

NAHUM

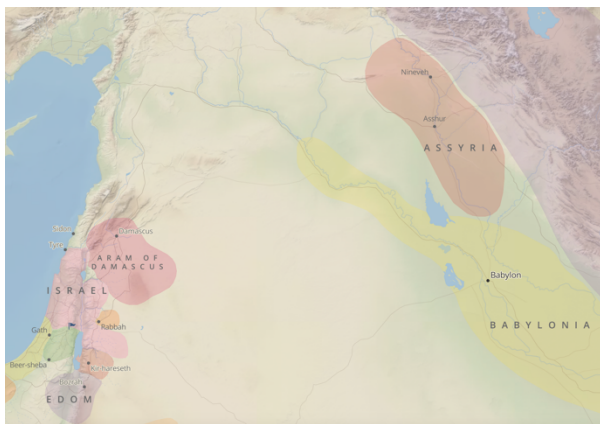
STUDY GUIDE

AUTHOR & DATE

Nahum, meaning “comforter” or “consolation,” hails from Elkosh – a place not exactly known. Some believe it may have been renamed Capernaum since that translates to “home of Nahum.” If Capernaum is the same location as Elkosh, then Nahum would have lived along the northern portion of the Sea of Galilee. Others believe Nahum’s hometown might have been between Gaza and Jerusalem.

Pinning down the date of Nahum’s prophecy is a bit easier. Nahum 3:8-10 references the fall of the Egyptian city of Thebes, which occurred in 663 B.C. Nineveh fell as prophesied around 612 B.C. Since Nahum refers to Thebes in past tense and Nineveh’s fall in future tense, we can estimate the book to have been written somewhere between those dates, **663-612 B.C.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Map Source: Logos Software

Nineveh was near where Mosul, Iraq is located today. Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, was a powerhouse and highly protected area. The city’s size was significant and had the Tigris River as a border with city walls measuring 40-50 ft. tall and more than 80 feet deep. Assyria was at a political and economic high, feeling secure behind her walls and confident in her ability to conquer anyone she wished. However, God had a different message for Nineveh! The ruin of this great city was carried out according to God’s judgment at the hands of those whom Assyria had previously conquered – the Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians.

The destruction Nahum describes quite literally took place in 612 B.C. Several historical accounts back up the accuracy of Nahum’s prophecy against this powerful city.

Nahum 1:8	An “overwhelming flood”
Nahum 3:12	Ease of Nineveh’s downfall, like “fig trees with ripe fruit”
Nahum 3:13	Unprotected due to a “fire that consumes your gate bars”
Nahum 3:19	Never recovered, for the “injury had no healing”

This book also reveals MUCH of the character of God! In fact, nearly 20 specific characteristics can be found in the first chapter alone! You may find some verses and descriptions which are quite familiar to you, but you probably don’t realize they are found in this book.



Contained in chapter 3 is a reference to “No-amon,” better known as Thebes, located along the Nile River about 350 miles south of Cairo, Egypt. This reference is significant because Thebes “was the center of the Egyptian Empire for nearly 1,400 years, until Assyria conquered it in 663 B.C. It was surrounded by waterways and sacred temples, much like Nineveh, and boasted allies like Put (Somaliland) and Lubim (Libya). The greatness of Thebes was legendary. Nahum mentioned her as a reminder that even the greatest fall.”
-- *Spirit-Filled Life Bible*, note on Nahum 3:8-9

“After a three month siege, ‘rain fell in such abundance that the waters of the Tigris inundated part of the city and overturned one of its walls for a distance of twenty stades [more than 10,000 feet]. Then the King, convinced that the oracle was accomplished and despairing of any means of escape, to avoid falling alive into the enemy’s hands constructed in his palace an immense funeral pyre, placed on it his gold and silver and his royal robes, and then, shutting himself up with his wives and eunuchs in a chamber formed in the midst of the pile, disappeared in the flames. Nineveh opened its gates to the besiegers, but this tardy submission did not save the proud city. It was pillaged and burned, and then razed to the ground so completely as to evidence the implacable hatred enkindled in the minds of subject nations by the fierce and cruel Assyrian government.”

-- Lenormant and E. Chevallier, *The Rise and Fall of Assyria*

“Nineveh was laid waste as ruthlessly and completely as her kings had once ravaged Susa and Babylon; the city was put to the torch, the population was slaughtered or enslaved, and the palace so recently built by Ashurbanipal was sacked and destroyed. At one blow Assyria disappeared from history. Nothing remained of her except certain tactics and weapons of war...The Near East remembered her for a while as a merciless unifier of a dozen lesser states; and the Jews recalled Nineveh vengefully as ‘the bloody city, full of lies and robbery.’ In a little while all but the mightiest of the Great Kings were forgotten, and all their royal palaces were in ruins under the drifting sands. Two hundred years after its capture, Xenophon’s Ten Thousand marched over the mounds that had been Nineveh, and never suspected that these were the site of the ancient metropolis that had ruled half the world. Not a stone remained visible of all the temples with which Assyria’s pious warriors had sought to beautify their greatest capital. Even Ashur, the everlasting god, was dead.”

-- Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*

Following the collapse of the Assyrian empire, it is believed a remnant of princes, noblemen and warriors took refuge in nearby mountains. The Magi, or wise men who visited baby Jesus, likely came from this population of exiled Assyrians. Tradition has it that the wise men, upon return from Bethlehem, proclaimed the amazing things they had seen and heard on their visit to the King of Kings. Christianity was established among some Assyrians, which have survived throughout the centuries and now is numbers between 100,000-200,000 Assyrian Christians.

JONAH AND NAHUM COMPARED

Two prophets were given the assignment to preach against Nineveh. In response to Jonah's preaching, the city repented and was spared. However, in the following 150 years, Nineveh and the Assyrians apparently turned once again to their former ways.

JONAH: Mercy of God	NAHUM: Judgment of God
800 B.C.	650 B.C.
Emphasis on the <u>prophet</u> – only one prophecy in the whole book	Emphasis on the <u>prophecy</u> – we know little about the prophet
Disobedient prophet	Obedient prophet
Obedient Nation	Disobedient Nation
Deliverance from Water – Jonah rescued by the fish	Destruction by water – Flooding river
Repentance of Nineveh	Rebellion of Nineveh

LITERARY STRUCTURE

Matthew Henry gives a great summary of Nahum in his commentary:

“About a hundred years before, at Jonah's preaching, the Ninevites repented and were spared, yet soon after, they became worse than ever. Nineveh knows not that God who contends with her, but is told what a God He is. It is good for all to mix faith with what is here said concerning Him, which speaks great terror to the wicked, and comfort to believers. Let each take his portion from it: let sinners read it and tremble; and let saints read it and triumph. The anger of the Lord is contrasted with His goodness to His people. Perhaps they are obscure and little regarded in the world, but the Lord knows them. The Scripture character of Jehovah agrees not with the views of proud reasoners.”

The book can be divided into three main sections:

1. Judgment of Nineveh Decreed by God
2. Execution of the Decree
3. Reasons for the Decree

OBSERVATION WORDS

- **God / Lord** (any other names, references of God, character traits, etc.)
- **Jesus** (prophecies, foreshadowing, types, etc.)
- **Holy Spirit** (specific mentions, miracles/wonders, fulfilled prophecy, symbols, etc.)
- **"I will.../He will..."**
- **Judah** (prophecies, actions of God toward them, descriptors, etc.)
- **"I am against you"**
- **Nineveh** (descriptors of destruction, sins, etc.)

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- What is something the Lord taught you through this book? How will you apply this to your life?

- List all the various characteristics of God described in this book. What characteristic of God do you need to focus on in your life and why?

- How do you see Jesus represented in this book? The Holy Spirit?

- What are some of the "I will / He will" statements you discover? Which one(s) surprise you?

- Describe Nineveh's destruction and some of the terms used (i.e., stripped, desolate, etc.).

- How does Nahum describe the following of Nineveh in verses 3:12-19?
 - Fortresses
 - Military
 - People
 - King and civil leaders
 - Dependence on water and clay

- What do you learn about repentance and God's mercy through the books of Jonah and Nahum combined?

- Read Hebrews 12:1-11 and write your thoughts about the following in light of Jonah and Nahum:
 - Sin

 - Judgment/Discipline
 - For God's people

 - For those God uses to judge others

KEY WORD:

KEY VERSE:

KEY CHAPTER: