amon. Their kings throughout history tried to secure their political protection from men instead of from God by building alliances with Egypt, Ammon, Syria, Assyria, and others, instead of obeying God and asking God to keep them safe. And time and again, those neighbor nations betrayed them so that they regretted the alliances they had made and wished they had obeyed God instead.
 - Early in Judah’s history, the prophet Hanani rebuked King Asa for giving the silver and gold from the temple in Jerusalem to the king of Syria in order to get the king of Syria to start a war with the northern kingdom of Israel and so end the border skirmishes between Israel and Judah. The prophet reminded King Asa in **2 Chronicles 16:8-9** of how God had delivered his predecessor, King Rehoboam, from Shishak’s multinational invasion of Judah. Hanani said, “Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this [*robbing God’s temple to pay foreigners to help instead of asking God for help*] you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.” (NKJV, cf. 2 Chr. 12:3)
 - Isaiah delivered that message often to the later kings of Israel and Judah. In chapter 20, he warned the Jews that it was pointless to make an alliance with Egypt because the Assyrians were just going to conquer Egypt. And because they were trusting in human strength instead of God, **Isaiah 20:5** says, “Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed of Cush of their hope and of Egypt their ornament.” (NAW)
 - And this message did not go out to the Jews alone, Ezekiel preached it to the cities of Lebanon (Tyre, Arvad) in chapters 27-28 and to Russia (Gog) in chapter 38, and Jeremiah preached it to Egypt in chapter 46. *Don’t put your trust in your military alliances; put your trust in God, and He will save you!*
- If you don’t, you will experience the horrors of God’s judgment at a very personal level, like the citizens of No-Amon did.

v. 10 – God’s Judgment Upon the Citizens of Egypt

- The Hebrew word translated “yet” in v.10 indicates that nobody expected No-Amon to be beat, and yet even they fell under God’s judgment.
- It was Assyria’s policy to remove the residents, after conquering a city, and to resettle those residents somewhere else, so that they would lose their former identity and join the melting pot of Assyrian culture.
 - That’s what they did to Samaria (2 Ki. 17:6 & 24); it’s what they threatened to do to Jerusalem (Isa. 36:17), and it’s apparently what Essarhaddon did to the residents of No-Amon when he conquered it.
 - The land, the city, and the people in which they so prided themselves would be taken away from them in judgment. **Isaiah 19:4** “I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master, and a fierce king will rule over them, declares Yahweh GOD Commander of armies.” (NAW)
- The barbaric murder of “nursing infants” publicly in the streets may also have been standard

policy for the Assyrians, because they did it to Samaria when they conquered the northern kingdom of Israel too¹³⁰, according to **Hosea 13:16** “Samaria is held guilty, For she has rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword, Their infants shall be dashed in pieces, And their women with child ripped open.” (NKJV)

- Perhaps they figured that babies and pregnant women would slow the captives down too much as they walked the long distance to their resettlement.
- Later on, God also declared that this same atrocity would be part of His judgment upon Babylon (Isaiah 13:16-18).
- Perhaps all the pregnant women these days hiring doctors to abort their unborn babies might be God’s contemporary way of judging nations along the same lines.
- The “casting of lots” (or, in modern terms, “rolling of dice”), indicates that this once-great people would be reduced to mere things – chattel – objects of no personal interest except their market value, to be killed or used upon the mere roll of a die. No heed was given anymore to whether this person deserved respect; all dignity was stripped from them, even as their clothes were stripped off (Isa. 20:4).
- In order to keep the strong men among the captives from escaping or fighting back while they were driven away into exile, the Assyrians “bound” them with “chains” (or iron “shackles”) on their hands¹³¹ to restrict their movement. [*Note in Assyrian bas-relief of this event, captives marching out of the city handcuffed and little children escaping with their parents.*]
- This turning of persons into things as judgment from God might find a parallel in the New Testament where, in **Romans 1:28**, God “gave [men] over to a debased mind” when they “would not retain God in their knowledge,” thus they became, in their blaspheming “...like unreasoning, natural animals, born for domestication and consumption... they will be consumed by their corruption” according to **2 Peter 2:12** (NAW, cf. Jude 1:10).
- Now, this is no excuse to actually treat other human beings with such barbarity, cruelty, and injustice, but when it happens, we can recognize it as judgment from God against those in rebellion against Him. (cf. Joel 3:1-8, Obadiah 1:9-11, Isaiah 45:14)

v. 11 – Nineveh Will Be Down And Out

- The same Hebrew word translated into English as “yet” at the beginning of v.10, indicating a surprising downfall, appears again at the beginning of v.11, introducing yet another surprising outcome.
 - It’s unfortunate that most English versions don’t translate the same Hebrew word with the same English word at the beginning of both verses 10 and 11, but the Hebrew wording draws a parallel.
 - In v. 10 the unexpected fall of No-Amon is described in third person “she,” but in a dramatic conclusion, v.11 changes the pronouns to second-person “you.” In other words, God is saying that God will take “you” down (Nineveh), just as unexpectedly as Nineveh had taken “her” (No-Amon) down.
- Three phrases in v.11 describe Assyria becoming down-and-out: Nineveh will become “drunk,” it will be “hidden,” and it will experience “refugee” status.

¹³⁰Cf. Hos. 14:1ff (where it was done by Assyria), 2 Ki. 8:12 (where it was done by Syria), Amos 1:13 (where it was done by Ammon), and Psalm 137:9 (where it is implied that it was done by Edom).

¹³¹“pinioned or handcuffed (so the word properly signifies)” ~Matthew Henry

- This Hebrew word for “drunk”
 - is used elsewhere in the Bible to describe inebriation from drinking too much alcohol,
 - and Nahum 1:10 does imply that the Assyrians drank too much alcohol,
 - and drunkenness does destroy a person’s reason and wealth (Prov. 23:29-35),
 - But I would like to point out that half of the times that this verb is used in the Bible it is a figurative expression for a deranged condition experienced, not from alcohol, but from God’s wrath. This is especially found in the prophetic books, for instance:
 - **Isaiah 29:9-10** “...they have gotten drunk, but not through wine, they have tottered, but not through liquor. For Yahweh has poured out upon y’all a spirit of sleep... **63:6** “...I intoxicated them in my fury, and I brought their vigor down to the earth.” (NAW¹³²)
 - **Jeremiah 25:15-27** “...Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.... Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Drink, be drunk, and vomit! Fall and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.’” (NKJV, cf. 48:25-26, 51:7, 39, 57)
 - When the Lord’s cup comes around to the wicked (Hab. 2:16, Psa. 75:8), it is to put them out of their right mind, whether that is “giving them over to a reprobate mind,” as it says in Romans 1, or whether it is to overwhelm them with so much grief and trauma from His judgments that they can’t think straight, as I think may be the case here in Nahum 3.
- The second aspect of a down-and-out status coming to Nineveh in God’s judgment in v.11 is that they will be “hidden.”
 - The NIV & ESV translate it “you will go into hiding,” but the Niphal spelling of this Hebrew verb is properly interpreted passively by the KJV and NASB (“be concealed/ignored/disregarded”) ¹³³.
 - This verb is not the standard Hebrew word for “hide,” rather, it is used to indicate purposeful avoidance or accidental ignorance, so as not to see, hear, or be near another person. For instance:
 - **Isaiah 1:15** “When you spread out your hands [in prayer], I will hide my eyes from them...”
 - **Isaiah 58:7** “... split your bread for the hungry, and bring home the poor vagabonds, and when you see a naked man, cover him, and not hide yourself from your flesh...” (NAW)
 - **Lament. 3:56** “...Do not hide Your ear From my sighing, from my cry for help.” (NKJV) ¹³⁴
 - I think that God is promising that folks will turn their heads and ignore the Ninevite refugees, rather than allow themselves to see and hear the ragged and hungry Ninevites begging for food and shelter ¹³⁵.
 - Instead of being the most powerful player among the nations, Assyria will become the sort of entity that people don’t pay attention to anymore,

¹³²cf. Deut. 32:42 (“make arrows drunk with blood”), Cant. 5:1b (sexual excitement), Isa. 49:25 (“intoxicated with their own blood”). The Greek word in the LXX for “drunk” appears 4x in the New Testament, 3x to indicate alcoholic drunkenness, and 1x figuratively (Rev. 17:2).

¹³³The passive meaning is supported by all the ancient versions.

¹³⁴See also: Psalm 10:1, 55:2, Prov. 28:27, Ezek. 22:26. The LXX word is found in the GNT only in Acts 17:30 (“God over-looked/winked at these times of ignorance”).

¹³⁵Calvin, Pusey, and Keil, however interpreted this hiddenness in terms of disappearance “as though it had never been” (cf. Obadiah 1:16). Cf. Michael Barrett’s 2021 commentary: “The word for ‘hiding’ also has the sense of being unconscious or deranged and may fit the idea of drunkenness a bit better.”

- either because they are so unimpressive that nobody notices them,
 - or because their problems are so hideous and embarrassing that nobody wants to deal with them.
- This is God’s judgment upon the proud who set themselves against God.
- The third judgment of God upon Nineveh in v.11 that will give it down-and-out status is that they will become displaced persons, “searching for a safe” place to live.
 - Logically, this implies that Nineveh will no longer be a “strong refuge” for them; Nineveh will be destroyed, leaving its people vulnerable to enemies.
 - After being the terror of the earth, they will be reduced to begging for a safe place to stay.
 - This is what it comes down to: Either get right with God and live in the safety of His care eternally, or live in rebellion against God and exist in fear, searching for safety.
 - **Revelation 6:15-17** describes a similar scenario at the end of time when the world in rebellion against God tried to “...hide¹³⁶ themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (NKJV)
 - The only alternative is to do what the Psalmist did and make God your “strong refuge:” **Psalm 43:1-5** “Adjudicate for me, God, and argue my case, please, against an ungodly nation. Deliver me from... deceit and injustice! For it is You who are my God, my stronghold/refuge! [*this is the same word in the Greek translation of Nahum 3:11*] ... Send Your light and Your truth; it is they that will guide me and bring me to the mountain of Your holiness and to Your chambers... Develop hope towards God, because I shall praise Him again... [for] salvations...” (NAW)
- Due to its rebellion against God, God said to Nineveh, “I am against you,” but we who are in Christ hear another word from God in Romans 8:31-39 “...If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (**Romans 8:31-39**, NKJV)

¹³⁶In both of the places where “hide” appears in this passage from Revelation 6, it is the standard Greek word for “hide” κρυπτω, whereas the LXX word used to translate “hid” in Nahum 3:11 was υπερεωραμένη (“overlook”).

Nahum 3:5-11 – Side-by side comparison of versions^{GX}

| Douay ^{GY} (Vulgate) | LXX ^{GZ} | Brenton ^{HA} (Vaticanus) | KJV ^{HB} | NASB ^{HC} | NIV ^{HD} | ESV ^{HE} | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew ^{HF} | Bauscher ^{HG} (Peshitta) | Cathcart ^{HH} (Targums) |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| 5 Behold I [come ^{HI}] against thee, saith the Lord of hosts: and I will dis- cover thy shame to thy face, and will shew thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms. | 5 ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐπὶ σέ, λέγει κύριος [ὁ θεός] ὁ παντοκράτωρ, καὶ ἀποκαλύψω τὰ ὀπίσω σου ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου καὶ δείξω ^{HU} ἔθνεσιν τὴν αἰσχύνην σου καὶ βασιλείας τὴν ἀτιμίαν σου | 5 Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord [God] Almighty, and I will uncover thy skirts in thy presence , and I will shew the nations thy shame, and the kingdoms thy disgrace. | 5 Behold, I <i>am</i> against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. | 5 "Behold, I am against you," declares the LORD of hosts; "And I will lift up your skirts over your face, And show to the nations your nakedness And to the kingdoms your disgrace. | 5 "X I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame. | 5 Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, and will lift-up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame. | 5 "Look at me; I am against you," declares Yahweh, Commander of armies, "and I will strip your skirts over your face, and I will show nations your nakedness, and kingdoms your shame, | (ה) הִנֵּנִי אֵלֶיךָ נָא יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת גְּלִיתִי שְׂלִיךְ עַל כְּנִיף וְסָרַמְתִּי גוֹיִם מִצָּרָךְ וּמִמְלָכֹת קְלוֹנֶךָ. | 5 Behold, I am against you, says LORD JEHOVAH of Hosts, and I shall throw your skirts over your faces, and I shall show your nakedness to the nations and your dis-honor to the kingdoms | 5. "Behold, I am [sending my wrath] upon you", says the Lord of hosts, "and I will reveal the shame of you[r sins] upon your face, and I will show the nations your shame and the kingdoms your disgrace. |
| 6 And I will cast abominations upon thee, and will disgrace thee, and will make an example of thee. | 6 καὶ ἐπιρρίψω ἐπὶ σέ βδελυγμὸν κατὰ τὰς ἐκκαθαρσίας σου καὶ θήσομαι ^{HL} σε εἰς παράδειγμα, | 6 And I will cast abominable filthX upon thee according to thine un- clean ways , and will make thee a [public] example . | 6 And I will cast abominable filthX upon thee, and make thee vile , and will set thee as a gazing-stock . | 6 "X I will throw filthX on you And make you vile . And set you up as a spectacle. | 6 X I will pelt you with filthX, I will treat you with contempt and make you X a spectacle. | 6 X I will throw filthX at you and treat you with contempt and make you X a spectacle. | 6 and I will throw abominable-idols on top of you, and I will make a fool of you, then I will set you up as a sight [to see], | (ו) וְהִשְׁלַכְתִּי עֲלֶיךָ שְׂקָצִים וְהִבְזִיתִי וְשִׁמְתִּיךָ כְּרָאִי. | 6 And I shall cast defilement X upon you and I shall disgrace you and I shall make you into a spectacle | 6. And I will cast abominations upon you and will treat you with contempt , and I will make you X [repugnant in the eyes of all who] see [you]. |
| 7 And it shall come to pass that every one that shall see thee, shall lee from thee, and shall say: Nineveh is laid waste ; who shall be- moan thee? whence shall I seek a comforter for thee? | 7 καὶ ἔσται πᾶς ὁ ὁρῶν σε ^{HO} ἀποκηρύσσεται ἀπὸ σοῦ καὶ ἐρεῖ Δεῖλαιά ^{HP} Νινευη· τίς στενάξει αὐτήν; πόθεν ζητήσω παράκλησιν αὐτή; ^{HQ} | 7 And it shall be that every one that sees thee shall de- wine ^{HR} from thee, and shall say, Wretched Nineve! who shall lament for her? whence shall I seek comfort for her? | 7 And it shall come to pass, <i>that</i> all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste : who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee? | 7 "And it will come about that all who see you Will shrink from you and say, 'Nineveh is dev- astated ! Who will grieve for her?' X Where will I seek comforters for you?" | 7 X X All who see you will flee from you and say, "Nineveh is in ruins —who will mourn for her?" X Where can I find [any] oneX to comfort X you?" | 7 And X all who look at you will shrink from you and say, "Wasted is Nineveh; who will grieve for her?" X Where would I seek comforters for you? | 7 and it will be that everyone who sees you will with- draw from you and will say, "Nineveh has been devastated; who will be sympathetic toward her?" Where ever would I seek comforters for you from? | (ז) וְהָיָה כָּל רֹאֵהְךָ מִן מִקְדָּךְ יִנָּמֵר שְׂדֵדִינִינָה מִי נָדָה ^{HS} לָהּ מֵאֵין ^{HU} אֶבְקֶשׁ מְנַחֲמִים לָהּ. | 7 X Every-one whoever sees you shall be loathe of you and shall say: "[For whom] is Nineva plundered[?]" Will you sorrow for yourself, and where shall I seek a comforter for you? | 7. And it shall come to pass that everyone who sees you will withdraw from you and say, 'Nineveh has been plundered !' Who will mourn for you? X Where shall I find those who will comfort you? |
| 8 Art thou better than the popu- lous Alex- andria , that dwell eth among the rivers? waters are round about it: the sea is its riches : the waters are its wall[s]. | 8 [ἐτοιμάσα μερίδα, ἄρμωσα χορδήν.] ἐτοιμάσα ^{HV} μερίδα, Ἀμων ἡ κατοικοῦσα ἐν ποταμοῖς, ὕδωρ κύκλω αὐτῆς, ἥς ἡ ἄρχη ^{HW} θάλασσα [καὶ ^{HX}] ὕδωρ αὐτῆς, | 8 [Prepare thee a portion, tune the chord.] prepare a portion for Ammon: she that dwells among the rivers, water is round about her, whose do- minion is the sea, [and] whose wall[s] are water . | 8 Art thou better than populous No X , that was situate among the rivers, <i>that</i> had the waters round about it, whose ram- part was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? | 8 Are you better than No-amon , Which was situated by the waters [of the Nile, With] water surrounding her, Whose rampart was the sea, Whose wall consisted of the sea? | 8 Are you better than Thebes , situated on the Nile, with water around her? The river was her defense , X the waters her wall. | 8 Are you better than Thebes that sat by the Nile, with water around her, her rampart a sea, and water her wall? | 8 Are you better than No-Amon — the one set- tled along the rivers, water all around her, the rampart of which was the sea, her defensive-wall being /the water\? | (ח) הֲתֵיטִבִּי מִן אֲמֹן הֲשָׁכָה בֵּינָרִים מִיִּם סָבִיב לָהּ אֲשֶׁר הָיָה ^{HZ} מִיִּם חֻמָּתָהּ | 8 Are you better than Yavan of Amon who dwells on the rivers and waters surround him, whose power is the sea and the waters , his fortification | 8. Are you better than the great Alex-andria which is situated between the rivers, with water all about her, whose wall is the sea, [the waters] of the sea her wall? |

| Douay (Vulgate) | LXX | Brenton (Vaticanus) | KJV | NASB | NIV | ESV | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew | Bauscher (Peshitta) | Cathcart (Targums) |
|--|---|--|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| 9 Ethiopia and Egypt were the strength thereof, and there is no end : Africa and the Libyans were thy helper[s]. | 9 [καὶ ¹⁹] Αἰθιοπία ἡ ἰσχύς αὐτῆς καὶ Αἰγύπτου, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν πέρας [τῆς] φωνῆς, καὶ Λίβυες ἐγένοντο βοηθοὶ αὐτῆς. | 9 [And] Ethiopia is her strength, and Egypt; and there was no limit of [the] flight [of her enemies ^{1C}]; and the Libyans became her helper[s]. | 9 Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite ; Put and Lubim were X thy helper[s]. | 9 Ethiopia was <i>her</i> might , And Egypt too, X without limit[s] . Put and Lubim were among <i>her</i> helper[s]. | 9 Cush and Egypt were her boundless strength; Put and Libya were among <i>her</i> allie[s]. | 9 Cush was her strength; Egypt too, and that without limit ; Put and the Libyans were X <i>her</i> helper[s]. | 9 Ethiopia was her strength, and so was Egypt, and that without limit . Sudan and Libya were in your alliance. | (ט) כוש וְעִצְמָהּ ^{1C} וּמִצְרַיִם וְאַיִן מֶצֶה פְּוֹטִים וְלִיבְיִים הִיוּ בְּעֶזְרָתָהּ ^{1E} . | 9 Cush and Egypt is her strength and she has no limit ; the Putians and the Libyans were among <i>her</i> allie[s] | 9. Cush was an ally , Egypt also, and without limit ; the Putians and Libyans were X your support . |
| 10 Yet she also was X removed and carried into captivity: X her young children were dashed in pieces at the top of every streetX, and they cast lots upon her nobles, and all her great men were bound in fetters. | 10 καὶ ^{1G} αὐτὴ εἰς ^{1H} μετοικεσίαν πορεύσεται αἰχμάλωτος, καὶ τὰ νήπια αὐτῆς ἐδαφιοῦσιν ἐπ' ἀρχὰς πασῶν τῶν ὁδῶν [αὐτῆς ^{1I}], καὶ ἐπὶ [πάντα] τὰ ἐνδοξα αὐτῆς βαλοῦσιν κλήρους, καὶ πάντες οἱ μεγίστων-ες αὐτῆς δεθήσονται χειροπέδαις. | 10 Yet she shall go as a prisoner into captivity, and they shall X dashX her infants [against the ground] at the top of all [her] ways: and they shall cast lots upon [all] her glorious [possession s], and all her nobles shall be bound in chains. | 10 Yet was she X carried away , she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. | 10 Yet she became an exile . She went into captivity; Also her small children were dashed to pieces At the head of every streetX. X They cast lots for her honourable men, And all her great men were bound with fetters . | 10 Yet she was taken captive and went into exile. X Her infants were dashed to pieces at the head of every streetX. X Lots were cast for her nobles , and all her great men were put in chains. | 10 Yet she became an exile ; she went into captivity; X her infants were dashed in pieces at the head of every streetX; X for her honored men lots were cast, and all her great men were bound in chains. | 10 Even she become an exile : she went into captivity. Even her nursing-babies were dashed to pieces at the head of all the streets. And over her honored men they handled dice, and all her great men were bound with chains. | (י) גַּם הִיא לְגִלְגָּל הַלֶּכֶה בְּשִׁבְיָ גַּם עֲלֵלֶיהָ יִרְטְשׁוּ ^{1K} בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל חֲצוֹת וְעַל נִכְבְּדֶיהָ יִדּוּ גוֹרָל וְכָל דְּוָלֶיהָ רְתָקוּ ^{1L} בְּנִיקִים. | 10 Also she went into X captivity and her children were dashed to pieces at the head of all [its] streets, and for her honorable men they cast lots and all her great ones were bound in chains | 10. Yet she is for captivity , she shall go into exile ; moreover , her youths shall be dashed in pieces at the head of every streetX, and they shall cast lots upon her honourable men, and all her nobles shall be crushed in chains. |
| 11 Therefore thou also shalt be made drunk, and shalt be despised : and thou shalt seek help from the enem[ies]. | 11 καὶ σὺ ^{1M} μεθυθήσῃ καὶ ἔση ὑπερωραμένη, καὶ σὺ ζητήσεις σεαυτῇ στάσιν ^{1O} ἐξ ἐχθρῶν. | 11 And thou shalt be drunken, and shalt be overlooked ; and thou shalt seek for thyself strength because of [thine] enem[ies]. | 11 Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid , thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy. | 11 You too will become drunk, You will be hid -den. You too will search for a refuge from the enemy. | 11 You too will become drunk; you will go into hiding and X seek refuge from the enemy. | 11 You also will be drunken; you will go into hiding ; X you will seek a refuge from the enemy. | 11 Even you yourself will become in-toxicated ; you will be disregarded . Even you yourself will seek refuge from the enemies. | (א) גַּם אַתָּ תִשְׁכָּר יִהְיֶה נִעְלָמָה גַּם אַתָּ תִּבְקָשׁ מִצֹּד מֵאֹיְבֶיךָ ^{1R} . | 11 Also you shall be wretched , and you shall be despised ; also you shall seek help from [your] enem[ies] | 11. You too are like one that is drunk; you shall be destroyed , you too shall seek help against the enemy. |

^{GX} NAW is my translation. When a translation adds words not in the Hebrew text, but does not indicate it has done so by the use of italics or greyed-out text, I put the added words in [square brackets]. When one version chooses a wording which is different from all the other translations, I underline it. When a version chooses a translation which, in my opinion, either departs too far from the root meaning of the Hebrew word or departs too far from the grammar form of the original text, I use **strikeout**. And when a version omits a word which is in the original text, I insert an X. I also place an X at the end of a word if the original word is plural but the English translation is singular. I occasionally use colors to help the reader see correlations between the various editions and versions when there are more than two different translations of a given word. The only known Dead Sea Scrolls containing Nahum 3 are 4Q82 (containing parts of verses 1-3 & 17 and dated between 30-1 BC), The *Nahal Hever* Greek scroll (containing parts of vs. 1-3 & 6-16 and dated around 25BC), and the Wadi Muraba'at Scroll (containing parts of verses 1-19 and dated around 135 AD). Where the DSS are legible and in agreement with the MT, the MT is colored **purple**. Where the DSS support the LXX/Vulgate/Peshitta with omissions or text not in the MT, I have **highlighted with yellow** the LXX and its translation into English, and where I have accepted that into my NAW translation, I have marked it with /forward and backward slashes\.

- ^{GY} Douay Old Testament first published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609, Revised and Diligently Compared with the Latin Vulgate by Bishop Richard Challoner, Published in 1582, 1609, 1752. As published on E-Sword.
- ^{GZ} “Septuagint” Greek Old Testament, edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Published in 1935. As published on E-Sword.
- ^{HA} English translation of the Septuagint by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, 1851, “based upon the text of the Vaticanus” but not identical to the *Vaticanus*. As published electronically by E-Sword.
- ^{HB} 1769 King James Version of the Holy Bible; public domain. As published electronically by E-Sword.
- ^{HC} Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
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- ^{HE} Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- ^{HF} From the Wiki Hebrew Bible
https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%94_%D7%90%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA.
 DSS text comes from <https://downloads.thewaytoyahuwah.com>
- ^{HG} The Peshitta Holy Bible Translated by Glenn David Bauscher, Copyright © 2018 Lulu Publishing, 3rd edition Copyright © 2019 as found on <https://biblehub.com/hpbt/naum/3.htm>
- ^{HH} From *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, Volume 14, 1989, Cathcart, Kevin J; Gordon, R. P. As found on https://wbsg8v.xyz/d3/y/1715385560/100/u/ia/annas-archive-ia-2023-06-acsm/t/targumofminorpro0014unse.pdf/~f8jMjv18tRB-fitiyGs6_g/The%20Aramaic%20Bible%3A%20The%20Targum%20of%20the%20Minor%20Prophets%20--%20Cathcart%2C%20Kevin%20J%3B%20Gordon%2C%20R_%20P%20--%20Volume%2014%2C%201989%20--%20Wilmington%2C%20Del_%3A%20M_%20Glazier%20--%209780894534898%20--%202c2211ab706b64db6d34be810eef40da%20--%20Anna%E2%80%99s%20Archive.pdf on 10 May 2024
- ^{HI} This word “come” is not in the original Latin text; it was added by Douay for the English translation.
- ^{HJ} “show... kingdom... peoples” occurs in the LXX of Esther 1:4 & 11 (when the Babylonian King “showed off” his “kingdom” and also wanted to show off his queen before the “nations”) and in the GNT in Matthew 4:8 (when the Devil “showed” Jesus all the “kingdoms” of the world).
- ^{HK} The first half of this verse is a reiteration of 2:13.
- ^{HL} *Nahal Hever* reads with an active form (θησω) instead of the LXX’s deponent form, but the meaning is the same.
- ^{HM} All 48 instances of this word are associated with idols and the worship of false gods, so I question the prevailing opinion among commentators that this is speaking of physical “filth.”
- ^{HN} The only other times this verb appear in the Piel stem are Deut. 32:15 (“lightly esteemed the Rock”), Jer. 14:21 (“don’t make a fool of the seat of Your glory”), and Mic. 7:6 (“son makes a fool of father”).
- ^{HO} Symmachus rendered with ἀναχωρησει (“clear out”), an equally fair translation of the MT.
- ^{HP} N. H. reads differently. The legible portion of this word is -πωρηκε-. A search for that string in the LXX yields only one word, τεταλαπωρηκεν (“afflicted/miserable/wretched” Jer. 4:20; Joel 1:10; Zech. 11:3), which turns out to be a close synonym to the LXX, further evidence that they are independent translations. Symmachus rendered διεσκεδασται, possibly closer to the MT Hebrew meaning “it has been destroyed.”
- ^{HQ} Another instance of a homophone variant in the LXX. If the translator were visually reading the original, he would have translated correctly, but since he was hearing someone else read it, and the Hebrew הָלָה (“to her”) sounds the same as הָלָה (“to you”), a variant was introduced.
- ^{HR} Although the Greek word in the LXX can mean “dismount,” it also can mean “get off” or “leap away” from, and the latter would have been a better English translation.
- ^{HS} Most instances of this verb have to do with back-and-forth movement, but the meaning of “mourning/sympathizing” shows up here and in Isa. 51:19, Jer. 15:5, 22:10, 31:18, & 48:17, Psalm 69:20, and Job 2:11, & 42:11.
- ^{HT} Curiously, this pronoun in the Aramaic versions is 2nd person (“you”), whereas it is 3rd person (“her”) in MT, Latin, & Greek.
- ^{HU} The final *nun* appears to be a lengthened form of the interrogative נָח (“where”). Perhaps since it borrows the spelling of the negative particle (יָח) it emphasizes the negation of the prospect that it is anywhere. This lengthened form of נָח is also found in Gen. 29:4, 42:7, Num. 11:13, Josh. 2:4, 9:8, Jdg. 17:9, 19:17, 2 Ki. 5:25, 6:27, 20:14, Job 1:7, 28:12,20, Psa. 121:1, Isa. 39:3, and Jon. 1:8.
- ^{HV} The first phrase in the LXX appears to be an alternate translation of the first phrase in Hebrew. *Nahal Hever* omits that repetition, reading like the MT and other versions except with a negative: μη αγαθους ‘υπ- “You are not better than...” (Aquila’s version concurs, and Symmachus translated with the synonym βελτιων=better than, and Theodotian with the synonym καλη). The name that follows is illegible in N.H., so, unfortunately, it can’t be compared to the LXX, but Aq, Sym. and Theod. all interpreted the Hebrew *minno ammon* as “than Ammon.”

- ^{HW} N.H. has the synonym ἰσχυς (“strength”), which is a closer translation of the MT than the LXX.
- ^{HX} N.H. omits “and,” thus reading more like MT, but the meaning is not significantly different either way.
- ^{HY} This word is only here and 2 Sam. 20:15, 1 Ki. 21:23, Ps. 48:14, 122:7, Isa. 26:1, and Lam. 2:8. I have translated it “ram-part,” “bulwark,” and “defensive wall.”
- ^{HZ} This word “sea” is missing in W.M., but it’s in the other DSS (N.H.) as it is in the MT and all the ancient versions. The LXX and Peshitta, however, add an “and” here. The MT just has a disjunctive accent here, not a conjunction-word, but the practical upshot is much the same.
- ^{IA} NIV, ESV, NET, & NLT follow the Vulgate, LXX, and Peshitta which reasonably translate the unpointed text as “water,” but with the Masoretic pointing it becomes “from the sea,” which is the reading of Geneva, KJV & NASB. Targums go both ways.
- ^{IB} Although obscured, N.H. does not appear to have this extra καί, and the MT and other versions match without it.
- ^{IC} Brenton appears to have added this explanatory phrase for the word “flight” – it is not in the LXX or *Vaticanus*.
- ^{ID} The unpointed text could be either a feminine form of “strength/force,” or it could be a 3fs possessive pronoun “her strength.” Masoretic pointing from the 900’s AD chose the former, followed by one of the Targums and the NASB, NET, & NLT, but the consensus of the Vulgate, LXX, Peshitta, Geneva, KJV, NIV, ESV, and another Targum is the latter, which would call for a dot in the middle of the last letter. (The song “Dagesh In The He” that I composed and recorded with Nathan Clark George explains it all.)
- ^{IE} N.H., Aq., Sym. and Theod. spell as the place name Put (פּוּט/τ), followed by MT and all the other versions. (The Vulgate paraphrased “Africa” rather than transliterating “Put,” and the LXX editor noticed that the Hebrew word sounded a lot like the Greek word for “fugitive” and just went with it. Put would correspond roughly to modern-day Sudan.)
- ^{IF} Geneva, NASB, NIV, NET, ESV, and NLT decided to follow the LXX & Syriac (“her” – which would have sounded the same but would have been spelled with a different letter in Hebrew) instead of the DSS, MT, Targums, Vulgate, and KJV (“your”). This “your” in Hebrew is spelled feminine and singular, so its meaning in English would be a cross between “her” and “your.”
- ^{IG} This and the next καί are translated καίτε in N.H. No significant difference in meaning.
- ^{IH} N.H. employed the ατ- prefix instead of the μετα- prefix to the next main verb, but it is a synonymous meaning.
- ^{II} N.H. does not have space between legible words to include this word. MT also does not include this pronoun, although it doesn’t change the meaning.
- ^{IJ} From a root that means “suck milk.” The only other instances of this word are in Ps. 137:9 (where it speaks of dashing Edom’s infants against stones in retribution), Jer. 6:11 & 9:20 (Judgment coming on Jerusalem, even its children), and Lam. 1:5, 2:19, 4:4, Joel 2:16, and Mic. 2:9 (with less-relevant indicatives about children).
- ^{IK} Vulgate and Syriac (followed by all English versions to my knowledge) translated this as past tense, even though it is in imperfect tense in Hebrew (the LXX and Targums rendered it as future tense). The LXX reasonably translated the unpointed text actively, but all other versions follow the Hophal passive pointing in the MT. It is a rare word, only occurring here and 2 Ki. 8:12, Isa. 13:16-18, and Hos. 10:14 & 14:1 – all in connection with killing nursing children.
- ^{IL} The only other instance of this word is in Ecclesiastes 12:6 – what happens to the “silver cord” at death. This rare word (רִתְּקוֹן) could have been chosen to parallel דָּשַׁן (dash in pieces) from earlier in the verse.
- ^{IM} *Nahal Hever* reads γε instead of the LXX ου. Καί γε might be a slightly better-nuanced translation of the the Hebrew *gam*, but the Hebrew does have an emphatic pronoun “you” here which is in the LXX, but not in *Nahal Hever*. However, since the verb has the second person embedded in it, the meaning is not really any different.
- ^{IN} *Nahal Hever* is partially illegible, but the letter ε is visible before ου here, presumably translating the Hebrew *gam* as καί γε, like it did at the beginning of the verse - yet another indication that *Nahal Hever* was a separate translation into Greek.
- ^{IO} By the time of the Greek N. T., this word had a different meaning, that of insurrection/disputation, but there is an interesting judgment-day parallel in Rev. 6:17 which uses the same Greek root in the phrase “who is able to stand?”
- ^{IP} Cf. Hab. 2:16.
- ^{IQ} The Niphal spelling is properly interpreted reflexively by the Geneva (“hide thyself”) or passively (“be concealed/ignored/disregarded”) by Vulgate, LXX, Peshitta, Targums, KJV, and NASB, but the Niphal stem is ignored and translated actively (“hiding”) by NIV & ESV. There are other words in Hebrew with a more primary meaning of “cover/hide,” but this one is used throughout the HOT to indicate accidental ignorance or a purposeful averting of the eyes or ears so as not to see or hear another person. BHS suggested that switching the second and third letters of this word could generate the Targum’s word “destroyed.”
- ^{IR} Peshitta, Symmachus, and Brenton add “your,” but it is not in the LXX (not even *Vaticanus*) or Vulgate. However, what is in the Peshitta, LXX, and Vulgate is a plural ending. Since no DSS have survived with this word intact, those ancient versions are much closer to the time of the original than the existing Hebrew text itself. The fact that Symmachus also saw a suffix on the ending of the Hebrew word also raises doubt as to the MT spelling. But whether it is “your enemy,” “enemy” or “enemies,” the general meaning comes out the same.

Nahum 3:12-19 – The Incurable Wound

Introduction

- The end of the book of Nahum continues with God's threat to bring judgment against a nation which had set itself in opposition against Him, and, using various agricultural images, makes the case that everything they were trusting to keep them safe - their fortifications, their army-men, their gates, their walls, their leaders, their trade, their numbers, their resilience - "all those things which they reposed a confidence in [w]ould fail them." ~M. Henry 1714, AD
- Read my translation of Nahum 3:12-19:
All your forts are fig-trees with first-fruits; just let them be shaken, and they will fall into the mouth of the devourer! Look, your people are women in your midst. Before your enemies, the gates of your land are completely open; fire devours your door-bolts. Bottle water for yourself for the siege. Strengthen your forts. Go to the mud-pit and make a mix with the clay; get a handle on the brick-work. It is there that the fire will devour you. The sword will cut you down; it will devour you like a young-locust. Let it make itself as overwhelming as the young-locust; let it make itself as overwhelming as the swarming-locust! You have made your merchants more numerous than the stars of the skies. The young-locust has molted and taken wing. Your devotees are like the swarming-locust. Furthermore, your officers are like burrowing locusts that entrench in the walls on a cold day. When the sun has risen, he is withdrawn, and it is not known where his location is. Your shepherds have gotten drowsy, O King of Assyria. Your nobles have gotten cozy. Your people were panicked upon the mountains, and there is no rallying them. There is no diminishing to your brokenness – [no] weakening of the strike against you. All who listen to the hearsay about you clap hands over you, for upon whom has your evil not had a lasting effect?

v. 12 – God Starts To Trash-talk!

- The fortifications mentioned in v.12 might be the wall of the main city or perhaps outlying military forts around the city (Calvin). But they are compared to fig trees.
- Fig trees seem to have been the sort of thing everybody had in their back yard in those days, so it was a familiar image.
 - **Isaiah 28:4** Regarding Ephraim: "And the fading flower of the beauty of his glory which is upon the head of the valley of riches will be like a ripe fig before summer which as soon as the see-er sees it, it is in his hand and he swallows it." (NAW)
- Fig trees do not grow big like elms and oaks (Many don't grow any taller than 15 feet!), so it was not very flattering for God to compare Nineveh to a fig tree.
- Furthermore, the main point of a fig tree is to eat its fruit¹³⁷.
 - So, when you go to harvest figs, does the fig-tree fight back and say, "Hey! Give me back my figs, or I'll poke your eyes out!"? No! it just stands there while you shake the ripe figs off of it and you pick the fallen fruit up off the ground.
 - God is implying that the mighty city of Nineveh is going to be a pushover and that

¹³⁷Perhaps also to provide close shade (John 1:48).

Nineveh's riches are just there for someone else to take.¹³⁸

- So God is trash-talking Nineveh. The scary thing is, Nineveh doesn't have a chance in this fight; their proud rebellion against God is a pitiful delusion of strength, and the same is true of every civilization which rises up without acknowledging accountability to their Creator.
- God promises that He is going to shake things up in judgment in our world too, in the future.
 - **Revelation 6:13** "And the stars of heaven fell [will fall] to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind." (NKJV)
 - *So, how will you survive the shaking?* You turn to "face" the "Lord" and accept the terms of His covenant; then He becomes your "helper" "at your right hand" rather than your adversary intent on destroying you.
 - **Acts 2:25** "For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.'" (NKJV)
 - **Hebrews 12:26-29** "...now He has promised saying, 'Once more I myself am shaking not only the earth but also heaven.' Now, the 'Once more' shows the replacement of the things being shaken (in this case, of things which have been created) such that the things which are not being shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us continue to be grateful, by means of which we may minister most-acceptably to God with reverence and devotion, for indeed, our God is a consuming¹³⁹ fire." (NAW)
- The trash-talk continues as we go into v.13. God taunts Nineveh, saying that they aren't going to put up any resistance to their conquerors.

v. 13 – The Ease With Which God Will Overthrow Nineveh

- Now, this was in the days when women weren't allowed in the Army.
 - The stereotype may have its exceptions, but it seems to be part of God's natural design for women to seek safety from trauma while it is part of God's natural design for men to become more aggressive under trauma and go on the attack.
 - God's design is quite sensible; somebody needs to preserve the human race while somebody else staves off threats – this isn't saying that there's anything wrong with women and the impulse to seek safety. The problem is when persons with a primary impulse to seek safety are put in the position of being the ones who are supposed to attack the enemies.
 - So, to call all Nineveh's soldiers "women" was an insult¹⁴⁰, but what could they do about it? They weren't going to be able to prove God wrong on this when "the rivers' gates were opened, and the palace dissolved," (**Nahum 2:6**, NAW) and the Medes and Persians in their crimson uniforms came pouring in to Nineveh, stabbing and slashing as they came. The Assyrian army wasn't going to put up resistance.
- According to Isaiah and Jeremiah, Egypt and Babylon would be in the same boat when their time

¹³⁸"And hence an useful doctrine may be deduced: whatever strength men may seek for themselves from different quarters, it will wholly vanish away; for neither forts, nor towers, nor ramparts, nor troops of men, nor any kind of contrivances, will avail any thing..." ~J. Calvin, 1559 AD

¹³⁹καταναλίσκων, a synonym to the word "eater" (ἔσθοντος) in the LXX of Nahum.

¹⁴⁰"God prepares men for ruin, when he debilitates their hearts, that they cannot bear the sight of their enemies... By saying, *in the midst of thee*, he intimates, that though they should be separated from their enemies and dwell in a fortified city, they should yet be filled with trembling.... smitten by the hand of God... that they would not cease to tremble, even while they were dwelling in a safe place." ~Calvin, 1559 AD

came for God's temporal judgment, "The mighty men... have ceased fighting, They have remained in their strongholds; Their might has failed, They became like women" (Jer. 51:30),¹⁴¹ for, as Romans 9:19 puts it, "Who can resist God's will?!"

- Even the very defensive infrastructure of Nineveh¹⁴² will give no resistance. Nahum says that the gates of the land¹⁴³ will be left "wide-open for their invaders," and the "dead-bolts" or "bars" (that were supposed to provide reinforcement to keep the gates and doors closed) won't work because they will be burnt and useless¹⁴⁴.
- When God is ready to move, nothing and nobody is going to get in His way; resistance is useless. In **Revelation 20:8-9**, we read of "Satan... deceiv[ing] the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle... and surround[ing] the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." (NKJV) "*Fire*" would also "*devour*" Nineveh.
- God's taunt against His enemies goes on in v.14; in this verse He jeers at the work they are doing to prepare for a siege.

v. 14 – God's Enemies Prepare In Vain

- Now, we all need water to survive, so one of the ways to prepare a city for a siege was to make sure everybody had enough drinking water secured in reservoirs/bottles/wells, otherwise, everybody is dead of dehydration within a matter of days. *Indeed Nineveh was besieged for over two years before it fell.*
- This "water" may also go with the rest of this verse describing the process for making bricks to shore up city walls.
 - Back in those days, concrete hadn't been introduced to that part of the world, so they built with bricks of dried mud.
 - Water would be dumped onto a spot of ground that had a lot of clay in the soil, and, since this was in the days before concrete-mixers with internal combustion engines, they simply squished the water between their toes into the clay (Isa. 41:25, Rom. 9:21) until it was the right consistency to cut or mold into the shape of bricks,
 - then they would set the wet bricks out to dry in the sun until they got hard, and voila! they would have bricks to make a wall taller or thicker or to repair holes in the wall.
 - There wasn't much timber or stone to build with in that area (Calvin), but there was plenty of clay (Pusey). The ancient historian Xenophon (*Anab.* iii.4.4) described the massive brick wall he saw on the stone foundation of Nineveh, and archaeologists have confirmed that the great double outer rampart on the east side of Nineveh was made of brick and earth (Lehrman).
 - Isaiah described similar preparations that the Jews in Jerusalem did when they were

¹⁴¹ **Isaiah 19:16** "In that day Egypt will be like women, and they will tremble and fear before the hand that Yahweh Commander of armies shakes over them." (NAW)

Jeremiah 50:37 "A sword is against their horses, Against their chariots, And against all the mixed peoples who are in her midst; And they will become like women. A sword is against her treasures, and they will be robbed..." (NKJV)
cf. **Luke 21:26** "...men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth..." (NKJV)

¹⁴² And of Egypt (Isa. 45:1-2) and of Babylon (Jer. 51:30b).

¹⁴³ Pusey noted that "gates of the land" were different from "city gates," explaining that mountain passes which afforded access to Nineveh are probably what is meant. Kyle agreed and interpreted the "bolts" as forts at those passes.

¹⁴⁴ "For as we see that so great is the vehemence of fire, that it melts iron and brass, so the Prophet means, that there would be no strength which could defend Nineveh and its empire against the hand of God." ~Calvin

threatened with a siege in **Isaiah 22:9-10** “...y'all saw the breaches of the city of David, for they were many. So y'all collected the waters of the lower pool, and y'all counted the houses of Jerusalem, then y'all broke down the houses to fortify¹⁴⁵ the wall.” (NAW)

- V.14 echoes what had been said earlier in **Nahum 2:1** “One who scatters has come up against your front: guard the fort-wall! Monitor the road; tighten belts; marshal extra strength...” (NAW) *It's as though God is mocking the Ninevites as they work to prepare themselves for a siege.*
- No matter what they do to fortify their city, verse 15 opens by saying, it is “there” within their own city that they will be destroyed.

v. 15 – Three Images of God’s Punishment

- The “fire” and the “sword” are familiar images that we’ve already encountered in Nahum to describe the conquest of Nineveh, for instance, Nahum 2:13a “‘Look at me; I am against you,’ declares Yahweh, Commander of armies, ‘and I will cause your cavalry to burn up in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions...” (NAW)
 - And indeed, archaeologists have found much evidence of fire damage in the ancient ruins of Nineveh, including vast amounts of cinders from the wooden roof that caught fire, and evidence of “intense and sustained heat,” such as “melted nails.” (Pusey, quoting Botta)
- But the “locust” is a new image, yet still a familiar one to anyone acquainted with agriculture.
 - Often in late summer, grasshoppers come through my garden and eat everything they can. They seem to like my iris blades, and I don’t mind that, but when they get into my vegetables, that’s another story!
 - What with the hard frosts of winter here, and the pesticides used in the fields around us, and other factors, I haven’t seen these insects get too out-of-control.
 - But sometimes conditions line up for them to multiply way more than normal, and there get to be so many of them that they eat every edible crop as well as every leaf and blade of grass throughout a whole region.
 - This is the picture we have here in Nahum 3:15 – a metaphor of a human army marching through the land and eating and destroying absolutely everything in its path.¹⁴⁶
 - Two Hebrew words for “locust/grasshopper” show up in this verse: *yeleq* and *arebeh*.
 - The first is translated “young locusts/caterpillars/grasshoppers/cankerworm” – the root idea of its meaning being to “eat up” things, so it may refer to the nymph stage of the locust when it is most voracious in eating and does not have developed wings.
 - The second kind of locust is sometimes translated “swarming/great locust,” and its root meaning is “to be many,” so this may refer to the adult stage of the insect when it swarms and reproduces.
- The end of verse 15 is very interesting to me, and I would like to suggest a translation of v.15 that is different from most English versions.
 - In Hebrew there are two commands, both commanding the subject to “make itself heavy/weighty/significant¹⁴⁷,” both in comparison to locusts. This is a different Hebrew verb root from the one at the beginning of v.16 (which simply means “to multiply/be many”); this

¹⁴⁵בצר, a synonym to Nahum’s חזק.

¹⁴⁶I (along with Metsudath David, Newcome, and others) interpret the locusts as an image of the Medo-Persians destroying Nineveh. Calvin and Grotius, however, interpreted the locusts as the Ninevites destroying other nations. Matthew Henry and Keil maintained that both were the case here.

command in v.15 has more to do with the effect of weight or importance upon others, which is why I translated it “overwhelm.”

- But what’s interesting is that the first command is to a masculine singular subject whereas the second command is to a feminine singular subject. So the question is, what pair of masculine and feminine subjects could he be commanding to make themselves overwhelming?
- The word “you,” referring to Nineveh, is the first thing that most people think of as the subject of this command¹⁴⁸, but the word “you” here is only feminine, with no masculine parallel, so I don’t think Nineveh is what’s being commanded to become heavy and overwhelming.
- But there is a masculine singular and feminine singular pair in this verse, and it is the masculine “fire” and the feminine “sword,” so I think it is the fire and sword wielded by the Medo-Persian armies which God is commanding to become overwhelming to the citizens of Nineveh.
- The way it’s usually translated in English is like the imperatives in v.14, where God is practically jeering at the Assyrians while they try to build up a bigger army, because He knows all their efforts will be in vain.
- But the translation I’m suggesting is more in line with the first half of v.15 with the fire and sword overwhelming and consuming and destroying Nineveh. And the sovereignty of God is just as present because, if these are commands to the fire and the sword, then all it takes is a word from God, and His enemies are overwhelmed. *That’s sovereign power!*
- In the prophecy of Joel (1:4, 2:25), this comparative imagery of invading armies to locusts shows up describing troops God sends in judgment upon Israel, and at the end of Isaiah (66:15-16) and the end of Revelation (9:3-7, 20:9) we see the same imagery of locusts, fire and sword consuming all of God’s enemies at the end of time.

v. 16 – Riches Take Wings

- It’s hard to see how the first half of verse 16 relates to the second half, but there is a progression from fullness of trade to the emptiness of abandonment, the latter being a consequence of the former.
 - Perhaps the past tense in the second half describing the judgment is an example of what they call the “prophetic perfect.” It hadn’t happened yet, but God’s word is so sure that it can be spoken of in past tense.
- John Calvin noted that “the principal men [of Nineveh]... were “all merchants,¹⁴⁹” and ancient historians like Diodorus Siculus (ii.11) and Herodotus (ii.52) commented on how rich the trade was through Nineveh because the Tigris River was a tremendous artery of commerce¹⁵⁰.
- The implication of the phrase “beyond the stars of the heavens” is religious; it indicates that Assyria was putting a priority on economic trade above all else, and that is a form of idolatry, putting something in this world higher than God.
 - Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 27 also promised judgment on Tyre and Babylon for the same sin,¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷The only other place this verb appears in this hitpaal stem in the Bible is Prov. 12:9, where it is translated “he honored himself/pretended to be somebody/played the great man/was self-important.”

¹⁴⁸Every commentator I read interpreted it as such.

¹⁴⁹Matthew Henry, however, said that the merchants came “from abroad.”

¹⁵⁰Pusey noted lists of goods in which Nineveh traded, published by Rawlinson and Brugsch, including: nard, amonium, myrrh, frankincense, indigo, embroidery, brocades, wrought iron, silver dishes, brass harps, lapis lazuli, ebony, ivory, vases, etc.

¹⁵¹**Isaiah 23:8** “Who has purposed this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants [סַחְרִיָּה] were princes, whose

- and, in the New Testament, Jesus used the same Greek word used to translate Nahum’s word for “merchants” to chide the Jews of His day for converting the temple – designed for the nations to worship God, into an “emporium” – designed to make money (John 2:16, cf. Matt. 22:5).
- After that, Jesus’ brother wrote to believers “abroad” in **James 4:13-5:3** “Get with-it now, you who are saying, ‘Today or tomorrow we shall go into this town here and manufacture for one year there, then market and profit!’ – who yourselves have no certainty of what will be tomorrow. (For what is your life? Indeed, it is smoke which is made to appear for a little while and then is made to disappear.) Instead y’all should say, ‘If the Lord wills, then we will live and do this or that.’ ... Get with-it now, you rich men, start weeping – howling – over your weighty trials which are coming upon y’all: Your wealth has rotted, and your garments have become moth-eaten, your gold and silver have been tarnished, and their poison will become a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. Y’all stockpiled during the last days.” (NAW)
- We read in Nahum 1:2, that God gets “jealous” when we make anything else more important than Him, so He will bring judgment upon those who prioritize getting money and things over having a right relationship with Jesus.
- The second part of verse 16 gets translated in a variety of ways because its main verb has more than one meaning:
 - The ESV, following the Vulgate, translated this Hebrew verb “spread out,” which is a rare meaning of this word. The word for “wings” is not in the Hebrew, but the next verb about “flying away” does assume wings in the anatomy.
 - The NASB and NIV, on the other hand, translated the main verb “strip,” which is its most-common meaning in the Hebrew Bible.
 - The KJV “spoils” and NKJV “plunders” interpreted this “stripping” in terms of the locusts eating all the vegetation before flying away.
 - The NET Bible and the Targums¹⁵², on the other hand, interpreted this “stripping” in terms of the young locusts molting and stripping themselves of their skin before flying off in their adult form. This makes the most sense to me, because locusts eat more vegetation in their young nymph stage, then they molt, and their adult form is the one that can really fly.
 - But whether the image is of the locust “spreading out” wings in preparation for flight, “molting” in preparation for flight, or “stripping” vegetation before flying away, it’s practically the same image.
- **Proverbs 23:4-5** teaches us, “Do not overwork to be rich... For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.” (NKJV) *Taking away things is a way that God disciplines and punishes those who idolize things, and that’s what the imagery of Nahum 3:16 teaches us too.*

traders [כַּנְעָנִיָּה] were the honored of the earth?” (NAW)

Ezekiel 27:13-24 “Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were your traders. They bartered [נָתַן] human lives and vessels of bronze for your merchandise [מַעֲרָב]... Judah and the land of Israel were your traders. They traded [נָתַן] for your merchandise wheat of Minnith, millet, honey, oil, and balm... Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your regular merchants [סֹחָרִי]. They traded with you in lambs, rams, and goats... Haran, Canneh, Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Assyria, and Chilmad were your merchants. These were your merchants in choice items in purple clothes, in embroidered garments, in chests of multicolored apparel, in sturdy woven cords, which were in your marketplace.” (NKJV, underlined words are all forms of Nahum’s word רָכַל.)

¹⁵² AJV renders “spreads itself,” but Lehrman translated “sheds the skin.” Keil insisted (inaccurately, as I point out in the endnotes) that “*Pashat* never means anything else than to plunder,” but he noted that Maurer, Ewald, and Hitzig interpreted it in terms of young locusts molting.

- This image from the lifecycle of locusts continues on into v.17, as the swarm of individuals, which made up a very active and busy community for a time, all fly away, leaving desolation behind.

v. 17 – The People Vanish Under God’s Judgment

- These individuals, which are compared to swarming, adult locusts/grasshoppers (which can fly), are called *Minnezarei*, a word used nowhere else in the Bible – perhaps borrowed from the Assyrian language.
 - It’s translated “crowned ones/guards/princes/commanders,” and is close to the Hebrew word Nazarene, which has to do with being “devoted” to a god¹⁵³.
 - In favor of the translation “crowned ones,” we do see a lot of head-dresses in the ancient Assyrian bas-reliefs.
 - I would like to suggest that this is a synonym for the “merchants” in v.16 which congregated in Nineveh when it was favorable for trade, then skipped town when God’s judgment came.
- A second group of persons is also described in the latter half of v.17, using another rare word which may refer to certain officers in the Assyrian army. English versions variously translate it “commander/general/marshal/captain/scribe.” (Interestingly, in the only other passage in the Bible which contains this word, Jeremiah 51:27, this same class of leaders is compared to locusts, and they are predicted to overthrow the Babylonian empire when God’s judgment comes around to them.¹⁵⁴)
- The language that Nahum uses in the latter half of v.17 is obscure, so it gets interpreted a variety of ways, but everybody agrees on one thing: these people will disappear. The exact mechanism of their disappearance may be debated, but the main point is that the leaders, too, will disappear from Nineveh.
 - The way that most English versions translate v.17, envisions these “locusts/grasshoppers” flying in on a “cold day,” “sitting” still until the “sun rises” and warms them up, and then “flying away,” which is pretty much parallel to the image in v.16.¹⁵⁵
 - I would like to suggest, however, a slightly different image based on the rest of the lifecycle of the locust and based on the new word for “locust” which Nahum uses in the second half of v.17.
 - Although there is some debate on this point, the classic¹⁵⁶ Hebrew lexicons say that the Hebrew word *gob* has to do with “digging,” and we know that the last stage in the lifecycle of a locust is that the adults go into reproductive mode, digging holes into which 50-100 eggs are laid. This generally happens after the warm weather has started turning to the “cooler” part of the year.
 - The verb which Nahum uses for them “settling/camping” denotes “putting stakes into the ground,” and the word which Nahum uses for the “walls/fences” where they “settle/camp/entrench themselves” is only used in the Bible to refer to “sheepfolds.” Nahum

¹⁵³Ibn Ezra and Kimchi supported “crowned,” while Daath Soferim and Keil supported “devoted” – the latter specifying “those levied, selected (for war).”

¹⁵⁴“...Appoint a general against her; Cause the horses to come up like the bristling locusts.” (NKJV)

¹⁵⁵Keil, like almost all the other commentators I read, took this position even though he admitted that “locusts do not take refuge in walls or hedges during the winter.” Calvin suggested yet another interpretation of the Assyrians themselves being the locusts who hibernated in Nineveh and “betook themselves in different directions... when the suitable time for plunder came.” But I don’t think this fits with the overall way Nahum is presenting the judgments upon Nineveh.

¹⁵⁶I refer to Strong’s and Brown Driver & Briggs. It may be noted, however, that Holladay’s gloss is “swarm.” See also commentary notes in endnotes.

doesn't say what kind of material these sheepfolds were made of – often they made them with rocks, which is why the NASB inserts the word “rock,” but, depending on how permanent it needed to be and what building materials were available, these walls could also have been made of earth or thatch – materials in which grasshoppers do lay eggs.

- Next, the word translated “flee/fly away” is not the Hebrew word for “flying with wings.” Back in v.7, half the English versions translated it “shrink away.” I propose that this stage of “withdrawal” refers to the incubation period where the grasshopper eggs are hidden in the dirt, invisible to the eye, and lost track of, as the eggs typically sit there for years (and even decades) before they hatch.
- Nahum concludes by saying that “where his place is, is not known.” It seems to me that it should be pretty easy to track where a “great horde” of swarming locusts are, but less easy to track where they laid all their eggs once they have gone underground.
- Do what you want with my theory about how they disappear, but I think we can agree that Nineveh's captains/marshals/officials/scribes end up... nobody knows where – maybe dead with no gravestone to mark where they fell in battle, or maybe escaped and living incognito somewhere, but they are no longer running the great city of Nineveh. The population of Nineveh will vanish under God's judgment.
- **Proverbs 14:28** teaches us that, “In a multitude of people is a king's honor, But in the lack of people is the downfall of a prince.” (NKJV)
- And with the loss of the people, the princes/leaders of Nineveh disappeared too, which is also the topic of the first half of v.18¹⁵⁷.

v. 18 – Nineveh's Leaders Are Incapacitated in God's Judgment

- The Hebrew pronoun “you” shifts from feminine in v.17 (denoting the feminine city of Nineveh) to masculine (denoting the masculine King of Assyria) in vs. 18-19, driving the message of God's judgment home personally to the responsible leadership.
- In v.18, the leaders are called “shepherds” and “nobles,” plus there's the “King of Assyria,” but in God's judgment against Nineveh, every level of leadership will be powerless to lead its people or to prevent Nineveh's destruction.
- There's a range of interpretation among the versions as to why Nineveh's leadership is impotent:
 - The Hebrew words are the normal verbs for “sleeping” and for “taking up residence,”
 - so, at the least, these leaders have let the normal things of peacetime life interfere with their responsibilities to their people in crisis – sleeping in and propping their feet up by the fireplace at home instead of getting out there and figuring out a way to protect their city from siege¹⁵⁸,
 - at worst, “sleep” and “lying down” could be metaphors for death, and, of course, if they're dead¹⁵⁹, they aren't able to lead either.
- Either way, it would leave the people of the city without a way to organize themselves in the midst of a foreign invasion, so they would “scatter” every which-way out of the city into the

¹⁵⁷“The point is that all the officials and leaders disappear when the trouble comes. Without the leadership, chaos ensues.”
~Michael Barrett, 2021 AD

¹⁵⁸Cf. Calvin: “He refers to their sloth... they shall remain idle; they shall not be able to sally out against their enemies, to stop their progress...” Barrett and others agreed.

¹⁵⁹This was the interpretation of the KJV, Vulgate, and, among the commentators, Pusey and Keil (who also cited Theodore, Hesselberg, and “Str.” in support).

wilderness in panic. There are indeed rugged mountains to the north of Nineveh. (Keil)

- And, as Nahum notes in the conclusion of v.18, since the leaders aren't leading, there's no way to get the people back together again in any organized way.
- The king, of course, was worshiped as a god in these pagan societies, but here, the One True God exposes the impotence of a king who has set himself up as a rival to Him.
- The same judgment of "sleepy" leadership and "scattered" people was later pronounced:
 - against Israel in Jeremiah 25 (vs. 34-36) and Isaiah 56,
 - against the Ammonites in Jeremiah 49:5,
 - and against Babylon in Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 51¹⁶⁰.
- And, in the New Testament:
 - God struck King Herod of Judea dead for letting people respond to his speech by saying, "The voice of a God and not a man." (Acts 12:21-23) *Herod knew better: he knew what Jesus taught (Luke 13:32, Mark 6:20), and he had even interviewed Jesus personally (Luke 23).*
 - In **Luke 1:50-52**, Mary touted God's authority over kings and rulers, singing, "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly... His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation." (NKJV)
 - and Paul, in **1 Timothy 6:14-15**, called "our Lord Jesus Christ" "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords." (NKJV)
- In the last verse of Nahum, the King of kings and Lord of lords stoops to address the condemned king of Assyria with his final sentence:

v. 19 – No Remedy & No Pity For God's Judgment

- The last phrase of v.19 reminds us of the most obvious reason why God condemned Nineveh, and that was its "evil/wickedness/cruelty," which it had perpetrated upon everyone around (Isa. 37:18), so much so that, when the "hearsay/bruit/news" of Nineveh's overthrow came around, people "clapped"¹⁶¹ their hands," happy to hear of Nineveh's downfall – relieved that they would no longer feel oppression and anxiety from the Assyrians any more.
- The Hebrew word translated "grievous/incurable/fatal" at the beginning of v.19 is a passive participle that has to do with "being weakened," and the subject of that passive participle is the word "plague/wound/ strike," so a literal translation would be something like "It will not be... that the strike against you is weakened"¹⁶². In other words, "You will get the full force of God's judgment; God is not going to pull any punches." The practical upshot is that God will wipe out these people who have opposed themselves to Him; they will not recover politically, economically, or militarily. Their city-state will be destroyed, and their civilization will die out.
 - They can go to any doctor in the land, meet with every consultant in the market, purchase

¹⁶⁰ **Jeremiah 51:56-57** "...the plunderer comes against her, against Babylon... For the LORD is the God of recompense, He will surely repay. 'And I will make drunk Her princes and wise men, Her governors, her deputies [פְּחוּתֵיהָ וְסִגְנֵיהָ, synonyms to Nahum's מְנַסְרֵיהָ ... מְנַזְרֵיהָ], and her mighty men. And they shall sleep a perpetual sleep [וְיִשְׁנוּ שְׁנַת] cf. Nahum's יִשְׁכְּבוּ ... לְנֶמְוָה And not awake,' says the King, Whose name is the LORD of hosts." (NKJV)

¹⁶¹ Cf. **Psalm 47:1** "All you peoples: Clap your hands; cheer for God with a sound of singing." (NAW) and Lam. 2:15, Job 27:23, where a synonym for Nahum's "clap" (תִּקַּעַ) is used to show derision: סָפַק/שָׁפַק.

¹⁶² Calvin agreed: "the pain of thy stroke cannot be allayed."

every healthcare product there is, and they're not going to get any better, because man cannot outsmart God. If God decides to condemn you to death, you're not going to be able to counteract that.

- Please don't misunderstand. The Bible isn't saying that doctors and medicines are wrong; what it's saying is that man cannot win in a contest against God.
- Any Assyrian who knew his history should have known that the only way out of being doomed by Israel's God was to repent of opposition against God and seek His mercy, like they did after Jonah's prophecy, but short of that, nothing else would be able to stop God from wiping out Nineveh for good this time.
- Once again, this principle holds true, not only in the case of Nineveh, but with any nation:
 - A generation or so after Nahum's prophecy, the Jews found themselves in a similar situation, where God would no longer extend any more mercy to their nation. Both Micah and Jeremiah prophesied that "Israel's plague became incurable¹⁶³" because they had rejected the only "remedy" there is against God's judgment (which is to repent of rebellion against God and seek His mercy, as the prophets had repeatedly told them to do), and so God sent the Chaldean army to conquer Jerusalem and send the Jews into exile. **2 Chron. 36:16** says this explicitly: "But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy¹⁶⁴." (NKJV)
 - Jeremiah 46:11 aimed a similar prophecy against Egypt, too.¹⁶⁵
- But I maintain that there was one remedy, one way of "healing/relief/ease" from God's condemnation.
 - When we look at the New Testament, Jesus is presented (in Luke 13:32 & Acts 4:29) "healing/relieving/easing" (the same Greek word used to translate the first noun in Nahum 3:19 into Greek) "every illness and every infirmity" (Mat. 9:35, NAW). *Jesus has the remedy!*
 - Jesus made it clear, however, that His physical cures were not the end goal of His ministry (John 4:48, 10:25, 14:11) but rather the eternal life which would come to those who trust Him to save them. **John 3:18** "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God... **6:47** Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life." (NKJV)

CONCLUSION

- Remember that, in Nahum, we are looking at only part of one process of God's judgment. The fact that Nahum centers on God's judgment against the Assyrian empire necessarily limits the scope of the big picture of God's judgment, but I have tried all along to use parallel statements from the other Biblical prophets and apostles to show that the whole counsel of scripture presents a bigger picture.
 - That bigger picture includes God's creative, revelatory, and redemptive work, in addition to His

¹⁶³**Micah 1:9** "because her plague is incurable [אנלשה, a synonym to Nahum's נחלה], because he has come to Judah; he has reached to the gate of my people – unto Jerusalem!" (NAW)

Jeremiah 30:12-13 "For thus says the LORD: 'Your affliction is incurable [אנלש], Your wound is severe. There is no one to plead your cause, That you may be bound up; You have no healing medicines [רפאות תעלה].'" (NKJV)

¹⁶⁴מרפא, a synonym to Nahum's כהה.

¹⁶⁵**Jeremiah 46:11** "Go up to Gilead and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt; In vain you will use many medicines [רפאות]; You shall not be cured [תעלה]." (NKJV)

work of judgment highlighted in Nahum. In the case of Nineveh, Nahum places the brick of his prophecy on top of multiple bricks already laid in God's redemptive history concerning Assyria.

- At the foundation is the book of Genesis, which tells of the creation of the land and people of Assyria, the revelation of God's person and of His universally-binding ordinances upon all mankind (including Assyria), the rebellion of mankind against God and His ordinances, the judgment of God against sin, from the banishment out of Eden to the worldwide flood of Noah, and the animal sacrifices which God ordained as the way to be reconciled to Him. *This was all part of the history of Nineveh which it shared in common with Israel and all the other nations of the world. God had not left the Assyrians without a witness concerning himself and His judgment and redemption.*
- But God did even more to reveal Himself along with His justice and mercy; God sent prophets to Israel and to all the surrounding nations to remind them of the ancient revelation they had received of Him (recorded in the book of Genesis) and to warn them that if they did not get right with God, God would destroy their civilizations. In the case of Nineveh, that was the mission of the prophet Jonah.
- According to my reckoning, Nahum's prophecy was not more than a century after Jonah's, so it had not even been a hundred years since the Assyrians had understood enough about God to repent and honor God appropriately and receive mercy from God.¹⁶⁶
- So, when Nahum said Nineveh was "incurable," it was not some snap judgment by an impatient, ethnocentric Jew in the 8th Century BC; rather, it was the culmination of Assyrians rejecting God and His word for thousands of years.
- A second aspect of the big picture, of which Nahum is only a part, is the way God's temporal judgments against nations are sequenced. As the Apostle Peter put it in the fourth chapter of his first epistle, "It is time to begin the judgment at the household of God, and if [it comes] first at us, what will be the end for those who are unpersuaded by God's good news?" (**1 Peter 4:17**, NAW) In the larger picture, we see that God brings discipline first upon His covenanted people through the means of the oppression of other peoples, then God brings judgment upon those other peoples. For instance,
 - The children of Israel were enslaved by the Egyptians, then God delivered His people from the Egyptian's oppression and decimated the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. *First the house of God, then the nations.*
 - Throughout the books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel, one Canaanite and Aramean nation after another brought crisis upon the people of Israel, only to be conquered subsequently by the Judges and the Kings (Saul and David).
 - Then, during the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, more-distant nations of Assyria, Egypt, and Persia became God's means of judgment and chastisement against His people. Then Nahum is one of the prophets who declared God's plan to punish those nations, in turn, for rebelling against their Creator and abusing His people. So Nahum's message comes sequentially after Assyria had brought destruction to unfaithful Jews and refinement to the Jewish remnant, and it's important to keep it in that context.
 - In the years to come, the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Europeans, Muslims, Communists, and others would each take their turn persecuting God's people, the church (in its Old Testament and New Testament forms), and God has subsequently humbled one empire

¹⁶⁶"And he says, 'continually,' to show that God's forbearance had been long exercised. Hence, also, it appears, that the Assyrians were inexcusable, because, when God indulgently spared them, they did not repent, but pursued their wicked ways for a long course of time." ~Calvin

after another, and will continue to do so until His church is complete and He is ready to make an end of this world. That's the big picture.

- **Psalm 5:8-12** “Yahweh, guide me in your righteousness because of my opponents; level your way in front of me. Because in [every] mouth there is nothing that will stand; their innards are empty-desires, an open grave their larynx; they flatter [with] their tongue. Judge them guilty, God! They will fall as a result of their counsels. Cause them to go away through multiplication of their transgressions because they are resistant with You. Meanwhile, all refugees in You will be happy, they will sing out forever, you will even fabricate shelter over him, and lovers of Your name will exult in You! Because You yourself really bless a righteous [person]; like a big shield, Yahweh, you encircle him with favor.” (NAW)

Nahum 3:12-19 – Side-by side comparison of versions^{IS}

| Douay ^{IT} (Vulgate) | LXX ^{IU} | Brenton ^{IV} (Vaticanus) | KJV ^{IW} | NASB ^{IX} | NIV ^{IY} | ESV ^{IZ} | NAW | Masoretic Hebrew ^{JA} | Bauscher ^{JB} (Peshitta) | Cathcart ^{JC} (Targums) |
|--|--|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| 12 All thy strong holds shall be [like] fig trees with [their] green [figs]: if they be shaken, X they shall fall into the mouth of the eater. | 12 πάντα τὰ ὀχυρώματα σου συκαῖ σκαπθῶς ἔχουσαι ^{JD} . ἐὰν σαλευ- θῶσιν, καὶ πεσοῦνται εἰς στόμα ἔσθοντος . | 12 All thy strong-holds are [as] fig-trees having watchers : if they be shaken, X they shall fall into the mouth of the eater. | 12 All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe [figs]: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. | 12 All your fortifica-tions are fig trees with ripe fruit—When shaken, X they fall into the eater's mouth. | 12 All your fortresses are [like] fig trees with [their] first ripe fruit; when they are shaken, X the [figs] fall into the mouth of the eater. | 12 All your fortresses are [like] fig trees with first-ripe [figs]—if shaken X they fall into the mouth of the eater. | 12 All your forts are fig-trees with first-fruits; just let them be shaken, and they will fall into the mouth of the devourer ! | כָּל (יב) מבצרות תְּאֵנִים עֵם בְּכוֹרִים אֵם יְנוּעוֹ וְנִפְלוּ עַל פִּי אוֹכֵל . | 12 All of your fortified cities are the first fruits [like figs,] which whenever they are ripe they shall fall into the mouth of the eater | 12. All your cities are [like] early ripened [figs] which fall if they are shaken[, and dried grapes which are good] to X X eat [are left in them]. |
| 13 Behold thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open to thy enemies, the fire shall devour thy bars. | 13 ἰδοὺ ὁ λαός σου [ὡς] γυναι-κες ἐν ^{JF} σοί- τοις ἐχθροῖς σου ἀνοιγ-όμενα ἀνοιχθή- σονται πύλαι τῆς γῆς σου, καὶ ^{KG} κατα-φάγεται πῦρ τοὺς μοχ- λοὺς σου. | 13 Behold, thy people within thee are [as] wo-men: the gates of thy land shall surely be opened to thine ene-mies: the fire shall devour thy bars. | 13 Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open to your ene-mies: the fire shall devour thy bars. | 13 Behold, your people are women in your midst! The gates of your land are opened wide to your ene-mies; Fire consumes your gate bars. | 13 Look at your troops -- they are [all] women X X X! The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has consumed their bars. | 13 Behold, your troops are women in your midst. The gates of your land are wide open to your ene-mies; fire has de-voured your bars. | 13 Look, your people are women in your midst. Before your enemies, the gates of your land are completely open; fire devours your door-bolts . | (יג) הִנֵּה עַמְּךָ נְשִׁים בְּקָרְבָּךְ לְאִיבֶיךָ פְּתוּחַ נִפְתָּחוּ שַׁעְרֵי אַרְצְךָ אֹכְלָהּ אֵשׁ בְּרִיתֶךָ . | 13 And your people within you are [like] women; the gates of your land shall be opened X to your enemies, and fire will devour your bars | 13. Behold, your people are [as feeble as] women in your midst; the gates of your land are opened wide to your enemies, fire has destroyed your strong-holds . |
| 14 Draw thee water for the siege, build up thy bulwarks ; go into the clay, and tread, work- it [and] make brick . | 14 ὕδωρ περι-οχῆς ἐπί-σπασαι σεαυτῇ ^{JA} καὶ κατακράτ-ησον τῶν ὀχυρωμάτων σου, ἐμβῇθι εἰς πηλὸν ^{JB} καὶ συμπατήθητι ἐν ἀγούροις, κατακράτ-ησον ὑπὲρ πλινθόν ^{JK} . | 14 Draw thee water for a siege, and well secure thy strong-holds : enter into the clay, and be thou trodden in the chaff, make [the for-tifications] stronger than brick . | 14 Draw thee waters for the siege, forti-fy thy strong holds : go into clay, and tread X the mortar, make strong the brickkiln . | 14 Draw for yourself water for the siege! Strengthen your fortifi-cations ! Go into the clay and tread X the mortar! Take hold of the brick mold ! | 14 Draw water X X for the siege, strengthen your de-fenses ! Work the clay, X tread X the mortar, repair the brickwork ! | 14 Draw water X X for the siege; strengthen your forts ; go into the clay; X tread X the mortar; take hold of the brick mold ! | 14 Bottle water for yourself for the siege. Strengthen your forts . Go to the mud-pit and make a mix with the clay; get a handle on the brick-work . | (יד) מִי מִצֹּר שִׁאֲבִי לָךְ חֲזֲקִי מבצרות בְּאִי בְטִיט וְרָמְסִי בְּחֶמֶר הַחֲזִיקִי מלכך ^{JL} . | 14 Draw for yourself water in the siege, fortify your cities ; increase ty-ranny, and oppress in the mud, strengthen [your] building . | 14. Draw water for yourself in the siege, fortify your cities ; increase ty-ranny, and oppress in the mud, strengthen [your] building . |
| 15 There shall the fire devour thee: thou shalt perish by the sword, it shall devour thee like the bruchus : assemble together like the bruchus , make thyself many like the locust. | 15 ἐκεῖ καταφάγ-εται σε πῦρ, ἐξολεθρεύ-σει σε ρόμφαία , καταφάγ-εται σε ὡς ἀκρίς , καὶ βαρυνθήσῃ ^{JM} ὡς βροῦχος X X X ^{JN} . | 15 There the fire shall de-vour thee; the sword shall utterly destroy thee, it shall de-vour thee as the locust, and thou shalt be pressed down as a palmerworm . X X X X | 15 There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the can-kerworm : make thyself many as the cankerworm , make thyself many as the locust[s]. | 15 There fire will consume you, The sword will cut you down; It will consume you as the lo-cust does. Multiply yourself like the creeping locust , Mul-tiply yourself like the swarming locust. | 15 There the fire will devour you; the sword will cut you down and, like grass- hopper[s] , consume you. Multi-ply like grasshop-per[s], multi-ply like locust[s]! | 15 There will the fire devour you; the sword will cut you off. It will devour you like the lo-cust . Multi-ply your-self [ves] like the locust; multiply like the grass-hopper! | 15 It is there that the fire will devour you. The sword will cut you down; it will devour you like a young-locust . Let it make itself as overwhelming as the young locust ; let it make itself as overwhelming as the swarming-locust! | (טז) שָׁם תֹּאכְלֶךָ אֵשׁ תִּכְרִיתֶךָ חֶרֶב תֹּאכְלֶךָ כְּדִבּוּ ^{JO} הַתִּכְבֵּד ^{JP} כְּדִבּוּ הַתִּכְבֵּדִי כְּאַרְבֵּךְ ^{JQ} . | 15 Fire shall consume you there and the sword shall destroy you [and] shall consume you like the crawling locust , [because] you increased X like the crawling locust [and] you multiplied like locust[s]. | 15. [The nations which are strong as] fire shall come [upon] you there, [those who kill with] the sword shall destroy you; [the armies of the nations which are as] numerous as the crawling locust shall assemble [against you, they shall cover you] like the locust, they shall lay [you] bare like the locust swarm. |

| Douay | LXX | Brenton | KJV | NASB | NIV | ESV | NAW | Hebrew | Bauscher | Cathcart |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| 16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchandises above the stars of heaven: the bruchus hath spread [himself] and flown away. | 16 ἐπλήθυνας τὰς ἐμπορίας σου ὑπὲρ τὰ ἄστρα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ· βροῦχος ὥρμησεν καὶ ἐξεπέτασθη. | 16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchandise beyond the stars of heaven: the palmer-worm has attacked [it], and has flown away. | 16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the canker-worm spoileth , and flieth away. | 16 You have increased your traders more than the stars of heaven— The creeping locust strips and flies away. | 16 You have increased the number of your merchants till they are more than the stars of the sky, but like locust[s] they strip [the land] and then fly away. | 16 You increased your merchants more than the stars of the heavens. The locust spreads [its wings] and flies away. | 16 You have made your merchants more numerous than the stars of the skies. The young-locust has molted and taken wing. | הַרְבִּיתָ (ט) רָכַלְךָ JS מְכֻכְבִּי הַשָּׁמַיִם JT יִלְקֹן פָּשַׁט JU וַיַּעֲף. | 16 [And] you have multiplied your Merchants more than the stars of Heaven the crawling locust sheds [skin] and flies away | 16. You multiplied your merchants more than the stars of the heavens, like the locust which lays bare and flies away. |
| 17 Thy guards are like the locusts: and thy little ones like the locusts of swam on the hedges in the day of cold: the sun arose, and they flew away, and their place was not known where they were. | 17 ἐξήλατο ὡς ἀττέλεβος ὁ σύμμικτός σου, ὡς X ἄκρις ἐπὶ βεβηκυῖα ἐπὶ φραγμὸν ἐν ἡμέραις πάγου· ὁ ἥλιος ἀνέτειλεν, καὶ ἀφήλατο, καὶ οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν τόπον αὐτῆς· οὐαὶ [αὐτοῖς]. | 17 Thy mixed multitude has suddenly departed as the grasshopper, as the locust perched on a hedge X in a frosty day; the sun arises, and it flies off, and knows not its place: woe [to them]! | 17 Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are. | 17 Your guardsmen are like the swarming locust. X Your marshals are like hordes of grasshoppers Settling in the [stone] walls on a cold day. The sun rises and they flee, And the place where they are is not known. | 17 Your guards are like locusts, X your officials like swarms of locusts that settle in the walls on a cold day-- [but] when the sun appears they fly away, and no one knows where X X. | 17 Your princes are like grasshoppers, X your scribes like clouds of locusts settling on the fences in a day of cold— when the sun rises, they fly away; X no one knows where they X are. | 17 Your devotees are like the swarming-locust. Furthermore, your officers are like burrowing locusts that entrench in the walls on a cold day. When the sun has risen, he is with-drawn , and it is not known where his location is. | מִנְיָן (ז) כָּאֲרָבָה הַשָּׁמַיִם JX קָלֹב גְּבִיר JY הַחֲזֹנִים בְּגִדְרוֹת JZ בַּיּוֹם קָרָה KA שָׁמַשׁ וְרָחָה וְנִדְּדָה וְלֹא נֹדַע מְקוֹמוֹ אֵינִם. | 17 Your Nazarites are like the locust and your fighters like the X locust that settles in hedges in the cold day that [whenever] the sun has set, it rises, and his place is not known X | 17. [Behold,] your plates [gleam] like a locust swarm, and your captains (are) like the locust larvae which stay in walls on a cold day, but which scatter when the sun rises [upon them], and their place of refuge is not known. |
| 18 Thy shepherds have slumbered, O king of Assyria, thy princes shall be buried : thy people are hid in the mountains, and there is none to gather them. | 18 ἐνύσταξαν οἱ ποιμένες σου, βασιλεὺς Ἀσσυρίως ἐκοίμυσεν τοὺς δυνάστας σου· ἀπῆρεν ὁ λαός σου ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη, καὶ οὐκ ἦν ὁ ἐκδεχόμενος KB. | 18 Thy shepherds have slumbered, the Assyrian king has laid low thy mighty men : thy people departed to the mountains, and there was none to receive them. | 18 Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the hills : thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no [man] gathereth them. | 18 slumbering down. LY | 18 he down [to rest] | 18 slumber. | 18 Your shepherds have gotten drowsy, O King of Assyria. Your nobles have gotten cozy . Your people were panicked upon the mountains, and there is no rallying them. | 18 רָעִיף מָלָךְ אֲשׁוּר יִשְׁכְּנוּ אֲדִירֵיהֶם KD נִפְשָׁם KE עָמָד עַל הָהָרִים וְאִין מְקַבְּצֵם KF | 18 disbanded. | 18. gone into exile; |
| 19 Thy destruction is not hidden , thy wound is grievous : all that have heard the fame of thee, have clapped their hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually? | 19 οὐκ ἔστιν ἱάσις KG, τῇ συντριβῇ σου, ἐφλέγμασεν ἡ πληγὴ σου· πάντες οἱ ἀκούοντες τὴν ἀγγελίαν σου κροτήσουσιν χεῖρας ἐπὶ σέ· διότι ἐπὶ τίνα οὐκ ἐπῆλθεν ἡ κακία σου διὰ παντός; | 19 There is no healing for thy bruise; thy wound has rankled : all that hear the report of thee shall clap [their] hands against thee; for upon whom has not thy wickedness passed continually? | 19 <i>There</i> is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous : all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually? | 19 There is no relief for your break-down, Your wound is incurable . All who hear X X about you Will clap their hands over you, For on whom has not your evil passed continually? | 19 Nothing can heal X your wound ; your injury is fatal. Everyone who hear[s] the news about you clap[s] his hands at you[r] fall], for X who has not felt your end-less cruelty? | 19 There is no easing your hurt; your wound is grievous . All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you. For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil? | 19 There is no diminishing to your brokenness – [no] weakening of the strike against you. All who listen to the hearsay about you clap hands over you, for upon whom has your evil not had a lasting effect? | אִין (ט) כָּהָה KH לְשִׁבְרָה נִמְקָה מִכָּה כָּל שָׁמַעַי שְׁמָעַי תִּקְעוּ כַּף עֲלֵידָכִי עַל מִי לֹא עֲבָרָה רָעָתָה תִּמְאִיד. | 19 There is none who grieves for him, for your brokenness is grievous ; all that have heard X your disease clapped hands over you, because your evil has passed upon [every] man constantly [The Prophecy of Nakhum is finished] | 19. There is no one who is grieved over your hurt; your plague is grievous ; all who heard the report of you clapped their hands at you, they rejoiced — for upon whom has your evil [scourge] not come continually? |

- ^{IS} NAW is my translation. When a translation adds words not in the Hebrew text, but does not indicate it has done so by the use of italics or greyed-out text, I put the added words in [square brackets]. When one version chooses a wording which is different from all the other translations, I underline it. When a version chooses a translation which, in my opinion, either departs too far from the root meaning of the Hebrew word or departs too far from the grammar form of the original text, I use ~~strikeout~~. And when a version omits a word which is in the original text, I insert an X. I also place an X at the end of a word if the original word is plural but the English translation is singular. I occasionally use colors to help the reader see correlations between the various editions and versions when there are more than two different translations of a given word. The only known Dead Sea Scrolls containing Nahum 3 are 4Q82 (containing parts of verses 1-3 & 17 and dated between 30-1 BC), The *Nahal Hever* Greek scroll (containing parts of vs. 1-3 & 6-16 and dated around 25BC), and the Wadi Muraba'at Scroll (containing parts of verses 1-19 and dated around 135 AD). Where the DSS are legible and in agreement with the MT or LXX, the text is colored **purple**.
- ^{IT} Douay Old Testament first published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609, Revised and Diligently Compared with the Latin Vulgate by Bishop Richard Challoner, Published in 1582, 1609, 1752. As published on E-Sword.
- ^{IU} "Septuagint" Greek Old Testament, edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Published in 1935. As published on E-Sword.
- ^{IV} English translation of the Septuagint by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, 1851, "based upon the text of the Vaticanus" but not identical to the *Vaticanus*. As published electronically by E-Sword.
- ^{IW} 1769 King James Version of the Holy Bible; public domain. As published electronically by E-Sword.
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- ^{Iz} Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- ^{JA} From the Wiki Hebrew Bible
https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%94_%D7%90/%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA.
DSS text comes from <https://downloads.thewaytoyahuwah.com>
- ^{JB} The Peshitta Holy Bible Translated by Glenn David Bauscher, Copyright © 2018 Lulu Publishing, 3rd edition Copyright © 2019 as found on <https://biblehub.com/hpbt/nahum/3.htm>
- ^{JC} From *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, Volume 14, 1989, Cathcart, Kevin J; Gordon, R. P. As found on https://wbsg8v.xyz/d3/y/1715385560/100/u/ia/annas-archive-ia-2023-06-acsm/t/targumofminorpro0014unse.pdf/~f8jMjv18tRB-fityGs6_g/The%20Aramaic%20Bible%3A%20The%20Targum%20of%20the%20Minor%20Prophets%20--%20Cathcart%2C%20Kevin%20J%3B%20Gordon%2C%20R_%20P%20--%20Volume%2014%2C%201989%20--%20Wilmington%2C%20Del_%3A%20M_%20Glazier%20--%209780894534898%20--%202c2211ab706b64db6d34be810eef40da%20--%20Anna%E2%80%99s%20Archive.pdf on 10 May 2024
- ^{JD} *Nahal Hever* does not have room in its lacuna for this word. The MT has the preposition "with," whereas the LXX has the participle form of the verb for "have," which means basically the same thing but is a longer word. The shorter space in the N.H. may support the MT, since the Greek prepositions for "with" in Greek (συν, ἅμα, μετὰ, ἐν) are shorter than the participle used by the LXX.
- ^{JE} The Vulgate, Peshitta, and Targums (followed by all the English versions except the NASB) add the comparative particle "like," but it is not in the MT or LXX or DSS (and therefore not in the NASB).
- ^{JF} *Nahal Hever* lacuna begins here, which has too much space for the LXX wording, but a word like μεσῶ ("the middle of") could be added without changing the meaning.
- ^{JG} The lacuna in *Nahal Hever* here is too small to contain all the letters in the LXX, but it doesn't necessarily require a different meaning since what the LXX says could be stated more concisely in Greek.
- ^{JH} In a reversal of policy from the previous verse, the NET & NLT follow the LXX, Peshitta, and Targums which add a comparative "as," but most standard English versions followed the MT (it's illegible in all the DSS) and Vulgate with the grammar of metaphor instead of simile. Ultimately there is no difference in meaning as long as one doesn't hold strictly to a literal hermeneutic with metaphors, which it seems the NIV did.
- ^{JI} The lacuna in *Nahal Hever*, which begins here, is about 10 characters/spaces too short for the text in LXX.
- ^{JJ} The lacuna in *Nahal Hever*, which begins here, is about 9 characters/spaces too short for the text in LXX.
- ^{JK} *Nahal Hever* reads πλινθίου instead of the LXX πλινθον, but both words are obviously related to "bricks."
- ^{JL} This is one of only 3 instances of this word in the HOT, the others being 2 Sam. 12:31 (something that forced laborers could "bend/cross over") and Jer. 43:9 (something that masons could "hide large stones" in). Calvin interpreted it in terms of mortar "joining together" the bricks.

- ^{JM} The translators of *Nahal Hever* and of LXX went with the “heaviness” idea of the Hebrew verb rather than with the “greatness” idea of the verb which all other translators followed, but multiple commentators pointed out that this distinction should be preserved.
- ^{JN} LXX apparently skipped the last phrase, but it is in *Nahal Hever*: καταβαρυνθητι ὡς ακρις.
- ^{JO} This word only occurs here and in Ps. 105:34 (referring to the Egyptian plague, where it is translated “young locusts/caterpillars/grasshoppers”), Jer. 51:14 & 27 (describing the men and horses of the army coming up against Babylon as “caterpillars/locusts”), and Joel 1:4 & 2:25 (describing an army invasion of Judah, where it is translated “cankerworm/crawling/creeping/hopping/young locust”). BDB’s gloss is “young locust,” with a root meaning “to lick up,” so Keil’s translation reads “lickers.”
- ^{JP} This is an imperative masculine singular, so it should not refer to the feminine “you.” I think it refers to the common-gendered “fire.” (Both words for “locust” in this verse are also masculine.) The only other place this verb appears in this hit-pael stem in the Bible is Proverbs 12:9, where it is translated “he honored himself/pretended to be somebody/played the great man/was self-important.” The next verb is exactly the same, except it is feminine, so I think it refers to the feminine “sword.” (The word for “you” is also singular and feminine, but it makes more sense for the fire and sword to be “multiplying/becoming overwhelming” rather than the city of Nineveh. The next verse does speak of Nineveh “multiplying,” but it uses a different verb for that – כּר, which simply means “multiply,” whereas here the verb is כּבד, which has more to do with the effect of “weight” or “importance” upon others, which is why I translated it “overwhelm” here.) The best way I could figure to bring out the nuance that the commands are to the fire and sword rather than to the people of Nineveh, was to make the imperative into a Jussive, so that I could use the word “it” – rather than the word “you” – as their subjects. Keil was the only commentator I found to even comment on this difficulty, but his solution was to have “the people [masculine כּוּ which does not occur in this verse or in the previous verse] floating before his mind” followed by “thinking of the city [feminine חֲשַׁב, which one would have to go back 15 verses to find].”
- ^{JQ} This is the kind of locust which formed one of the plagues in Egypt (Ex. 10, Ps. 78:46, & 105:34 – where it is differentiated from the *yeleq*-locust and simply translated “locust”), and one of the curses for covenant-breaking (Deut. 38:28, 1 Ki. 8:37), but was kosher for eating (Lev. 11:22). Multitudinous enemies were often referred to as being like locusts (Judges 6:54, 7:12, Jer. 46:23, and Joel 1:4, 2:25 – where it is differentiated from the *yeleq*-locust by being translated “locust/swarming locust/great locust”) as here. BDB’s gloss is “locust,” with a root meaning “to be many.”
- ^{JR} *Nahal Hever* translated with the preposition ὡς (“like/as”) requiring the “stars” be in the Accusative rather than the Genitive case, but here is a rare case where the LXX made a better translation with “above.”
- ^{JS} This word is only used elsewhere in the HOT to describe merchants at Jerusalem (1 Ki. 10:15; Neh. 3:31-32; 13:20; Cant. 3:6; Ezek. 17:4) and the merchants of Tyre (Ezek. 27:3, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22-24). The Greek translation of this word in the LXX of Nah. 3:16 only shows up in Matt. 22:5 in the parable of the invitations to the wedding feast when one of the first invitees went back to his “shop/business/merchandise,” and in John 2:16, where Jesus said that the sellers in the temple should not make His Father’s house into a “house of business/merchandise/market/trade”! James 4:13 uses a verbal form too.
- ^{JT} This is one of only two places in the Bible (Isaiah 13:10’s eschatological one being the other) where this phrase “stars of the heavens” does not refer to the number of descendants promised to Abram (Gen. 22:17, 26:4, Ex. 32:13, Deut. 1:10, 10:22, 28:62, 1 Chron. 27:23, Neh. 9:23, Heb. 11:12).
- ^{JU} The NASB and NIV follow the Targums in translating this word according to the meaning of “strip” (esp. changing clothes), which is the most-common meaning of the word. However a secondary meaning of this same verb is “to conduct a surprise-attack” (Judges 9:33, 44, & 20:37, and 1 Sam. 23:27; 27:8-10; and 30:1, 14, 1 Chron. 14:9-13, 28:18, Job 1:17, and possibly Hos. 7:1), and this is the meaning brought out by the LXX. (Perhaps the Peshitta’s word has a similar range of meaning because Lamsa translated it “swarms” and Baucher translated it “sheds skin.”) The ESV, following the Vulgate, translates it according to its tertiary meaning “to spread out” (found only in 1 Chr. 14:9 & 13 and its parallel passages in 2 Sam. 5:18 & 22, and advocated by Pusey and Keil), but the ESV was unwarranted in adding the word “wings.” Perhaps it speaks of the young larvae eating voraciously, then molting and flying away on their adult wings.
- ^{JV} It appears that *Nahal Hever* reads ὄχλος (“crowd”) here instead of the LXX “mixed multitude,” but the rest of the book of Nahum is too obliterated to read in N.H.
- ^{JW} Although this word is a *hapex legomenon*, its related form appears 10 times, denoting consecrated priests (Lev. 15:31; 22:2), Nazirites (Num. 6:2,3,5,6,12), and devotees of various gods (Eze. 14:7, Hos. 9:10, and Zec. 7:3). May refer to a particular Assyrian official rank. Pusey, noting the headgear worn in Assyrian bas-reliefs, advocated for “crowned ones,” quoting Gosse’s book on *Assyria*, “All high officers of state... were adorned with diadems.”
- ^{JX} This word is only found in the HOT here and in Jer. 51:27, where it is translated “commander/general/marshal/captain.” It may refer to a particular rank of Assyrian officer. ESV renders “scribe” here. Ashurbanipal developed an impressive library and saw to it that images of himself always depicted a writing stylus in his belt, so being a scribe was highly valued in Nineveh. Keil noted that this word for “general” also appears in Targum Jonathan on Deut. 28:12 describing an angel.

- ^{JY} This word is repeated here. Its only other occurrence is Amos 7:1, where it is translated “locusts/locust-swarms/grasshoppers.” BDB and Strong related it to a root meaning “to dig/grub,” Lehrman traced its meaning to the Arabic cognate “to gather” and translated it “swarms” (cf. Holladay’s lexicon, followed by NASB, NIV, and ESV). Calvin (and Pusey and Keil) said the construction is a “superlative degree in Hebrew” and thus means “the locust of all locusts” or, as the KJV put it, “great locust,” followed by Henry “the largest specimens of that species.”
- ^{JZ} This word shows up in only 7 other verses: Num. 32:16, 24, 36, 1 Sam. 24:4, Ps. 89:41, Jer. 49:3, and Zeph. 2:6, where it is translated “sheepfolds/pens/hedges/walls.”
- ^{KA} “cold” – in combination with “day” only here and in **Prov. 25:20** “Like one who takes away a garment in cold weather ... Is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.” (NKJV) - and without “day” in Job 24:7, 37:9, and Ps. 147:17 – all about literal cold weather.
- ^{KB} Second-century AD Greek versions by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodion translated with συναγων, which is much closer to the meaning of the Hebrew word.
- ^{KC} A relatively-rare word found only here and in Psalm 76:6 & 121:3-4, and Isa. 5:27 & 56:10.
- ^{KD} cf. Perhaps the same “noblemen” mentioned in 2:5, although I think the ones in chapter 2 could be Nineveh’s adversaries. After the feminine “your” in previous verses referring to the city of Nineveh, the 2nd singular possessive pronoun changes in this verse to masculine, referring to the King of Assyria.
- ^{KE} This rare verb, found only here and in Jer. 50:11 and Mal. 3:20 (and only here in the Niphal stem), is never used to describe anything but cattle (cf. “shepherds” here, although clearly a metaphor for people), and all the other occurrences, which are in the Qal stem, denote leaping about and frolicking – even stampeding, so this “scattering” is not so much about “distribution” as it is about “going every which-way” in a panic. Calvin agreed, but his solution was to claim (without any evidence) that the MT was misspelled (and should have been spelled פָּרַץ as in Nah. 2:1) and to use the word “scatter” anyway!
- ^{KF} I think this participle can be interpreted reasonably as a noun “rally,” but NASB & NIV interpreted it (reasonably) in terms of a particular person “one to gather.” Incidentally, in **Isaiah 56:8** “The Lord Yahweh” is the “One who gathers.” Cf. **1 Kings 22:17** “...I saw all Israel scattered [פָּרַץ instead of Nahum’s פָּרַשׁ] on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd...” (NKJV)
- ^{KG} BHS notes suggested that this would be a better translation of גָּהַד than of the MT’s כָּהַד.
- ^{KH} *Hapex legomenon*, but shares the same root as “dim/diminish” in Lev. 13:6, 21, 26, 28, 56, Isa. 42:3, and 61:3.
- ^{KI} This is one of two instances of the phrase “clap hands” in the HOT where the context is triumph (the other being Ps. 47:2), the other three instances of the phrase use a different verb and have to do with providing surety for a loan (Prov. 6:1, 17:18, 22:26).

About the Author

Nate Wilson grew up as a pastor's kid, attending Briarwood Christian School and Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama. He gained a love for studying God's word from his father, Ken Wilson, and an appreciation for exegetical preaching from pastor Frank Barker. He went on to Covenant College to earn a Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies under the mentorship of Dr. Joseph Clumpner (Math & Physics), Dr. John Hamm (Music & Voice), and Dr. Roger Lambert (Bible & Missions). After a 14-year career in mobilizing students and church leaders in the United States toward world missions through the Student Foreign Mission Fellowship and Caleb Project, Nate earned a Master of Divinity degree (with a focus on Biblical Languages and Exegesis) at Sangre de Cristo Seminary in Westcliffe, Colorado, under the mentorship of Dr. Dwight Zeller and Dr. Andrew Zeller, and was ordained as a teaching elder in the Rocky Mountain Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America. In the year 2006, he was called to organize a new church in Manhattan Kansas, under the name of Christ The Redeemer, so he moved there with his wife Paula and eight children (to which four more were added in Kansas). Over the course of the next several years, Nate concluded that the small, mostly-German-ethnicity town they had moved to did not have the demographics to support a self-sustaining P.C.A. church, so an informal and interdenominational group of evangelical pastors local to Manhattan, Kansas re-ordained him to pastor Christ The Redeemer Church as a non-denominational congregation, committed to the doctrines common to the English Presbyterian Westminster Confession, the Second London Baptist Confession, and the Dutch-Reformed Three Forms of Unity. This commentary was developed in the process of preaching through the book of Nahum to Christ The Redeemer Church during the spring of the year 2025.

This commentary comes from an evangelical and reformed perspective, so the Bible is treated as coming authoritatively from God, not man, and the Bible is seen as primarily revealing God's plan for saving those He loves by paying the atonement for their sins through the death of His Son Jesus. This commentary also highly values the thinking of honest Christian scholars throughout history, which is the reason for incorporating the side-by-side charts of different translations on each passage and the reason for surveying a wide range of commentary from ancient church fathers to modern Reformers and Puritans as well as some contemporary scholarship. Another value which shaped this study is the conviction that God has preserved His word in all ages for His people, so Biblical texts and versions which have sustained Christians for over a thousand years should be given great consideration. At the same time, Christians need to hear God's word in language they can understand, so there has to be a balance between preserving time-honored traditions and keeping Biblical teaching understandable in our time. This commentary is an attempt to strike that balance in a more traditional direction than most

contemporary versions and commentaries, making it easier to see the original text through the contemporary American English. Finally, this commentary was not intended to be a mere academic exercise, but rather a spur to personally know God better and to live that love out in practical ways in everyday life. It is hoped that the practical application of each passage in this commentary will indeed have that effect.

Other Bible books on which Nate Wilson has written commentaries include:

- Leviticus,
- 1 Samuel,
- 2 Samuel/1 Chronicles,
- Psalms (1-56),
- Jeremiah,
- Ezekiel,
- Jonah,
- Micah,
- Habakkuk,
- Matthew,
- 1 Corinthians,
- 2 Corinthians
- Philippians,
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians,
- Hebrews,
- James,
- 1 & 2 Peter,
- 1, 2, 3 John
- Jude

Most of these are available in print at:

- Clark Memorial Library, 6160 County Road 130, Westcliffe, CO 81252
AND
- Christ The Redeemer Church Office, 2488 Woodside Ln, Manhattan, KS 66503

Digital copies of most are available as individual sermons in the sermon section of the website of Christ The Redeemer Church www.ctrchurch-mhk.org
or at the author's website: www.NateWilsonFamily.net

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