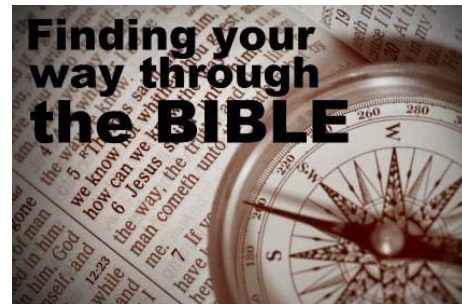


Nahum

Author



The book contains the “vision of Nahum” ([1:1](#)), whose name means “comfort” and is related to the name Nehemiah, meaning “The Lord comforts” or “comfort of the Lord.” (Nineveh’s fall, which is Nahum’s theme, would bring comfort to Judah.) Nothing is known about him except his hometown (Elkosh), and even its general location is uncertain.



Date

In [3:8–10](#) the author speaks of the fall of Thebes, which happened in 663 b.c., as already past. In all three chapters Nahum prophesied Nineveh’s fall, which was fulfilled in 612. Nahum therefore uttered this oracle between 663 and 612, perhaps near the end of this period since he represents the fall of Nineveh as imminent ([2:1](#); [3:14,19](#)). This would place him during the reign of Josiah and make him a contemporary of Zephaniah and the young Jeremiah.

Background



Assyria (represented by Nineveh, [1:1](#)) had already destroyed Samaria (722–721 b.c.), resulting in the captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel, and posed a present threat to Judah. The Assyrians were brutally cruel, their kings often being depicted as gloating over the gruesome punishments inflicted on conquered peoples. They conducted their wars with shocking ferocity, uprooted whole populations as state policy and deported them to other parts of their empire. The leaders of conquered cities were tortured and horribly mutilated before being executed (see note on [3:3](#)). No wonder the dread of Assyria fell on all her neighbors!

About 700 b.c. King Sennacherib made Nineveh the capital of the Assyrian empire, and it remained the capital until it was destroyed in 612. Jonah had announced its destruction earlier ([Jnh 3:4](#)), but the people put on at least a show of repentance and the destruction was temporarily averted (see [Jnh 3:10](#) and note). Not long after that, however, Nineveh reverted to its extreme wickedness, cruelty and pride. The brutality reached its peak under Ashurbanipal (669–627), the last great ruler of the Assyrian empire. After his death, Assyria’s influence and power waned rapidly until 612, when Nineveh was overthrown

Recipients

Some words are addressed to Judah (see [1:12–13,15](#)), but most are addressed to Nineveh (see [1:11,14](#); [2:1,13](#); [3:5–17,19](#)) or its king ([3:18](#)). The book, however, was meant for Israelite readers living in Judah.

Literary Style

The contents are primarily made up of judgment oracles, with appropriate descriptions and vocabulary, expressing intense moods, sights and sounds. The language is poetic, with frequent use of metaphors and similes, vivid word pictures, repetition and many short—often staccato—phrases (see, e.g., [3:1–3](#)). Rhetorical questions punctuate the flow of thought, which has a marked stress on moral indignation toward injustice.

Theological Themes

The focal point of the entire book is the Lord's judgment on Nineveh for her oppression, cruelty, idolatry and wickedness. The book ends with the destruction of the city.

According to [Ro 11:22](#), God is not only kind but also stern. In Nahum, God is not only “slow to anger” ([1:3](#)) and “a refuge . . . for those who trust in him” ([1:7](#)), but also one who “will not leave the guilty unpunished” ([1:3](#)). God's righteous and just kingdom will ultimately triumph, for kingdoms built on wickedness and tyranny must eventually fall, as Assyria did.

In addition, Nahum declares the universal sovereignty of God. God is Lord of history and of all nations; as such, he controls their destinies.

Outline

- Title ([1:1](#))
- Nineveh's Judge ([1:2–15](#))
 - The Lord's Kindness and Sternness ([1:2–8](#))
 - Nineveh's Overthrow and Judah's Joy ([1:9–15](#))
- Nineveh's Judgment ([ch. 2](#))
 - Nineveh Besieged ([2:1–10](#))
 - Nineveh's Desolation Contrasted with Her Former Glory ([2:11–13](#))
- Nineveh's Total Destruction ([ch. 3](#))
 - Nineveh's Sins ([3:1–4](#))
 - Nineveh's Doom ([3:5–19](#))