

THE BOOK OF NAHUM

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INTRODUCTION

NAHUM means “consolation” and “vengeance”; symbolizing the “consolation” in the book for God’s people, and the “vengeance” coming on their enemies. In the first chapter the two themes alternate; but as the prophet advances, vengeance on the capital of the Assyrian foe is the predominant topic. He is called “the Elkoshite” (Na 1:1), from *Elkosh*, or *Elkesi*, a village of Galilee, pointed out to JEROME [*Preface in Nahum*] as a place of note among the Jews, having traces of ancient buildings. The name *Capernaum*, that is, “village of Nahum,” seems to take its name from Nahum having resided in it, though born in Elkosh in the neighborhood. There is another Elkosh east of the Tigris, and north of Mosul, believed by Jewish pilgrims to be the birthplace and burial place of the prophet. But the book of Nahum in its allusions shows a particularity of acquaintance with Palestine (Na 1:4), and only a more general knowledge as to Nineveh (Na 2:4-6 3:2,3).

His graphic description of Sennacherib and his army (Na 1:9-12) makes it not unlikely that he was in or near Jerusalem at the time: hence the number of phrases corresponding to those of Isaiah (compare Na 1:8,9, with ^{<2108>}Isaiah 8:8 10:23; Na 2:10, with ^{<2101>}Isaiah 24:1 21:3; Na 1:15, with ^{<2510>}Isaiah 52:7). The prophecy in Na 1:14 probably refers to the murder of Sennacherib twenty years after his return from Palestine (^{<2538>}Isaiah 37:38). The date of his prophecies, thus, seems to be about the former years of Hezekiah. So JEROME thinks. He plainly writes while the Assyrian power was yet unbroken (Na 1:12 2:11-13 Na 3:15-17). The correspondence between the sentiments of Nahum and those of Isaiah and Hezekiah, as recorded in Second Kings and Isaiah, proves the likelihood of Nahum’s prophecies belonging to the time when Sennacherib was demanding the surrender of Jerusalem, and had not yet raised the siege (compare Na 1:2, etc., with ^{<1294>}2 Kings 19:14,15; Na 1:7, with ^{<1282>}2 Kings 18:22 19:19,31 ^{<4317>}2 Chronicles 32:7,8; Na 1:9,11, with ^{<1292>}2 Kings 19:22,27,28; Na 1:14, with

2 Kings 19:6,7; Na 1:15 2:1,2, with 2 Kings 19:32,33; Na 2:13, with 2 Kings 19:22,23). The historical data in the book itself are the humiliation of Israel and Judah by Assyria (Na 2:2); the invasion of Judah (Na 1:9,11); and the conquest of No-ammon, or Thebes, in Upper Egypt (Na 3:8-10). Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser had carried away Israel. The Jews were harassed by the Syrians, and impoverished by Ahaz' payments to Tiglath-pileser (2 Chronicles 28:1-27 Isaiah 7:9). Sargon, Shalmaneser's successor, after the reduction of Phoenicia by the latter, fearing lest Egypt should join Palestine against him, undertook an expedition to Africa (Isaiah 20:1-6), and took Thebes; the latter fact we know only from Nahum, but the success of the expedition in general is corroborated in Isaiah 20:1-6.

Sennacherib, Sargon's successor, made the last Assyrian attempt against Judea, ending in the destruction of his army in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah (713-710 B.C.). As Nahum refers to this in part prophetically, in part as matter of history (Na 1:9-13 2:13), he must have lived about 720-714 B.C., that is, almost a hundred years before the event foretold, namely, the overthrow of Nineveh by the joint forces of Cyaxares and Nabopolassar in the reign of Chyniladanus, 625 or 603 B.C.

The prophecy is remarkable for its unity of aim. Nahum's object was to inspire his countrymen, the Jews, with the assurance that, however alarming their position might seem, exposed to the attacks of the mighty Assyrian, who had already carried away the ten tribes, yet that not only should the Assyrian (Sennacherib) fail in his attack on Jerusalem, but Nineveh, his own capital, be taken and his empire overthrown; and this, not by an arbitrary exercise of Jehovah's power, but for the iniquities of the city and its people. His position in the canon is seventh of the minor prophets in both the Hebrew and Greek arrangement. He is seventh in point of date.

His style is clear, elegant, and forcible. Its most striking characteristic is the power of representing several phases of an idea in the briefest sentences, as in the majestic description of God in the commencement, the conquest of Nineveh, and the destruction of No-ammon [EICHORN]. DE WETTE calls attention to his variety of manner in presenting ideas, as marking great poetic talent. "Here there is something sonorous in his language there something murmuring; with both these alternates something that is soft, delicate, and melting, as the subject demands." Excepting two alleged Assyrian words (Na 3:17), *English Version*, "crowned," or *princes*, and *English Version*, "captains," or *satraps* (used by Jeremiah 51:27), the language is pure. These two, doubtless, came to be known in Judea from the intercourse with Assyria in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.

CHAPTER 1

NAHUM 1:1-15.

JEHOVAH'S ATTRIBUTES AS A JEALOUS JUDGE OF SIN, YET MERCIFUL TO HIS TRUSTING PEOPLE, SHOULD INSPIRE THEM WITH CONFIDENCE. HE WILL NOT ALLOW THE ASSYRIANS AGAIN TO ASSAIL THEM, BUT WILL DESTROY THE FOE.

1. *burden of Nineveh* — the *prophetic doom* of Nineveh. Nahum prophesied against that city a hundred fifty years after Jonah.

2. *jealous* — In this there is sternness, yet tender affection. We are jealous only of those we love: a husband, of a wife; a king, of his subjects' loyalty. God is jealous of men because He loves them. God will not bear a rival in His claims on them. His burning jealousy for His own wounded honor and their love, as much as His justice, accounts for all His fearful judgments: the flood, the destruction of Jerusalem, that of Nineveh. His jealousy will not admit of His friends being oppressed, and their enemies flourishing (compare ^{<0216>}Exodus 20:5 ^{<0462>}1 Corinthians 16:22 ^{<0712>}2 Corinthians 11:2). *Burning zeal* enters into the idea in "jealous" here (compare ^{<0251>}Numbers 25:11,13 ^{<1190>}1 Kings 19:10).

the Lord revengeth ... Lord revengeth — The repetition of the incommunicable name JEHOVAH, and of His *revenging*, gives an awful solemnity to the introduction.

furious — literally, "a master of fury." So *a master of the tongue*, that is, "eloquent." "One who, if He pleases, can most readily give effect to His fury" [GROTIUS]. Nahum has in view the provocation to fury given to God by the Assyrians, after having carried away the ten tribes, now proceeding to invade Judea under Hezekiah.

reserveth wrath for his enemies — *reserves it* against His own appointed time (^{<0319>}2 Peter 2:9). After long waiting for their repentance in vain, at length punishing them. A wrong estimate of Jehovah is formed from His suspending punishment: it is not that He is insensible or dilatory, but He reserves wrath for His own fit time. In the case of the penitent, He does not *reserve* or retain His anger (^{<0430>}Psalms 103:9 ^{<0475>}Jeremiah 3:5,12 ^{<0375>}Micah 7:18).

3. *slow to anger, and great in power* — that is, *but* great in power, so as to be able in a moment, if He pleases, to destroy the wicked. His long-suffering is not from want of power to punish (^{<1036>}Exodus 34:6,7).

not at all acquit — literally, “will not acquitting acquit,” or treat as innocent.

Lord hath his way in the whirlwind — From this to Na 1:5, inclusive, is a description of His power exhibited in the phenomena of nature, especially when He is wroth. His vengeance shall sweep away the Assyrian foe like a whirlwind (^{<3005>}Proverbs 10:25).

clouds are the dust of his feet — Large as they are, He treads on them, as a man would on the small dust; He is Lord of the clouds, and uses them as He pleases.

4. *rebuketh the sea* — as Jesus did (^{<4185>}Matthew 8:26), proving Himself God (compare ^{<2810>}Isaiah 50:2).

Bashan languisheth — through drought; ordinarily it was a region famed for its rich pasturage (compare ^{<2110>}Joel 1:10).

flower of Lebanon — *its bloom*; all that blooms so luxuriantly on Lebanon (^{<2847>}Hosea 14:7). As Bashan was famed for its pastures, Carmel for its corn fields and vineyards, so Lebanon for its forests (^{<2309>}Isaiah 33:9). There is nothing in the world so blooming that God cannot change it when He is wroth.

5. *earth is burned* — so GROTIUS. Rather, “lifts itself,” that is, “heaveth” [MAURER]: as the *Hebrew* is translated in ^{<3809>}Psalm 89:9 ^{<2810>}Hosea 13:1; compare ^{<4121>}2 Samuel 5:21, *Margin*.

6. *fury is poured out like fire* — like the liquid fire poured out of volcanoes in all directions (see ^{<3472>}Jeremiah 7:20).

rocks are thrown down — or, “are burnt asunder”; the usual effect of volcanic fire (^{<2512>}Jeremiah 51:25,56). As Hannibal burst asunder the Alpine rocks by fire to make a passage for his army [GROTIUS].

7. Here Nahum enters on his special subject, for which the previous verses have prepared the way, namely, to assure his people of safety in Jehovah under the impending attack of Sennacherib (Na 1:7), and to announce the doom of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian foe (Na 1:8). The contrast of Na 1:7,8 heightens the force.

he knoweth — recognizes as His own (^{<2835>}Hosea 13:5 ^{<4182>}Amos 3:2); and so, cares for and guards (^{<4906>}Psalm 1:6 ^{<5119>}2 Timothy 2:19).

8. *with an overrunning flood* — that is, with irresistible might which *overruns* every barrier like a flood. This image is often applied to overwhelming *armies* of invaders. Also of *calamity* in general (^{<4916>}Psalm 32:6 42:7 90:5). There is, perhaps, a special allusion to the mode of Nineveh's capture by the Medo-Babylonian army; namely, through a *flood* in the river which broke down the wall twenty furlongs (see on Na 2:6; ^{<2308>}Isaiah 8:8 ^{<2026>}Daniel 9:26 11:10,22,40).

end of the place thereof — Nineveh is personified as a queen; and “*her place*” of residence (the *Hebrew* for “*thereof*” is feminine) is *the city itself* (Na 2:8), [MAURER]. Or, He shall so utterly destroy Nineveh that its place cannot be found; Na 3:17 confirms this (compare ^{<4876>}Psalm 37:36 ^{<1285>}Daniel 2:35 ^{<6118>}Revelation 12:8 20:11).

darkness — the severest calamities.

9. *What do ye imagine against the Lord?* — abrupt address to the Assyrians. How mad is your attempt, O Assyrians, to resist so powerful a God! What can ye do against such an adversary, successful though ye have been against all other adversaries? Ye *imagine* ye have to *do* merely with mortals and with a weak people, and that so you will gain an easy victory; but you have to encounter God, the protector of His people. Parallel to ^{<2373>}Isaiah 37:23-29; compare ^{<3000>}Psalm 1:1.

he will make an utter end — The utter overthrow of Sennacherib's host, soon about to take place, is an earnest of the “utter end” of Nineveh itself.

affliction shall not rise up the second time — Judah's “affliction” caused by the invasion shall never rise again. So Na 1:12. But CALVIN takes the “affliction” to be that of *Assyria*: “There will be no need of His inflicting on you a second blow: He will make an utter end of you once for all” (^{<0482>}1 Samuel 3:12 26:8 ^{<1000>}2 Samuel 20:10). If so, this verse, in contrast to Na 1:12, will express, Affliction shall visit the Assyrian no more, in a sense very different from that in which God will afflict Judah no more. In the Assyrian's case, because the blow will be fatally final; the latter, because God will make lasting blessedness in Judah's case succeed temporary chastisement. But it seems simpler to refer “affliction” here, as in Na 1:12, to Judah; indeed *destruction*, rather than *affliction*, applies to the Assyrian.

10. *while they are folden together as thorns* — literally, “*to the same degree as thorns*” (compare ^{<1302>}1 Chronicles 4:27, *Margin*). As thorns, so folded together and entangled that they cannot be loosed asunder without trouble, are thrown by the husbandmen all in a mass into the fire, so the Assyrians shall all be given together to destruction. Compare ^{<4136>}2 Samuel 23:6,7, where also “thorns” are the image of the wicked. As this image

represents the speediness of their destruction *in a mass*, so that of “drunkards,” their rushing as it were *of their own accord* into it; for drunkards fall down without any one pushing them [KIMCHI]. CALVIN explains, *Although ye be dangerous to touch* as thorns (that is, full of rage and violence), yet the Lord can easily consume you. But “although” will hardly apply to the next clause. *English Version* and KIMCHI, therefore, are to be preferred. The comparison to drunkards is appropriate. For drunkards, though exulting and bold, are weak and easily thrown down by even a finger touching them. So the insolent self-confidence of the Assyrians shall precipitate their overthrow by God. The *Hebrew* is “soaked,” or “drunken as with their own wine.” Their drunken revelries are perhaps *alluded to*, during which the foe (according to DIODORUS SICULUS [2]) broke into their city, and Sardanapalus *burned* his palace; though the main and ultimate destruction of Nineveh referred to by Nahum was long subsequent to that under Sardanapalus.

11. The cause of Nineveh’s overthrow: Sennacherib’s plots against Judah.

come out of thee — O Nineveh. From thyself shall arise the source of thy own ruin. Thou shalt have only thyself to blame for it.

imagineth evil — Sennacherib carried out the *imaginings* of his countrymen (Na 1:9) against the Lord and His people (²¹⁹²2 Kings 19:22,23).

a wicked counsellor — literally, “a counsellor of Belial.” Belial means “without profit,” worthless, and so bad (¹²²⁵1 Samuel 25:25 ⁴⁷¹⁵2 Corinthians 6:15).

12-14. The same truths repeated as in Na 1:9-11, Jehovah here being the speaker. He addresses Judah, prophesying good to it, and evil to the Assyrian.

Though they be quiet — that is, without fear, and tranquilly secure. So *Chaldee* and CALVIN. Or, “entire,” “complete”; “Though their power be *unbroken* [MAURER], and though they be *so many, yet even so* they shall be cut down” (literally, “shorn”; as *hair shaved off closely by a razor*, ³¹²⁰Isaiah 7:20). As the Assyrian was a razor shaving others, so shall he be shaven himself. Retribution in kind. In the height of their pride and power, they shall be clean cut off. The same *Hebrew* stands for “likewise” and “yet thus.” So *many* as they are, so many shall they perish.

when he shall pass through — or, “and he shall pass away,” namely, “the wicked counsellor” (Na 1:11), Sennacherib. The change of number to the *singular* distinguishes *him* from *his host*. *They* shall be cut down, *he* shall

pass away home (⁴²⁹⁵2 Kings 19:35,36) [HENDERSON]. *English Version* is better, “they shall be cut down, “when” He (Jehovah) shall pass through,” destroying by one stroke the Assyrian host. This gives the reason why they with all their numbers and power are to be so utterly cut off. Compare “pass through,” that is, in destroying power (³³²²Ezekiel 12:12,23 ²³⁸⁸Isaiah 8:8 ²⁷¹¹Daniel 11:10).

Though I have afflicted thee — Judah, “I will afflict thee no more” (²³¹⁰Isaiah 40:1,2 52:1,2). The contrast is between “they,” the Assyrians, and “thee,” Judah. *Their* punishment is fatal and final. Judah’s was temporary and corrective.

13. *will I break his yoke* — the Assyrian’s yoke, namely, the tribute imposed by Sennacherib on Hezekiah (⁴²⁹⁴2 Kings 18:14).

from off thee — O Judah (²³⁰⁷Isaiah 10:27).

14. *that no more of thy name be sown* — that no more of thy seed, bearing thy name, as kings of Nineveh, be propagated; that thy dynasty become extinct, namely, on the destruction of Nineveh here foretold; “thee” means the *king of Assyria*.

will I cut off ... graven image — The Medes under Cyaxares, the joint destroyers of Nineveh with the Babylonians, hated idolatry, and would delight in destroying its idols. As the Assyrians had treated the gods of other nations, so their own should be treated (⁴²⁹⁵2 Kings 19:18). The Assyrian palaces partook of a sacred character [LAYARD]; so that “house of thy gods” *may* refer to the *palace*. At Khorsabad there is remaining a representation of a man cutting an idol to pieces.

I will make thy grave — rather, “I will make it (namely, ‘the house of thy gods,’ that is, ‘Nisroch’) thy grave” (⁴²⁹⁵2 Kings 19:37 ²³⁷⁸Isaiah 37:38). Thus, by Sennacherib’s being slain in it, Nisroch’s house should be defiled. Neither thy gods, nor thy temple, shall save thee; but the latter shall be thy sepulcher.

thou art vile — or, thou art lighter than due weight (²⁷²²Daniel 5:27; compare ³³⁰⁶Job 31:6) [MAURER].

15. This verse is joined in the *Hebrew* text to the second chapter. It is nearly the same as ²³¹⁷Isaiah 52:7, referring to the similar deliverance from Babylon.

him that bringeth good tidings — announcing the overthrow of Sennacherib and deliverance of Jerusalem. The “mountains” are those round Jerusalem, on which Sennacherib’s host had so lately encamped,

preventing Judah from keeping her “feasts,” but on which messengers now speed to Jerusalem, publishing his overthrow with a loud voice where lately they durst not have opened their mouths. A type of the far more glorious spiritual deliverance of God’s people from Satan by Messiah, heralded by ministers of the Gospel (~~615~~ Romans 10:15).

perform thy vows — which thou didst promise if God would deliver thee from the Assyrian.

the wicked — literally, “Belial”; the same as the “counsellor of Belial” (Na 1:11, *Margin*); namely, Sennacherib.

CHAPTER 2

NAHUM 2:1-13.

THE ADVANCE OF THE DESTROYING FORCES AGAINST NINEVEH, AFTER IT WAS USED AS GOD'S ROD FOR A TIME TO CHASTISE HIS PEOPLE: THE CAPTURE OF THAT LION'S DWELLING, ACCORDING TO THE SURE WORD OF JEHOVAH.

1. *He that dasheth in pieces* — God's "battle axe," wherewith He "breaks in pieces" His enemies. ^{<3513>}Jeremiah 51:20 applies the same *Hebrew* term to Nebuchadnezzar (compare ^{<1518>}Proverbs 25:18 ^{<3413>}Jeremiah 50:23, "the hammer of the whole earth"). Here the Medo-Babylonian army under Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, that destroyed Nineveh, is prophetically meant.

before thy face — before Nineveh. *Openly*, so that the work of God may be manifest.

watch the way — by which the foe will attack, so as to be ready to meet him. Ironical advice; equivalent to a prophecy, Thou shalt have need to use all possible means of defense; but use what thou wilt, all will be in vain.

make thy loins strong — The loins are the seat of strength; to gird them up is to prepare all one's strength for conflict (^{<3817>}Job 40:7). Also gird on thy sword (^{<1118>}2 Samuel 20:8 ^{<1119>}2 Kings 4:29).

2. *For the Lord hath turned away the excellency of Jacob* — that is, the time for Nineveh's overthrow is ripe, because Jacob (Judah) and Israel (the ten tribes) have been sufficiently chastised. The Assyrian rod of chastisement, having done its work, is to be thrown into the fire. If God chastised Jacob and Israel with all their "excellency" (Jerusalem and the temple, which was their pre-eminent excellency above all nations in God's eyes, ^{<3414>}Psalms 47:4 87:2 ^{<3321>}Ezekiel 24:21; see on ^{<3118>}Amos 6:8), how much more will He punish fatally Nineveh, an alien to Him, and idolatrous? MAURER, not so well, translates, "restores," or "will restore the excellency of Jacob."

emptiers — the Assyrian spoilers.

have emptied them out — have spoiled the Israelites and Jews (²⁰⁰¹Hosea 10:1). Compare ⁶⁸⁰⁸Psalm 80:8-16, on “vine branches,” as applied to Israel.

3. his mighty men — the Medo-Babylonian generals *mighty men* attacking Nineveh.

made red — The ancients dyed their bull’s-hide shields *red*, partly to strike terror into the enemy, chiefly lest the blood from wounds which they might receive should be perceived and give confidence to the foe [CALVIN]. G. V. SMITH conjectures that the reference is to the red reflection of the sun’s rays from shields of bronze or copper, such as are found among the Assyrian remains.

in scarlet — or *crimson* military tunics (compare ⁴⁷²⁸Matthew 27:28). XENOPHON mentions that the Medes were fond of this color. The Lydians and Tyrians extracted the dye from a particular worm.

chariots ... with flaming torches — that is, the chariots shall be like flaming torches, their wheels in lightning-like rapidity of rotation flashing light and striking sparks from the stones over which they pass (compare ²³⁶⁸Isaiah 5:28). *English Version* supposes a transposition of the *Hebrew* letters. It is better to translate the *Hebrew* as it is, “the chariots (shall be furnished) with fire-flashing *scythes*” (literally, “with the fire,” or glitter, of *iron weapons*). Iron scythes were fixed at right angles to the axles and turned down, or parallel to it, inserted into the felly of the wheel. The Medes, perhaps, had such chariots, though no traces of them are found in Assyrian remains. On account of the latter fact, it may be better to translate, “the chariots (shall come) with the glitter of *steel weapons*” [MAURER and G. V. SMITH].

in the day of his preparation — JEHOVAH’S (²³¹³Isaiah 13:3). Or, “*Medo-Babylonian commander’s* day of preparation for the attack” (Na 2:1). “He” confirms this, and “his” in this verse.

the fir trees — their fir-tree lances.

terribly shaken — branded so as to strike terror. Or, “shall be tremulous with being brandished” [MAURER].

4. rage — are driven in furious haste (²⁴⁶⁹Jeremiah 46:9).

justle one against another — run to and fro [MAURER].

in the broad ways — (⁴³¹⁶2 Chronicles 32:6). Large open spaces in the suburbs of Nineveh.

they shall seem like torches — literally, “their (feminine in *Hebrew*) appearance (is)”: namely, the appearance of *the broad places* is like that of torches, through the numbers of chariots in them flashing in the sun (^{<318>}Proverbs 8:26, *Margin*).

run like the lightnings — with rapid violence (^{<402>}Matthew 24:27 ^{<208>}Luke 10:18).

5. The Assyrian king. The Assyrian preparations for defense.

shall recount his worthies — (Na 3:18). *Review*, or *count over in his mind*, his nobles, choosing out the bravest to hasten to the walls and repel the attack. But in vain; for

they shall stumble in their walk — “they shall stumble in their *advancē*” through fear and hurry.

the defense shall be prepared — rather, *the covering machine* used by *besiegers* to protect themselves in advancing to the wall. Such sudden transitions, as here from the besieged to the besiegers, are frequent (compare ^{<304>}Ezekiel 4:2), [MAURER]. Or, used *by the besieged Assyrians* [CALVIN].

6. **The gates of the rivers ... opened** — The river wall on the Tigris (the west defense of Nineveh) was 4,530 yards long. On the north, south, and east sides, there were large moats, capable of being easily filled with water from the Khosru. Traces of dams (“gates,” or sluices) for regulating the supply are still visible, so that the whole city could be surrounded with a water barrier (Na 2:8). Besides, on the east, the weakest side, it was further protected by a lofty double rampart with a moat two hundred feet wide between its two parts, cut in the rocky ground. The moats or canals, flooded by the Ninevites before the siege to repel the foe, were made a dry bed to march into the city, by the foe turning the waters into a different channel: as Cyrus did in the siege of Babylon [MAURER]. In the earlier capture of Nineveh by Arbaces the Mede, and Belesis the Babylonian, DIODORUS SICULUS, [1.2.80], states that there was an old prophecy that it should not be taken till the river became its enemy; so in the third year of the siege, the river by a flood broke down the walls twenty furlongs, and the king thereupon burnt himself and his palace and all his concubines and wealth together, and the enemy entered by the breach in the wall. Fire and water were doubtless the means of the second destruction here foretold, as of the first.

dissolved — by the inundation [HENDERSON]. Or, those in the palace shall melt with fear, namely, the king and his nobles [GROTIUS].

7. *Huzzab* — the name of the queen of Nineveh, from a *Hebrew* root implying that she *stood by* the king (^{4981P}Psalm 45:9), [VATABLUS]. Rather, Nineveh personified as a queen. She who had long *stood* in the most supreme prosperity. Similarly CALVIN. MAURER makes it not a proper name, and translates, “It is established,” or “determined” (compare ^{0443P}Genesis 41:32). *English Version* is more supported by the parallelism.

led away captive — The *Hebrew* requires rather, “she is laid bare”; brought forth from the apartments where Eastern women remained secluded, and is stripped of her ornamental attire. Compare ^{2370P}Isaiah 47:2,3, where the same image of a woman with face and legs exposed is used of a city captive and dismantled (compare Na 3:5), [MAURER].

brought up — Her people shall be *made to go up* to Babylon. Compare the use of “go up” for *moving from* a place in ^{291P}Jeremiah 21:2.

her maids ... as ... doves — As Nineveh is compared to a queen dethroned and dishonored, so she has here assigned to her in the image *handmaids attending her with dove-like plaints* (^{2384P}Isaiah 38:14 59:11. The image implies *helplessness and grief suppressed, but at times breaking out*). The minor cities and dependencies of Nineveh may be meant, or her captive women [JEROME]. GROTIUS and MAURER translate, for “lead her,” “moan,” or “sigh.”

tabering — *beating* on their breasts *as on a tambourine*.

8. *But* — rather, “Though” [G. V. SMITH].

of old — rather, “from the days that she hath been”; from the earliest period of her existence. Alluding to Nineveh’s antiquity (^{0100P}Genesis 10:11). “Though Nineveh has been of old defended by water surrounding her, yet her inhabitants shall flee away.” GROTIUS, less probably (compare Na 3:8-12), interprets, the “waters” of her *numerous population* (^{2300P}Isaiah 8:7 ^{2513P}Jeremiah 51:13 ^{6175P}Revelation 17:15).

Stand, stand, shall they cry — that is, the few patriotic citizens *shall cry* to their *fleeing* countrymen; “but none looketh back,” much less stops in flight, so panic-stricken are they.

9. *silver ... gold* — The conquerors are summoned to plunder the city. Nineveh’s riches arose from the annual tribute paid by so many subject states, as well as from its extensive merchandise (Na 3:16 ^{2372P}Ezekiel 27:23,24).

store — accumulated by the plunder of subject nations. It is remarkable, that while small articles of value (bronze inlaid with gold, gems, seals, and

alabaster *vases*) are found in the ruins of Nineveh, there are is none of *gold* and *silver*. These, as here foretold, were “taken for spoil” before the palaces were set on fire.

glory out of all the pleasant furniture — or, “there is abundance of precious vessels of every kind” [MAURER].

10. Literally, “emptiness, and emptiedness, and devastation.” The accumulation of substantives without a verb (as in Na 3:2), the two first of the three being derivatives of the same root, and like in sound, and the number of syllables in them increasing in a kind of climax, intensify the gloomy effectiveness of the expression. *Hebrew, Bukah, Mebukah, Mebullakah* (compare ²³⁰⁴Isaiah 24:1,3,4 ³⁰¹⁵Zephaniah 1:15).

faces of all gather blackness — (See on ²³⁰⁶Joel 2:6). CALVIN translates, “withdraw (literally, ‘gather up’) their glow,” or flush, that is grow pale. This is probably the better rendering. So MAURER.

11. *dwelling of ... lions* — Nineveh, the seat of empire of the rapacious and destructive warriors of various ranks, typified by the “lions,” “young lions,” “old lion” (or *lioness* [MAURER]), “the lion’s whelp.” The image is peculiarly appropriate, as lions of every form, winged, and sometimes with the head of a man, are frequent in the Assyrian sepulchres. It was as full of spoils of all nations as a lion’s den is of remains of its prey. The question, “Where,” etc. implies that Jehovah “would make an utter end of *the place*,” so that its very site could not be found (Na 1:8). It is a question expressing wonder, so incredible did it then seem.

12. *prey ... ravin* — different kinds of prey. Compare ²³⁰¹Isaiah 3:1, “the stay and the staff.”

13. *burn ... in the smoke* — or (so as to pass) “*into smoke*,” that is, “entirely” [MAURER], (⁴⁸²³Psalms 37:20 46:9). CALVIN, like *English Version*, explains, As soon as the flame catches, and the fire smokes, by the mere smoke I will burn her chariots.

cut off thy prey from the earth — Thou shalt no more carry off prey from the nations of the earth.

the voice of thy messengers ... no more ... heard — No more shall thy emissaries be heard throughout thy provinces conveying thy king’s commands, and exacting tribute of subject nations.

CHAPTER 3

NAHUM 3:1-19.

REPETITION OF NINEVEH'S DOOM, WITH NEW FEATURES; THE CAUSE IS HER TYRANNY, RAPINE, AND CRUELTY: NO-AMMON'S FORTIFICATIONS DID NOT SAVE HER; IT IS VAIN, THEREFORE, FOR NINEVEH TO THINK HER DEFENSES WILL SECURE HER AGAINST GOD'S SENTENCE.

1. *the bloody city!* — literally, “city of blood,” namely, shed by Nineveh; just so now her own blood is to be shed.

robbery — violence [MAURER]. Extortion [GROTIUS].

the prey departeth not — Nineveh never ceases to live by rapine. Or, the *Hebrew* verb is transitive, “she (Nineveh) does not make the prey depart”; she ceases not to plunder.

2. The reader is transported into the midst of the fight (compare ^{צהר}Jeremiah 47:3). The “noise of the whips” urging on the horses (in the chariots) is heard, and of “the rattling of the wheels” of war chariots, and the “horses” are seen “prancing,” and the “chariots jumping,” etc.

3. *horseman* — distinct from “the horses” (in the chariots, Na 3:2).

lifteth up — denoting readiness for fight [EWALD]. GESENIUS translates, “lifteth up (literally, ‘makes to ascend’) his horse.” Similarly MAURER, “makes his horse to rise up on his hind feet.” *Vulgate* translates, “ascending,” that is, making his horse to advance up to the assault. This last is perhaps better than *English Version*.

the bright sword and the glittering spear — literally, “the glitter of the sword and the flash of the spear!” This, as well as the translation, “the horseman advancing up,” more graphically presents the battle scene to the eye.

they stumble upon their corpses — The *Medo-Babylonian* enemy stumble upon the *Assyrian corpses*.

4. *Because of the multitude of the whoredoms* — This assigns the reason for Nineveh's destruction.

of the well-favored harlot — As Assyria was not a worshipper of the true God, “whoredoms” cannot mean, as in the case of Israel, apostasy to the worship of false gods; but, her *harlot-like artifices* whereby she allured neighboring states so as to subject them to herself. As the unwary are allured by the “well-favored harlot's” looks, so Israel, Judah (for example, under Ahaz, who, calling to his aid Tiglath-pileser, was made tributary by him, ^{<2K16>}2 Kings 16:7-10), and other nations, were tempted by the plausible professions of Assyria, and by the lure of commerce (^{<6812>}Revelation 18:2,3), to trust her.

witchcrafts — (^{<2109>}Isaiah 47:9,12). Alluding to the love incantations whereby harlots tried to dement and ensnare youths; answering to the subtle machinations whereby Assyria attracted nations to her.

selleth — deprives of their liberty; as slaves used to be *sold*: and in other property also *sale* was a usual mode of transfer. MAURER understands it of depriving nations of their freedom, and literally *selling* them as slaves to distant peoples (^{<2109>}Joel 3:2,3,6-8). But elsewhere there is no evidence that the Assyrians did this.

families — peoples.

5. *I will discover thy skirts upon thy face* — that is, discover thy nakedness by *throwing up thy skirts upon thy face* (the greatest possible insult), pulling them up as as high as thy head (^{<2109>}Jeremiah 13:22 ^{<2109>}Ezekiel 16:37-41). I will treat thee not as a matron, but as a harlot whose shame is exposed; her gaudy finery being lifted up off her (^{<2109>}Isaiah 47:2,3). So Nineveh shall be stripped of all her glory and defenses on which she prides herself.

6. *cast abominable filth upon thee* — as infamous harlots used to be treated.

gazing stock — exposed to public ignominy as a warning to others (^{<2109>}Ezekiel 28:17).

7. *all ... that look upon thee* — when thou hast been made “a gazing stock” (Na 3:6).

shall flee from thee — as a thing horrible to look upon. Compare “standing *afar off*,” ^{<6810>}Revelation 18:10.

whence shall I seek comforters for thee? — Compare ^{<2519>}Isaiah 51:19, which Nahum had before his mind.

8. populous No — rather, as *Hebrew*, “No-ammon,” the Egyptian name for Thebes in Upper Egypt; meaning the *portion* or *possession of Ammon*, the Egyptian Jupiter (whence the Greeks called the city Diospolis), who was especially worshipped there. The Egyptian inscriptions call the god *Amon-re*, that is, *Amon the Sun*; he is represented as a human figure with a ram’s head, seated on a chair (^{<2465>}Jeremiah 46:25 ^{<2514>}Ezekiel 30:14-16). The blow inflicted on No-ammon, described in Na 3:10, was probably by the Assyrian Sargon (see on ^{<2301>}Isaiah 18:1; ^{<2310>}Isaiah 20:1). As Thebes, with all her resources, was overcome by Assyria, so Assyrian Nineveh, notwithstanding all her might, in her turn, shall be overcome by Babylon. *English Version*, “populous,” if correct, implies that No’s large population did not save her from destruction.

situate among the rivers — probably the *channels* into which the Nile here divides (compare ^{<2306>}Isaiah 19:6-8). Thebes lay on both sides of the river. It was famed in HOMER’s time for its hundred gates [*Iliad*, 9.381]. Its ruins still describe a circumference of twenty-seven miles. Of them the temples of Luxor and Karnak, east of the river, are most famous. The colonnade of the former, and the grand hall of the latter, are of stupendous dimensions. One wall still represents the expedition of Shishak against Jerusalem under Rehoboam (^{<1145>}1 Kings 14:25 ^{<1112>}2 Chronicles 12:2-9).

whose ... wall was from the sea — that is, *rose up* “from the sea.” MAURER translates, “whose wall consisted of the sea.” But this would be a mere repetition of the former clause. The Nile is called a *sea*, from its appearance in the annual flood (^{<2305>}Isaiah 19:5).

9. Ethiopia — *Hebrew, Cush*. Ethiopia is thought at this time to have been mistress of Upper Egypt.

Egypt — Lower Egypt.

her strength — her safeguard as an ally.

it was infinite — The resources of these, her allies, were endless.

Put — or Phut (^{<1006>}Genesis 10:6); descended from Ham (^{<2710>}Ezekiel 27:10). From a root meaning a *bow*; as they were famed as archers [GESENIUS]. Probably west of Lower Egypt. JOSEPHUS [*Antiquities*, 1:6.2] identifies it with Mauritania (compare ^{<2419>}Jeremiah 46:9, *Margin*; ^{<2305>}Ezekiel 38:5).

Lubim — the Libyans, whose capital was Cyrene; extending along the Mediterranean west of Egypt (^{<1123>}2 Chronicles 12:3 16:8 ^{<1120>}Acts 2:10). As,

however, the *Lubim* are always connected with the Egyptians and Ethiopians, they are perhaps distinct from the *Libyans*. The Lubim were probably at first wandering tribes, who afterwards were settled under Carthage in the region of Cyrene, under the name Libyans.

thy — No's.

helpers — literally, “in thy help,” that is, among thy auxiliaries.

10. Notwithstanding all her might, she was overcome.

cast lots for her honorable men — They divided them among themselves by lot, as slaves (^{248B}Joel 3:3).

11. *drunken* — made to drink of the cup of Jehovah's wrath (^{251D}Isaiah 51:17,21 ^{245E}Jeremiah 25:15).

hid — covered out of sight: a prediction remarkably verified in the state in which the ruins of Nineveh have been found [G. V. SMITH]. But as “hid” precedes “seek strength,” etc., it rather refers to Nineveh's state when attacked by her foe: “Thou who now so vauntest thyself, shalt be compelled to seek a hiding-place from the foe” [CALVIN]; or, shalt be neglected and slighted by all [MAURER].

seek strength because of the enemy — Thou too, like Thebes (Na 3:9), shalt have recourse to other nations for help against thy Medo-Babylonian enemy.

12. *thy strongholds* — on the borders of Assyria, protecting the approaches to Nineveh: “the gates of thy land” (Na 3:13).

fig trees with the first ripe figs — expressing the rapidity and ease of the capture of Nineveh (compare ^{233A}Isaiah 28:4 ^{408E}Revelation 6:13).

13. *thy people* — thy soldiers.

women — unable to fight for thee (^{239A}Isaiah 19:16 ^{247E}Jeremiah 50:37 51:30).

gates on thy land — the fortified passes or entrances to the region of Nineveh (compare ^{241E}Jeremiah 15:7). Northeast of Nineveh there were hills affording a natural barrier against an invader; the guarded passes through these are probably “the gates of the land” meant.

fire shall devour thy bars — the “bars” of the fortresses at the passes into Assyria. So in Assyrian remains the Assyrians themselves are represented as setting fire to the gates of a city [BONOMI, *Nineveh*, pp. 194, 197].

14. Ironical exhortation to Nineveh to defend herself.

Draw ... waters — so as not to be without water for drinking, in the event of being cut off by the besiegers from the fountains.

make strong the brick-kiln — or “repair” so as to have a supply of bricks formed of kiln-burnt clay, to repair breaches in the ramparts, or to build new fortifications inside when the outer ones are taken by the foe.

15. *There* — in the very scene of thy great preparations for defense; and where thou now art so secure.

fire — even as at the former destruction; Sardanapalus (Pul?) perished with all his household in the conflagration of his palace, having in despair set it on fire, the traces of which are still remaining.

cankerworm — “the licking locust” [HENDERSON].

make thyself many as the locusts — “the swarming locusts” [HENDERSON]; that is, however “many” be thy forces, like those of “the swarming locusts,” or the “licking locusts,” yet the foe shall consume thee as the “licking locust” licks up all before it.

16. *multiplied thy merchants* — (²⁰²³Ezekiel 27:23,24). Nineveh, by large canals, had easy access to Babylon; and it was one of the great routes for the people of the west and northwest to that city; lying on the Tigris it had access to the sea. The Phoenicians carried its wares everywhere. Hence its merchandise is so much spoken of.

the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away — that is, spoiled *thy merchants*. The “cankerworm,” or licking locust, answers to the Medo-Babylonian invaders of Nineveh [G. V. SMITH]. CALVIN explains less probably, “Thy merchants spoiled many regions; but the same shall befall them as befalls locusts, they in a moment shall be scattered and flee away.” MAURER, somewhat similarly, “The licking locust puts off (the envelope in which his wings had been folded), and teeth away” (Na 2:9; compare ²⁰⁰⁴Joel 1:4). The *Hebrew* has ten different names for the locust, so destructive was it.

17. *Thy crowned* — Thy princes (⁶⁹⁰⁷Revelation 9:7). The king’s nobles and officers wore the tiara, as well as the king; hence they are called here “thy crowned ones.”

as the locusts — as many as *the swarming locusts*.

thy captains — *Tiphisar*, an Assyrian word; found also in ²⁶¹²⁷Jeremiah 51:27, meaning *satraps* [MICHAELIS]; or rather, “military leaders”

[MAURER]. The last syllable, *sar* means a “prince,” and is found in *Belshaz-zar*, *Nabopolas-sar*, *Nebuchadnezzar*.

as the great grasshoppers — literally, “as the locust of locusts,” that is, the largest locust. MAURER translates, “as many as *locusts upon locusts*,” that is, swarms of locusts. *Hebrew* idiom favors *English Version*.

in the hedges in the cold — Cold deprives the locust of the power of flight; so they alight in cold weather and at night, but when warmed by the sun soon “flee away.” So shall the Assyrian multitudes suddenly disappear, not leaving a trace behind (compare PLINY, *Natural History*, 11.29).

18. Thy shepherds — that is, Thy leaders.

slumber — are carelessly secure [MAURER]. Rather, “lie in death’s sleep, having been slain” [JEROME] (^{<12516>}Exodus 15:16 ^{<13716>}Psalms 76:6).

shall dwell in the dust — (^{<13716>}Psalms 7:5 94:17).

thy people is scattered — the necessary consequence of their leaders being laid low (^{<12217>}1 Kings 22:17).

19. bruit — the report.

clap the hands — with joy at thy fall. The sole descendants of the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians in the whole country are the Nestorian Christians, who speak a Chaldean language [LAYARD].

upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually? — implying God’s long forbearance, and the consequent enormity of Assyria’s guilt, rendering her case one that admitted no hope of restoration.