

# NAHUM

TRANSLATED BY  
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## Introduction

**Person of the Prophet.** — All that we know of *Nah.* (*Nachūm*, i.e., consolation or comforter, *consolator*, Gr. *Ναούμ*) is, that he sprang from the place called *Elkosh*; since the epithet *hâ'elqōshī*, in the heading to his book, is not a patronymic, but the place of his birth. *Elkosh* is not to be sought for in Assyria, however, viz., in the Christian village of *Alkush*, which is situated on the eastern side of the Tigris, to the north-west of Khorsabad, two days' journey from Mosul, where the tomb of the prophet Nah. is shown in the form of a simple plaster box of modern style, and which is held in great reverence, as a holy place, by the Christians and Mohammedans of that neighbourhood (see Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, i. 233), as Michaelis, Eichhorn, Ewald, and others suppose. For this village, with its pretended tomb of the prophet, has not the smallest trace of antiquity about it, and is mentioned for the first time by a monk of the sixteenth century, in a letter to *Assemani* (*Biblioth. or.* i. 525, iii. 1, p. 352). Now, as a tomb of the prophet Jonah is also shown in the neighbourhood of Nineveh, the assumption is a very natural one, that the name *Elkush* did not come from the village into the book, but passed from the book to the village (Hitzig). The statement of Jerome is older, and much more credible, — namely, that “Elkosh was situated in Galilee, since there is to the present day a village in Galilee called Helcesaei (others Helcesei, Elcesi), a very small one indeed, and containing in its ruins hardly any traces of ancient buildings, but one which is well known to the Jews, and was also pointed out to me by my guide,” — inasmuch as he does not simply base his statement upon the word of his guide, but describes the place as well known to the Jews. This Jewish tradition of the birth of Nah. in the Galilaean *Elkosh*, or *Ελκεσέ*, is also supported by Cyril of Alex., Psa. Epiphanius, and Psa. Dorotheus, although the more precise accounts of the situation of the place are confused and erroneous in the two last named. We have indeed no further evidence that Nah. sprang out of Galilee. The name of the Elkesaites furnishes just as little proof of the existence of a place called Elkosh, as the name Capernaum, i.e., village of Nahum, of the fact that our prophet lived there. Whether the sect of the Elkesaites really derived their name from a founder named Elxai or Elkesai, is just as questionable as the connection between this Elxai and the place called Elkosh; and the conjecture that Capernaum received its name from our prophet

is altogether visionary. But Jerome's statement is quite sufficient, since it is confirmed by the contents of Nahum's prophecy. Ewald indeed imagines that he can see very clearly, from the general colouring of the little book, that Nah. did not live in Palestine, by in Assyria, and must have seen with his own eyes the danger which threatened Nineveh, from an invasion by powerful foes, as being one of the descendants of the Israelites who had formerly been transported to Assyria. "It moves," he says, "for example, round about Nineveh only, and that with a fulness such as we do not find in any other prophecy relating to a foreign nation; and it is quite in a casual manner that it glances at Judah in Nah. 1:13-2: 3. There is not a single trace of its having been written by Nah. in Judah; on the contrary, it follows most decidedly, from the form given to the words in Nah. 2: 1 (Nah. 1:15), compared with Isa. 52: 7, that he was prophesying at a great distance from Jerusalem and Judah." But why should not an earlier prophet, who lived in the kingdom of Israel or that of Judah, have been able to utter a special prophecy concerning Nineveh, in consequence of a special commission from God? Moreover, it is not merely in a casual manner that Nah. glances at Judah; on the contrary, his whole prophecy is meant for Judah; and his glance at Judah, notwithstanding its brevity, assumes, as Umbreit has correctly observed, a very important and central position. And the assertion, that there is not a single trace in the whole prophecy of Nahum's having been in Judah, has been contested with good reason by Maurer, Hitzig, and others, who appeal to Nah. 1: 4 and Nah. 1:13-2: 3, where such traces are to be found.

On the other hand, if the book had been written by a prophet living in exile, there would surely be some allusions to the situation and circumstances of the exiles; whereas we look in vain for any such allusions in Nahum. Again, the acquaintance with Assyrian affairs, to which Ewald still further appeals, is not greater than that which might have been possessed by any prophet, or even by any inhabitant of Judah in the time of Hezekiah, after the repeated invasions of Israel and Judah by the Assyrians. "The liveliness of the description runs through the whole book. Ch. 1: 2-14 is not less lively than Nah. 2; and yet no one would infer from the former that Nah. must have seen with his own eyes all that he sets before our eyes in so magnificent a picture in Nah. 1: 2ff." (Nägelsbach; Herzog's *Cycl.*) It is not more a fact that "Nah. 2: 6 contains such special acquaintance with the locality of Nineveh, as could only be derived from actual inspection," than that "Nah. 2: 7 contains the name of the Assyrian queen (Huzzab)." Moreover, of the words that are peculiar to our prophet, *taphsar* (Nah. 3:17) is the only one that is even probably Assyrian; and this is a military term, which the Judaeans in Palestine may have heard from Assyrians living there. The rest of the supposed Aramaeisms, such as the suffixes in נְבוֹרֵיהוּ (Nah. 2: 4) and מְלֹאֲכָבָה (Nah. 2:14), and the words נָהַג, to sigh = הָגָה (Nah. 2: 8), דָּהַר (Nah. 3: 2), and פְּלָדוֹת (Nah. 2: 4), may be accounted for

from the Galilaean origin of the prophet. Consequently there is no tenable ground whatever for the assumption that Nah. lived in exile, and uttered his prophecy in the neighbourhood of Nineveh. There is much greater reason for inferring, from the many points of coincidence between Nah. and Isaiah (see pp. 6, 7), that he was born in Galilee during the Assyrian invasions, and that he emigrated to Judaea, where he lived and prophesied. Nothing whatever is known of the circumstances of his life. The notices in Psa. Epiphanius concerning his miracles and his death (see O. Strauss, *Nahumi de Nino vaticin. expl.* p. xii.f.) can lay no claim to truth. Even the period of his life is so much a matter of dispute, that some suppose him to have prophesied under Jehu and Jehoahaz, whilst others believe that he did not prophesy till the time of Zedekiah; at the same time it is possible to decide this with tolerable certainty from the contents of the book.

2. The Book of Nah. contains one extended prophecy concerning Nineveh, in which the ruin of that city and of the Assyrian world-power is predicted in three strophes, answering to the division into chapters; viz., in Nah. 1 the divine purpose to inflict judgment upon this oppressor of Israel; in Nah. 2 the joyful news of the conquest, plundering, and destruction of Nineveh; and in Nah. 3 its guilt and its inevitable ruin. These are all depicted with pictorial liveliness and perspicuity. Now, although this prophecy neither closes with a Messianic prospect, nor enters more minutely into the circumstances of the Israelitish kingdom of God in general, it is rounded off within itself, and stands in such close relation to Judah, that it may be called a prophecy of consolation for that kingdom. The fall of the mighty capital of the Assyrian empire, that representative of the godless and God-opposing power of the world, which sought to destroy the Israelitish kingdom of God, was not only closely connected with the continuance and development of the kingdom of God in Judah, but the connection is very obvious in Nahum's prophecy. Even in the introduction (Nah. 1: 2ff.) the destruction of Nineveh is announced as a judgment, which Jehovah, the zealous God and avenger of evil, executes, and in which He proves Himself a refuge to those who trust in Him (Nah. 1: 7). But "those who trust in Him" are not godly Gentiles here; they are rather the citizens of His kingdom, viz., the Judaeans, upon whom Asshur had laid the yoke of bondage, which Jehovah would break (Nah. 1:13), so that Judah could keep feasts and pay its vows to Him (Nah. 1:15). On the destruction of Nineveh the Lord returns to the eminence of Israel, which the Assyrians have overthrown (Nah. 2: 2). Consequently Nineveh is to fall, and an end is to be put to the rule and tyranny of Asshur, that the glory of Israel may be restored.

The unity and integrity of the prophecy are not open to any well-founded objection. It is true that Eichhorn, Ewald, and De Wette, have questioned the

genuineness of the first part of the heading (the *Massâ* of Nineveh), but without sufficient reason, as even Hitzig observes. For there is nothing that can possibly astonish us in the fact that the object of the prophecy is mentioned first, and then the author. Moreover, the words מֵשָׁא נִנּוּה cannot possibly have been added at a later period, because the whole of the first half of the prophecy would be unintelligible without them; since Nineveh is not mentioned by name till Nah. 2: 8, and yet the suffix attached to מִקְּנֻמָּה in Nah. 1: 8 refers to Nineveh, and requires the introduction of the name of that city in the heading. There is just as little force in the arguments with which Hitzig seeks to prove that the allusion to the conquest of No-Amon in Nah. 3: 8-10 is a later addition. For the assertion that, if an Assyrian army had penetrated to Upper Egypt and taken that city, Nahum, when addressing Nineveh, could not have related to the Assyrians what had emanated from themselves, without at least intimating this, would obviously be well founded only on the supposition that the words “Art thou better than No-Amon,” etc., could be taken quite prosaically as news told to the city of Nineveh, and loses all its force, when we see that this address is simply a practical turn, with which Nah. describes the fate of No-Amon not to the Ninevites, but to the Judaeans, as a practical proof that even the mightiest and most strongly fortified city could be conquered and fall, when God had decreed its ruin. From the lively description of this occurrence, we may also explain the change from the third person to the second in Nah. 3: 9b, at which Hitzig still takes offence. His other arguments are so subjective and unimportant, that they require no special refutation.

With regard to the date of the composition of our prophecy, it is evident from the contents that it was not written before, but after, the defeat of Sennacherib in front of Jerusalem in the reign of Hezekiah, since that event is not only clearly assumed, but no doubt furnished the occasion for the prophecy. Asshur had overrun Judah (Nah. 1:15), and had severely afflicted it (Nah. 1: 9, 12), yea plundered and almost destroyed it (Nah. 2: 2). Now, even if neither the words in Nah. 1:11, “There is one come out of thee, who imagined evil against Jehovah,” etc., nor those of Nah. 1:12b, according to the correct interpretation, contain any special allusion to Sennacherib and his defeat, and if it is still less likely that Nah. 1:14 contains an allusion to his death or murder (Isa. 37:38), yet the affliction (*tsârâh*) which Assyria had brought upon Judah (Nah. 1: 9), and the invasion of Judah mentioned in Nah. 1:15 and 2: 2, can only refer to Sennacherib’s expedition, since he was the only one of all the kings of Assyria who so severely oppressed Judah as to bring it to the very verge of ruin. Moreover, Nah. 2:13, “The voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard,” is peculiarly applicable to the messengers whom Sennacherib sent to Hezekiah, according to Isa. 36:13ff. and 37: 9ff., to compel the surrender of Jerusalem and get Judah completely into his power. But if this is established, it cannot have

been a long time after the defeat of Sennacherib before Jerusalem, when Nah. prophesied; not only because that event was thoroughly adapted to furnish the occasion for such a prophecy as the one contained in our prophet's book, and because it was an omen of the future and final judgment upon Asshur, but still more, because the allusions to the affliction brought upon Judah by Sennacherib are of such a kind that it must have still continued in the most vivid recollection of the prophet and the men of his time. We cannot do anything else, therefore, than subscribe to the view expressed by Vitringa, viz., that "the date of Nah. must be fixed a very short time after Isaiah and Micah, and therefore in the reign of Hezekiah, not only after the carrying away of the ten tribes, but also after the overthrow of Sennacherib (Nah. 1:11, 13), from which the argument of the prophecy is taken, and the occasion for preaching the complete destruction of Nineveh and the kingdom of Assyria" (*Typ. doctr. prophet.* p. 37). The date of the composition of our book cannot be more exactly determined. The assumption that it was composed before the murder of Sennacherib, in the temple of his god Nisroch (Isa. 37:38; 2Ki. 19:37), has no support in Nah. 1:14. And it is equally impossible to infer from Nah. 1:13 and 1:15 that our prophecy was uttered in the reign of Manasseh, and occasioned by the carrying away of the king to Babylon (2Ch. 33:11).

The relation which exists between this prophecy and those of Isaiah is in the most perfect harmony with the composition of the former in the second half of the reign of Hezekiah. The resemblances which we find between Nah. 3: 5 and Isa. 47: 2, 3, Nah. 3: 7, 10 and Isa. 51:19, 20, Nah. 1:15 and Isa. 52: 1 and 7, are of such a nature that Isaiah could just as well have alluded to Nah. as Nah. to Isaiah. If Nah. composed his prophecy not long after the overthrow of Sennacherib, we must assume that the former was the case. The fact that in Nah. 1: 8, 13 and 3:10 there are resemblances to Isa. 10:23, 27 and 13:16, where our prophet is evidently the borrower, furnishes no decisive proof to the contrary. For the relation in which prophets who lived and laboured at the same time stood to one another was one of mutual giving and receiving; so that it cannot be immediately inferred from the fact that our prophet made use of a prophecy of his predecessor for his own purposes, that he must have been dependent upon him in all his kindred utterances. When, on the other hand, Ewald and Hitzig remove our prophecy to a much later period, and place it in the time of the later Median wars with Assyria, either the time of Phraortes (Herod. i. 102), or that of Cyaxares and his first siege of Nineveh (Herod. i. 103), they found this opinion upon the unscriptural assumption that it was nothing more than a production of human sagacity and political conjecture, which could only have been uttered "when a threatening expedition against Nineveh was already in full operation" (Ewald), and when the danger which threatened Nineveh was before his eyes, — a view which has its roots in the

denial of the supernatural character of the prophecy, and is altogether destitute of any solid foundation.

The style of our prophet is not inferior to the classical style of Isaiah and Micah, either in power and originality of thought, or in clearness and purity of form; so that, as R. Lowth (*De sacr. poësi Hebr.* § 281) has aptly observed, *ex omnibus minoribus prophetis nemo videtur aequare sublimitatem, ardorem et audaces spiritus Nahumi*; whereas Ewald, according to his preconceived opinion as to the prophet's age, "no longer finds in this prophet, who already formed one of the later prophets, so much inward strength, or purity and fulness of thought." For the exegetical writings on the book of Nahum, see my *Lehrbuch der Einleitung*, § 299, 300.

## EXPOSITION

### The Judgment upon Nineveh Decreed by God — Ch. 1

**Nah. 1.** Jehovah, the jealous God and avenger of evil, before whose manifestation of wrath the globe trembles (vv. 2-6), will prove Himself a strong tower to His own people by destroying Nineveh (vv. 7-11), since He has determined to break the yoke which Asshur has laid upon Judah, and to destroy this enemy of His people (vv. 12-14).

**Nah. 1: 1.** The heading runs thus: "*Burden concerning Nineveh; book of the prophecy of Nah. of Elkosh.*" The first sentence gives the substance and object, the second the form and author, of the proclamation which follows. מִשָּׁנָה signifies a burden, from נָשָׂה, to lift up, to carry, to heave. This meaning has very properly been retained by Jonathan, Aquila, Jerome, Luther, and others, in the headings to the prophetic oracle. Jerome observes on Hab. 1: 1: "Massa never occurs in the title, except when it is evidently grave and full of weight and labour." On the other hand, the LXX have generally rendered it λήμμα in the headings to the oracles, or even ὄρασις, ὄραμα, ῥήμα (Isa. 13ff., 30: 6); and most of the modern commentators since Cocceius and Vitranga, following this example, have attributed to the word the meaning of "utterance," and derived it from נָשָׂה, *effari*. But נָשָׂה has no more this meaning than נָשָׂה קוֹל can mean to utter the voice, either in Exo. 20: 7 and 23: 1, to which Hupfeld appeals in support of it, or in 2Ki. 9:25, to which others appeal. The same may be said of מִשָּׁנָה, which never means *effatum*, utterance, and is never placed before simple announcements of salvation, but only before oracles of a threatening nature. Zec. 9: 1 and 12: 1 form no exception to this rule. Delitzsch (on Isa. 13: 1) observes, with regard to the latter passage, that the promise has at least a dark foil, and in ch. 9: 1ff. the heathen nations of the Persian and Macedonian world-

monarchy are threatened with a divine judgment which will break in pieces their imperial glory, and through which they are to be brought to conversion to Jehovah; “and it is just in this that the burden consists, which the word of God lays upon these nations, that they may be brought to conversion through such a judgment from God” (Kliefoth). Even in Pro. 30: 1 and 31: 1 *Massâ*<sup>c</sup> does not mean utterance. The words of Agur in Pro. 30: 1 are a heavy burden, which is rolled upon the natural and conceited reason; they are punitive in their character, reproving human forwardness in the strongest terms; and in ch. 31: 1 *Massâ*<sup>c</sup> is the discourse with which king Lemuel reproved his mother. For the thorough vindication of this meaning of *Massâ*<sup>c</sup>, by an exposition of all the passages which have been adduced in support of the rendering “utterance,” see Hengstenberg, *Christology*, on Zec. 9: 1, and O. Strauss on this passage. For *Nineveh*, see the comm. on Jon. 1: 2. The burden, i.e., the threatening words, concerning Nineveh are defined in the second clause as *sēpher chāzōn*, book of the seeing (or of the seen) of Nahum, i.e., of that which Nah. saw in spirit and prophesied concerning Nineveh. The unusual combination of *sēpher* and *chāzōn*, which only occurs here, is probably intended to show that Nah. simply committed his prophecy concerning Nineveh to writing, and did not first of all announce it orally before the people. On *hâ<sup>c</sup>elqōshî* (the Elkoshite), see the Introduction.

**Nah. 1: 2-6.** The description of the divine justice, and its judicial manifestation on the earth, with which Nah. introduces his prophecy concerning Nineveh, has this double object: first of all, to indicate the connection between the destruction of the capital of the Assyrian empire, which is about to be predicted, and the divine purpose of salvation; and secondly, to cut off at the very outset all doubt as to the realization of this judgment.

V. 2. “A God jealous and taking vengeance is Jehovah; an avenger is Jehovah, and Lord of wrathful fury; an avenger is Jehovah to His adversaries, and He is One keeping wrath to His enemies. V. 3. Jehovah is long-suffering and of great strength, and He does not acquit of guilt. Jehovah, His way is in the storm and in the tempest, and clouds are the dust of His feet.”

The prophecy commences with the words with which God expresses the energetic character of His holiness in the decalogue (Exo. 20: 5, cf. 34:14; Deu. 4:24; 5: 9; and Jos. 24:19), where we find the form **אֵלֹהִים זָלוּס** for **אֵלֹהִים זָלוּס**. Jehovah is a jealous God, who turns the burning zeal of His wrath against them that hate Him (Deu. 6:15). His side of the energy of the divine zeal predominates here, as the following predicate, the three-times repeated **זָלוּס**, clearly shows. The strengthening of the idea of *nōqēm* involved in the repetition of it three times (cf. Jer. 7: 4; 22:29), is increased still further by the apposition *ba<sup>c</sup>al chēmâh*, possessor of the wrathful heat, equivalent to the wrathful God (cf. Pro. 29:22;

22:24). The vengeance applies to His adversaries, towards whom He bears ill-will. *Nâtar*, when predicated of God, as in Lev. 19:18 and Psa. 103: 9, signifies to keep or bear wrath. God does not indeed punish immediately; He is long-suffering (אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם, Exo. 34: 6, Num. 14:18, etc.). His long-suffering is not weak indulgence, however, but an emanation from His love and mercy; for He is *g<sup>c</sup>döl-kōäch*, great in strength (Num. 14:17), and does not leave unpunished (נִקְחָה וּגְרָה after Exo. 34: 7 and Num. 14:18; see at Exo. 20: 7). His great might to punish sinners, He has preserved from of old; His way is in the storm and tempest. With these words Nah. passes over to a description of the manifestations of divine wrath upon sinners in great national judgments which shake the world (שַׁעֲרָה as in Job. 9:17 = סַעֲרָה, which is connected with סוּפָה in Isa. 29: 6 and Psa. 83:16). These and similar descriptions are founded upon the revelations of God, when bringing Israel out of Egypt, and at the conclusion of the covenant at Sinai, when the Lord came down upon the mountain in clouds, fire, and vapour of smoke (Exo. 19:16-18). Clouds are the dust of His feet. The Lord comes down from heaven in the clouds. As man goes upon the dust, so Jehovah goes upon the clouds.

#### **Nah. 1: 4.**

*“He threateneth the sea, and drieth it up, and maketh all the rivers dry up. Bashan and Carmel fade, and the blossom of Lebanon fadeth. V. 5. Mountains shake before Him, and the hills melt away; the earth heaveth before Him, and the globe, and all the inhabitants thereon. V. 6. Before His fury who may stand? and who rise up at the burning of His wrath? His burning heat poureth itself out like fire, and the rocks are rent in pieces by Him.”*

In the rebuking of the sea there is an allusion to the drying up of the Red Sea for the Israelites to pass through (cf. Psa. 106: 9); but it is generalized here, and extended to every sea and river, which the Almighty can smite in His wrath, and cause to dry up. וַיַּבְשֶׁהוּ for וַיַּבְשֶׁהוּ, the vowelless *ʾ* of the third pers. being fused into one with the first radical sound, as in וַיִּדְוֶה in Lam. 3:53 (cf. Ges. § 69, Anm. 6, and Ewald § 232-3). Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon are mentioned as very fruitful districts, abounding in a vigorous growth of vegetation and large forests, the productions of which God could suddenly cause to fade and wither in His wrath. Yea more: the mountains tremble and the hills melt away (compare the similar description in Mic. 1: 4, and the explanation given there). The earth lifts itself, i.e., starts up from its place (cf. Isa. 13:13), with everything that dwells upon the surface of the globe. תָּשָׂא from נָשָׂא, used intransitively, “to rise,” as in Psa. 89:10 and Hos. 13: 1; not *conclamat s. tollit vocem* (J. H. Michaelis, Burk, Strauss). תָּבַל, lit., the fertile globe, always signifies the whole of the habitable earth, ἡ οἰκουμένη; and יוֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ, not



merely the men (Ewald), but all living creatures (cf. Joe. 1:18, 20). No one can stand before such divine wrath, which pours out like consuming fire (Deu. 4:24), and rends rocks in pieces (1Ki. 19:11; Jer. 23:29; cf. Jer. 10:10; Mal. 3: 2).

**Nah. 1: 7-11.** But the wrath of God does not fall upon those who trust in the Lord; it only falls upon His enemies. With this turn Nah. prepares the way in vv. 7ff. for proclaiming the judgment of wrath upon Nineveh.

*V. 7. "Good is Jehovah, a refuge in the day of trouble; and He knoweth those who trust in Him. V. 8. And with an overwhelming flood will He make an end of her place, and pursue His enemies into darkness."*

Even in the manifestation of His wrath God proves His goodness; for the judgment, by exterminating the wicked, brings deliverance to the righteous who trust in the Lord, out of the affliction prepared for them by the wickedness of the world. The predicate **טוֹב** is more precisely defined by the apposition **וְגִּוּר לְמַעַן**, for a refuge = a refuge in time of trouble. The goodness of the Lord is seen in the fact that He is a refuge in distress. The last clause says to whom: viz., to those who trust in Him. They are known by Him. "To know is just the same as not to neglect; or, expressed in a positive form, the care or providence of God in the preservation of the faithful" (Calvin). For the fact, compare Psa. 34: 9; 46: 2, Jer. 16:19. And because the Lord is a refuge to His people, He will put an end to the oppressor of His people, viz., Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, and that with an overwhelming flood. *Sheteph*, overwhelming, is a figure denoting the judgment sweeping over a land or kingdom, through the invasion of hostile armies (cf. Isa. 8: 7; Dan. 11:26, 40). **עֲבַר**, overflowed by a river (cf. Isa. 8: 8; Hab. 3:10; Dan. 11:40). **עָשָׂה כְּלָה**, to put an end to anything, as in Isa. 10:23. **מִקְנָמָהּ** is the accusative of the object: make her place a vanishing one. **כְּלָה**, the fem. of **כָּלָה**, an adjective in a neuter sense, that which is vanishing away. The suffix in **מִקְנָמָהּ** refers to *Nineveh* in the heading (v. 1): either Nineveh personified as a queen (Nah. 2: 7; 3: 4), is distinguished from her seat (Hitzig); or what is much more simple, the city itself is meant, and "her place" is to be understood in this sense, that with the destruction of the city even the place where it stood would cease to be the site of a city, with which March aptly compares the phrase, "its place knoweth man no more" (Job. 7:10; 8:18; 20: 9). **אִיְבָנֵי** are the inhabitants of Nineveh, or the Assyrians generally, as the enemies of Israel. **יְרֵד־הַשֶּׁדַּי**, not darkness will pursue its enemies; for this view is irreconcilable with the *makkeph*: but to pursue with darkness, *chōshekh* being an accusative either of place or of more precise definition, used in an instrumental sense. The former is the simpler view,

and answers better to the parallelism of the clauses. As the city is to vanish and leave no trace behind, so shall its inhabitants perish in darkness.

**Nah. 1: 9-11.** The reason for all this is assigned in vv. 9ff.

V. 9. "What think ye of Jehovah? He makes an end, the affliction will not arise twice. V. 10. For though they be twisted together like thorns, and as if intoxicated with their wine, they shall be devoured like dry stubble. V. 11. From thee has one come out, who meditated evil against Jehovah, who advised worthlessness."

The question in v. 9a is not addressed to the enemy, viz., the Assyrians, as very many commentators suppose: "What do ye meditate against Jehovah?" For although *châshabh* 'el is used in Hos. 7:15 for a hostile device with regard to Jehovah, the supposition that 'el is used here for 'al, according to a later usage of the language, is precluded by the fact that **הָשֵׁב אֵל** is actually used in this sense in v. 11. Moreover, the last clause does not suit this view of the question. The word, "the affliction will not stand up, or not rise up a second time," cannot refer to the Assyrians, or mean that the infliction of a second judgment upon Nineveh will be unnecessary, because the city will utterly fall to the ground in the first judgment, and completely vanish from the earth (Hitzig). For **צָרָה** points back to **בְּיוֹם צָרָה**, and therefore must be the calamity which has fallen upon Judah, or upon those who trust in the Lord, on the part of Nineveh or Asshur (Marck, Maurer, and Strauss). This is confirmed by v. 11 and ch. 1:15, where this thought is definitely expressed. Consequently the question, "What think ye with regard to Jehovah?" can only be addressed to the Judaeans, and must mean, "Do ye think that Jehovah cannot or will not fulfil His threat upon Nineveh?" (Cyr., Marck, Strauss). The prophet addresses these words to the anxious minds, which were afraid of fresh invasions on the part of the Assyrians. To strengthen their confidence, he answers the question proposed, by repeating the thought expressed in v. 8. He (Jehovah) is making an end, sc. of the enemy of His people; and he gives a further reason for this in v. 10. The participial clauses **אֲדָ סִירִים** to **סְבוֹאִים** are to be taken conditionally: are (or were) they even twisted like thorns. **אֲדָ סִירִים**, to thorns = as thorns (**אֲדָ** is given correctly by J. H. Michaelis: *eo usque ut spinas perplexitate aequent*; compare Ewald, § 219). The comparison of the enemy to thorns expresses "*firmitatum callidumque nocendi studium*" (Marck), and has been well explained by Ewald thus: "crisp, crafty, and cunning; so that one would rather not go near them, or have anything to do with them" (cf. 2Sa. 23: 6 and Mic. 7: 4). **בְּסִבְאָם סְבוֹאִים**, not "wettered like their wet" (Hitzig), nor "as it were drowned in wine, so that fire can do no more harm to them than to anything else that is wet" (Ewald); for **סְבָא** neither means to wet nor to drown, but to drink, to carouse; and **סְבוֹא** means drunken, intoxicated. **סְבָא** is strong

unmixed wine (see Delitzsch on Isa. 1:22). “Their wine” is the wine which they are accustomed to drink. The simile expresses the audacity and hardness with which the Assyrians regarded themselves as invincible, and applies very well to the gluttony and revelry which prevailed at the Assyrian court; even if the account given by Diod. Sic. (ii. 26), that when Sardanapalus had three times defeated the enemy besieging Nineveh, in his great confidence in his own good fortune, he ordered a drinking carousal, in the midst of which the enemy, who had been made acquainted with the fact, made a fresh attack, and conquered Nineveh, rests upon a legendary dressing up of the facts. **אֶבְלָה**, devoured by fire, is a figure signifying utter destruction; and the perfect is prophetic, denoting what will certainly take place. Like dry stubble: cf. Isa. 5:24; 47:14, and Joe. 2: 5. **מֵלֵא** is not to be taken, as Ewald supposes (§ 279, a), as strengthening **יָבֵשׁ**, “fully dry,” but is to be connected with the verb adverbially, and is simply placed at the end of the sentence for the sake of emphasis (Ges., Maurer, and Strauss). This will be the end of the Assyrians, because he who meditates evil against Jehovah has come forth out of Nineveh. In **מִמֶּנֶּךָ** Nineveh is addressed, the representative of the imperial power of Assyria, which set itself to destroy the Israelitish kingdom of God. It might indeed be objected to this explanation of the verse, that the words in vv. 12b and 13 are addressed to Zion or Judah, whereas Nineveh or Asshur is spoken of both in what precedes (vv. 8 and 10) and in what follows (v. 12a) in the third person. On this ground Hoelem. and Strauss refer **מִמֶּנֶּךָ** also to Judah, and adopt this explanation: “from thee (Judah) will the enemy who has hitherto oppressed thee have gone away” (taking **יָצָא מִן** as *fut. exact.*, and **יָצָא מִן** as in Isa. 49:17). But this view does not suit the context. After the utter destruction of the enemy has been predicted in v. 10, we do not expect to find the statement that it will have gone away from Judah, especially as there is nothing said in what precedes about any invasion of Judah. The meditation of evil against Jehovah refers to the design of the Assyrian conquerors to destroy the kingdom of God in Israel, as the Assyrian himself declares in the blasphemous words which Isaiah puts into the mouth of Rabshakeh (Isa. 36:14-20), to show the wicked pride of the enemy. This address merely expresses the feeling cherished at all times by the power of the world towards the kingdom of God. It is in the plans devised for carrying this feeling into action that the **אֶזְנֵי בַלְיָאֵל**, the advising of worthlessness, consists. This is the only meaning that **בַּלְיָאֵל** has, not that of destruction.

**Nah. 1:12-14.** The power of Nineveh will be destroyed, to break the yoke laid upon Judah.

V. 12. “Thus saith Jehovah, Though they be unconsumed, and therefore numerous, yet are they thus mowed down, and have passed away. I have bowed thee down, I will bow thee down no more. V. 13. And now shall I break his yoke from off thee,

and break thy fetters in pieces. V. 14. And Jehovah hath given commandment concerning thee, no more of thy name will be sown: from the house of thy God I cut off graven image and molten work: I prepare thy grave; for thou art found light.”

To confirm the threat expressed in vv. 8-11, Nah. explains the divine purpose more fully. Jehovah hath spoken: the completeness and strength of her army will be of no help to Nineveh. It is mowed down, because Judah is to be delivered from its oppressor. The words **וְעֵבֶר** to **שְׁלָמִים** refer to the enemy, the warlike hosts of Nineveh, which are to be destroyed notwithstanding their great and full number. *Shâlēm, integer*, with strength undiminished, both outwardly and inwardly, i.e., both numerous and strong. **וּבְכֹן רַבִּים**, and so, i.e., of such a nature, just because they are of full number, or numerous. **וּבְכֹן נְגוּזוּ**, and so, i.e., although of such a nature, they will nevertheless be mowed down. **נָזַן**, taken from the mowing of the meadows, is a figure denoting complete destruction. **וְעֵבֶר** is not impersonal, *actum est*, sc. *de iis*, but signifies it is away, or has vanished. The singular is used with special emphasis, the numerous army being all embraced in the unity of one man: “he paints the whole people as vanishing away, just as if one little man were carried off” (Strauss). With **וְעֵנְתָךְ** the address turns to Judah. The words are not applicable to the Assyrians, to whom Abarbanel, Grotius, Ewald, and Hitzig refer this clause; for Asshur is not only bowed down or chastened, but utterly destroyed. **וְעֵנְתָךְ** refers to the oppression which Judah had suffered from the Assyrians in the time of Ahaz and Hezekiah. This shall not be repeated, as has already been promised in v. 9b. For now will the Lord break the yoke which this enemy has laid upon Judah. **וְאַתָּה**, but now, is attached adversatively to **וְעֵנְתָךְ**. The suffix to **מִטְהוּ** refers to the enemy, which has its seat in Nineveh. For the figure of the yoke, cf. Lev. 26:13, Jer. 27: 2; 28:10, Eze. 34:27, etc.; and for the fact itself, Isa. 10:27. The words do not refer to the people of the ten tribes, who were pining like slaves in exile (Hitzig); for Nah. makes no allusion to them at all, but to Judah (cf. Nah. 1:15), upon whom the Assyrians had laid the yoke of tribute from the time of Ahaz. This was first of all shaken off in the reign of Hezekiah, through the overthrow of Sennacherib; but it was not yet completely broken, so long as there was a possibility that Assyria might rise again with new power, as in fact it did in the reign of Manasseh, when Assyrian generals invaded Judah and carried off this king to Babylon (2Ch. 33:11). It was only broken when the Assyrian power was overthrown through the conquest and destruction of Nineveh. This view, which is required by the futures *‘eshbōr* and *‘ānattēq*, is confirmed by v. 14, for there the utter extermination of Assyria is clearly expressed. *V<sup>t</sup>sivvâh* is not a perfect with *Vav rel.*; but the *Vav* is a simple copula: “and (= for) Jehovah has commanded.” The perfect refers to the divine purpose, which has already been formed, even though its execution is still in the future. This purpose runs

thus: “Of thy seed shall no more be sown, i.e., thou wilt have no more descendants” (“the people and name are to become extinct,” Strauss; cf. Isa. 14:20). It is not the king of Assyria who is here addressed, but the Assyrian power personified as a single man, as we may see from what follows, according to which the idols are to be rooted out along with the seed from the house of God, i.e., out of the idol temples (cf. Isa. 37:38; 44:13). *Pesel* and *massēkhâh* are combined, as in Deu. 27:15, to denote every kind of idolatrous image. For the idolatry of Assyria, see Layard’s *Nineveh and its Remains*, ii. p. 439ff. **אֲשִׁים קַבְרֵיךָ** cannot mean, “I make the temple of thy god into a grave,” although this meaning has already been expressed in the Chaldee and Syriac; and the Masoretic accentuation, which connects the words with what precedes, is also founded upon this view. If an object had to be supplied to **אֲשִׁים** from the context, it must be *pesel ūmassēkhâh*; but there would be no sense in “I make thine idol into a grave.” There is no other course left, therefore, than to take **קַבְרֵיךָ** as the nearest and only object to **אֲשִׁים**, “I lay, i.e., prepare thy grave,” **בִּי קִלְוֶת**, because, when weighed according to thy moral worth (Job. 31: 6), thou hast been found light (cf. Dan. 5:27). Hence the widespread opinion, that the murder of Sennacherib (Isa. 37:38; 2Ki. 19:37) is predicted here, must be rejected as erroneous and irreconcilable with the words, and not even so far correct as that Nah. makes any allusion to that event. He simply announces the utter destruction of the Assyrian power, together with its idolatry, upon which that power rested. Jehovah has prepared a grave for the people and their idols, because they have been found light when weighed in the balances of righteousness.

## Conquest, Plundering, and Destruction of Nineveh — Ch. 1:15-2:13 (Heb. Bib. Ch. 2)

**Nah. 1:15-2:13.** Jehovah sends a powerful and splendid army against Nineveh, to avenge the disgrace brought upon Judah and restore its glory (Nah. 1:15-2: 4). The city is conquered; its inhabitants flee or wander into captivity; the treasures are plundered (vv. 5-10); and the powerful city perishes with all its glory, and leaves not a trace behind (vv. 11-13).

**Nah. 1:15-2: 4.** Judah hears the glad tidings, that its oppressor is utterly destroyed. A warlike army marches against Nineveh, which that city cannot resist, because the Lord will put an end to the oppression of His people. Ch. 1:15.

*“Behold, upon the mountains the feet of the messengers of joy, proclaiming salvation! Keep thy feasts, O Judah; pay thy vows: for the worthless one will no more go through thee; he is utterly cut off.”*

The destruction of the Assyrian, announced in Nah. 1:14, is so certain, that Nah. commences the description of its realization with an appeal to Judah, to keep joyful feasts, as the miscreant is utterly cut off. The form in which he utters this appeal is to point to messengers upon the mountains, who are bringing the tidings of peace to the kingdom of Judah. The first clause is applied in Isa. 52: 7 to the description of the Messianic salvation. The messengers of joy appear upon the mountains, because their voice can be heard far and wide from thence. The mountains are those of the kingdom of Judah, and the allusion to the feet of the messengers paints as it were for the eye the manner in which they hasten on the mountains with the joyful news. **מְבַשֵּׂר** is collective, every one who brings the glad tidings. *Shâlôm*, peace and salvation: here both in one. The summons, to keep feasts, etc., proceeds from the prophet himself, and is, as Ursinus says, “*partim gratulatoria, partim exhortatoria.*” The former, because the feasts could not be properly kept during the oppression by the enemy, or at any rate could not be visited by those who lived at a distance from the temple; the latter, because the *chaggîm*, i.e., the great yearly feasts, were feasts of thanksgiving for the blessings of salvation, which Israel owed to the Lord, so that the summons to celebrate these feasts involved the admonition to thank the Lord for His mercy in destroying the hostile power of the world. This is expressed still more clearly in the summons to pay their vows. **בְּלִיאָל**, abstract for concrete = **אִישׁ בַּל**, as in 2Sa. 23: 6 and Job. 34:18. **נִכְרַת** is not a participle, but a perfect in pause.

**Nah. 2: 1-2.** With Nah. 2: 1 the prophecy turns to Nineveh.

V. 1. “*A dasher in pieces comes against thee. Keep thy fortress! Look out upon the way, fortify the loins, exert thy strength greatly!*” V. 2. *For Jehovah returneth to the eminence of Jacob as to the eminence of Israel; for plunderers have plundered them, and their vines have they thrown to the ground.*”

**אֶל-פִּנְיָךְ** cannot be addressed to Judah, as in 1:15 (Chald., Rashi, etc.). It cannot indeed be objected that in Nah. 1:15 the destruction of Asshur has already been announced, since the prophet might nevertheless have returned to the time when Asshur had made war upon Judah, in order to depict its ruin with greater precision. But such an assumption does not agree with the second clause of the verse as compared with v. 2, and still less with the description of the approaching enemy which follows in v. 3, since this is unquestionably, according to v. 5, the power advancing against Nineveh, and destroying that city. We must therefore assume that we have here a sudden change in the person addressed, as in Nah. 1:11 and 12, 13 and 14. The enemy is called **מִפְיָן**, “a dasher in pieces;” not a war-hammer (cf. Pro. 25:18), because **עֲלָה**, the standing expression for the advance of a hostile army, does not agree with

this. אֶל-פָּנָיֶיךָ, against thy face, i.e., pitching his tent opposite to the city (there is no good reason for altering the suffix into פָּנֶיךָ, as Ewald and Hitzig propose). Against this enemy Nineveh is to bring all possible power of resistance. This is not irony, but simply a poetical turn given to the thought, that Nineveh will not be able to repulse this enemy any more. The *inf. abs. nâtsôr* stands emphatically for the imperative, as is frequently the case, and is continued in the imperative. *M<sup>e</sup>tsurâh* is the enclosure of a city, hence the wall or fortification. צִפְהוּ-דְרָכָךְ, looking watchfully upon the way by which the enemy comes, to repulse it or prevent it from entering the city. חִזַּק מִן, make the loins strong, i.e., equip thyself with strength, the loins being the seat of strength. The last clause expresses the same thought, and is merely added to strengthen the meaning. The explanatory *kî* in v. 2 (3) does not follow upon v. 1b in the sense of “summon up all thy strength, for it is God in whose strength the enemy fights” (Strauss), but to v. 1a or Nah. 1:15b. The train of thought is the following: Asshur will be utterly destroyed by the enemy advancing against Nineveh, for Jehovah will re-establish the glory of Israel, which Asshur has destroyed. שָׁב (perf. proph.) has not the force of the *hiphil, reducere, restituere*, either here or in Psa. 85: 5 and Isa. 52: 8, and other passages, where the modern lexicons give it, but means to turn round, or return to a person, and is construed with the accusative, as in Num. 10:36, Exo. 4:20, and Gen. 50:14, although in actual fact the return of Jehovah to the eminence of Jacob involves its restoration. גְּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב, that of which Jacob is proud, i.e., the eminence and greatness or glory accruing to Israel by virtue of its election to be the nation of God, which the enemy into whose power it had been given up on account of its rebellion against God had taken away (see at Amo. 6: 8). *Jacob* does not stand for Judah, nor *Israel* for the ten tribes, for Nah. never refers to the ten tribes in distinction from Judah; and Ob. 18, where Jacob is distinguished from the house of Joseph, is of a totally different character. Both names stand here for the whole of Israel (of the twelve tribes), and, as Cyril has shown, the distinction is this: Jacob is the natural name which the people inherited from their forefather, and Israel the spiritual name which they had received from God. Strauss gives the meaning correctly thus: Jehovah will so return to the eminence of His people, who are named after Jacob, that this eminence shall become the eminence of Israel, i.e., of the people of God; in other words, He will exalt the nation once more to the lofty eminence of its divine calling (בָּ used in the same manner as in 1Sa. 25:36). This will He do, because plunderers have plundered (*bâqaq, evacuare*) them (the Israelites), and destroyed their vines, cast them to the ground; that He may avenge the reproach cast upon His people. The plunderers are the heathen nations, especially the Assyrians. The vines are the Israelites; Israel as a people or kingdom is the vineyard (Isa. 5: 1; Jer. 12:10;

Psa. 80: 9ff.); the vines are the families, and the branches (*z<sup>e</sup>mōrīm* from *z<sup>e</sup>mōrāh*) the members.

**Nah. 2: 3-4.** After assigning this reason for the divine purpose concerning Asshur, the prophet proceeds in vv. 3ff. to depict the army advancing towards Nineveh, viz., in v. 3 its appearance, and in v. 4 the manner in which it sets itself in motion for battle.

V. 3. “*The shield of His heroes is made red, the valiant men are clothed in crimson: in the fire of the steel-bosses are the chariots, on the day of His equipment; and the cypresses are swung about.* V. 4. *The chariots rave in the streets, they run over one another on the roads; their appearance is like the torches, they run about like lightning.*”

The suffix attached to *gibbōrēhū* (His heroes) might be taken as referring to *mēphīts* in v. 1 (2); but it is more natural to refer it to Jehovah in v. 2 (3), as having summoned the army against Nineveh (cf. Isa. 13: 3). The shields are reddened, i.e., not radiant (Ewald), but coloured with red, and that not with the blood of enemies who have been slain (Abarbanel and Grotius), but either with red colour with which they are painted, or what is still more probable, with the copper with which they are overlaid: see Josephus, *Ant.* xiii. 12, 5 (Hitzig).

**אֲנָשֵׁי-חַיִל** are not fighting men generally, i.e., soldiers, but brave men, heroes (cf. Jud. 3:29, 1Sa. 31:12, 2Sa. 11:16, equivalent to *b<sup>e</sup>nē chayil* in 1Sa. 18:17, etc.). **מִתְלַעִים**, **ἀπ. λεγ.**, a denom. of **תְּלַעַע**, *coccus*: clothed in coccus or crimson. The fighting dress of the nations of antiquity was frequently blood-red (see Aeliani, *Var. hist.* vi. 6).<sup>1</sup>

The **ἀπ. λεγ.** *p<sup>e</sup>lādōth* is certainly not used for *lappīdim*, torches; but in both Arabic and Syriac *paldāh* signifies steel (see *Ges. Lex.*). But *p<sup>e</sup>lādōth* are not scythes, which would suggest the idea of scythe-chariots (Michaelis, Ewald, and others); for scythe-chariots were first introduced by Cyrus, and were unknown before his time to the Medes, the Syrians, the Arabians, and also to the ancient Egyptians (see at Jos. 17:16). *P<sup>e</sup>lādōth* probably denotes the steel covering of the chariots, as the Assyrian war-chariots were adorned according to the monuments with ornaments of metal.<sup>2</sup>

The army of the enemy presents the appearance described **בְּיוֹם הַכִּינוֹ**, in the day of his equipment. **הַכִּין**, to prepare, used of the equipping of an army for an attack or for battle, as in Jer. 46:14, Eze. 7:14; 38: 7. The suffix refers to Jehovah, like that in **גְּבוּרֵיהוּ**; compare Isa. 13: 4, where Jehovah raises an army for war with Babylon. *Habb<sup>e</sup>rōshim*, the cypresses, are no doubt lances or javelins made of cypress-wood (Grotius and others), not *magnates* (Chald., Kimchi, and others), or *virī hastati*. **הִרְעָלוּ**, to be swung, or brandished, in the



hands of the warriors equipped for battle. The army advances to the assault (v. 4), and presses into the suburbs. The chariots rave (go mad) in the streets. **הִתְהוֹלֵל**, to behave one's self foolishly, to rave, used here as in Jer. 46: 9 for mad driving, or driving with insane rapidity (see 2Ki. 9:20). **הִשְׁתַּקְּשַׁק**, *hithpalel* of **שָׁקַק**, to run (Joe. 2: 9); in the intensive form, to run over one another, i.e., to run in such a way that they appear as though they would run over one another. **חֹצוֹת** and **רְחֹבוֹת** are roads and open spaces, not outside the city, but inside (cf. Amo. 5:16; Psa. 144:13, 14; Pro. 1:20), and, indeed, as we may see from what follows, in the suburbs surrounding the inner city of citadel. Their appearance (viz., that of the chariots as they drive raving about) is like torches. The feminine suffix to **מְרִאִיהֶן** can only refer to **הָרֶכֶב**, notwithstanding the fact that elsewhere **רֶכֶב** is always construed as a masculine, and that it is so here in the first clauses. For the suffix cannot refer to **רְחֹבוֹת** (Hoelem. and Strauss), because **הָרֶכֶב** is the subject in the following clause as well as in the two previous ones. The best way probably is to take it as a neuter, so that it might refer not to the chariots only, but to everything in and upon the chariots. The appearance of the chariots, as they drove about with the speed of lightning, richly ornamented with bright metal (see on v. 3), and occupied by warriors in splendid clothes and dazzling armour, might very well be compared to torches and flashing lightning. **רִצָּץ**, *pilel* of **רָצַץ** (not *poel* of **רָצַץ**, Jud. 10: 8), *cursitare*, used of their driving with lightning-speed.

**Nah. 2: 5-10.** The Assyrian tries to repel this attack, but all in vain.

V. 5. "He remembers his glorious ones: they stumble in their paths; they hasten to the wall of it, and the tortoise is set up. V. 6. The gates are opened in the rivers, and the palace is dissolved. V. 7. It is determined: she is laid bare, carried off, and her maids groan like the cry of doves, smiting on their breasts."

On the approach of the war-chariots of the enemy to the attack, the Assyrian remembers his generals and warriors, who may possibly be able to defend the city and drive back the foe. That the subject changes with *yizkōr*, is evident from the change in the number, i.e., from the singular as compared with the plurals in vv. 3 and 4, and is placed beyond the reach of doubt by the contents of vv. 5ff., which show that the reference is to the attempt to defend the city. The subject to *yizkōr* is the Assyrian (**בְּלִיאַל**, v. 1), or the king of Asshur (Nah. 3:18). He remembers his glorious ones, i.e., remembers that he has *'addirim*, i.e., not merely generals (**μεισιτᾶνες**, LXX), but good soldiers, including the generals (as in Nah. 3:18, Jud. 5:13, Neh. 3: 5). He sends for them, but they stumble in their paths. From terror at the violent assault of the foe, their knees lose their tension (the plural *hālīkhōth* is not to be corrected into the singular according to the *keri*, as the word always occurs in the plural).

They hasten to the wall of it (Nineveh); there is מִצְדָּה set up: i.e., literally the covering one, not the defender, *praesidium militare* (Hitzig), but the tortoise, *testudo*.<sup>B</sup>

The prophet's description passes rapidly from the assault upon the city wall to the capture of the city itself (v. 6). The opened or opening gates of the rivers are neither those approaches to the city which were situated on the bank of the Tigris, and were opened by the overflowing of the river, in support of which appeal has been made to the statement of Diodor. Sic. ii. 27, that the city wall was destroyed for the space of twenty stadia by the overflowing of the Tigris; for "gates of the rivers" cannot possibly stand for gates opened by rivers. Still less can it be those roads of the city which led to the gates, and which were flooded with people instead of water (Hitzig), or with enemies, who were pressing from the gates into the city like overflowing rivers (Ros.); nor even gates through which rivers flow, i.e., sluices, namely those of the concentric canals issuing from the Tigris, with which the palace could be laid under water (Vatabl., Burck, Hitzig, ed. 1); but as Luther renders it, "gates on the waters," i.e., situated on the rivers, or gates in the city wall, which were protected by the rivers; "gates most strongly fortified, both by nature and art" (Tuch, *de Nino urbe*, p. 67, Strauss, and others), for *n<sup>o</sup>hârôth* must be understood as signifying the Tigris and its tributaries and canals. At any rate, there were such gates in Nineveh, since the city, which stood at the junction of the Khosr with the Tigris, in the slope of the (by no means steep) rocky bank, was to some extent so built in the alluvium, that the natural course of the Khosr had to be dammed off from the plain chosen for the city by three stone dams, remnants of which are still to be seen; and a canal was cut above this point, which conducted the water to the plain of the city, where it was turned both right and left into the city moats, but had a waste channel through the city. To the south, however, another small collection of waters helped to fill the trenches. "The wall on the side towards the river consisted of a slightly curved line, which connected together the mouths of the trenches, but on the land side it was built at a short distance from the trenches. The wall on the river side now borders upon meadows, which are only flooded at high water; but the soil has probably been greatly elevated, and at the time when the city was built this was certainly river" (see M. v. Niebuhr, *Geschichte Assurs u. Babels*, p. 280; and the outlines of the plan of the ground on which Nineveh stood, p. 284). The words of the prophet are not to be understood as referring to any particular gate, say the western, either alone, or *par excellence*, as Tuch supposes, but apply quite generally to the gates of the city, since the rivers are only mentioned for the purpose of indicating the strength of the gates. As Luther has correctly explained it, "the gates of the rivers, however firm in other respects, and with no easy access, will now be easily occupied, yea, have been already opened." The palace melts

away, not, however, from the floods of water which flow through the open gates. This literal rendering of the words is irreconcilable with the situation of the palaces in Nineveh, since they were built in the form of terraces upon the tops of hills, either natural or artificial, and could not be flooded with water. The words are figurative. *mūg*, to melt, dissolve, i.e., to vanish through anxiety and alarm; and **הַיִּכָּל**, the palace, for the inhabitants of the palace. “When the gates, protected by the rivers, are broken open by the enemy, the palace, i.e., the reigning Nineveh, vanishes in terror” (Hitzig). For her sway has now come to an end.

**הָצַב**: the *hophal* of **נָצַב**, in the *hiphil*, to establish, to determine (Deu. 32: 8; Psa. 74:17; and Chald. Dan. 2:45; 6:13); hence it is established, i.e., is determined, sc. by God: she will be made bare; i.e., Nineveh, the queen, or mistress of the nations, will be covered with shame. **גָּלְתָהּ** is not to be taken as interchangeable with the *hophal* **הִגְלָהּ**, to be carried away, but means to be uncovered, after the *piel* to uncover, sc. the shame or nakedness (Nah. 3: 5; cf. Isa. 47: 2, 3; Hos. 2:12). **הֵעֵלָהּ**, for **הִעֵלָהּ** (see Ges. § 63, Anm. 4), to be driven away, or led away, like the *niph.* in Jer. 37:11, 2Sa. 2:27. <sup>64</sup>

The laying bare and carrying away denote the complete destruction of Nineveh. **אֲמָהֹתֶיהָ**, *ancillae ejus*, i.e., *Nini*. The “maids” of the city of Nineveh personified as a queen are not the states subject to her rule (Theodor., Cyr., Jerome, and others), — for throughout this chapter Nineveh is spoken of simply as the capital of the Assyrian empire, — but the inhabitants of Nineveh, who are represented as maids, mourning over the fate of their mistress. *Nāhag*, to pant, to sigh, for which *hāgāh* is used in other passages where the cooing of doves is referred to (cf. Isa. 38:14; 59:11). **בְּקוֹל יוֹנִים** instead of **בְּיוֹנִים**, probably to express the loudness of the moaning. *Tophēph*, to smite, used for the smiting of the timbrels in Psa. 68:26; here, to smite upon the breast. Compare *pectus pugnīs caedere*, or *palmīs infestis tundere* (e.g., Juv. xiii. 167; Virg. *Aen.* i. 481, and other passages), as an expression of violent agony in deep mourning (cf. Luk. 18:13; 23:27). **לִבְבֵיהֶן** for **לִבְבֵיהֶן** is the plural, although this is generally written **לִבּוֹת**; and as the **י** is frequently omitted as a sign of the plural (cf. Ewald, § 258, *a*), there is no good ground for reading **לִבְבֵיהֶן**, as Hitzig proposes.

**Nah. 2: 8-10.** At the conquest of Nineveh the numerous inhabitants flee, and the rich city is plundered.

V. 8. “And Nineveh like a water-pond all her days. And they flee! Stand ye, O stand! and no one turns round. V. 9. Take silver as booty, take ye gold! And no end to the furnishing with immense quantity of all kinds of ornamental vessels. V. 10. Emptying

and devastation! and the heart has melted, and trembling of the knees, and labour pain in all loins, and the countenance of every one withdraws its ruddiness.”

Nineveh is compared to a pool, not merely with reference to the multitude of men who had gathered together there, but, as water is everywhere an element of life, also with reference to the wealth and prosperity which accrued to this imperial city out of the streaming together of so many men and so many different peoples. Compare Jer. 51:13, where Babel is addressed as “Thou that dwellest on many waters, art rich in many treasures.” מַיִם הִיא, since the days that she exists. אֲשֶׁר הִיא = הִיא, the relation being indicated by the construct state; מִן הַיָּם in Isa. 18: 2 is different. *But they flee*. The subject to נָסִיִּם is not the waters, although *nūs* is applied to water in Psa. 104: 7, but, as what follows shows, the masses of men who are represented as water. These flee away without being stopped by the cry “Stand ye” (i.e., remain), or even paying any attention to it. *Hiphnâh*, lit., “to turn the back” (‘*ōreph*, Jer. 48:39), to flee, but when applied to a person already fleeing, to turn round (cf. Jer. 46: 5). In v. 9 the conquerors are summoned to plunder, not by their generals, but by God, who speaks through the prophet. The fact is hereby indicated, “that this does not happen by chance, but because God determines to avenge the injuries inflicted upon His people” (Calvin). With אֵין קָצָה the prophecy passes into a simple description. There is no end *latt<sup>e</sup>khūnâh*, to the furnishing with treasures. *T<sup>e</sup>khūnâh*, from *kūn*, not from *tākhan*, lit., the setting up, the erection of a building (Eze. 43:11); here the furnishing of Nineveh as the dwelling-place of the rulers of the world, whilst in Job. 23: 3 it is applied to the place where the throne of God has been established. In בָּבֶד the לְ might be thought of as still continuing in force (Ewald, Hitzig), but it answers better to the liveliness of the description to take בָּבֶד as beginning a fresh sentence. בָּבֶד written defectively, as in Gen. 31: 1: glory, equivalent to the great amount of the wealth, as in Genesis (*l.c.*). *K<sup>e</sup>lê chemdâh*, gold and silver vessels and jewels, as in Hos. 13:15. That there were immense treasures of the precious metals and of costly vessels treasured up in Nineveh, may be inferred with certainty from the accounts of ancient writers, which border on the fabulous. <sup>15</sup>

Of all these treasures nothing was left but desolate emptiness. This is expressed by the combination of three synonymous words. *Būqâh* and *m<sup>e</sup>bhūqâh* are substantive formations from *būq* = *bâqaq*, to empty out, and are combined to strengthen the idea, like similar combinations in Zep. 1:15, Eze. 33:29, and Isa. 29: 2ff. *M<sup>e</sup>bhullâqâh* is a synonymous noun formed from the participle *pual*, and signifying devastation (cf. Isa. 24: 1, where even *bâlaq* is combined with *bâqaq*). In v. 11b the horror of the vanquished at the total devastation of Nineveh is described, also in short substantive clauses: “melted heart” (*nâmēs* is a participle), i.e., perfect despondency (see Isa. 13: 7; Jos. 7: 5); trembling of

the knees, so that from terror men can hardly keep upon their feet (*piq* for *pūq*; it only occurs here). *Chalchâlâh* formed by reduplication from *chil*: spasmodic pains in all loins, like the labour pains of women in childbirth (cf. Isa. 21: 3). Lastly, the faces of all turning pale (see at Joe. 2: 6).

**Nah. 2:11-13.** Thus will the mighty city be destroyed, with its men of war and booty.

V. 11. “Where is the dwelling of the lions and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion walked, the lioness, the lion’s whelp, and no one frightened? V. 12. The lion robbing for the need of his young ones, and strangling for his lionesses, and he filled his dens with prey, and his dwelling-places with spoil. V. 13. Behold, O come to thee, is the saying of Jehovah of hosts, and I cause her chariots to turn in smoke, and thy young lions the sword devours; and I cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall be heard no more.”

The prophet, beholding the destruction in spirit as having already taken place, looks round for the site on which the mighty city once stood, and sees it no more. This is the meaning of the question in v. 11. He describes it as the dwelling-place of lions. The point of comparison is the predatory lust of its rulers and their warriors, who crushed the nations like lions, plundering their treasures, and bringing them together in Nineveh. To fill up the picture, the epithets applied to the lions are grouped together according to the difference of sex and age. אַרְיָה is the full-grown male lion; לְבִיָּא, the lioness; כַּפִּיר, the young lion, though old enough to go in search of prey; גִּנּוּר אַרְיָה, *catulus leonis*, the lion’s whelp, which cannot yet seek prey for itself. וּמְרֻעָה הוּא, lit., “and a feeding-place is it,” sc. the dwelling-place (מְעוֹן הוּא pointing back to מְעוֹן) in this sense: “Where is the dwelling-place which was also a feeding-place for the young lions?” By the apposition the thought is expressed, that the city of lions was not only a resting-place, but also afforded a comfortable living. אֲשֶׁר is to be taken in connection with the following שָׁם: in the very place where; and *hâlakh* signifies simply to walk, to walk about, not “to take exercise,” in which case the *kal* would stand for *piel*. The more precise definition follows in מְחַרְרֵד [אֵין], without any one terrifying, hence in perfect rest and security, and undisturbed might (cf. Mic. 4: 4; Lev. 26: 6; Deu. 28:26, etc.). Under the same figure v. 12 describes the tyranny and predatory lust of the Assyrians in their wars. This description is subordinate in sense to the leading thought, or to the question contained in the previous verse. Where is the city now, into which the Assyrians swept together the booty of the peoples and kingdoms which they had destroyed? In form, however, the verse is attached poetically in loose apposition to v. 12*b*. The lion, as king of the beasts, is a very fitting emblem of the kings or rulers of Assyria. The lionesses and young lions are the citizens of Nineveh and of the province of Assyria, the tribe-land of the imperial monarchy

of Assyria, and not the queens and princes, as the Chaldee explains it. *Gōrōth* with the *o* -inflection for *gūrōth*, as in Jer. 51:38. *Chōrīm*, holes for hiding-places, or caves, not only applies to the robbers, in which character the Assyrians are exhibited through the figure of the lion (Hitzig), but also to the lions, which carry their prey into caves (cf. Bochart, *Hieroz.* i. 737). This destruction of Nineveh will assuredly take place; for Jehovah the Almighty God has proclaimed it, and He will fulfil His word. The word of God in v. 14 stamps the foregoing threat with the seal of confirmation. הִנְנִי אֵלַיִךְ, behold I (will) to thee (Nineveh). We have not to supply אָבוֹא here, but simply the *verb. copul.*, which is always omitted in such sentences. The relation of the subject to the object is expressed by אֵל (cf. Nah. 3: 5; Jer. 51:25). הִבְאֲרַתִּי בְעָשָׁן, I burn into smoke, i.e., so that it vanishes into smoke (cf. Ps. 37:20). רֶכְבָּהָ, her war-chariots, stands synecdochically for the whole of the apparatus of war (Calvin). The suffix in the third person must not be altered; it may easily be explained from the poetical variation of prophetic announcement and direct address. The young lions are the warriors; the echo of the figure in the previous verse still lingers in this figure, as well as in מַרְפֵּךְ. The last clause expresses the complete destruction of the imperial might of Assyria. The messengers of Nineveh are partly heralds, as the carriers of the king's commands; partly halberdiers, or delegates who fulfilled the ruler's commands (cf. 1Ki. 19: 2; 2Ki. 19:23). The suffix in מְלֹאֲכָבָה is in a lengthened form, on account of the tone at the end of the section, analogous to אֲתָכָה in Exo. 29:35, and is not to be regarded as an Aramaeism or a dialectical variation (Ewald, § 258, *a*). The *tsere* of the last syllable is occasioned by the previous *tsere*. Jerome has summed up the meaning very well as follows: "Thou wilt never lay countries waste any more, nor exact tribute, nor will thy messengers be heard throughout thy provinces." (On the last clause, see Eze. 19: 9.)

## Nineveh's Sins And Inevitable Destruction — Ch. 3

**Nah. 3.** The announcement of the destruction awaiting Nineveh is confirmed by the proof, that this imperial city has brought this fate upon itself by its sins and crimes (vv. 1-7), and will no more be able to avert it than the Egyptian No-Amon was (vv. 8-13), but that, in spite of all its resources, it will be brought to a terrible end (vv. 14-19).

**Nah. 3: 1-7.** The city of blood will have the shame, which it has inflicted upon the nations, repaid to it by a terrible massacre. The prophet announces this with the woe which opens the last section of this threatening prophecy.

V. 1. "Woe to the city of blood! She all full of deceit and murder, the prey departs not."

‘*Ir dāmīm*, city of drops of blood, i.e., of blood shed, or of murders. This predicate is explained in the following clauses: she all full of lying and murder.

*Cachash* and *pereq* are asyndeton, and accusatives dependent upon מְלֹאָה.

*Cachash*, lying and deceit: this is correctly explained by Abarbanel and Strauss as referring to the fact that “she deceived the nations with vain promises of help and protection.” *Pereq*, tearing in pieces for murder, — a figure taken from the lion, which tears its prey in pieces (Psa. 7: 3). לֹא יָמִישׁ, the prey does not depart, never fails. *Mūsh*: in the *hiphil* here, used intransitively, “to depart,” as in Exo. 13:22, Psa. 55:12, and not in a transitive sense, “to cause to depart,” to let go; for if ‘*ir* (the city) were the subject, we should have *tāmish*.

**Nah. 3: 2-4.** This threat is explained in vv. 2ff., by a description of the manner in which a hostile army enters Nineveh and fills the city with corpses.

V. 2. “The cracking of whips, and noise of the rattling of wheels, and the horse in galloping, and chariots flying high. V. 3. Riders dashing along, and flame of the sword, and flashing of the lance, and multitude of slain men and mass of dead men, and no end of corpses; they stumble over their corpses. V. 4. For the multitude of the whoredoms of the harlot, the graceful one, the mistress of witchcrafts, who sells nations with her whoredoms, and families with her witchcrafts.”

Nah. sees in spirit the hostile army bursting upon Nineveh. He hears the noise, i.e., the cracking of the whips of the charioteers, and the rattling (*ra’ash*) of the chariot-wheels, sees horses and chariots driving along (*dāhar*, to hunt, cf. Jud. 5:22; *riqqēd*, to jump, applied to the springing up of the chariots as they drive quickly along over a rugged road), dashing riders (*ma’āleh*, lit., to cause to ascend, sc. the horse, i.e., to make it prance, by driving the spur into its side to accelerate its speed), flaming swords, and flashing lances. As these words are well adapted to depict the attack, so are those which follow to describe the consequence or effect of the attack. Slain men, fallen men in abundance, and so many corpses, that one cannot help stumbling or falling over them. כָּבֵד, the heavy multitude. The *chethib* יִכְשְׁלוּ is to be read יִכְשְׁלוּ (*niphal*), in the sense of stumbling, as in Nah. 2: 6. The *keri* וְיִכְשְׁלוּ is unsuitable, as the sentence does not express any progress, but simply exhibits the infinite number of the corpses (Hitzig). גְּוִיָּתָם, their (the slain men’s) corpses. This happens to the city of sins because of the multitude of its whoredoms. Nineveh is called *Zōnâh*, and its conduct *z<sup>e</sup>nūnīm*, not because it had fallen away from the living God and pursued idolatry, for there is nothing about idolatry either here or in what follows; nor because of its commercial intercourse, in which case the commerce of Nineveh would appear here under the perfectly new figure of love-making with other nations (Ewald), for commercial intercourse as such is not love-making; but the love-making, with its parallel “witchcrafts” (*k<sup>e</sup>shâphīm*), denotes “the treacherous friendship and crafty politics with which the coquette

in her search for conquests ensnared the smaller states” (Hitzig, after Abarbanel, Calvin, J. H. Michaelis, and others). This policy is called whoring or love-making, “inasmuch as it was that selfishness which wraps itself up in the dress of love, and under the appearance of love seeks simply the gratification of its own lust” (Hengstenberg on the Rev.). The *zōnâh* is described still more minutely as **טוֹבַת הַן**, beautiful with grace. This refers to the splendour and brilliancy of Nineveh, by which this city dazzled and ensnared the nations, like a graceful coquette. *Ba ʿălath kʿshâphîm*, devoted to witchcrafts, mistress of them. *Kʿshâphîm* (witchcrafts) connected with *zʿnūnim*, as in 2Ki. 9:22, are “the secret wiles, which, like magical arts, do not come to the light in themselves, but only in their effects” (Hitzig). **מָכַר**, to sell nations, i.e., to rob them of liberty and bring them into slavery, to make them tributary, as in Deu. 32:30, Jud. 2:14; 3: 8, etc. (not = **כָּמַר** from **כָּבַר**, to entangle: Hitzig). **בְּזוֹנוֹתָהּ**, with (not for) their whoredoms. *Mishpâchōth*, families, synonymous with **אֲמִים**, are smaller peoples or tribes (cf. Jer. 25: 9; Eze. 20:32).

**Nah. 3: 5-7.** The Lord will plunge Nineveh into shameful misery in consequence.

V. 5. “Behold, I come to thee, is the saying of Jehovah of hosts; and uncover thy skirts over thy face, and let nations see thy nakedness, and kingdoms thy shame. V. 6. And cast horrible things upon thee, and shame thee, and make thee a gazing-stock. V. 7. And it comes to pass, every one who sees thee will flee before thee, and say, Is Nineveh laid waste? Who will bewail her? whence do I seek comforters for thee?”

V. 5.a as in Nah. 2:13a. The punishment of Nineveh will correspond to her conduct. Her coquetry shall be repaid to her by the uncovering of her nakedness before the nations (cf. Jer. 13:26; Isa. 47: 3; Hos. 2: 5). *Gillâh*, to uncover. *Shūlim*, *fimbriae*, the skirts, borders, or lower end of the long sweeping dress (cf. Exo. 28:33, 34; Isa. 6: 1). **אֵל פְּנֵיךָ**, over thy countenance, so that the train when lifted up is drawn over the face. **מֵעֶרְהָ**, a contraction of **מֵעֶרְהָ**, from **עֶרְהָ**, signifies in 1Ki. 7:36 an empty space, here nakedness or shame equivalent to **עֶרְהָ**. This thought is carried out still further in literal terms in vv. 6, 7. *Shiqqutsîm*, objects of abhorrence, is used most frequently of idols; but here it is used in a more general sense for unclean or repulsive things, dirt and filth. Throwing dirt upon any one is a figurative expression for the most ignominious treatment or greatest contempt. *Nibbēl*, to treat contemptuously, not with words, as in Mic. 7: 6, but with deeds, equivalent to insult or abuse (cf. Jer. 14:21). To make it **בְּרֵאָה**, the object of sight, i.e., to give up to open shame, *παραδειγματίζειν* (Mat. 1:19). **רֵאָה**, a pausal form of **רָאָה**, the seeing, here the spectacle, like *θέατρον* in 1Co. 4: 9. This is evident from v. 7, where



רָאָה contains a play upon רָאָה. Every one who looks at her will flee from her as an object of disgust. שָׁדָדָה, a rare form of the *pual* for שָׁדָדָה (for the fact, compare Jer. 48:20). The last two clauses express the thought that no one will take pity upon the devastated city, because its fate is so well deserved; compare Isa. 51:19, where the same words are used of Jerusalem. Nineveh will not be able to protect herself from destruction even by her great power. The prophet wrests this vain hope away from her by pointing in vv. 8ff. to the fall of the mighty Thebes in Egypt.

**Nah. 3: 8-10.** Nineveh will share the fate of No-Ammon. —

V. 8. “Art thou better than No-Amon, that sat by rivers, waters round about her, whose bulwark was the sea, her wall of sea? V. 9. Ethiopians and Egyptians were (her) strong men, there is no end; Phut and Libyans were for thy help. V. 10. She also has gone to transportation, into captivity; her children were also dashed in pieces at the corners of all roads; upon her nobles they cast the lot, and all her great men were bound in chains.”

הַתִּימְבִי for הַתִּימְבִי, for the sake of euphony, the imperfect *kal* of תִּמְבִּי, to be good, used to denote prosperity in Gen. 12:13 and 40:14, is applied here to the prosperous condition of the city, which was rendered strong both by its situation and its resources. נֵא אָמוֹן, i.e., probably “dwelling (אָ) contracted from נֵא, cf. נֵאֹת) of Amon,” the sacred name of the celebrated city of *Thebes* in Upper Egypt, called in Egyptian *P-amen*, i.e., house of the god *Amun*, who had a celebrated temple there (Herod. i. 182, ii. 42; see Brugsch, *Geogr. Inschr.* i. p. 177). The Greeks called it *Διὸς πόλις*, generally with the predicate *ἡ μεγάλη* (Diod. Sic. i. 45), or from the profane name of the city, which was *Apet* according to Brugsch (possibly a throne, seat, or bank), and with the feminine article prefixed, *Tapet*, or *Tape*, or *Tepe*, *Θήβη*, generally used in the plural *Θήβαι*. This strong royal city, which was described even by Homer (*Il.* ix. 383) as *ἑκατόμυλος*, and in which the Pharaohs of the 18th to the 20th dynasties, from Amosis to the last Rameses, resided, and created those works of architecture which were admired by Greeks and Romans, and the remains of which still fill the visitor with astonishment, was situated on both banks of the river Nile, which was 1500 feet in breadth at that point, and was built upon a broad plain formed by the falling back of the Libyan and Arabian mountain wall, over which there are now scattered nine larger or smaller fellah-villages, including upon the eastern bank Karnak and Luxor, and upon the western Gurnah and Medinet Abu, with their plantations of date-palms, sugar-canes, corn, etc. הַיִּשְׁבָּה בְּיַאֲרִים, who sits there, i.e., dwells quietly and securely, on the streams of the Nile. The plural יַאֲרִים refers to the Nile with its canals, which surrounded the city, as we may see from what follows: “water round

about her.” אֲשֶׁר-חֵיל, not which is a fortress of the sea (Hitzig), but whose bulwark is sea. חֵיל (for חֵילָה) does not mean the fortified place (Hitzig), but the fortification, bulwark, applied primarily to the moats of a fortification, with the wall belonging to it; then, in the broader sense, the defence of a city in distinction from the actual wall (cf. Isa. 26: 1; Lam. 2: 8). מִיָּם, consisting of sea is its wall, i.e., its wall is formed of sea. Great rivers are frequently called *yâm*, sea, in rhetorical and poetical diction: for example, the Euphrates in Isa. 27: 1, Jer. 51:36; and the Nile in Isa. 18: 2; 19: 5, Job. 41:23. The Nile is still called by the Beduins *bahr*, i.e., sea, and when it overflows it really resembles a sea.

To the natural strength of Thebes there was also added the strength of the warlike nations at her command. *Cush*, i.e., Ethiopians in the stricter sense, and *Mitsraim*, Egyptians, the two tribes descended from Ham, according to Gen. 10: 6, who formed the Egyptian kingdom before the fall of Thebes, and under the 25th (Ethiopian) dynasty. עֲצָמָה, as in Isa. 40:29; 47: 9, for עֲצָם, strength; it is written without any suffix, which may easily be supplied from the context. The corresponding words to עֲצָמָה in the parallel clause are קֶצֶה וְאֵין (with *Vav cop.*): Egyptians, as for them there is no number; equivalent to an innumerable multitude. To these there were to be added the auxiliary tribes: *Put*, i.e., the Libyans in the broader sense, who had spread themselves out over the northern part of Africa as far as Mauritania (see at Gen. 10: 6); and *Lubim* = *L<sup>o</sup>hâbhîm*, the Libyans in the narrower sense, probably the *Libyaegyptii* of the ancients (see at Gen. 10:13). בְּעֶזְרָתָךְ (cf. Psa. 35: 2) Nah. addresses No-Amon itself, to give greater life to the description. Notwithstanding all this might, No-Amon had to wander into captivity. *Laggôlâh* and *basshebhî* are not tautological. *Laggôlâh*, for emigration, is strengthened by *basshebhî* into captivity. The perfect הִלָּכָה is obviously not to be taken prophetically. The very antithesis of גַּם-אֵת הַתְּשֻׁבָרִי and גַּם-הָיָא הִלָּכָה (v. 11) shows to itself that הִלָּכָה refers to the past, as תְּשֻׁבָרִי does to the future; yea, the facts themselves require that Nah. should be understood as pointing to the fate which the powerful city of Thebes had already experienced. For it must be an event that has already occurred, and not something still in the future, which he holds up before Nineveh as a mirror of the fate that is awaiting it. The clauses which follow depict the cruelties that were generally associated with the taking of an enemy's cities. For עֲלֵלֶיהָ וְגו', see Hos. 14: 1, Isa. 13:16, and 2Ki. 8:12; and for יָדוּ גֹזְרֵל, Joe. 4: 3 and Ob. 11. *Nikhbaddim*, *nobiles*; cf. Isa. 23: 8, 9. *G<sup>o</sup>dôlim*, *magnates*; cf. Jon. 3: 7. It must be borne in mind, however, that the words only refer to cruelties connected with the conquest and carrying away of the inhabitants, and not to the destruction of No-Amon.

We have no express historical account of this occurrence; but there is hardly any doubt that, after the conquest of Ashdod, *Sargon* the king of Assyria organized an expedition against Egypt and Ethiopia, conquered No-Amon, the residence of the Pharaohs at that time, and, as Isaiah prophesied (Isa. 20: 3, 4), carried the prisoners of Egypt and Ethiopia into exile. According to the Assyrian researches and their most recent results (vid., Spiegel's *Nineveh and Assyria* in Herzog's *Cyclopaedia*), the king Sargon mentioned in Isa. 20: 1 is not the same person as Shalmaneser, as I assumed in my commentary on 2Ki. 17: 3, but his successor, and the predecessor of Sennacherib, who ascended the throne during the siege of Samaria, and conquered that city in the first year of his reign, leading 27,280 persons into captivity, and appointing a vicegerent over the country of the ten tribes. In Assyrian *Sargon* is called *Sar Kin*, i.e., essentially a king. He was the builder of the palace at Khorsabad, which is so rich in monuments; and, according to the inscriptions, he carried on wars in Susiana, Babylon, the borders of Egypt, Melitene, Southern Armenia, Kurdistan, and Media; and in all his expeditions he resorted to the removal of the people in great numbers, as one means of securing the lasting subjugation of the lands (see Spiegel, *l.c.* p. 224). In the great inscription in the palace-halls of Khorsabad, Sargon boasts immediately after the conquest of Samaria of a victorious conflict with Pharaoh Sebech at Raphia, in consequence of which the latter became tributary, and also of the dethroning of the rebellious king of Ashdod; and still further, that after another king of Ashdod, who had been chosen by the people, had fled to Egypt, he besieged Ashdod with all his army, and took it. Then follows a difficult and mutilated passage, in which Rawlinson (*Five Great Monarchies*, ii. 416) and Oppert (*Les Sargonides*, pp. 22, 26, 27) find an account of the complete subjugation of Sebech (see Delitzsch on *Isaiah*, at Isa. 20: 5, 6). There is apparently a confirmation of this in the monuments recording the deeds of Esarhaddon's successor, whose name is read *Assur-bani-pal*, according to which that king carried on tedious wars in Egypt against Tirhaka, who had conquered Memphis, Thebes, and sundry other Egyptian cities during the illness of Esarhaddon, and according to his own account, succeeded at length in completely overcoming him, and returned home with rich booty, having first of all taken hostages for future good behaviour (see Spiegel, p. 225). If these inscriptions have been read correctly, it follows from them that from the reign of Sargon the Assyrians made attempts to subjugate Egypt, and were partially successful, though they could not maintain their conquests. The struggle between Assyria and Egypt for supremacy in Hither Asia may also be inferred from the brief notices in the Old Testament (2Ki. 17: 4) concerning the help which the Israelitish king Hosea expected from So the king of Egypt, and also concerning the advance of Tirhaka against Sennacherib. <sup>16</sup>

**Nah. 3:11-13.** The same, or rather a worse fate than No-Amon suffered, is now awaiting Nineveh.

V. 11. "Thou also wilt be drunken, shalt be hidden; thou also wilt seek for a refuge from the enemy. V. 12. All thy citadels are fig-trees with early figs; if they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. V. 13. Behold thy people, women in the midst of thee; the gates of thy land are thrown quite open to thine enemies; fire consumes thy bolts."

נִסְתָּרָה corresponds to נִסְתָּרָה in v. 10: as she, so also thou. "The fate of No-Amon is a prophecy of thine own" (Hitzig). תִּשְׁכָּרִי, thou wilt be drunken, viz., from the goblet of divine wrath, as at Oba. 1:16. תִּהְיֶינָה נִעְלָמָה might mean, "thou wilt be hiding thyself;" but although this might suit what follows, it does not agree with תִּשְׁכָּרִי, since an intoxicated person is not in the habit of hiding himself. Moreover, נִעְלָמָה always means "hidden," *occultus*; so that Calvin's interpretation is the correct one: "Thou wilt vanish away as if thou hadst never been; the Hebrews frequently using the expression being hidden for being reduced to nothing." This is favoured by a comparison both with Nah. 1: 8 and 2:12, and also with the parallel passage in Oba. 1:16, "They will drink, and be as if they had not been." This is carried out still further in what follows: "Thou wilt seek refuge from the enemy," i.e., in this connection, seek it in vain, or without finding it; not, "Thou wilt surely demand salvation from the enemy by surrender" (Strauss), for מִאֲוִיבֵי does not belong to תִּבְקָשִׁי, but to מִעוֹ (cf. Isa. 25: 4). All the fortifications of Nineveh are like fig-trees with early figs (עֵץ in the sense of subordination, as in Son. 4:13), which fall into the mouth of the eater when the trees are shaken. The *tertium compar.* is the facility with which the castles will be taken and destroyed by the enemy assaulting them (cf. Isa. 28: 4). We must not extend the comparison so far, however, as to take the figs as representing cowardly warriors, as Hitzig does. Even in v. 13a, where the people are compared to women, the point of comparison is not the cowardliness of the warriors, but the weakness and inability to offer any successful resistance into which the nation of the Assyrians, which was at other times so warlike, would be reduced through the force of the divine judgment inflicted upon Nineveh (compare Isa. 19:16; Jer. 50:37; 51:30). לְאִיבֹדֶיךָ belongs to what follows, and is placed first, and pointed with *zakeph-katon* for the sake of emphasis. The gates of the land are the approaches to it, the passes leading into it, which were no doubt provided with castles. Tuch (p. 35) refers to the mountains on the north, which Pliny calls impassable. The bolts of these gates are the castles, through which the approaches were closed. Jeremiah transfers to Babel what is here said of Nineveh (see Jer. 51:30).

**Nah. 3:14-19.** In conclusion, the prophet takes away from the city so heavily laden with guilt the last prop to its hope, — namely, reliance upon its fortifications, and the numerical strength of its population. —

V. 14. *“Draw thyself water for the siege! Make thy castles strong! tread in the mire, and stamp in the clay! prepare the brick-kiln! V. 15. There will the fire devour thee, the sword destroy thee, devour thee like the lickers. Be in great multitude like the lickers, be in great multitude like the locusts? V. 16. Thou hast made thy merchants more than the star so heaven; the licker enters to plunder, and flies away. V. 17. Thy levied ones are like the locusts, and thy men like an army of grasshoppers which encamp in the hedges in the day of frost; if the sun rises, they are off, and men know not their place: where are they?”*

Water of the siege is the drinking water necessary for a long-continued siege. Nineveh is to provide itself with this, because the siege will last a long while. It is also to improve the fortifications (*chizzēq* as in 2Ki. 12: 8, 13). This is then depicted still more fully. *Tit* and *chōmer* are used synonymously here, as in Isa. 41:25. *Tit*, lit., dirt, slime, then clay and potter’s clay (Isa. *l.c.*). *Chōmer*, clay or mortar (Gen. 11: 3), also dirt of the streets (Isa. 10: 6, compared with Mic. 7:10). **חֲזִיזִיק**, to make firm, or strong, applied to the restoration of buildings in Neh. 5:16 and Eze. 27: 9, 27; here to restore, or to put in order, the brick-kiln (*malbēn*, a denom. from *lʿbhēnāh*, a brick), for the purpose of burning bricks. The Assyrians built with bricks sometimes burnt, sometimes unburnt, and merely dried in the sun. Both kinds are met with on the Assyrian monuments (see Layard, vol. ii. p. 36ff.). This appeal, however, is simply a rhetorical turn for the thought that a severe and tedious siege is awaiting Nineveh. This siege will end in the destruction of the great and populous city. **אֶשׁ**, there, sc. in these fortifications of thine, will fire consume thee; fire will destroy the city with its buildings, and the sword destroy the inhabitants. The destruction of Nineveh by fire is related by ancient writers (Herod. 1:106, 185; Diod. Sic. 2:25-28; Athen. xii. p. 529), and also confirmed by the ruins (cf. Str. *ad h. l.*). It devours thee like the locust. The subject is not fire *or* sword, either one or the other, but rather both embraced in one. **בַּיֵּלֶק**, like the *licker*; *yeleq*, a poetical epithet applied to the locust (see at Joe. 1: 4), is the nominative, not the accusative, as Calvin, Grotius, Ewald, and Hitzig suppose. For the locusts are not devoured by the fire or the sword, but it is they who devour the vegetables and green of the fields, so that they are everywhere used as a symbol of devastation and destruction. It is true that in the following sentences the locusts are used figuratively for the Assyrians, or the inhabitants of Nineveh; but it is also by no means a rare thing for prophets to give a new turn and application to a figure or simile. The thought is this: fire and sword will devour Nineveh and its inhabitants like the all-consuming locusts, even though the city itself, with its mass of houses and people, should resemble an enormous swarm

of locusts. **הִתְכַבֵּד** may be either an inf. abs. used instead of the imperative, or the imperative itself. The latter seems the more simple; and the use of the masculine may be explained on the assumption that the prophet had the people floating before his mind, whereas in **הִתְכַבְּדִי** he was thinking of the city. *Hithkabbēd*, to show itself heavy by virtue of the large multitude; similar to **כָּבַד** in Nah. 2:10 (cf. **כָּבַד** in Gen. 13: 2, Exo. 8:20, etc.).

The comparison to a swarm of locusts is carried still further in vv. 16 and 17, and that so that v. 16 explains the **אֲכַלְךָ בַיֶּלֶק** in v. 15. Nineveh has multiplied its traders or merchants, even more than the stars of heaven, i.e., to an innumerable multitude. The *yeleq*, i.e., the army of the enemy, bursts in and plunders. That Nineveh was a very rich commercial city may be inferred from its position, — namely, just at the point where, according to oriental notions, the east and west meet together, and where the Tigris becomes navigable, so that it was very easy to sail from thence into the Persian Gulf; just as afterwards Mosul, which was situated opposite, became great and powerful through its widely-extended trade (see Tuch, *l.c.* p. 31ff., and Strauss, *in loc.*).<sup>17</sup>

The meaning of this verse has been differently interpreted, according to the explanation given to the verb *pāshat*. Many, following the **ὑρμῆσε** and *expansus est* of the LXX and Jerome, give it the meaning, to spread out the wing; whilst Credner (on *Joel*, p. 295), Maurer, Ewald, and Hitzig take it in the sense of undressing one's self, and understand it as relating to the shedding of the horny wing-sheaths of the young locusts. But neither the one nor the other of these explanations can be grammatically sustained. *Pāshat* never means anything else than to plunder, or to invade with plundering; not even in such passages as Hos. 7: 1, 1Ch. 14: 9 and 13, which Gesenius and Dietrich quote in support of the meaning, to spread; and the meaning forced upon it by Credner, of the shedding of the wing-sheaths by locusts, is perfectly visionary, and has merely been invented by him for the purpose of establishing his false interpretation of the different names given to the locusts in Joe. 1: 4. In the passage before us we cannot understand by the *yeleq*, which “plunders and flies away” (*pāshat vayyā'ōph*), the innumerable multitude of the merchants of Nineveh, because they were not able to fly away in crowds out of the besieged city. Moreover, the flying away of the merchants would be quite contrary to the meaning of the whole description, which does not promise deliverance from danger by flight, but threatens destruction. The *yeleq* is rather the innumerable army of the enemy, which plunders everything, and hurries away with its booty. In v. 17 the last two clauses of v. 15 are explained, and the warriors of Nineveh compared to an army of locusts. There is some difficulty caused by the two words **מְזַרְזֵד** and **מַפְסִיד**, the first of which only occurs here, and the second only once more, viz., in Jer. 51:27, where we meet with it in the

singular. That they both denote warlike companies appears to be tolerably certain; but the real meaning cannot be exactly determined. מְנַרִים with *dagesh dir.*, as for example in מְנַרִשׁ in Exo. 15:17, is probably derived from *nâzar*, to separate, and not directly from *nezer*, a diadem, or *nâzîr*, the crowned person, from which the lexicons, following Kimchi's example, have derived the meaning princes, or persons ornamented with crowns; whereas the true meaning is those levied, selected (for war), analogous to *bâchûr*, the picked or selected one, applied to the soldiery. The meaning princes or captains is at variance with the comparison to *'arbeh*, the multitude of locusts, since the number of the commanders in an army, or of the war-staff, is always a comparatively small one. And the same objection may be offered to the rendering war-chiefs or captains, which has been given to *taphsar*, and which derives only an extremely weak support from the Neo-Persian *tâwsr*, although the word might be applied to a commander-in-chief in Jer. 51:27, and does signify an angel in the Targum-Jonathan on Deu. 28:12. The different derivations are all untenable (see Ges. *Thes.* p. 554); and the attempt of Böttcher (*N. Krit. Aehrenl.* ii. pp. 209-10) to trace it to the Aramaean verb מַפַּס, *obedivit*, with the inflection מַפַּס־ for מַפַּס־, in the sense of *clientes*, vassals, is precluded by the fact that *ar* does not occur as a syllable of inflection. The word is probably Assyrian, and a technical term for soldiers of a special kind, though hitherto it has not been explained. גֹּבַב גֹּבַבִּי, locusts upon locusts, i.e., an innumerable swarm of locusts. On גֹּבַבִּי, see at Amo. 7: 1; and on the repetition of the same word to express the idea of the superlative, see the comm. on 2Ki. 19:23 (and Ges. § 108, 4). *Yôm qârâh*, day (or time) of cold, is either the night, which is generally very cold in the East, or the winter-time. To the latter explanation it may be objected, that locusts do not take refuge in walls or hedges during the winter; whilst the expression *yôm*, *day*, for night, may be pleaded against the former. We must therefore take the word as relating to certain cold days, on which the sky is covered with clouds, so that the sun cannot break through, and *zârach* as denoting not the rising of the sun, but its shining or breaking through. The wings of locusts become stiffened in the cold; but as soon as the warm rays of the sun break through the clouds, they recover their animation and fly away. *Nôdad*, (*poal*), has flown away, viz., the Assyrian army, which is compared to a swarm of locusts, so that its place is known no more (cf. Psa. 103:16), i.e., has perished without leaving a trace behind. מִשָּׁסִי contracted from מִשָּׁסִי הָיָה. These words depict in the most striking manner the complete annihilation of the army on which Nineveh relied.

**Nah. 3:18-19.** Such an end will come to the Assyrian kingdom on the overthrow of Nineveh.

V. 18. "The shepherds have fallen asleep, king Asshur: thy glorious ones are lying there: thy people have scattered themselves upon the mountains, and no one gathers

*them. V. 19. No alleviation to thy fracture, thy stroke is grievous: all who hear tidings of thee clap the hand over thee: for over whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?"*

The king of Asshur addressed in v. 18 is not the last historical king of that kingdom, but a rhetorical personification of the holder of the imperial power of Assyria. His shepherds and glorious ones (*‘addirim*, as in Nah. 2: 6) are the princes and great men, upon whom the government and defence of the kingdom devolved, the royal counsellors, deputies, and generals. *Nâmū*, from *nūm*, to slumber, to sleep, is not a figurative expression for carelessness and inactivity here; for the thought that the people would be scattered, and the kingdom perish, through the carelessness of the rulers (Hitzig), neither suits the context, where the destruction of the army and the laying of the capital in ashes are predicted, nor the object of the whole prophecy, which does not threaten the fall of the kingdom through the carelessness of its rulers, but the destruction of the kingdom by a hostile army. *Nūm* denotes here, as in Psa. 76: 6, the sleep of death (cf. Psa. 13: 4; Jer. 51:39, 57: Theodoret, Hesselb., Str., and others). *Shâkhan*, a synonym of *shâkhabh*, to have lain down, to lie quietly (Jud. 5:17), used here of the rest of death. As the shepherds have fallen asleep, the flock (i.e., the Assyrian people) is scattered upon the mountains and perishes, because no one gathers it together. Being scattered upon the mountains, is easily explained from the figure of the flock (cf. Num. 27:17; 1Ki. 22:17; Zec. 13: 7), and implies destruction. The mountains are mentioned with evident reference to the fact that Nineveh is shut in towards the north by impassable mountains. *Kēhâh*, a noun formed from the adjective, the extinction of the wound (cf. Lev. 13: 6), i.e., the softening or anointing of it. *Shebher*, the fracture of a limb, is frequently applied to the collapse or destruction of a state or kingdom (e.g., Psa. 60: 4; Lam. 2:11). נָחֵלָה מַכָּתֵד, i.e., dangerously bad, incurable is the stroke which has fallen upon thee (cf. Jer. 10:19; 14:17; 30:12). Over thy destruction will all rejoice who hear thereof. שְׂמֵעַד, the tidings of thee, i.e., of that which has befallen thee. Clapping the hands is a gesture expressive of joy (cf. Psa. 47: 2; Isa. 55:12). *All*: because they all had to suffer from the malice of Asshur. רָעָה, malice, is the tyranny and cruelty which Assyria displayed towards the subjugated lands and nations.

Thus was Nineveh to perish. If we inquire now how the prophecy was fulfilled, the view already expressed by Josephus (*Ant.* x. 2), that the fall of the Assyrian empire commenced with the overthrow of Sennacherib in Judah, is not confirmed by the results of the more recent examinations of the Assyrian monuments. For according to the inscriptions, so far as they have been correctly deciphered, Sennacherib carried out several more campaigns in Susiana and Babylonia after that disaster, whilst ancient writers also speak of an expedition of his to Cilicia. His successor, Esarhaddon, also carried on wars against the



cities of Phoenicia, against Armenia and Cilicia, attacked the Edomites, and transported some of them to Assyria, and is said to have brought a small and otherwise unknown people, the *Bikni*, into subjection; whilst we also know from the Old Testament (2Ch. 33:11) that his generals led king Manasseh in chains to Babylon. Like many of his predecessors, he built himself a palace at Kalah or Nimrud; but before the internal decorations were completely finished, it was destroyed by so fierce a fire, that the few monuments preserved have suffered very considerably. His successor is the last king of whom we have any inscriptions, with his name still legible upon them (viz., *Assur-bani-pal*). He carried on wars not only in Susiana, but also in Egypt, viz., against Tirhaka, who had conquered Memphis, Thebes, and other Egyptian cities, during the illness of Esarhaddon; also on the coast of Syria, and in Cilicia and Arabia; and completed different buildings which bear his name, including a palace in Kouyunjik, in which a room has been found with a library in it, consisting of clay tablets. Assur-bani-pal had a son, whose name was written *Asur-emid-ilin*, and who is regarded as the *Sarakos* of the ancients, under whom the Assyrian empire perished, with the conquest and destruction of Nineveh (see Spiegel in Herzog's *Cycl.*). But if, according to these testimonies, the might of the Assyrian empire was not so weakened by Sennacherib's overthrow in Judah, that any hope could be drawn from that, according to human conjecture, of the speedy destruction of that empire; the prophecy of Nah. concerning Nineveh, which was uttered in consequence of that catastrophe, cannot be taken as the production of any human combination: still less can it be taken, as Ewald supposes, as referring to "the first important siege of Nineveh, under the Median king Phraortes (Herod. i. 102)." For Herodotus says nothing about any siege of Nineveh, but simply speaks of a war between Phraortes and the Assyrians, in which the former lost his life. Nineveh was not really besieged till the time of Cyaxares (Uwakhshatra), who carried on the war with an increased army, to avenge the death of his father, and forced his way to Nineveh, to destroy that city, but was compelled, by the invasion of his own land by the Scythians, to relinquish the siege, and hasten to meet that foe (Her. i. 103). On the extension of his sway, the same Cyaxares commenced a war with the Lydian king Alyattes, which was carried on for five years with alternating success and failure on both sides, and was terminated in the sixth year by the fact, that when the two armies were standing opposite to one another, drawn up in battle array, the day suddenly darkened into night, which alarmed the armies, and rendered the kings disposed for peace. This was brought about by the mediation of the Cilician viceroy Syennesis and the Babylonian viceroy Labynetus, and sealed by the establishment of a marriage relationship between the royal families of Lydia and Media (Her. i. 74). And if this Labynetus was the same person as the Babylonian king *Nabopolassar*, which there is no reason to doubt, it was not till after the conclusion of this peace that Cyaxares formed an alliance with

Nabopolassar to make war upon Nineveh; and this alliance was strengthened by his giving his daughter Amuhea in marriage to Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar (Nabukudrossor). The combined forces of these two kings now advanced to the attack upon Nineveh, and conquered it, after a siege of three years, the Assyrian king *Saracus* burning himself in his palace as the besiegers were entering the city. This is the historical kernel of the capture and destruction of Nineveh, which may be taken as undoubted fact from the accounts of Herodotus (i. 106) and Diod. Sic. (ii. 24-28), as compared with the extract from Abydenus in Euseb. *Chron. Armen.* i. p. 54; whereas it is impossible to separate the historical portions from the legendary and in part mythical decorations contained in the elaborate account given by Diodorus (vid., M. v. Niebuhr, *Geschichte Assurs*, p. 200ff.; Duncker, *Geschichte des Alterthums*. i. p. 793ff.; and Bumüller, *Gesch. d. Alterth.* i. p. 316ff.).

The year of the conquest and destruction of Nineveh has been greatly disputed, and cannot be exactly determined. As it is certain that Nabopolassar took part in the war against Nineveh, and this is indirectly intimated even by Herodotus, who attributes the conquest of it to Cyaxares and the Medes (vid., i. 106), Nineveh must have fallen between the years 625 and 606 B.C. For according to the canon of Ptolemy, Nabopolassar was king of Babylon from 625 to 606; and this date is astronomically established by an eclipse of the moon, which took place in the fifth year of his reign, and which actually occurred in the year 621 B.C. (vid., Niebuhr, p. 47). Attempts have been made to determine the year of the taking of Nineveh, partly with reference to the termination of the Lydio-Median war, and partly from the account given by Herodotus of the twenty-eight years' duration of the Scythian rule in Asia. Starting from the fact, that the eclipse of the sun, which put an end to the war between Cyaxares and Alyattes, took place, according to the calculation of Altmann, on the 30th September B.C. 610 (see Ideler, *Handbuch der Chronologie*, i. p. 209ff.), M. v. Niebuhr (pp. 197-8) has assumed that, at the same time as the mediation of peace between the Lydians and Medes, an alliance was formed between Cyaxares and Nabopolassar for the destruction of Nineveh; and as this treaty could not possibly be kept secret, the war against Assyria was commenced at once, according to agreement, with their united forces. But as it was impossible to carry out extensive operations in winter, the siege of Nineveh may not have commenced till the spring of 609; and as it lasted three years according to Ctesias, the capture may not have been effected before the spring of 606 B.C. It is true that this combination is apparently confirmed by the fact, that during that time the Egyptian king Necho forced his way into Palestine and Syria, and after subduing all Syria, advanced to the Euphrates; since this advance of the Egyptian is most easily explained on the supposition that Nabopolassar was so occupied with the war against Nineveh, that he could not offer any resistance to

the enterprise of Necho. And the statement in 2Ki. 23:29, that Necho had come up to fight against the king of Asshur on the Euphrates, appears to favour the conclusion, that at that time (i.e., in the year of Josiah's death, 610 B.C.) the Assyrian empire was not yet destroyed. Nevertheless there are serious objections to this combination. In the first place, there is the double difficulty, that Cyaxares would hardly have been in condition to undertake the war against Nineveh in alliance with Nabopolassar, directly after the conclusion of peace with Alyattes, especially after he had carried on a war for five years, without being able to defeat his enemy; and secondly, that even Nabopolassar, after a fierce three years' conflict with Nineveh, the conquest of which was only effected in consequence of the wall of the city having been thrown down for the length of twenty stadia, would hardly possess the power to take the field at once against Pharaoh Necho, who had advanced as far as the Euphrates, and not only defeat him at Carchemish, but pursue him to the frontier of Egypt, and wrest from him all the conquests that he had effected, as would necessarily be the case, since the battle at Carchemish was fought in the year 606; and the pursuit of the defeated foe by Nebuchadnezzar, to whom his father had transferred the command of the army because of his own age and infirmity, even to the very border of Egypt, is so distinctly attested by the biblical accounts (2Ki. 24: 1 and 7; Jer. 46: 2), and by the testimony of Berosus in Josephus (*Ant.* x. 11, 1, and *c. Ap.* i. 19), that these occurrences are placed beyond the reach of doubt (see comm. on 2Ki. 24: 1). These difficulties would not indeed be sufficient in themselves to overthrow the combination mentioned, provided that the year 610 could be fixed upon with certainty as the time when the Lydian-Median war was brought to a close. But that is not the case; and this circumstance is decisive. The eclipse of the sun, which alarmed Cyaxares and Alyattes, and made them disposed for peace, must have been total, or nearly total, in Central Asia and Cappadocia, to produce the effect described. But it has been proved by exact astronomical calculations, that on the 30th September 610 B.C., the shadow of the moon did not fall upon those portions of Asia Minor, whereas it did so on the 18th May 622, after eight o'clock in the morning, and on the 28th May 585 (*vid.*, Bumüll. p. 315, and M. v. Niebuhr, pp. 48, 49). Of these two dates the latter cannot come into consideration at all, because Cyaxares only reigned till the year 594; and therefore, provided that peace had not been concluded with Alyattes before 595, he would not have been able to carry on the war with Nineveh and conquer that city. On the other hand, there is no valid objection that can be offered to our transferring the conclusion of peace with the Lydian king to the year 622 B.C. Since, for example, Cyaxares became king as early as the year 634, he might commence the war with the Lydians as early as the year 627 or 628; and inasmuch as Nabopolassar was king of Babylon from 625 to 605, he might very well help to bring about the peace between Cyaxares and Alyattes in the year 622. In this

way we obtain the whole space between 622 and 605 B.C. for the war with Nineveh; so that the city may have been taken and destroyed as early as the years 615-610.

Even the twenty-eight years' duration of the Scythian supremacy in Asia, which is recorded by Herodotus (i. 104, 106, cf. iv. 1), cannot be adduced as a well-founded objection. For if the Scythians invaded Media in the year 633, so as to compel Cyaxares to relinquish the siege of Nineveh, and if their rule in Upper Asia lasted for twenty-eight years, the expedition against Nineveh, which led to the fall of that city, cannot have taken place after the expulsion of the Scythians in the year 605, because the Assyrian empire had passed into the hands of the Chaldaeans before that time, and Nebuchadnezzar had already defeated Necho on the Euphrates, and was standing at the frontier of Egypt, when he received the intelligence of his father's death, which led him to return with all speed to Babylon. There is no other alternative left, therefore, than either to assume, as M. v. Niebuhr does (pp. 119, 120), that the war of Cyaxares with the Lydians, and also the last war against Nineveh, and probably also the capture of Nineveh, and the greatest portion of the Median conquests between Ararat and Halys, fell within the period of the Scythian sway, so that Cyaxares extended his power as a vassal of the Scythian Great Khan as soon as he had recovered from the first blow received from these wild hordes, inasmuch as that sovereign allowed his dependent to do just as he liked, provided that he paid the tribute, and did not disturb the hordes in their pasture grounds; or else to suppose that Cyaxares drove out the Scythian hordes from Media at a much earlier period, and liberated his own country from their sway; in which case the twenty-eight years of Herodotus would not indicate the period of their sway over Media and Upper Asia, but simply the length of time that they remained in Hither Asia generally, or the period that intervened between their first invasion and the complete disappearance of their hordes. If Cyaxares had driven the Scythians out of his own land at a much earlier period, he might extend his dominion even while they still kept their position in Hither Asia, and might commence the war with the Lydians as early as the year 628 or 627, especially as his wrath is said to have been kindled because Alyattes refused to deliver up to him a Scythian horde, which had first of all submitted to Cyaxares, and then fled into Lydia to Alyattes (Herod. i. 73). Now, whichever of these two combinations be the correct one, they both show that the period of the war commenced by Cyaxares against Nineveh, in alliance with Nabopolassar, cannot be determined by the statement made by Herodotus with regard to the twenty-eight years of the Scythian rule in Asia; and this Scythian rule, generally, does not compel us to place the taking and destruction of Nineveh, and the dissolution of the Assyrian empire, as late as the year 605 B.C., or even later.

At this conquest Nineveh was so utterly destroyed, that, as Strabo (xvi. 1, § 3) attests, the city entirely disappeared immediately after the dissolution of the Assyrian kingdom (ἡ μὲν οὖν Νίνος πόλις ἠφανίσθη παραχρῆμα μετὰ τὴν τῶν Σύρων κατάλυσιν). When Xenophon entered the plain of Nineveh, in the year 401, on the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks, he found the ruins of two large cities, which he calls Larissa and Mespila, and by the side of the first a stone pyramid of 200 feet in height and 100 feet in breadth, upon which many of the inhabitants of the nearest villages had taken refuge, and heard from the inhabitants that it was only by a miracle that it had been possible for the Persians to conquer those cities with their strong walls (Xenoph. *Anab.* iii. 4, 7ff.). These ruined cities had been portions of the ancient Nineveh: Larissa was *Calah*; and Mespila, *Kouyunjik*. Thus Xenophon passed by the walls of Nineveh without even learning its name. Four hundred years after (according to Tacitus, *Annal.* xii. 13), a small fortress stood on this very spot, to guard the crossing of the Tigris; and the same fortress is mentioned by *Abul-Pharaj* in the thirteenth century (*Hist. Dynast.* pp. 266, 289, 353). Opposite to this, on the western side of the Tigris, Mosul had risen into one of the first cities of Asia, and the ruins of Nineveh served as quarries for the building of the new city, so that nothing remained but heaps of rubbish, which even Niebuhr took to be natural heights in the year 1766, when he was told, as he stood by the Tigris bridge, that he was in the neighbourhood of ancient Nineveh. So completely had this mighty city vanished from the face of the earth; until, in the most recent times, viz., from 1842 onwards, Botta the French consul, and the two Englishmen Layard and Rawlinson, instituted excavations in the heaps, and brought to light numerous remains of the palaces and state-buildings of the Assyrian rulers of the world. Compare the general survey of these researches, and their results, in Herm. J. C. Weissenborn's *Ninive u. sein Gebiet.*, Erfurt 1851, and 56, 4.

But if Nahum's prophecy was thus fulfilled in the destruction of Nineveh, even to the disappearance of every trace of its existence, we must not restrict it to this one historical event, but must bear in mind that, as the prophet simply saw in Nineveh the representative for the time of the power of the world in its hostility to God, so the destruction predicted to Nineveh applied to all the kingdoms of the world which have risen up against God since the destruction of Asshur, and which will still continue to do so to the end of the world.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>ft1</sup> Valerius observes on this: “They used Poenic tunics in battle, to disguise and hide the blood of their wounds, not lest the sight of it should fill them with alarm, but lest it should inspire the enemy with confidence.”
- <sup>ft2</sup> “The chariots of the Assyrians,” says Strauss, “as we see them on the monuments, glare with shining things, made either of iron or steel, battle-axes, bows, arrows, and shields, and all kinds of weapons; the horses are also ornamented with crowns and red fringes, and even the poles of the carriages are made resplendent with shining suns and moons: add to these the soldiers in armour riding in the chariots; and it could not but be the case, that when illumined by the rays of the sun above them, they would have all the appearance of flames as they flew hither and thither with great celerity.” Compare also the description of the Assyrian war-chariots given by Layard in his *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. ii. p. 348.
- <sup>ft3</sup> Not, however, the tortoise formed by the shields of the soldiers, held close together above their heads (Liv. xxxiv. 9), since these are never found upon the Assyrian monuments (vid., Layard), but a kind of battering-ram, of which there are several different kinds, either a moveable tower, with a battering-ram, consisting of a light framework, covered with basket-work, or else a framework without any tower, either with an ornamented covering, or simply covered with skins, and moving upon four or six wheels. See the description, with illustrations, in Layard’s *Nineveh*, ii. pp. 366-370, and Strauss’s commentary on this passage.
- <sup>ft4</sup> Of the different explanations that have been given of this hemistich, the supposition, which dates back as far as the Chaldee, that *huzzab* signifies the queen, or is the name of the queen (Ewald and Rückert), is destitute of any tenable foundation, and is no better than Hitzig’s fancy, that we should read **וְהַצִּבּוֹר**, “and the lizard is discovered, fetched up,” and that this “reptile” is Nineveh. The objection offered to our explanation, viz., that it would only be admissible if it were immediately followed by the *decretum divinum* in its full extent, and not merely by one portion of it, rests upon a misinterpretation of the following words, which do not contain merely a portion of the purpose of God.
- <sup>ft5</sup> For proofs, see Layard’s *Nineveh*, ii. 415ff., and Movers, *Phönizier* (iii. 1, pp. 40, 41). After quoting the statements of Ctesias, the latter observes that “these numbers are indeed fabulous; but they have their historical side,

inasmuch as in the time of Ctesias the riches of Nineveh were estimated at an infinitely greater amount than the enormous treasures accumulated in the treasuries of the Persian empire. That the latter is quite in accordance with truth, may be inferred from the fact that the conquerors of Nineveh, the Medes and Chaldaeans, of whose immense booty, in the shape of gold, silver, and other treasures, even the prophet Nah. speaks, furnished Ecbatana and Babylon with gold and silver from the booty of Nineveh to an extent unparalleled in all history.”]

<sup>ft6</sup> From the modern researches concerning ancient Egypt, not the smallest light can be obtained as to any of these things. “The Egyptologists (as J. Bumüller observes, p. 245) have hitherto failed to fill up the gaps in the history of Egypt, and have been still less successful in restoring the chronology; for hitherto we have not met with a single well-established date, which we have obtained from a monumental inscription; nor have the monuments enabled us to assign to a single Pharaoh, from the 1st to the 21st, his proper place in the years or centuries of the historical chronology.”]

<sup>ft7</sup> “*The point,*” says O. Strauss (*Nineveh and the Word of God*, Berl 1855, p. 19), “at which Nineveh was situated was certainly the culminating point of the three quarters of the globe — Europe, Asia, and Africa; and from the very earliest times it was just at the crossing of the Tigris by Nineveh that the great military and commercial roads met, which led into the heart of all the leading known lands.”