

Easy-to-Read Version

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Nahum

This book describes a message that God gave the prophet Nahum in a vision. It is about the nation of Assyria. The message is aimed at Nineveh, the nation's most important city. But this city represents the whole nation.

The ancient Assyrian Empire was one of the most violent nations in human history. This is true even compared with modern nations that use weapons of mass destruction. The Assyrians were proud of being cruel. Their ancient records show that they took pleasure in seeing people suffer. They boasted about how they tortured people. They enjoyed watching women and children cry over the dead bodies of their husbands and fathers.

The book of Nahum gives these people of war a clear warning. This is the message: "God is a stronger warrior than you are!" Most of the book is a message of judgement. It is God's message of warning against the Assyrians for their violence. But it is also a message of hope for God's people. It speaks of relief from the cruelty they suffered from their enemy Assyria. Their pain and tears will not continue (1:12-13). The message for God's people is that now they have someone to defend them. God himself will fight for them.

In the book of Nahum, the prophet tells the people of Nineveh...

What to expect from God (1:2-7)

That God will destroy their city and free his people (1:8 – 2:2)

How their city will fall (2:3 – 3:19)

1 This book is the vision of Nahum from Elkosh. This is the sad message about the city of Nineveh.*

The Lord Is Angry at Nineveh

²The LORD is a jealous God.

The LORD punishes the guilty, and he is very angry.

The LORD punishes his enemies, and he stays angry with them.

³The LORD is patient,

but he is also very powerful!

The LORD will punish the guilty; he will not let them go free.

You can see his power in the whirlwinds and storms.

The clouds are like dust from his feet.

⁴He gives a command and the sea becomes dry.

He dries up all the rivers.

The green hills of Bashan and Carmel turn brown,

and the flowers of Lebanon die.

⁵When the Lord appears, the mountains shake

and the hills melt away.

He will come,

and the earth will shake with fear.

The earth and everyone on it will shake with fear.

⁶No one can stand against his great anger.

No one can endure his terrible anger.

His anger burns like fire.

The rocks break into pieces when he comes.

⁷The LORD is good.

He is a safe place to go to in times of trouble.

He takes care of those who trust him.

⁸But he completely destroys his enemies.

***1:1 Nineveh** The capital city of the country of Assyria. Assyria destroyed Israel in 722-721 BC.

He washes them away like a flood
and chases them into the darkness.
⁹ Why are you making plans against the
LORD?

He will bring complete destruction;
you will not cause trouble again.

¹⁰ His enemies are as helpless as tangled
thorn bushes

or drunks after too much to drink.
They will be burned up
like dry straw.

¹¹ Someone from Nineveh is making evil
plans against the LORD.

That adviser is a worthless
troublemaker.

¹² This is what the LORD said:

“The people of Assyria are at full
strength.

They have many soldiers, but they will
all be cut down.

They will all be finished.

My people, I made you suffer,
but I will make you suffer no more.

¹³ Now I will set you free from the power
of Assyria.

I will take the yoke off your neck
and tear away the chains holding you.”

¹⁴ King of Assyria, the LORD gave this
command about you:

“You will not have any descendants to
wear your name.

I will destroy your carved idols
and metal statues that are in the temple
of your gods.

I am preparing your grave,
because your end is coming soon!”[†]

¹⁵ Judah, look! There, coming over the
mountains,

is a messenger bringing good news!

He says there is peace.

Judah, celebrate your special festivals
and do what you promised.

Those worthless troublemakers will not
come to attack you again.
They have all been destroyed.

Nineveh Will Be Destroyed

2 An enemy is coming to attack you,
so guard the strong places of your
city.

Watch the road.

Get ready for war.

Prepare for battle!

² Yes, the LORD changed Jacob’s pride.
He made it like Israel’s pride.

The enemy destroyed them
and ruined their grapevines.

³ The shields of his soldiers are red.

Their uniforms are bright red.

Their chariots are shining like flames of
fire

and are lined up for battle.

Their horses are ready to go.

⁴ The chariots race wildly through the
streets

and rush back and forth through the
square.

They look like burning torches,
like lightning flashing from place to
place!

⁵ The enemy calls for his best soldiers.

They stumble as they rush ahead.

They run to the wall

and set up their shield over the battering
ram.[‡]

⁶ But the gates by the rivers are open,
and the enemy comes flooding in and de-
stroys the king’s palace.

⁷ The enemy takes away the queen,
and her slave girls moan sadly like
doves.

They beat their breasts to show their
sorrow.

⁸ Nineveh is like a pool whose water

[†]1:14 *because your end is coming soon* Or “you are not important” or “you are so hated”.

[‡]2:5 *battering ram* A heavy log that soldiers used to break down gates or break holes in the walls of a city.

is draining away.
 People yell, “Stop! Stop running away!”
 But it does not do any good.

⁹Take the silver!

Take the gold!

There are many things to take.

There are many treasures.

¹⁰Now Nineveh is empty.

Everything has been stolen.

The city is ruined.

Its people have lost their courage.

Their hearts melt with fear.

Their knees knock together,

their bodies shake,

and their faces turn pale.

¹¹Where is that great city now?

It was like a den where the lions feed
 their young.

It was a place where people felt safe,
 like lions in a cave with no one there to
 harm them.

¹²The lion was able to catch plenty of
 food

to feed his cubs and his mate.

He filled his cave with the animals he
 killed.

He filled his den with the meat he
 gathered.

¹³“I am against you, Nineveh,”

says the LORD All-Powerful.

“I will burn your chariots

and kill your young lions in battle.

You will not hunt anyone on earth again.

People will never again hear bad news
 from your messengers.”

Bad News for Nineveh

3 It will be very bad for that city of
 murderers.

Nineveh is a city full of lies.

It is filled with things taken from other
 countries.

It is filled with plenty of people that it
 hunted and killed.

²You can hear the sounds of whips
 and the noise of wheels.

You can hear horses galloping
 and chariots bouncing along!

³Soldiers on horses are attacking,
 their swords are shining,
 their spears are gleaming!

There are many dead people.

Dead bodies are piled up—too many
 bodies to count.

People are tripping over the dead bodies.

⁴All this happened because of Nineveh.
 Nineveh is like a prostitute who could
 never get enough.

She wanted more and more.

She sold herself to many nations,
 and she used her magic to make them
 her slaves.

⁵“I am against you, Nineveh,”

says the LORD All-Powerful.

“I will pull your dress^f up over your face.
 I will let the nations see your naked
 body.

The kingdoms will see your shame.

⁶I will throw dirty things on you
 and treat you in a hateful way.

People will look at you and laugh.

⁷Everyone who sees you will be shocked
 and say,

‘Nineveh is destroyed. Who will cry for
 her?’

I know I cannot find anyone to comfort
 you, Nineveh.”

⁸Nineveh, you are no safer than Thebes[§]
 on the Nile River, surrounded by water.
 Like you, she had the river for
 protection.

It was like a wall around her.

⁹Ethiopia and Egypt made Thebes
 strong.

^f**3:5 pull your dress** This is a wordplay in Hebrew. The Hebrew word also means “to destroy a country and take its people away as prisoners to other nations”.

[§]**3:8 Thebes** A great city in Egypt. It was destroyed in 663 BC by the Assyrian army.

Libya and the Sudan supported her.

¹⁰ But Thebes was defeated.

Her people were taken away as prisoners
to a foreign country.

Soldiers beat her small children to death
at every street corner.

They threw lots to see who would keep
the leaders as slaves.

They put chains on all the important
men of Thebes.

¹¹ So, Nineveh, you will also fall like a
drunk.

You will try to hide.

You will look for a safe place away from
the enemy.

¹² But Nineveh, all your strong places
will be like fig trees.

When new figs become ripe, people
come and shake the tree.

The figs fall into their mouths.

They eat them, and the figs are gone.

¹³ Nineveh, your people are all like
women,

and the enemy soldiers are ready to take
them.

The gates of your land are open wide for
your enemies to come in.

Fire has destroyed the wooden bars
across the gates.

¹⁴ Get water and store it inside your city,
because the enemy soldiers will sur-
round your city.

Make your defences strong!

Get clay to make more bricks and mix
the mortar.

Get the moulds for making bricks.

¹⁵ But no matter what you do, the fire
will destroy you.

The enemy army will kill you.

They will cover you like a swarm of
locusts

eating everything in sight.

You can increase your numbers like a
swarm of locusts,

but it will not help you.

¹⁶ You have many traders who go places
and buy things.

They are as many as the stars in the sky.

They are like locusts that come and eat
until everything is gone and then leave.

¹⁷ And your government officials are
also like locusts

that settle on a stone wall on a cold day.

But when the sun comes up, the rocks
become warm,

and the locusts all fly away,

and no one knows where.

¹⁸ King of Assyria, your shepherds fell
asleep.

These powerful men are sleeping.

And now your sheep have wandered
away on the mountains.

There is no one to bring them back.

¹⁹ Nineveh, you have been hurt badly,
and nothing can heal your wound.

Everyone who hears the news of your
destruction

claps their hands.

They are all happy,

because they all felt the pain you caused
again and again.