Nahum

The Destruction of Nineveh (Nahum 2)

In weeks one and two of this series, we looked at how to pronounce Nahum, where Nahum is in the Bible, the historical, political, and geographical contexts, as well as a word-by-word look at the original Hebrew language in order to draw out applications and personalizations.

In today's lesson, we'll read Nahum 1-2, explain the words in the text of Nahum 2, and look for applications and personalizations.

Read: The Destruction of Nineveh (Nahum 2)

1 The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

God’s Wrath on His Enemies

2 God is jealous, and the LORD avenges;
The LORD avenges and is furious.
The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries,
And He reserves wrath for His enemies;
3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power,
And will not at all acquit the wicked.

The LORD has His way
In the whirlwind and in the storm,
And the clouds are the dust of His feet.
4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry,
And dries up all the rivers.
Bashan and Carmel wither,
And the flower of Lebanon wilts.

5 The mountains quake before Him,
The hills melt,
And the earth heaves at His presence,
Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.

6 Who can stand before His indignation?
And who can endure the fierceness of His anger?
His fury is poured out like fire,
And the rocks are thrown down by Him.
7 The LORD is good,
A stronghold in the day of trouble;
And He knows those who trust in Him.
8 But with an overflowing flood
He will make an utter end of its place,
And darkness will pursue His enemies.

9 What do you conspire against the LORD?
He will make an utter end of it.
Affliction will not rise up a second time.
10 For while tangled like thorns,
And while drunken like drunkards,
They shall be devoured like stubble fully dried.
11 From you comes forth one
Who plots evil against the LORD,
A wicked counselor.

12 Thus says the LORD:
“Though they are safe, and likewise many,
Yet in this manner they will be cut down
When he passes through.
Though I have afflicted you,
I will afflict you no more;
13 For now I will break off his yoke from you,
And burst your bonds apart.”

14 The LORD has given a command concerning you:
“Your name shall be perpetuated no longer.
Out of the house of your gods
I will cut off the carved image and the molded image.
I will dig your grave,
For you are vile.”

15 Behold, on the mountains
The feet of him who brings good tidings,
Who proclaims peace!
O Judah, keep your appointed feasts,
Perform your vows.
For the wicked one shall no more pass through you;
He is utterly cut off.
The Destruction of Nineveh

1 He who scatters has come up before your face.
Man the fort!
Watch the road!
Strengthen your flanks!
Fortify your power mightily.

2 For the LORD will restore the excellence of Jacob
Like the excellence of Israel,
For the emptiers have emptied them out
And ruined their vine branches.

3 The shields of his mighty men are made red,
The valiant men are in scarlet.
The chariots come with flaming torches
In the day of his preparation,
And the spears are brandished.

4 The chariots rage in the streets,
They jostle one another in the broad roads;
They seem like torches,
They run like lightning.

5 He remembers his nobles;
They stumble in their walk;
They make haste to her walls,
And the defense is prepared.

6 The gates of the rivers are opened,
And the palace is dissolved.

7 It is decreed:
She shall be led away captive,
She shall be brought up;
And her maidservants shall lead her as with the voice of doves,
Beating their breasts.

8 Though Nineveh of old was like a pool of water,
Now they flee away.
“Halt! Halt!” they cry;
But no one turns back.

9 Take spoil of silver!
Take spoil of gold!
There is no end of treasure,
Or wealth of every desirable prize.
10 She is empty, desolate, and waste!
The heart melts, and the knees shake;
Much pain is in every side,
And all their faces are drained of color.

11 Where is the dwelling of the lions,
And the feeding place of the young lions,
Where the lion walked, the lioness and lion’s cub,
And no one made them afraid?
12 The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs,
Killed for his lionesses,
Filled his caves with prey,
And his dens with flesh.

13 “Behold, I am against you,” says the LORD of hosts, “I will burn your 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.”

Explain: The Destruction of Nineveh (Nahum 2)
Bible study is asking and answering questions about the text. Let’s ask some.

Are there any literary/structural observations?

Nahum is poetry. The focus shifts from the LORD to Nineveh.

2:3: While the general tenor of the section is clear, some details are obscure. This is due to several factors, including difficult and rare words and the lack of specificity in the use of grammatical antecedents. Indeed, at times it is unclear whether the writer is referring to the warriors defending the city or to its attackers. Since confusion reigns in most warfare, it is possible that the latter type of ambiguity is stylistic, and thus intentional. (The Minor Prophets, McComiskey, 804)

2:6: There is virtually no semantic (thought) parallelism in these lines. The poetic flavor is retained by a continuation of short, hard-hitting clauses. Within this vivid picture the interpreter continues to find pronouns without clear antecedents. Who is “he”—the king of Assyria, the commander of the attacking army, or God? To whom does “they” refer—the attacking army or the Assyrian army? This is purposeful poetic ambiguity that, as we saw previously, reflects the confusion of battle. (The Minor Prophets, McComiskey, 805)
Are there any repeated words?

You/your (8), lion/lioness/lionesses (4), chariots (3), emptied/emptiers, empty (3), man/men (3), cub/cubs (2), excellence (2), face/faces (2), fort/fortify (2), halt (2), lead/led (2), LORD (2), mightily/mighty (2), preparation/prepared (2), prey (2), road/roads (2), spoil (2), torches (2), voice (2), walk/walked (2), young (2)

A Hebrew verb has a person, a number, a gender, a voice, an aspect, a stem, and a conjugation.

1. **Person**: the relationship between the verb and the speaker (first, second, third)
2. **Number**: whether one or more than one subject is referenced (singular, plural)
3. **Gender**: the sex of the referent (masculine, feminine, common)
4. **Voice**: the relationship of the action of the verb to the subject (active, passive, reflexive)
5. **Aspect/mode**: the kind of action expressed by a verb (simple, intensive, causal)
6. **Stems** (variants are in parenthesis): an offshoot of the root indicating the properties of voice and aspect
   - **Qal** (qal): simple action, active voice
   - **Nifal** (niphal): simple (normal) action, passive voice
   - **Piel** (polel, poel, pilpel, palel, pealal, pilel): intensive (strong) action, active voice
   - **Pual** (polal, poal, polpal, pulal, poalal): intensive (strong) action, passive voice
   - **Hifil** (hiphil, tiphel): causal (caused to) action, active voice
   - **Hofal** (hophal, hothpael): causal (caused to) action passive voice
   - **Hitpael** (hithpolel, hithpalpel, nithpael, hishtafel, nitpalel, hothpael, hithpael, hithpoel): intensive (strong) action, reflective (performed on self) voice
7. **Conjugation**. Each stem can be conjugated in one of the following eight ways.
   - **Perfect**: simple, completed action
   - **Imperfect**: incomplete or progressive action
   - **Cohortative**: 1st person command
   - **Imperative**: 2nd person command
   - **Jussive**: 3rd person command
   - **Infinitive construct**: a verbal noun
   - **Infinitive absolute**: a grammatical intensifier
   - **Participle**: verbal adjective

Summarized and adapted from [Hebrew4Christians.com](https://hebrew4christians.com), [blb.org](http://blb.org), Strong’s Concordance, and [lib.haifa.ac.il](http://lib.haifa.ac.il).
What do the words mean?

1 **He who scatters** [hiphil; participle; break (dash, shake) in (to) pieces, cast (abroad), disperse (selves), drive, retire, scatter (abroad), spread abroad] has come up [qal; perfect] **before your face** [countenance, face, person, presence, sight (+ many more definitions); same word used in 1:5, 6]. [Nahum does not name the nations that will defeat Nineveh, but in retrospect we know that they were the Medes and the Babylonians. We must leave open the possibility, however, that the “scatterer” refers not to these nations, but to God himself, who is the Divine Warrior. Behind the battles of the nations it is he who will destroy Nineveh (Ezekiel 29:12). (The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Robertson, 801)]

**Man** [qal; infinitive; besiege, hidden thing, keep(-er, -ing), monument, observe, preserve(-r), subtle, watcher(-man)] **the fort** [fenced (city, fort, munition, strong hold)]!

**Watch** [piel; imperative; behold, espy, look up (well), wait for, (keep the) watch(-man)] **the road** [along, away, because of, by, conversation, custom, (east-) ward, journey, manner, passenger, through, toward, (high-) (path-) way(-side), whither(-soever); same word used in 1:3]!

**Strengthen** [piel; imperative; aid, amend, catch, cleave, confirm, be constant, constrain, continue, be of good (take) courage(-ous, -ly), encourage (self), be established, fasten, force, fortify, make hard, harden, help, (lay) hold (fast), lean, maintain, play the man, mend, become (wax) mighty, prevail, be recovered, repair, retain, seize, be (wax) sore, strengthen (self), be stout, be (make, shew, wax) strong(-er), be sure, take (hold), be urgent, behave self valiantly, withstand] **your flanks** [greyhound, loins, side]!

**Fortify** [piel; imperative; confirm, be courageous (of good courage, steadfastly minded, strong, stronger), establish, fortify, harden, increase, prevail, strengthen (self), make strong (obstinate, speed)] **your power** [ability, able, chameleon, force, fruits, might, power, strength, substance, wealth; same word used in 1:3] **mightily** [diligently, especially, exceeding(-ly), far, fast, good, great(-ly), might(-ily, -y), (so) much, quickly, (so) sore, utterly very (much, sore), well].

2 **For the Lord** [yehovah] will restore [qal; perfect; deliver (again), recall, recover, rescue, restore, retrieve, (cause to, make to) return, send back (+ many more definitions)] **the excellence** [arrogancy, excellency(-lent), majesty, pomp, pride, proud, swelling] **of Jacob**

**Like the excellence** [arrogancy, excellency(-lent), majesty, pomp, pride, proud, swelling; same word used earlier in 2:2] **of Israel,**

**For the emptiers** [qal; active participle; (make) empty (out), fail, make void] have
emptied [qal; perfect; (make) empty (out), fail, make void] them out
And ruined [piel; perfect; batter, cast off, corrupt(-er, thing), destroy(-er, -uction), lose, mar, perish, spill, spoiler, waste(-r)] their vine branches [vine, branch, slip].

3 The shields [buckler, defense, ruler, scale, shield] of his mighty men [champion, chief, giant, man, mighty (man, one), strong (man), valiant man; this is the same word used to describe Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:51] are made red [adam; pual; participle; be (dyed, made) red (ruddy)],
The valiant [able, activity, army, band of men (soldiers), company, (great) forces, goods, host, might, power, riches, strength, strong, substance, train, valiant(-ly), valor, virtuous(-ly), war, worthy(-ily)] men are in scarlet [pual; participle]. [Ezekiel (23:14) tells us that the Babylonians wore red (sasar). (The Minor Prophets, McComiskey, 804)]
The chariots [chariot, (upper) millstone, multitude, wagon] come with flaming [burning, fiery, fire, flaming, hot; same word used in 1:6] torches
In the day of his preparation [hiphil; perfect; certain(-ty), confirm, direct, faithfulness, fashion, fasten, firm, be fitted, be fixed, frame, be meet, ordain, order, perfect, (make) preparation, prepare (self), provide, make provision, (be, make) ready, right, set (aright, fast, forth), be stable, (e-) stablish, stand, tarry],
And the spears [fir (tree)] are brandished [hophal; perfect; terribly shake].
4 The chariots [chariot, (upper) millstone, multitude, wagon; same word used in 2:3] rage [hithpoel; imperfect; (make) boast (self), celebrate, commend, (deal, make), fool(-ish, -ly), glory, give (light), be (make, feign self) mad (against), give in marriage, (sing, be worthy of) praise, rage, renowned, shine] in the streets [abroad, field, forth, highway, more, out(-side, -ward), street, without],
They jostle one another [hithpalpel; imperfect; have appetite, jostle one against another, long, range, fun (to and fro)] in the broad roads [broad place (way), street];
They seem [appearance(-reth), countenance, fair, favored, form, goodly, to look (up) on (to), look(-eth), pattern, to see, seem, sight, visage, vision] like torches [(fire-) brand, (burning) lamp, lightning, torch],
They run [polel; imperfect; break down, divide speedily, footman, guard, bring hastily, (make) run (away, through), post] like lightning [bright, glitter(-ing sword), lightning].

5 He remembers [qal; imperfect; be male, (make) mention (of), be mindful, recount, record(-er), remember, make to be remembered, bring (call, come, keep, put) to (in) remembrance, think on] his nobles [excellent, famous, gallant, glorious, goodly, lordly, mighty(-ier one), noble, principal, worthy];
They stumble [niphal; imperfect; bereave (from the margin), cast down, be
decayed, (cause to) fail, (cause, make to) fall (down, -ing), feeble, be (the) ruin(-ed, of), (be) overthrown, (cause to) stumble, be weak] in their walk [company, going, walk, way];

**They make haste** [piel; imperfect; be carried headlong, fearful, (cause to make, in, make) haste(-n, -ily), (be) hasty, fetch, make ready, rash] to her walls [wall, walled],

**And the defense** [qal; active participle; cover, defense, defend, hedge in, join together, set, shut up; The attacking army now reaches the wall. In the confusion of the battle the soldiers stumble. To attack the wall they set up a mantelet, which was a covering over the attacking soldiers to protect them as they worked to breach the city walls. There were three ways to neutralize a city wall in ancient warfare: build a ramp over it, ram a hole through it, or tunnel under it. Here, the soldiers are attempting to breach it. (The Minor Prophets, McComiskey, 805)] is prepared [hophal; perfect; certain(-ty), confirm, direct, faithfulness, fashion, fasten, firm, be fitted, be fixed, frame, be meet, ordain, order, perfect, (make) preparation, prepare (self), provide, make provision, (be, make) ready, right, set (aright, fast, forth), be stable, (e-) stablish, stand, tarry; same word used in 2:3].

6 **The gates** [city, door, gate, port] of the rivers [flood, rivers; same word used in 1:4] are opened [niphal; perfect; appear, break forth, draw (out), let go free, (en-) grave(-n), loose (self), (be, be set) open(-ing), put off, ungird, unstop, have vent],

**And the palace** [palace, temple] is dissolved [niphal; perfect; consume, dissolve, (be) faint(-hearted), melt (away), make soft; same word used in 1:5]. [The city [Nineveh] was conquered by diverting the waters of the Tigris into the city. (The Minor Prophets, McComiskey, 806)]

7 **It is decreed** [hophal; perfect; appointed, deputy, erect, establish, lay, officer, pillar, present, rear up, set (over, up), settle, sharpen, establish, (make to) stand(-ing, still, up, upright), best state]: [The destruction of Nineveh is settled by the Almighty. . . . So it is. And so it shall ever be with all God’s enemies. (The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Robertson, 91)]

She shall be led away captive [pual; perfect; advertise, appear, bewray, bring, (carry, lead, go) captive (into captivity), depart, disclose, discover, exile, be gone, open, publish, remove, reveal, shew, tell, uncover],

She shall be brought up [hophal; perfect];

**And her maidservants** [(hand-) bondmaid(-woman), maid(-servant)] shall lead [piel; participle; acquaint, bring away, drive (away), lead (away, forth), (be) guide, lead (away, forth)] her as with the voice [aloud, bleating, crackling, cry (out), fame, lightness, lowing, noise, hold peace, (pro-) claim, proclamation, sing, sound, spark, thunder(-ing), voice, yell] of doves [dove, pigeon],

**Beating** [poel; participle; taber, play with timbrels] their breasts [bethink
themselves, breast, comfortably, courage, faint, (tender-) heart(-ed), midst, mind, understanding].

8 Though Nineveh [the capital of Assyria; same word used in 1:1] of old [yom] was like a pool [fish(-) pool] of water [piss, wasting, water(-ing, (-course, -flood, -spring))].

Now they flee away [qal; participle; away, be displayed, (make to) flee (away, -ing), put to flight, lift up a standard].

“Halt [qal; imperative; abide (behind), appoint, arise, cease, confirm, continue, dwell, be employed, endure, establish, leave, make, ordain, be (over), place, (be) present (self), raise up, remain, repair, serve, set (forth, over, -tla, up), (make to, make to be at a, with-) stand (by, fast, firm, still, up), (be at a) stay (up), tarry)! Halt [qal; imperative; same word used earlier in 2:8]!” they cry;

But no one turns back [hiphil; participle; appear, at (even-) tide, behold, cast out, come on, dawning, empty, go away, lie, look, mark, pass away, prepare, regard, (have) respect (to), (re- turn (aside, away, back, face, self)].

9 Take spoil [qal; imperative; catch, gather, (take) for a prey, rob(-ber), spoil, take away, spoil] of silver [money, price, silver(-ling)]!

Take spoil [qal; imperative; same word used earlier in 2:9] of gold [gold(-en), fair weather]!

There is no end [border, brim, brink, edge, end, (in-) finite, frontier, outmost coast, quarter, shore, (out-) side, ut(-ter) most (part)] of treasure [fashion, store],

Or wealth [glorious(-ly), glory, honor(-able)] of every desirable [desire, goodly, pleasant, precious] prize [armor(-bearer), artiller, bag, carriage, furnish, furniture, instrument, jewel, that is made of, that which pertains, pot, psaltery, sack, stuff, thing, tool, vessel, ware, weapon, whatsoever]. [cf Isaiah 2:7; Haggai 2:7; The treasures of the world may change hands from conqueror to conqueror. But ultimately they all shall flow to him alone. All the glory of the all the wealth of all the nations shall be consecrated to him. (The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Robertson, 94)]

10 She is empty, desolate [void], and waste [pual; participle; (make) waste]! [The verse opens with an exclamation of horror at the scene of the ruined city. The English translations have tried to capture the alliteration of buqa [boo-KAW] umebuqa [meh-boo-KAW] ubebullaqa [UM-meh-boo-KAW?]: “Devastation, desolation, and destruction!” (NRSV; compare Isaiah 24:1). Note how this phrase moves to a climax by making each word longer than the preceding. (The Minor Prophets, McComiskey, 807)]

The heart [care for, comfortably, consent, courage(-ous), friend(-ly), ((broken-), (hard-), (merry-), (stiff-), (stout-), double) heart(-ed), kindly, midst, mind(-ed), understanding, willingly, wisdom] melts [niphal; perfect; discourage, faint, be
loosed, melt (away), refuse], **and the knees shake** [smite together];

**Much pain** [(great, much) pain] *is in every side* [greyhound, loins, side; same word used in 2:1],

**And all their faces** [countenance, face, person, presence, sight (+ many more definitions); same word used in 1:5, 6; 2:1] *are drained* [piel; perfect; assemble (selves), gather (bring) (together, selves together, up), heap, resort, take up] of color [blackness].  

[Guilt in the conscience will fill men with terror in an evil day, and those who place their happiness in the wealth of this world and set their hearts upon it will think themselves undone when their silver, and their gold, and their pleasant furniture are taken from them. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Henry, 1,548]

11 **Where is the dwelling** [den, dwelling(-place), habitation] of the lions [(young) lion, pierce],

**And the feeding place** [feeding place, pasture] of the young lions [(young) lion, village],

**Where the lion** [(young) lion, pierce; same word used earlier in 2:11] *walked* [qal; perfect], the lioness [(great, old, stout) lion, lionness, young (lion)] and lion's [(young) lion, pierce; same word used twice earlier in 2:11] cub [whelp, young one],

**And no one made them afraid** [hiphil; participle; be (make) afraid, be careful, discomfit, fray (away), quake, tremble]? [cf. Isaiah 5:29; Extremely appropriate is the imagery of a den of lions for the royalty of Nineveh. The royalty commissioned reliefs carved in stone depict repeatedly a number of lions. The kings of Nineveh often presented themselves in their annals in terms reflecting the behavior of the lion. *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, Robertson, 95] [Footnote: Both Adadnirari II and Ashurnasirpal declare: “I am lion-brave.” Sennacherib says: “Like a lion I raged.” For the text, see D.D. Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia (New York: Greenwood, 1927), 1:110, no. 358; 1:140, no. 438; 2:126, no. 253. *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, Robertson, 95]

12 **The lion** [(young) lion, pierce; same word used three times in 2:11] *tore in pieces* [qal; active participle; catch, feed, ravin, rend in pieces, tear (in pieces)]

**enough** [able, according to, after (ability), among, as (oft as), (more than) enough, from, in, since, (much as is) sufficient(-ly), too much, very, when] *for his cubs* [whelp],

**Killed** [piel; participle; hang self, strangle] *for his lionesses* [(great, old, stout) lion, lioness, young (lion); same word used in 2:11],

**Filled** [piel; imperfect; accomplish, confirm, consecrate, be at an end, be expired, be fenced, fill, fulfil, (be, become, give in, go) full(-ly), -ly set, tale), (over-) flow, fullness, furnish, gather (selves, together), presume, replenish, satisfy, set, space,
take a (hand-) full, have wholly] his caves [cave, hole] with prey [leaf, meat, prey, spoil],
And his dens [den, habitation, (dwelling) place, refuge] with flesh [ravin, (that which was) torn (of beasts, in pieces)].

13 “Behold, I am against you,” says [qal; passive participle; (hath) said, says] the LORD [yehovah] of hosts [appointed time, company, host, service, soldiers, waiting upon, war(-fare)], “I will burn [hiphil; perfect; be brutish, bring (put, take) away, burn, (cause to) eat (up), feed, heat, kindle, set (on fire), waste] your chariots [chariot, (upper) millstone, multitude, wagon; same word used in 2:3, 4] in smoke [smoke(-ing)], and the sword [axe, dagger, knife, mattock, sword, tool] shall devour [qal; imperfect; burn up, consume, devour(-er, up), dine, eat(-er, up), feed (with), food, (lay) meat; same word used in 1:10] your young lions [(young) lion, village; same word used in 2:11]; I will cut off [hiphil; perfect; be chewed, be con- (feder-) ate, covenant, cut (down, off), destroy, fail, feller, be freed, hew (down), make a league (covenant), perish; same word used in 1:14, 15] your prey [leaf, meat, prey, spoil; same word used in 2:12] from the earth [country, earth, field, ground, land, way, wilderness, world; same word used in 1:5], and the voice [aloud, bleating, crackling, cry (out), fame, lightness, lowing, noise, hold peace, (pro-) claim, proclamation, sing, sound, spark, thunder(-ing), voice, yell; same word used in 2:7] of your messengers [ambassador, angel, king, messenger] shall be heard [call (gather) together, consent, consider, be content, declare, discern, give ear, (cause to, let, make to) hear(-ken, tell), listen, make (a) noise, (be) obedient, obey, perceive, (make a) proclamation(-ation), publish, regard, report, shew (forth), (make a) sound, tell, understand, whosoever (hears), witness; same word used in 1:15] no more [niphal; imperfect; call together, consent, consider, be content, declare, discern, give ear, (cause to, let, make to) hear(-ken, tell), listen, make a noise, be obedient, obey, perceive, make a proclamation, publish, regard, report, shew forth, make a sound, tell, understand, whosoever hears, witness; same word used in 1:15; cf. 2 Kings 18:17ff.”

Apply (What is the point?)
1. God’s prophecies will come to pass
2. No enemy can stand before God
3. God (at times) uses the sins of His enemies to judge His enemies (e.g., lions)
Personalize (What do we do with that?)

1. Believe all His prophecies and share the gospel accordingly
2. Examine our lives to ensure we are on the LORD’S side
3. Perform our vows and proclaim good tidings

Next week: The Destruction of Nineveh (Nahum 3)

Homework

1. Ask the Holy Spirit for help
2. Read next week’s text (multiple times in multiple ways) (Nahum 3)
3. Talk to someone about the text (fb.com/OurSundaySchool or in person)
4. Share (fb.com/OurSundaySchool) insights and questions by Thursday
5. Invite a member or non-member

Extra Credit

Watch: The Bible Project Video on Nahum (youtube.com/watch?v=Y30DanA5EhU)

Resources

Commentary on the Whole Bible, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (1973)
Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, Henry (1998)
The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Robertson (1990)
The Minor Prophets, McComiskey (1998)
The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Wiersbe (2007)
Thru the Bible, McGee (1982)