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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON
NAHUM

by Adam Clarke.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET NAHUM

NAHUM, the *seventh* of the *twelve* minor prophets, was a native of Elkoshai, a little village of Galilee, whose ruins were still in being in the time of St. Jerome. However there are some who think that Elkoshai is rather the name of his father, and that the place of his birth was Bethabor, or Bethabara, beyond Jordan. They used to show the tomb of the prophet at a village called Beth-gabre, now called Gibbin, near Emmaus. The Chaldee calls him Nahum of Beth-koshi, or of Beth-kitsi; but the situation of this place is as much unknown as that of Elkoshai.

The particular circumstances of the life of Nahum are altogether unknown. His prophecy consists of *three* chapters, which make up but *one* discourse, wherein he foretells the destruction of Nineveh. He describes it in so lovely and pathetic a manner, that he seems to have been upon the spot to declare to the Ninevites the destruction of their city.

Opinions are divided as to the time in which he prophesied. Josephus will have it that he foretold the fall of Nineveh *one hundred and fifteen* years before it happened, which will bring the time of Nahum to that of King Ahaz. The Jews say that he prophesied under Manasseh. We are inclined to be of St. Jerome's opinion, that he foretold the destruction of Nineveh in the time of Hezekiah, and after the war of Sennacherib in Egypt, mentioned by Berosus. Nahum speaks plainly of the taking of No-Ammon, a city of Egypt; of the haughtiness of Rabshakeh; of the defeat of Sennacherib; and he speaks of them as things that were past. He supposes that the Jews were still in their own country, and that they there celebrated their festivals. He speaks of the captivity, and of the dispersion of the *ten* tribes. All these evidences convince us that Nahum cannot be placed before the *fifteenth* year of Hezekiah, since the expedition of Sennacherib against this prince was in the *fourteenth* year of his reign.

This prophet gives us a fine description of the destruction of Nineveh. He says that this city should be ruined by a deluge of waters, which should overflow it and demolish its walls.

Diodorus Siculus and *Athenæus* relate, that during the time this city was besieged by Belesis and by Arbaces, under Sardanapalus, the river Tigris

swelled so as to overthrow twenty furlongs of the walls of Nineveh. But as the siege mentioned by Nahum was long after the taking of Nineveh under Sardanapalus, it must needs be that the same thing happened to Nineveh at the second and last siege, under Nebuchadnezzar and Astyages. Probably the besiegers at this second siege determined the course of the waters, and brought on the same fate to the city by the same means as at the first siege. And as the walls of those ancient cities were generally formed of *brick kneaded with straw and baked in the sun*, a *flood of waters* could easily effect their dissolution. *Babylon* was built in the same manner; and this is the reason why scarcely any vestiges of those cities are to be found. See on ^{<3014>}**Nahum 3:14**.

The time of the prophet's death is not known. The Greek meneologies and the Latin martyrologies place his festival on the first of December. *Petrus Natalis* places it on the twenty-fourth of the same month, which he says was the day of his death, without acquainting us whence he had learned this circumstance.

The conduct and imagery of this prophetic poem are truly admirable.

The exordium sets forth with grandeur the justice and power of God, tempered by lenity and goodness, ^{<3001>}**Nahum 1:1-8**.

A sudden address to the Assyrians follows; and a prediction of their perplexity and overthrow, as devisers of evil against the true God, ^{<3010>}**Nahum 1:9-11**. Jehovah himself then proclaims freedom to his people from the Assyrian yoke, and the destruction of the Assyrian idols, ^{<3012>}**Nahum 1:12-14**. Upon which the prophet, in a most lively manner, turns the attention of Judah to the approach of the messenger who brings such glad tidings, and bids her celebrate her festivals and offer her thank-offerings, without fear of so powerful an adversary, ^{<3015>}**Nahum 1:15**.

Chap. ii. In the next place Nineveh is called on to prepare for the approach of her enemies, as instruments in the hands of Jehovah; and the military array and muster of the Medes and Babylonians, their rapid approach to the city, the process of the siege, the capture of the place, the captivity, lamentation, and flight of the inhabitants, the sacking of the wealthy city, and the consequent desolation and terror, are described in the true spirit of Eastern poetry, and with many pathetic, vivid, and sublime images, ^{<3010>}**Nahum 2:1-10**.

A grand and animated allegory succeeds this description, ^{<3421>}**Nahum 2:11, 12**; which is explained and applied to the city of Nineveh in ^{<3421>}**Nahum 2:13**.

Chap. iii. The prophet denounces a wo against Nineveh for her perfidy and violence, and strongly places before our eyes the number of her chariots and cavalry, her burnished arms, and the great and unrelenting slaughter which she spread around her, ^{<3401>}**Nahum 3:1-3**.

He assigns her idolatries as one cause of her ignominious and unpitied fall, ^{<3404>}**Nahum 3:4-7**.

He foretells that No-Ammon, (the Diospolis in the Delta,) her rival in populousness, confederacies, and situation, should share a like fate with herself, ^{<3408>}**Nahum 3:8-11**; and beautifully illustrates the ease with which her strong holds should be taken, ^{<3412>}**Nahum 3:12**, and her pusillanimity during the siege, ^{<3413>}**Nahum 3:13**.

He pronounces that all her preparations, ^{<3414>}**Nahum 3:14, 15**, her numbers, her opulence, her multitude of chief men, would be of no avail, ^{<3415>}**Nahum 3:15-17**.

He foretells that her tributaries would desert her, ^{<3418>}**Nahum 3:18**.

He concludes with a proper epiphonema; the topics of which are, the greatness and incurableness of her wound, and the just triumph of others over her on account of her extensive oppressions, ^{<3419>}**Nahum 3:19**.

To sum up all with the decisive judgment of an eminent critic: "Not one of the minor prophets equals the sublimity, genius, and spirit of Nahum. Besides, his prophecy is a perfect poem. The *exordium* is exceedingly majestic. The *apparatus* for the destruction of Nineveh, and the description of that catastrophe, are painted in the most glowing colours, and are admirably clear and powerful." *Lowth*, Prælect. Heb. xxi., p. 282.

It must be farther observed, that this prophecy was highly interesting to the Jews; as the Assyrians had often ravaged their country, and I suppose had recently destroyed the kingdom of Israel. See *Calmet*.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET NAHUM

Chronological Notes relative to this Book, upon the supposition that it was written about seven hundred and thirteen years before the commencement of the Christian era

- Year from the Creation, according to Archbishop Usher, 3291.
- Year of the Julian Period, 4001.
- Year since the Flood, 1635.
- Year from the vocation of Abram, 1208.
- Year since the first celebration of the Olympic games in Elis by the Idæi Dactyli, 741.
- Year from the destruction of Troy, according to the general computation of chronologers, 471.
- Year since the commencement of the kingdom of Israel, by the Divine appointment of Saul to the regal dignity, 383.
- Year from the foundation of Solomon's temple, 299.
- Year since the division of Solomon's monarchy into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, 263.
- Year since the restoration of the Olympic games at Elis by Lycurgus, Iphitus, and Cleosthenes, 172.
- Year from the foundation of the kingdom of Macedon by Caranus, 102.
- Year from the commencement of the reign of Ardysus over Lydia, 84.
- Year since the conquest of Corœbus at Olympia, usually called the first Olympiad, 64.
- Fourth year of the *sixteenth* Olympiad.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to the Varronian computation, 41.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Cato and the *Fasti Consulares*, 40.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Polybius the historian, 39.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Fabius Pictor, 35.
- Year of the era of Nabonassar, 35.

- Year since the destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, 9.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 709.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 713.
- Cycle of the Sun, 25.
- Cycle of the Moon, 11.
- Eleventh year of Zeuxidamus, king of Lacedæmon, of the family of the Proclidæ.
- Twelfth year of Eurycrates, king of Lacedæmon, of the family of the Eurysthenidæ.
- Sixth year of Gyges, king of Lydia.
- Tenth year of Hippomenes, decennial archon of the Athenians.
- Second year of Cordiccas, governor of the Medes, according to some chronologers.
- Seventeenth year of Perdiccas, king of Macedon.
- Third year of Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome.
- Fourteenth year of Hezekiah, king of Judah.

CHAPTER 1

This chapter opens the prophecy against the Assyrians and their metropolis with a very magnificent description of the infinite justice, tender compassion, and uncontrollable power of God, 1-8. To this succeeds an address to the Assyrians; with a lively picture of their sudden overthrow, because of their evil device against Jerusalem, 9-11. Then appears Jehovah himself, proclaiming deliverance to his people from the Assyrian yoke, and the destruction of the Assyrian idols, 12-14; upon which the prophet, with great emphasis, directs the attention of Judah to the approach of the messenger who brings such glad tidings; and exultingly bids his people to celebrate their solemn feasts, and perform their vows, as a merciful Providence would not suffer these enemies of the Jewish state to prevail against them, 15.

NOTES ON CHAP. 1

Verse 1. The burden of Nineveh.] *acm* *massa* not only signifies a *burden*, but also a thing *lifted up, pronounced, or proclaimed*; also a *message*. It is used by the prophets to signify the *revelation* which they

have received from God to deliver to any particular people: the *oracle*—the *prophecy*. Here it signifies the *declaration* from God relative to the overthrow of Nineveh, and the *commission* of the prophet to deliver it.

As the Assyrians under Pul, Tiglath-pileser, and Shalmaneser, three of their kings, had been employed by a just God for the chastisement of his disobedient people; the end being now accomplished by them, God is about to *burn the rod* wherewith he corrected Israel; and Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, is to be destroyed. This prediction appears to have been accomplished a short time after this by Nebuchadnezzar and Cyaxares, the Ahasuerus of Scripture.

Nahum, נחום *n Nachum*, signifies *comforter*. The name was very suitable, as he was sent to *comfort* the people, by showing them that God was about to destroy their adversaries.

Verse 2. God is jealous] For his own glory.

And—revenge] His justice; by the destruction of his enemies.

And is furious] So powerful in the manifestations of his judgments, that nothing can stand before him.

He reserveth wrath] Though they seem to prosper for a time, and God appears to have passed by their crimes without notice, yet he *reserveth—treasureth* up—*wrath* for them, which shall burst forth in due time.

Verse 3. The Lord is slow to anger] He exercises much longsuffering towards his enemies, that this may lead them to repentance. And it is because of this longsuffering that vengeance is not speedily executed on every evil work.

Great in power] Able at all times to *save* or to *destroy*.

The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm] These are the *effects* of his *power*; and when they appear unusual, they may be considered as the *immediate* effects of his power: and although he be *in them* to punish and destroy, he is *in them* to *direct* their *course*, to determine their *operations*, and to defend his followers from being injured by their violence. The pestilential wind which slew *one hundred and eighty-five thousand* of the Assyrians did not injure *one* Israelite. See ^{<12198>} **2 Kings 19:35**.

The clouds are the dust of his feet.] This is spoken in allusion to a *chariot and horses* going on with *extreme rapidity*: they are all *enveloped in a cloud of dust*. So Jehovah is represented as coming through the circuit of the heavens as rapidly as lightning; the *clouds* surrounding him as the *dust* does the chariot and horses.

Verse 4. He rebuketh the sea] The Red Sea, and the rivers: probably an allusion to the passage of the *Red Sea* and *Jordan*.

The description of the coming of Jehovah, from the third to the sixth verse, is dreadfully majestic. {<34018>**Nahum 1:3-6**} He is represented as controlling *universal nature*. The *sea* and the *rivers* are dried up, the *mountains* tremble, the *hills* melt, and the *earth* is burnt at his presence. *Bashan*, *Carmel*, and *Lebanon* are withered and languish: streams of *fire* are poured out, and the *rocks* are cast down to make him a passage. If then, the *seas*, the *rivers*, the *mountains*, the *hills*, the *rocks*, and the *earth* itself, fail before Jehovah, or flee from his presence, how shall *Nineveh* and the *Assyrian empire* stand before him?

Verse 7. The Lord is good] In the midst of judgment he remembers mercy; and among the most dreadful denunciations of wrath he mingles promises of mercy. None that trust in him need be alarmed at these dreadful threatenings; they shall be discriminated in the day of wrath, for the *Lord knoweth them that trust in him*.

Verse 8. But with an overrunning flood] Bishop *Newcome* thinks this may refer to the manner in which *Nineveh* was taken. The *Euphrates* overflowed its banks, deluged a part of the city, and overturned *twenty stadia* of the wall; in consequence of which the desponding king burnt himself, and his palace, with his treasures.—*Diodor. Sic.*, Edit. *Wessel.*, p. 140, lib. ii., s. 27.

Darkness shall pursue] Calamity. All kinds of calamity shall pursue them till they are destroyed.

Verse 9. Affliction shall not rise up the second time.] There shall be no need to *repeat the judgment*; with *one blow* God will make a full end of the business.

Verse 10. While they be folden together] However united their counsels may be, they shall be as *drunken men*—perplexed and unsteady in all their

resolutions; and before God's judgments they shall be as *dry thorns* before a devouring fire.

Verse 11. Imagineth evil against the Lord] Such were *Pul*, ^{<121510>}**2 Kings 15:10**, *Tiglath-pileser*, ^{<121529>}**2 Kings 15:29**; *Shalmaneser*, ^{<121706>}**2 Kings 17:6**; and *Sennacherib*, ^{<121817>}**2 Kings 18:17; 19:23**.

A wicked counsellor.] *Sennacherib* and *Rabshakeh*.

Verse 12. Though they be—many] *Sennacherib* invaded Judea with an army of nearly *two hundred thousand* men.

Thus shall they be cut down] The angel of the Lord (a suffocating wind) slew of them in one night *one hundred and eighty-five thousand*, ^{<121935>}**2 Kings 19:35**.

Verse 13. Now will I break his yoke from off thee] This refers to the tribute which the Jews were obliged to pay to the Assyrians, ^{<121714>}**2 Kings 17:14**.

Verse 14. No more of thy name be sown] No more of you shall be carried away into *captivity*.

I will make thy grave; for thou art vile] I think this is an address to the Assyrians, and especially to *Sennacherib*. The text is no obscure intimation of the fact. The *house of his gods is to be his grave*: and we know that while he was worshipping in the house of his god *Nisroch*, his two sons, *Adrammelech* and *Sharezer*, smote him there that he died, ^{<121937>}**2 Kings 19:37**.

Verse 15. Behold upon the mountains] Borrowed probably from ^{<285307>}**Isaiah 52:7**, but applied here to the *messengers* who brought the *good tidings* of the *destruction of Nineveh*. Judah might then *keep her solemn feasts*, for the wicked Assyrian should *pass through the land no more*; being entirely cut off, and the imperial city razed to its foundations.

NAHUM

CHAPTER 2

Nineveh is now called upon to prepare for the approach of her enemies, the instruments of Jehovah's vengeance, 1; and the military array and muster, the very arms and dress, of the Medes and Babylonians in the reigns of Cyaxares and Nabopolassar; their rapid approach to the city; the process of the siege, and the inundation of the river; the capture of the place; the captivity, lamentation, and flight of the inhabitants; the sacking of this immense, wealthy, and exceedingly populous city; and the consequent desolation and terror, are all described in the pathetic, vivid, and sublime imagery of Hebrew poetry, 2-10. This description is succeeded by a very beautiful and expressive allegory, 11-12; which is immediately explained, and applied to the city of Nineveh, 13. It is thought by some commentators that the metropolitan city of the Assyrian empire is also intended by the tender and beautiful simile, in the seventh verse, of a great princess led captive, with her maids of honour attending her, bewailing her and their own condition, by beating their breasts, and by other expressions of sorrow.

NOTES ON CHAP. 2

Verse 1. He that dasheth in pieces] Or *scattereth*. The Chaldeans and Medes.

Keep the munition] Guard the fenced places. From this to the end of the fifth verse, the *preparations* made at Nineveh to repel their enemies are described. The description is exceedingly picturesque.

Watch the way] By which the enemy is most likely to approach.

Make thy loins strong] Take *courage*.

Fortify thy power] Muster thy troops; call in all thy allies.

Verse 2. For the Lord hath turned away] Bishop *Newcome* reads, *for the Lord restoreth*, by a slight alteration in the text. I do not see that we gain much by this. The Lord *has* been opposed to Jacob, and the enemy has prevailed against him.

Emptied them out] Brought them from their own land into captivity. This was the *emptying*!

Verse 3. The shield of his mighty men is made red] These things may refer to the war-like preparations made by the Ninevites: they had *red shields*, and *scarlet or purple clothing*; their chariots were finely *decorated*, and proceeded with amazing rapidity.

The fir trees shall be terribly shaken.] This may refer to the *darts*, *arrows*, and *javelins*, flung with destructive power.

Verse 4. The chariots shall rage] Those of the *besiegers* and the *besieged*, meeting in the streets, producing universal confusion and carnage.

Verse 5. He shall recount his worthies] Muster up his most renowned warriors and heroes.

Shall make haste to the wall] Where they see the enemies making their most powerful attacks, in order to get possession of the city.

Verse 6. The gates of the rivers shall be opened] I have already referred to this, see **Clarke's note on "Na 1:8"**; but it will be necessary to be *more particular*. The account given by *Diodorus Siculus*, lib. ii., is very surprising. He begins thus: *Ἦν δ' αὐτῷ λογιὸν παραδεδομένον ἐκ προγονῶν, κ.τ.λ.* — "There was a prophecy received from their forefathers, that Nineveh should not be taken *till the river first became an enemy to the city*. It happened in the *third* year of the siege, that the Euphrates [query, *Tigris*] being swollen with continued rains, overflowed part of the city, and threw down *twenty* stadia of the wall. The king then imagining that the oracle was accomplished, and that *the river was now manifestly become an enemy to the city*, casting aside all hope of safety, and lest he should fall into the hands of the enemy, built a large funeral pyre in the palace, (*ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις*), and having collected all his gold and silver and royal vestments, together with his concubines and eunuchs, placed himself with them in a little apartment built in the pyre; burnt them, himself, and the palace together. When the death of the king (*Sardanapalus*) was announced by certain deserters, the enemy entered in by the breach which the waters had made, and took the city."

Thus the prophecy of Nahum was literally fulfilled: "the gates of the river were opened, and the palace dissolved," i.e., *burnt*.

Verse 7. And Huzzab shall be led away captive] Perhaps *Huzzab* means the *queen of Nineveh*, who had escaped the burning mentioned above by

Diodorus. As there is no account of the *queen* being burnt, but only of the king, the concubines, and the eunuchs, we may, therefore, naturally conclude that the queen escaped; and is represented here as *brought up* and delivered to the conqueror; her maids at the same time bewailing her lot. Some think Huzzab signifies Nineveh itself.

Verse 8. But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water] *ymym mimey*, from days. Bp. *Newcome* translates the line thus: “And the waters of Nineveh are a pool of waters.” There may be reference here to the fact given in the preceding note, the *overflowing of the river* by which the city was primarily destroyed.

Stand, stand] Consternation shall be at its utmost height, the people shall flee in all directions; and though *quarter* is offered, and they are assured of safety if they remain, yet not *one looketh back*.

Verse 9. Take ye the spoil] Though the king burnt his treasures, vestments, &c., he could not totally *destroy* the *silver* and the *gold*. Nor did he burn the *riches of the city*; these fell a prey to the conquerors; and there was *no end of the store of glorious garments*, and the most costly *vessels* and *furniture*.

Verse 10. She is empty, and void, and waste] The original is strongly emphatic; the words are of the *same sound*; and increase in their *length* as they point out *great, greater, and greatest* desolation.

hql bmq hqwbmw hqwb

Bukah, umebukah, umebullakah.

She is void, empty, and desolate.

The faces of them all gather blackness.] This marks the diseased state into which the people had been brought by reason of *famine*, &c.; for, as Mr. *Ward* justly remarks, “*sickness* makes a great change in the countenance of the Hindoos; so that a person who was rather *fair* when in *health*, becomes nearly *black* by *sickness*.” This was a general case with the Asiatics.

Verse 11. Where is the dwelling of the lions] *Nineveh*, the habitation of *bold, strong, and ferocious* men.

The feeding place of the young lions] Whither her victorious and rapacious generals frequently *returned to consume* the produce of their

success. Here they *walked* at large, and *none made them afraid*. Wheresoever they turned their arms they were victors; and all nations were afraid of them.

Verse 12. The lion did tear] This verse gives us a striking picture of the manner in which the Assyrian conquests and depredations were carried on. How many people were spoiled to enrich his *whelps*—his sons, princes, and *nobles*! How *many women* were *stripped* and *slain*, whose spoils went to decorate his *lionesses*—his *queen*, *concubines*, and *mistresses*. And they had even more than they could assume; *their holes and dens*—treasure-houses, palaces, and *wardrobes*—were filled *with ravin*, the riches which they got by the plunder of *towns*, *families*, and *individuals*. This is a very fine allegory, and admirably well supported.

Verse 13. Behold, I am against thee] Assyria, and Nineveh its capital. I will deal with you as you have dealt with others.

The voice of thy messengers] Announcing thy splendid victories, and the vast spoils taken—*shall no more be heard*—thou and thy riches, and ill-got spoils, shall perish together.

CHAPTER 3

The prophet denounces a wo against Nineveh for her perfidy and violence. He musters up before our eyes the number of her chariots and cavalry; points to her burnished arms, and to the great and unrelenting slaughter which she spreads around her, 1-3. Because Nineveh is a city wholly given up to the grossest superstition, and is an instructress of other nations in her abominable rites, therefore she shall come to a most ignominious and unpitied end, 3-7. Her final ruin shall be similar to that of No, a famous city of Egypt, 8-11. The prophet then beautifully describes the great ease with which the strong holds of Nineveh should be taken, 12, and her judicial pusillanimity during the siege, 13; declares that all her preparation, her numbers, opulence, and chieftains, would be of no avail in the day of the Lord's vengeance, 14-17; and that her tributaries would desert her, 18. The whole concludes with stating the incurableness of her malady, and the dreadful destruction consequently awaiting her; and with introducing the nations which she had oppressed as exulting at her fall, 19.

NOTES ON CHAP. 3

Verse 1. Wo to the bloody city!] Nineveh: the threatenings against which are continued in a strain of invective, astonishing for its richness, variety, and energy. One may hear and see the *whip crack*, the *horses prancing*, the *wheels rumbling*, the *chariots bounding* after the *galloping steeds*; the *reflection* from the *drawn* and *highly polished swords*; and the *hurled spears*, like *flashes of lightning*, dazzling the eyes; the *slain* lying in *heaps*, and *horses* and *chariots* stumbling over them! O what a picture, and a *true representation* of a battle, when one side is broken, and all the *cavalry* of the conqueror fall in upon them, *hewing* them down with their swords, and trampling them to pieces under the hoofs of their horses! O! infernal war! Yet sometimes thou art the scourge of the Lord.

Verse 4. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms] Above, the Ninevites were represented under the emblem of a *lion tearing all to pieces*; here they are represented under the emblem of a *beautiful harlot* or public *prostitute*, enticing all men to her, inducing the nations to become idolatrous, and, by thus perverting them, rendering them also objects of the Divine wrath.

Mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms] Using every means to excite to idolatry; and being, by *menace* or *wiles*, successful in all.

Verse 5. I will discover thy skirts upon thy face] It was an ancient, though not a laudable custom, to strip prostitutes naked, or throw their clothes over their heads, and expose them to public view, and public execration. This verse alludes to such a custom.

Verse 6. I will cast abominable filth upon thee] I will set thee as a *gazing-stock*. This was a punishment precisely like our *pillory*. They put such women in the pillory as a *gazing-stock*; and then, *children* and *others* threw *mud*, *dirt*, and *filth* of all kinds at them.

Verse 7. Who will bemoan her?] In such cases, who pities the delinquent? She has been the occasion of ruin to multitudes, and now she is deservedly exposed and punished. And so it should be thought concerning Nineveh.

Verse 8. Art thou better than populous No] No-Ammon, or *Diospolis*, in the *Delta*, on one branch of the Nile. This is supposed to be the city mentioned by *Nahum*; and which had been lately destroyed, probably by the Chaldeans.

The waters round about it] Being situated in the *Delta*, it had the *fork* of two branches of the Nile to defend it by land; and its barrier or *wall* was the *sea*, the Mediterranean, into which these branches emptied themselves: so that this city, and the place it stood on, were wholly surrounded by the waters.

Verse 9. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength] The land of *Cush*, not far from *Diospolis*; for it was in Arabia, on the *Red Sea*.

Put and Lubim] A part of Africa and Libya, which were all within reach of forming alliances with *No-Ammon* or *Diospolis*.

Verse 10. They cast lots for her honourable men] This refers still to the city called *populous No*. And the custom of *casting lots* among the commanders, for the prisoners which they had taken, is here referred to.

Great men were bound in chains] These were reserved to grace the *triumph* of the victor.

Verse 12. Thy strong holds] The effects of the consternation into which the Ninevites were cast by the assault on their city are here pointed out by a very expressive metaphor; the *first-ripe figs*, when at *full maturity*, fell from the tree with the *least shake*; and so, at the first *shake* or *consternation*, all the *fortresses* of Nineveh were abandoned; and the king, in despair, burnt himself and household in his own palace.

Verse 13. Thy people—are women] They lost all courage, and made no resistance. O vere Phrygiæ, neque enim Phryges: “Verily, ye are Phrygian women, not Phrygian men.” So said *Numanus* to the *Trojans*. *Virg.*, *Æn.* ix.

Verse 14. Draw thee waters for the siege] The Tigris ran near to Nineveh, and here they are exhorted to lay in plenty of fresh water, lest the siege should last long, and lest the enemy should cut off this supply.

Go into clay, and tread the mortar] This refers to the manner of forming bricks anciently in those countries; they digged up the clay, kneaded it properly by *treading*, mixed it with straw or *coarse grass*, moulded the bricks, and dried them in the sun. I have now some of the identical bricks, that were brought from this country, lying before me, and they show all these appearances. They are compact and very hard, but wholly soluble in water. There were however others without *straw*, that seem to have been *burnt in a kiln* as ours are. I have also some fragments or *bats* of these from Babylon.

Verse 15. Make thyself many as the cankerworm] On the *locusts*, and their operations in their various *states*, see the notes on ~~comp~~ **Joel 2:2**. The multitudes, successive swarms, and devastation occasioned by locusts, is one of the most expressive similes that could be used to point out the successive armies and all-destroying influences of the enemies of Nineveh. The account of these destroyers from Dr. *Shaw*, inserted ~~comp~~ **Joel 2:2-11, 20**, will fully illustrate the verses where allusion is made to locusts.

Verse 16. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants] Like Tyre, this city was a famous resort for merchants; but the multitudes which were there previously to the siege, like the locusts, took the alarm, and fled away.

Verse 17. Thy crowned are as the locusts] Thou hast numerous *princes* and numerous *commanders*.

Which camp in the hedges in the cold day] The locusts are said to *lie in shelter* about the *hedges* of fertile spots when the weather is *cold*, or during the *night*; but as soon as the *sun* shines out and is hot, they come out to their forage, or take to their wings.

Verse 18. Thy shepherds slumber] That is, the rulers and tributary princes, who, as *Herodotus* informs us, deserted Nineveh in the day of her distress, and came not forward to her succour.

Diodorus Siculus says, lib. ii., when the enemy shut up the king in the city, many nations revolted, each going over to the besiegers, for the sake of their liberty; that the king despatched messengers to all his subjects, requiring power from them to succour him; and that he thought himself able to endure the siege, and remained in expectation of armies which were to be raised throughout his empire, relying on the *oracle* that *the city would not be taken till the river became its enemy*. See Clarke's note on "~~3406~~ Nahum 2:6".

Verse 19. There is no healing of thy bruise] Thou shalt never be rebuilt.

All that hear the bruit of thee] The report or account.

Shall clap the hands] Shall exult in thy downfall.

For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed] Thou hast been a *universal oppressor*, and therefore all nations rejoice at thy fall and utter desolation.

Bp. *Newton* makes some good remarks on the fall and total ruin of Nineveh.

“What probability was there that the capital city of a great kingdom, a city which was *sixty* miles in compass, a city which contained so many *thousand* inhabitants, a city which had walls a *hundred* feet high, and so thick that *three* chariots could go abreast upon them, and which had *one thousand five hundred* towers, of *two hundred* feet in height; what probability was there that such a city should ever be totally destroyed? And yet so totally was it destroyed that the place is hardly known where it was situated. What we may suppose helped to complete its ruin and devastation, was *Nebuchadnezzar's* enlarging and beautifying *Babylon*, soon after *Nineveh* was taken. From that time no mention is made of *Nineveh* by any of the sacred writers; and the most ancient of the heathen

authors, who have occasion to say any thing about it, speak of it as a city that was once great and flourishing, but now destroyed and desolate. Great as it was formerly, so little of it is remaining, that authors are not agreed even about its situation. From the general suffrage of ancient historians and geographers, it appears to have been situated upon the Tigris, though others represent it as placed upon the Euphrates. *Bochart* has shown that *Herodotus*, *Diodorus Siculus*, and *Ammianus Marcellinus*, all *three* speak differently of it; sometimes as if situated on the Euphrates, sometimes as if on the Tigris; to reconcile whom he supposes that there were *two* Ninevehs; and *Sir John Marsham*, that there were *three*; the Syrian upon the Euphrates, the Assyrian on the Tigris, and a *third* built afterwards upon the Tigris by the Persians, who succeeded the Parthians in the empire of the East, in the *third* century, and were subdued by the Saracens in the *seventh* century after Christ. But whether this latter was built in the same place as the old Nineveh, is a question that cannot be decided.

“There is a city at this time called Mosul, situate upon the western side of the Tigris; and on the opposite eastern shore are ruins of great extent, which are said to be those of Nineveh.

“*Dr. Prideaux*, following *Thevenot*, observes that Mosul is situated on the west side of the Tigris, where was anciently only a suburb of the old Nineveh; for the city itself stood on the east side of the river, where are to be seen some of its ruins of great extent even to this day. Even the ruins of old Nineveh, as we may say, have been long ago ruined and destroyed; such an utter end hath been made of it, and such is the truth of the Divine predictions!

“These extraordinary circumstances may strike the reader more strongly by supposing only a parallel instance. Let us then suppose that a person should come in the name of a prophet, preaching repentance to the people of this kingdom, or otherwise denouncing the destruction of the capital city within a few years. ‘With an overflowing flood will God make an utter end of the place thereof; he will make an utter end: its place may be sought, but it shall never be found.’ I presume we should look upon such a prophet as a madman, and show no farther attention to his message than to deride and despise it. And yet such an event would not be more strange and incredible than the destruction and devastation of Nineveh; for Nineveh was much the larger, stronger, and older city of the two. And the Assyrian empire had subsisted and flourished more ages than any form of government in this

country; so there is no objecting the instability of Eastern monarchies in this case. Let us then, since this event would not be more improbable and extraordinary than the other, suppose again, that things should succeed according to the prediction; that the floods should arise, and the enemies should come; the city should be overthrown and broken down, be taken and pillaged, and destroyed so totally that even the learned could not agree about the place where it was situated. What would be said or thought in such a case? Whoever of posterity should read and compare the prophecy and event together, must they not, by such an illustrious instance, be thoroughly convinced of the providence of God, and of the truth of his prophet, and be ready to acknowledge, ‘Verily, this IS the word which the Lord hath spoken; verily, there IS a God who judgeth the earth?’”-See Bp. *Newton*, vol. i., dissert. 9.