

Nahum

Original Historical Setting

Author: Nahum

Written: Between 663 B.C. – 612 B.C.

Audience: First, Nineveh. Second, (and primarily) Judah.

Occasion: Assyria had terrorized the known world at the time. The specific occasion is not stated, but these acts of terror were no doubt what prompted the prophecy.

Timeline:

687 BC – Evil King Manasseh begins rule in Judah

663 BC – Thebes Egypt falls to Assyria

612 BC – Nineveh falls to Babylon

World Events that occur simultaneously

650 B.C. – Greeks begin trade with southern Russia

648 B.C. – Pankration (martial arts sport) introduced to Greek Olympic Games

621 B.C. – Draco (from which we get “draconian”) issues first written law code in Athens

Features and Structure

OUTLINE **1:1-1:14** Nineveh’s destruction declared
 1:15-3:19 Nineveh’s destruction described

STRUCTURE

A Assyrian king taunted/Judah urged to celebrate **1:1-15**

B Dramatic call to alarm **2:1-10**

C Taunt **2:11-12**

D Announcement of judgment **2:13**

E Woe oracle **3:1-4**

D' Announcement of judgment **3:5-7**

C' Taunt **3:8-13**

B' Dramatic call to alarm **3:14-17**

A' Assyrian king taunted as others celebrate **3:18-19**

Genre/Literary style

A brief prophecy written in Hebrew poetry

Key text(s)

1:7 – A stronghold in the day of trouble

1:8 – A flood will make an utter end

3:5-7 – Behold, I am against you

What to look for

- Notice Nahum’s vivid style of writing and his exceptional use of metaphors and word pictures.
- Note that Nahum predicted that Nineveh would end “with an overflowing flood. The Tigris River overflowed its banks and the flood destroyed part of the city’s wall leading to its destruction.
- Nahum 1:2-8 is a psalm about God’s awesome power that, in Hebrew, is presented in an acrostic poem.

Interesting facts

- Nineveh’s walls were 100 feet high and wide enough to accommodate three chariots riding side by side. Dotted around the walls were high towers that stretched an additional 100 feet above the top of the walls. In addition, the walls were surrounded by a moat 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep. Nineveh appeared impregnable and could withstand a twenty-year siege. Thus Nahum’s prophecy of Nineveh’s destruction seemed unlikely.
- Nahum predicted that Nineveh would be hidden (**3:11**). After its destruction in 612 B.C. the site was not discovered until A.D. 1842 (some 2,254 years after its destruction). Therefore, Nineveh fell a few years after Nahum’s prophecy, never to be rebuilt again.
- Nahum says he is from Elkosh which has no conclusive location. However, it could be the city later called Capernaum which literally means “the village of Nahum.”

Memory Verse: Nahum 1:7