

NAHUM

All comments by Garcia-Treto unless otherwise noted.

- 1) Why the focus of attention on Nineveh and Assyria and the joy at its fall? For almost 150 years Judah had been under the heel of Assyria – Tiglath-pileser III (the “Pul” of 2 Kings 15-16), Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhadon, and Assurbanipal. Sennacherib devastated Judah in 701 and exacted heavy tribute from Hezekiah after besieging him in Jerusalem. /// Nahum and Obadiah are the only two prophetic books that are not included in the Common Lectionary. /// Raises the question and leaves unanswered: can God’s punishment of violence and oppression partake of that same violence and oppression? /// The book shows no distinction between the guilty and the innocent, such as does God in the last verse of Jonah: “And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons...” /// Probably written after the fall of Thebes in 663 BCE and before the fall of Nineveh in 612. Probably by a Judean prophet/poet. /// May be a shortened form of Nehemiah, which means “Yahweh is my consolation.” /// Except for v 1, written as an acrostic, the first half of the Hebrew alphabet. Isaac Azimov: “A paean of joy over the forthcoming destruction of Nineveh.”
- 2) 1:9 – NAB: “What are you imputing to the Lord?”
- 3) 1:10 – Self ruin results from trying to frustrate God’s designs in history. From entanglement to unconsciousness to complete destruction.
- 4) 1:12b – “afflicted in NIV, “humbled” in NAB.
- 5) 1:14 – a: Is “you” Nineveh or Judah? Impossible to say. b: An idiom in the MT: “Seed will not be sown from your name again.” c: In Hebrew: “I will make your grave a refuse heap.”
- 6) 2:1 – The “shatterer(s)” are the Babylonians and Medes.
- 7) 2:2 – In parentheses because it is clearly intrusive, a gloss from a redactor.
- 8) 2:7-9 – The temple was plundered and the statue of Ishtar was carried out, followed by her priestesses and/or temple prostitutes. This was common practice in Assyrian/Babylonian warfare.
- 9) 2:10 – In Hebrew, there is a malevolent effect of the repeated alteration of b and q, a full-throated spitting: bûqâ ûm_bûqâ ûm_bullâqû.
- 10) 2:11-12 – Assyria’s defeat is likened to Yahweh’s hunting down a pride of lions. The lions’ den is the Assyrian king and his court. The prey and torn flesh alludes to the enormous tribute extracted from their vassals and used to build palaces and temples. Lions appeared frequently in Assyrian art, noticeably in lion hunt scenes in wall reliefs, especially Ashurbanipal’s palace at Nineveh.
- 11) 3:4-7 – This may be 1) Assyria’s seductive diplomatic and commercial alliances, or 2) a sardonic portrayal of the goddess Ishtar, a “whore in disgrace.” /// The image of God humiliating anyone in this way, even a whore, is distasteful to modern readers.
- 12) 3:7b-8 – Nineveh devastated by the Chaldeans (southern Babylonians and Medes). No-amon (Thebes) far down the Nile, almost to Aswan, astride the Nile, not surrounded by water, immensely wealthy, a prime target for Assyrian looting.
- 13) 3:12-19 – An address of Yahweh: 12-13 – Assyria’s fortresses are ripe for the plucking, not requiring much effort on the eater’s part. /// The gates of the land being “wide open” may have overtones of rape. 14-15: Clearly ironic: it is already too late to prepare the

- city for a siege. And too late to increase the population like grasshoppers.
- 14) 3:16b – NAB: “spread their wings,” NIV: “strip the land.” Perhaps referring to the flight of Assyrian and foreign merchants, leaving behind empty shells of abandoned shops.
 - 15) 3:18 – The king is a shepherd also, as are his people. This verse is a serious indictment of the king, allowing his flock to be in a defenseless position.
 - 16) 3:19 – “Nahum’s vision of a divine warrior coming to destroy Nineveh in retribution for Assyrian oppression fails ultimately to rise above justifying yet another instance of brutal human warfare;;; how can we celebrate the wholesale destruction of human life as an act of God?”