

## Nahum 1

Verse 1

**The pronouncement of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite:**

Nineveh was situated on the Tigris River, and for an extended period of time was the most powerful city on earth.

See map 105



The Septuagint has the following wording of verse 1.

**1 The burden of Nineve: the book of the vision of Naum the Elkesite.**

The word "burden" carries with it the idea of a heavy load; the imagery is that Nineveh's sins have become a heavy load and that God would destroy it for the sake of humanity. Jonah had prophesied around 800 BC and the people repented so God's judgment on Nineveh was delayed. However, over time the sins of the people returned and Nahum prophesied around 650 BC that Nineveh would fall. Then in 612 BC Babylon conquered Assyria.

Nahum the “Elkoshite” indicates he was a native of a town or village called Elkosh. The exact location of Elkosh remains a mystery but as usual there is no shortage of guesses from a number of sources.

Verse 2

**<sup>2</sup> A jealous and avenging God is the Lord;**  
**The Lord is avenging and wrathful.**  
**The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries,**  
**And He reserves wrath for His enemies.**

This kind of language should not surprise anyone because God is both **patient and kind** toward the nations of mankind but He is also **the judge** of every nation.

See Jeremiah 18:7 – 10

**<sup>7</sup> At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot it, to tear it down, or to destroy it; <sup>8</sup> if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I planned to bring on it. <sup>9</sup> Or at *another* moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; <sup>10</sup> if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will relent of the good with which I said that I would bless it.**

Job understood this principle and commented on it around 4,500 years ago.

See Job 12:23

**<sup>23</sup> He makes the nations great, then destroys them;**  
**He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.**

God destroyed cities and nations throughout the various periods of biblical history and we know that He has and will continue to judge nations until the end of time. The following are just a few of the nations that have fallen since the time of Christ.

1. The Han Dynasty of China fell in 220 AD.
2. The Western Roman Empire ended in 476 AD being defeated by the barbarians.
3. The Sasanians were destroyed by the early Islamic conquests in 651 AD.
4. The Byzantine Empire (The Eastern half of the Roman Empire) was defeated by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 AD.
5. The Holy Roman Empire was conquered by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1806 AD.

Verse 3

**<sup>3</sup>The Lord is slow to anger and great in power,  
And the Lord will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished.  
In *the gale* and *the storm* is His way,  
And clouds are the dust *beneath* His feet.**

The main focus of the Old Testament scriptures center on Israel and how God made them into a great nation (from one man) and how He disciplined them for their sin. But in that long history we also see God rising up other nations and then judging them for their wicked ways. One of these nations was Assyria, the main focus of this book.

The many sins of Nineveh are spelled out in this short book and include but are not limited to the following. Those that plan and execute evil, practice bestiality, inflict pain on others, destroy and exploit the innocent, thieves, harlots and deceitful liars.

Verse 4

**<sup>4</sup>He rebukes the sea and dries it up;  
He dries up all the rivers.  
Bashan and Carmel wither,  
The blossoms of Lebanon wither.**

God is not limited in any way in the things that He can do when he decides a nation is wicked and must be punished or destroyed. God created a global flood that destroyed all of mankind except for 8 people that he chose to save. He also reshaped the earth by making new valleys that contained the waters of that flood.

See Psalms 104:

**<sup>6</sup>You covered it with the deep sea as with a garment;  
The waters were standing above the mountains.  
<sup>7</sup>They fled from Your rebuke,  
At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away.  
<sup>8</sup>The mountains rose; the valleys sank down  
To the place which You established for them.  
<sup>9</sup>You set a boundary *so that* they will not pass over,  
*So that* they will not return to cover the earth.**

If it were possible to go back in time it would be amazing to see how the world was transformed by God during and after the global flood. It is sad that “modern science” cannot admit to a global flood taking place.

Bashan, Carmel and Lebanon were some of the most-favored areas of the Promised Land but none of these areas could withstand a judgment from God.

See map 110



Phoenicia and Lebanon was part of the “Promised Land” but Israel was never able to subdue it. However, some Israelites lived in the surrounding mountainous area known as Lebanon and even settled in some of the coastal cities of Tire and Sidon known as Phoenicia. Both of these areas were heavily integrated with Israel through trade because of King Solomon's alliance with King Hiram of Tyre.

In 1920 following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, France declared the creation of Greater Lebanon, uniting the coastal cities (historic Phoenicia) with the mountainous interior under a single mandate. This is when the coastal lands began to officially be called Lebanon.

So Phoenicia and Lebanon were two separate regions in the past, but have recently become one nation known as Lebanon with its capital being Beirut.

Verses 5 - 6

**5 Mountains quake because of Him,**  
**And the hills come apart;**  
Indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence,  
The world and all the inhabitants in it.  
**6 Who can stand before His indignation?**  
**Who can endure the burning of His anger?**  
His wrath gushes forth like fire,  
And the rocks are broken up by Him.

When God appears to execute judgment on a nation, even the mountains and hills tremble and melt. All of humanity and nature are completely overwhelmed by His presence.

Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, had terrorized and oppressed the region but no matter how mighty or seemingly invincible a nation might be it cannot stand against God's judgment. While God is described as "slow to anger", these verses are a reminder that when a nation becomes evil God's righteous judgment will soon follow.

Verse 7

**7 The Lord is good,**  
**A stronghold in the day of trouble,**  
**And He knows those who take refuge in Him.**

This verse makes three points.

1. Despite the mayhem that is so common in this fallen world, God is good.
2. God is an unshakeable refuge when life becomes overwhelming.

See Hebrews 11:35 - 38

**<sup>35</sup> ... and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; <sup>36</sup> and others experienced mocking and flogging, and further, chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented <sup>38</sup> (*people of whom the world was not worthy*), wandering in deserts, on mountains, and sheltering in caves and holes in the ground.**

3. God has an intimate relationship with those who seek Him.

Verse 8

**8 But with an overflowing flood**  
**He will make a complete end of its site,**  
**And will pursue His enemies *into* darkness.**

Here God was giving Nahum and those who heard his message an insight into the destruction of Nineveh. Nahum prophesied the fall of Nineveh around 650 BC and it was destroyed in 612 BC when the Babylonians besieged and sacked the Assyrian capital. The city's collapse was accelerated by the flooding of the Tigris River, which washed away a section of the city's massive walls, allowing the invading army to enter the city and burn it to the ground.

Verses 9 - 10

**9 Whatever you devise against the Lord,**  
**He will make a complete end of it.**  
**Distress will not rise up twice.**  
**10 Like tangled thorns,**  
**And like those who are drunken with their drink,**  
**They are consumed**  
**Like stubble completely dried up.**

The enemies of Judah continually devise evil against them but in doing so they are plotting against the Lord, because Israel was God's chosen vessel to bring the Messiah. If Israel was completely destroyed then God's promise to Abraham would be nullified and that could never happen.

Nahum uses two metaphors to make the point that Assyria cannot succeed in their plans to defeat Judah.

1. The army is disoriented, like a person who has had too much to drink. God had often defeated the enemies of Israel by creating confusion in the minds of the opposing army leading to a scenario where they killed themselves in the confusion.
2. The army is like the dry leftover stalks of harvested grain that catches fire easily and burns to ash in seconds. This represents how quickly God can wipe out an opposing army.

Verses 11 - 13

**<sup>11</sup> From you has gone out  
One who plotted evil against the Lord,  
A wicked counselor.**

**<sup>12</sup> This is what the Lord says:  
“Though *they are at full strength* and so *they are many*,  
So also they will be cut off and pass away.**

**Though I have afflicted you,  
I will afflict you no longer.**

**<sup>13</sup> So now, I will break his yoke from upon you,  
And I will tear your shackles to pieces.”**

Many scholars believe this is a reference to Sennacherib, an Assyrian king, or his messengers, like Rabshakeh. Sennacherib was the ruthless King of Assyria (705 – 681 BC) who invaded the southern kingdom of Judah in 701 BC. He captured 46 Judean cities and laid siege to Jerusalem, only to have his army (185,000 men) miraculously destroyed by the Angel of the Lord. Defeated by divine intervention rather than earthly armies, Sennacherib abandoned the siege and retreated to his capital, Nineveh. Years later, while worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, Sennacherib was assassinated by his own sons.

While Sennacherib was no longer a threat to Judea because his yoke had been broken, his successors continued to rule over the region and demanded allegiance from the Judean kings, but they never again engaged in war with Judea or attempted to conquer Jerusalem.

Verse 14

**<sup>14</sup> The Lord has issued a command concerning you:  
“Your name will no longer be perpetuated.  
I will eliminate the carved image and the cast metal image  
From the house of your gods.  
I will prepare your grave,  
For you are contemptible.”**

God’s judgment of Assyria will involve three main components.

1. The end of their dynasty. Their royal line will be cut off, ensuring their empire will have no descendants to carry on their power.
2. The destruction of their false gods/religion.

3. The death of the Assyrian Empire. God will bring an end to the Assyrian because their wickedness and brutality have made them contemptible in His sight.

Verse 15

**Behold, on the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news,**  
**Who announces peace!**  
**Celebrate your feasts, Judah,**  
**Pay your vows.**  
**For never again will the wicked one pass through you;**  
**He is eliminated completely.**

While the fall of Nineveh would have been good news to the people of Judah it would have been somewhat stifled because the new landlord, Babylon, would prove to be just as bad as Assyria if not worse. Therefore, this verse should be seen as looking forward to the time of the Christ and His church when the good news of peace will be proclaimed to all men.

See Romans 10:15

**<sup>15</sup> But how are they to preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!”**

The second part of this verse is a command to keep God’s law in thanksgiving for the blessings that God has provided Judah by eliminating their enemy (Assyria). In all likelihood this was also a reminder that Judah was not living up to the commands of the law.