



NAHUM

Read Nahum 1:1–8

This book concerns the overthrow and destruction of Israel's longtime mortal enemy, Assyria, whose capital city is Nineveh. To save the Israelites, the Lord marches forth as a fearsome warrior against those who have harshly oppressed Israel for almost two centuries. God's defeat of Israel's enemies reveals concretely that "the LORD is good, a stronghold in a day of trouble."

Reflect: God's reputation as a defender of the oppressed goes back to the days of Israel's enslavement in Egypt and their deliverance at the Red Sea. Can I see God's saving hand at work in my life or in today's world? How should God's people respond to injustice and oppression?

Pray: I will pray for eyes to see injustice and the courage to confront it.

Act: I will read and listen to the local news to acquaint myself with the injustice at my doorstep.

1 An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

The Consuming Wrath of God

- 2** A jealous and avenging God is the LORD,
the LORD is avenging and wrathful;
the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries
and rages against his enemies.
- 3** The LORD is slow to anger but great in power,
and the LORD will by no means clear the
guilty.
His way is in whirlwind and storm,
and the clouds are the dust of his feet.
- 4** He rebukes the sea and makes it dry,
and he dries up all the rivers;
Bashan and Carmel wither,
and the bloom of Lebanon fades.
- 5** The mountains quake before him,
and the hills melt;
the earth heaves before him,
the world and all who live in it.
- 6** Who can stand before his indignation?
Who can endure the heat of his anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire,
and by him the rocks are broken in pieces.
- 7** The LORD is good,
a stronghold in a day of trouble;
he protects those who take refuge in him,
even in a rushing flood.
- 8**

Read Nahum 1:9–15

The prophet addresses Nineveh directly and reveals that the Assyrians' military campaigns against Israel are really attacks against the Lord. God will respond and cut off the Assyrians. The proper response from God's people is to fulfill their vows and to keep their holy festivals honoring God. Worship has its roots in gratitude for God's saving deeds.

Reflect: I often pray when I am in need. When prayers are answered or when I recognize that God has helped me, what is my response? Is my prayer mostly petition or do I spend sufficient time in thanksgiving?

Pray: I will pray for the grace to recognize God's blessing and for a spirit of gratitude.

Act: Today I will set aside some time to list the blessings God has given me.

He will make a full end of his adversaries,^a
and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

⁹ Why do you plot against the LORD?

He will make an end;
no adversary will rise up twice.

¹⁰ Like thorns they are entangled,
like drunkards they are drunk;
they are consumed like dry straw.

¹¹ From you one has gone out
who plots evil against the LORD,
one who counsels wickedness.

Good News for Judah

¹² Thus says the LORD,
“Though they are at full strength and many,^b
they will be cut off and pass away.

Though I have afflicted you,
I will afflict you no more.

¹³ And now I will break off his yoke from you
and snap the bonds that bind you.”

¹⁴ The LORD has commanded concerning you:
“Your name shall be perpetuated no longer;
from the house of your gods I will cut off
the carved image and the cast image.
I will make your grave, for you are worthless.”

^{15c} Look! On the mountains the feet of one
who brings good tidings,
who proclaims peace!
Celebrate your festivals, O Judah,
fulfill your vows,
for never again shall the wicked invade you;
they are utterly cut off.

The Destruction of the Wicked City

2 A shatterer^d has come up against you.
Guard the ramparts;
watch the road;
gird your loins;
collect all your strength.

² (For the LORD is restoring the majesty of Jacob,
as well as the majesty of Israel,
though ravagers have ravaged them
and ruined their branches.)

³ The shields of his warriors are red;
his soldiers are clothed in crimson.
The metal on the chariots flashes
on the day when he musters them;
the chargers^e prance.

^a Gk: Heb of her place

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Ch 2.1 in Heb

^d Cn: Heb scatterer

^e Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb cypresses

Read Nahum 2

This chapter describes the attack against Nineveh, its futile defense, and its sacking. The mighty Assyrian army is no match for the Lord, who uses the Babylonian army to attack Nineveh. Now the people who conquered and subjected others shall themselves be conquered and subjected. The prophet relishes the defeat of Assyria, as would anyone who has suffered under an unjust aggressor.

Reflect: The human misery of war is captured in such images as that of a population fleeing the city like water being drained from a pool and young women being led into exile, beating their breasts in mourning. War is not just a conflict between armies but a tragedy that affects non-combatants, especially the vulnerable who often have no defense or escape.

Pray: Today I will pray for refugees and victims of war.

Act: I will try to restore peace to a relationship that is broken or wounded.

- 4 The chariots race madly through the streets,
they rush to and fro through the squares;
their appearance is like torches,
they dart like lightning.
- 5 He calls his officers;
they stumble as they come forward;
they hasten to the wall,
and the mantelet^a is set up.
- 6 The river gates are opened,
the palace trembles.
- 7 It is decreed^a that the city^b be exiled,
its slave women led away,
moaning like doves
and beating their breasts.
- 8 Nineveh is like a pool
whose waters^c run away.
“Halt! Halt!”—
but no one turns back.
- 9 “Plunder the silver,
plunder the gold!
There is no end of treasure!
An abundance of every precious thing!”
- 10 Devastation, desolation, and destruction!
Hearts faint and knees tremble,
all loins quake,
all faces grow pale!
- 11 What became of the lions’ den,
the cave^d of the young lions,
where the lion goes,
and the lion’s cubs, with no one to disturb them?
- 12 The lion has torn enough for his whelps
and strangled prey for his lionesses;
he has filled his caves with prey
and his dens with torn flesh.

13 See, I am against you, says the LORD of hosts,
and I will burn your^e chariots in smoke, and the sword
shall devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey
from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall
be heard no more.

Ruin Imminent and Inevitable

- 3** Ah! City of bloodshed,
utterly deceitful, full of booty—
no end to the plunder!
- 2 The crack of whip and rumble of wheel,
galloping horse and bounding chariot!
- 3 Horsemen charging,
flashing sword and glittering spear,
piles of dead,
heaps of corpses,

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Heb *it*

^c Cn Compare Gk: Heb *a pool, from the days that she has become, and they*

^d Cn: Heb *pasture*

^e Heb *her*

Read Nahum 3

With graphic language, the prophet details the atrocities of Assyria, making clear that their fate is well deserved. Beyond the carnage of war, Assyria is guilty of pride, thinking itself better than all others and beyond the reach of any enemy. The king and nobles are so complacent in their power that they are like those who sleep. They shall awaken to destruction.

Reflect: The fate of Nineveh dramatizes the proverb, “you reap whatever you sow” (see Gal 6:7). Violence begets violence, war begets war. What is true on the stage of world events is true also in our own lives. How we treat others invites them to treat us in the same way, for good or for ill.

Pray: I will pray for the grace of humility in my dealings with others.

Act: I will treat others with the respect and dignity with which I would like to be treated.

- dead bodies without end—
they stumble over the bodies!
- 4 Because of the countless debaucheries of the prostitute,
gracefully alluring, mistress of sorcery,
who enslaves^a nations through her debaucheries,
and peoples through her sorcery,
- 5 I am against you,
says the LORD of hosts,
and will lift up your skirts over your face;
and I will let nations look on your nakedness
and kingdoms on your shame.
- 6 I will throw filth at you
and treat you with contempt,
and make you a spectacle.
- 7 Then all who see you will shrink from you and say,
“Nineveh is devastated; who will bemoan her?”
Where shall I seek comforters for you?
- 8 Are you better than Thebes^b
that sat by the Nile,
with water around her,
her rampart a sea,
water her wall?
- 9 Ethiopia^c was her strength,
Egypt too, and that without limit;
Put and the Libyans were her^d helpers.
- 10 Yet she became an exile,
she went into captivity;
even her infants were dashed in pieces
at the head of every street;
lots were cast for her nobles,
all her dignitaries were bound in fetters.
- 11 You also will be drunken,
you will go into hiding;^e
you will seek
a refuge from the enemy.
- 12 All your fortresses are like fig trees
with first-ripe figs—
if shaken they fall
into the mouth of the eater.
- 13 Look at your troops:
they are women in your midst.
The gates of your land
are wide open to your foes;
fire has devoured the bars of your gates.
- 14 Draw water for the siege,
strengthen your forts;
trample the clay,
tread the mortar,
take hold of the brick mold!

^a Heb *sells*

^b Heb *No-amon*

^c Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

^d Gk: Heb *your*

^e Meaning of Heb uncertain

15 There the fire will devour you,
 the sword will cut you off.
 It will devour you like the locust.

Multiply yourselves like the locust,
 multiply like the grasshopper!

16 You increased your merchants
 more than the stars of the heavens.
 The locust sheds its skin and flies
 away.

17 Your guards are like grasshoppers,
 your scribes like swarms^a of locusts
 settling on the fences
 on a cold day—
 when the sun rises, they fly away;

no one knows where they have
 gone.

18 Your shepherds are asleep,
 O king of Assyria;
 your nobles slumber.
 Your people are scattered on the
 mountains
 with no one to gather them.

19 There is no assuaging your hurt,
 your wound is mortal.
 All who hear the news about you
 clap their hands over you.
 For who has ever escaped
 your endless cruelty?

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

BLANK PAGE 1498