

NAHUM

—>prophet against Nineveh probably from Judah, second half of seventh century.

He is called the “Elkoshite” (1:1), probably an uncertain village.—Modern Arabic tradition (from 1600s) is that this site is in ancient Assyria (Iraq), a possibility suggested by familiarity to Assyrian geography (2:5,6) and language (2:7; 3:17).

Jerome in his *Onomasticon* suggested a Christian tradition that Elkosh was the earlier place name for Capernaum, “City of Nahum (viz., “of comfort”).

1.—Subject of Nahum

—> the coming judgment and destruction of Nineveh, a Gentile power depicting “world evil” in the days of the prophet

until 1845, the early critics thought that Nineveh was a fictitious place; Alexander the Great waged battles nearby without even knowing of its existence

1:1, “burden of Nineveh,” נִשְׁבָּר *massa*’ (from נִשָּׁבַר *nasa*’), load, burden, as on a beast; thus an utterance, oracle, normally of judgment (cf. 2 Kings 9:25; Isa. 14:28)

2.—Date

3:8-10, after destruction of Thebes in 663 BC

1:1, etc., before destruction of Nineveh in 612 BC

king of Judah not mentioned

686-642	Manasseh
642-640	Amon
640-609	Josiah

would fit with wicked reigns of Manasseh or Amon, or with Josiah’s earlier years

2:13; 3:1-4, Assyria still strong

Assurbanapal the last strong king, died 631 BC

probably written near middle or second half of 7th century; Bullock suggests time close to Nineveh’s downfall, 612

3.—Assyrian background

Note brief sketch of Assyrian history from Jonah's time to their destruction:

Assyrian rulers:

Tiglath-pileser III	745-727 BC
Shalmaneser V	727-722
Sargon II	722-704
Sennacherib	704-681
Essarhaddon	680-669
Assurbanapal	668-627
last kings:	
Sin-shar-ishkun	627-612
Asshur-uballit II	612-606

ca. 760 BC, Jonah preaches repentance to Nineveh

ca. 740, Assyrians receive tribute from Menahem

732, Assyrians conquer northern Israel

722, Assyrians conquer Samaria

721, Babylon becomes rebellious from this time on

712, Assyrians reconquer Philistine coast

701, Assyrians conquer most of Judah (cf. Nah. 1:11-12)

689, Assyrians conquer rebellious Babylon

671, Assyrians defeat Egyptians, occupy Memphis

667, Assyrians crush another Egyptian rebellion

663, Assyrians destroy Thebes in Egypt (Nah. 3:8-10)

ca. 655, Egypt wins independence from Assyria

ca. 650, Assyrians hold Manasseh in temporary captivity in Babylon (2 Chron. 33:10-13)

648, Assyrians retake rebellious Babylon

626, Nabopolassar of Babylon achieves independence; Medes begin attacking Assyria

616, Egyptians switch sides to support Assyria

614, Medes conquer old capital of Asshur

* 612, Babylonians and Medes (“the king of Akkad” and “the king of the Umman-manda”) conquer Nineveh; remnant of Assyrians flee to Haran

610, Babylonians and Medes take Haran (hold on in counterattack in 609)

by this time, Assyria not a contender; Egypt main enemy of Babylonians; controls Palestine

605, Babylonians defeat Egyptians in Carchemish (Jer. 46:2); take control of Palestine

4.—Poetic style

excellent poetry, like Isaiah

“As to poetic form, the book of Nahum is thus one of the finest in all the Old Testament.—No other of all the prophets, except Isaiah, can be said even to equal Nahum in boldness, ardor, or sublimity.—His descriptions are most vivid and impetuous.—‘His language is strong and brilliant, his rhythm rumbles and rolls, leaps and flashes, like the horsemen and chariots he describes’ (G. A. Smith).—By general consent Nahum is counted a master of Hebrew style.—His supreme excellence is not his feeling but his power of description, which for fiery vigor, glowing color, dramatic impressiveness and picturesque phraseology is unsurpassed.”
(George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, p. 113)

5.—Outline of Nahum

Nahum is comprised of two sections which are unified by themes and imagery (see Armerding chart from *EBC*, p. 453).

Section I = Judicial Decree of Judgment against Nineveh, ch. 1

Section II = Execution of the Decree against Nineveh, chs. 2,3.

1) Psalm of triumph over Nineveh by the Divine Warrior, ch. 1

vv. 2-8 are a broken acrostic poem; this style often is employed to denote thoroughness, in this case, of God the Judge

God’s judgment and wrath, vv. 2, 6, 8-14

God’s mercy to his people, vv. 3a, 7, 15

God’s power, vv. 3b-5

v. 8, flood of Tigris opened gap in rampart around city

v. 10, Assyrians had repulsed Medes earlier, were “celebrating” when attacked

vv. 11-12, Sennacherib invasion of Judah (2 Kings 18-19; Isa. 7:17; 8:8; ch. 36-37)

v. 14, Nineveh's grave; fulfilled, Ezek. 32:22-23

2) Siege and destruction of Nineveh foretold, ch. 2

vv. 2-8 the Divine Warrior

v.8 canals

3) The case against Nineveh closed, ch. 3

vv. 1-4, Nineveh's sins

great cruelty, especially under Assurbanapal

examples in *ANET*, pp. 294-301

vv. 5-19, verdict against Nineveh

vv. 8-10, No Amon = Thebes

defeated and ruined by Assurbanapal in 663 BC (*ANET*, pp. 295, 297)

v. 19, joy at Nineveh's destruction for her reputation of cruelty

6.—NT use of Nahum

1:6, “who can stand the wrath of God?”

cf. Isa. 63:4; Jer. 10:10 (in Aramaic); Mal. 3:2

quoted in Rev. 6:17 of the return of Christ

1:15, “on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news”

also in Isa. 52:7; phps a proverbial expression

quoted in Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15

EXCURSUS on Nahum’s Dependence on the book of Isaiah

Bible scholars have debated whether Nahum 1:15 was citing Isaiah 52:7 or whether the two works shared a common [proverbial] source.—Carl Armerding in *EBC* builds a tight case showing Nahum’s literary dependence on Isaiah.—He thus argues for the literary unity of Isaiah and says the entire book was extant by the time of Nahum.

In a contextual study, he shows that 1:12-15 “corresponds with remarkable exactitude to that of Isaiah 51:21-52:7.—”Moreover, the correlation between the Book of Nahum and Isaiah 51-52 extends to [Isaiah’s] second theme of judgment on the oppressor.”—See p. 454 for development of the deliberate parallels.

“The evidence for literary interdependence between Isaiah and Nahum is thus founded on

- 1) Unique, multiple verbal repetitions linking specific passages
- 2) Extensive continuity of imagery
- 3) A shared thematic pattern of oppression, deliverance, and judgment experience in relation to Assyria” —p. 455

The implications of this investigation have bearing on

- 1) Hermeneutics: how one prophet interprets and applies the prophecies of another prophet
- 2) Canonicity and authorship: Nahum authenticates Isaiah in its entirety