

Nahum



This short book is a poetic celebration of the fall of Nineveh, the capital of one of Israel's cruelest oppressors, the Assyrian Empire.

1 I am Nahum from Elkosh. And this is the message[>] that I wrote down about Nineveh.

The Fierce Anger of the LORD

- ² The LORD God demands loyalty.
In his anger, he takes revenge
on his enemies.
- ³ The LORD is powerful,
yet patient;
he makes sure that the guilty
are always punished.
He can be seen in storms
and in whirlwinds;
clouds are the dust from his feet.
- ⁴ At the LORD's command,
oceans and rivers dry up.
Bashan, Mount Carmel,
and Lebanon wither,
and their flowers fade.
- ⁵ At the sight of the LORD,
mountains and hills
tremble and melt;
the earth and its people
shudder and shake.
- ⁶ Who can stand the heat
of his furious anger?
It flashes out like fire
and shatters stones.

The Power of Assyria Will Be Broken

- ⁷ The LORD is good.
He protects those who trust him
in times of trouble.
- ⁸ But like a roaring flood,
the LORD chases his enemies
into dark places
and destroys them.
- ⁹ So don't plot against the LORD!
He wipes out his enemies,
and they never revive.
- ¹⁰ 'They are like drunkards
overcome by wine,
or like dry thornbushes
burning in a fire.'
- ¹¹ Assyria, one of your rulers
has made evil plans
against the LORD.
- ¹² But the LORD says, 'Assyria,
no matter how strong you are,
you are doomed!
My people Judah,
I have troubled you before,
but I won't do it again.
- ¹³ I'll snap your chains
and set you free
from the Assyrians.'

- 14 Assyria, this is what else
the LORD says to you:
"Your name will be forgotten.
I will destroy every idol
in your temple,
and I will send you to the grave,
because you are worthless."
15 Look toward the mountains,
people of Judah!
Here comes a messenger
with good news of peace.
Celebrate your festivals.
Keep your promises to God.
Your evil enemies are destroyed
and will never again
invade your country.

Nineveh Will Fall

- 2 Nineveh, someone is coming
to attack and scatter you.
Guard your fortresses!
Watch the road! Be brave!
Prepare for battle!
2 Judah and Israel are like trees
with branches broken
by their enemies.
But the LORD is going to restore
their power and glory.
*3 Nineveh, on this day of attack,
your enemies' shields are red;
their uniforms are crimson.
4 Their horses prance,
and their 'armored' chariots
dart around like lightning
or flaming torches.
5 An officer gives a command.
But his soldiers stumble,
as they hasten to build
a shelter to protect themselves
against rocks thrown down
from the city wall.
6 The river gates fly open,
and panic floods the palace.
7 Nineveh is disgraced.
The queen is dragged off.
Her servant women mourn;
they sound like doves,
and they beat their breasts
in sorrow.
8 Nineveh is like a pond
with leaking water.

Shouts of "Stop! Don't go!"
can be heard everywhere.
But everyone is leaving.

- 9 Enemy soldiers shout,
"The city is full of treasure
and all kinds of wealth.
Steal her silver! Grab her gold!"
10 Nineveh is doomed! Destroyed!
Her people tremble with fear;
their faces turn pale.▷
11 What happened to this city?
They were safer there
than powerful lions in a den,
with no one to disturb them.
12 These are the same lions
that ferociously attacked
their victims,
then dragged away the flesh
to feed their young.
13 The LORD All-Powerful
is against you, Nineveh.
God will burn your chariots
and send an army to kill
those young lions of yours.
You will never again
make victims of others
or send messengers to threaten
everyone on this earth.

Punishment for Nineveh

The LORD said:

- 3 Doom to the crime capital!
Nineveh, city of murder
and treachery,
2 here is your fate—
cracking whips,
churning wheels;
galloping horses,
roaring chariots;
3 cavalry attacking,
swords and spears flashing;
soldiers stumbling
over piles of dead bodies.
4 You were nothing more
than a prostitute
using your magical charms
and witchcraft
to attract and trap nations.
5 But I, the LORD All-Powerful,
am now your enemy.

I will pull up your skirt
and let nations and kingdoms
stare at your nakedness.
6 I will cover you with garbage,
treat you like trash,
and rub you in the dirt.
7 Everyone who sees you
will turn away and shout,
"Nineveh is done for!
Is anyone willing to mourn
or to give her comfort?"

Nineveh's Fate Is Sealed

8 Nineveh, do you feel safer
than the city of Thebes?
The Nile River
'was its wall of defense.'
9 Thebes trusted the mighty power
of Ethiopia[▷] and Egypt;
the nations of Put and Libya
were her allies.
10 But she was captured and taken
to a foreign country.
Her children were murdered
at every street corner.
The members of her royal family
were auctioned off,
and her high officials
were bound in chains.
11 Nineveh, now it's your turn!
You will get drunk and try to hide
from your enemy.
12 Your fortresses are fig trees
with ripe figs.
Merely shake the trees,
and fruit will fall
into every open mouth.
13 Your army is weak.
Fire has destroyed the crossbars
on your city gates;

now they stand wide open
to your enemy.

14 Your city is under attack.
Haul in extra water!
Strengthen your defenses!
Start making bricks!
Stir the mortar!
15 You will still go up in flames
and be cut down by swords
that will wipe you out like wheat
attacked by grasshoppers.
So, go ahead and increase
like a swarm of locusts!
16 More merchants are in your city
than there are stars
in the sky—
but they are like locusts
that eat everything,
then fly away.
17 Your guards and your officials
are swarms of locusts.
On a chilly day
they settle on a fence,
but when the sun comes out,
they take off
to who-knows-where.
18 King of Assyria,
your officials and leaders
sleep the eternal sleep,
while your people are scattered
in the mountains.
Yes, your people are sheep
without a shepherd.
19 You're fatally wounded.
There's no hope for you.
But everyone claps
when they hear this news,
because your constant cruelty
has caused them pain.

Notes

*An asterisk preceding a verse number in a poetic passage of this book indicates that the contents of two or more verses have been joined together and rearranged beginning with the verse so marked.

Phrases enclosed in half square superscript brackets ([^]) are those that are difficult to translate from the original Hebrew with great certainty. Consequently, the English rendering given should be understood as only one possible way of translating such texts.

▷ **1.1** *message*: Or "vision."

▷ **2.10** *faces turn pale*: Or "ashes cover their faces."

▷ **3.9** *Ethiopia*: The Hebrew text has "Cush."