

# THE BOOK OF NAHUM – AN INTRODUCTION

*“The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in Him.” Nahum 1:7*

**AUTHOR:** the prophet Nahum of Elkosh (1:1)

- Nahum was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah (1:12, 1:15, 2:2). We are uncertain of the location of Elkosh (1:1).
- His name means “consolation” or “comfort” likely because his words of judgment against Nineveh would comfort Judah.

**PURPOSE:** To encourage Judah that God will soon show His justice and sovereignty by repaying Nineveh for its evil.

- Nahum foretold that the LORD would destroy Nineveh in return for the Assyrians' brutality against the nations, the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722BC, and Judah in 701BC. The fall of Assyria was a common theme among Israel's prophets (Isa. 10:12–19; 14:24–25; 30:31–33; 31:8–9; Ezek. 32:22–23; Zeph. 2:13–15; Zech. 10:11).
- In light of the strong judgment themes, it has been said Nahum wrote the book Jonah wanted to write, but could not.

**AUDIENCE:** Judah and the residents of Nineveh

- *Judah* was to hear of God's faithful judgment upon Assyria and take courage in His covenant keeping faithfulness.
- *Nineveh* the capital city of Assyria was the hub of horror for the known world and was now the focus of God's wrath.
- Some have suggested *King Sennacherib* (705-681BC) is being directly addressed (1:9, 1:11) for his unique evils against Israel and Judah (2 Kings 18), but this seems unlikely since he had been assassinated by the time this book was written.

**DATE:** between 663-626<sub>BC</sub>

- Nahum's prophecy came roughly 150 years after Jonah called the city to repentance.
- The fall of the Egyptian city of Thebes mentioned in 3:8 occurred in 663BC, which dates the book after that event.
- Nahum likely lived and ministered during the days of Manasseh (697-642BC) or possibly Josiah (640-609BC).
- Nahum followed the ministry of Isaiah and Micah and was likely contemporaries of Zephaniah and Jeremiah.

**BACKGROUND:**

1. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria located 220 miles NW of modern-day Bagdad along the eastern bank of the Tigris River. Wicked Nimrod built the city in the days following God's scattering of people at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10:11).
2. Its residents were idolaters who worshipped Ashur and Ishtar through perverse and often violent means.
3. The city of Nineveh boasted of 100-foot walls that were nearly 50 feet thick. The main wall was 7 ½ miles long.
4. Nineveh repented under the preaching of Jonah, but soon became hardened and resumed their imperialistic conquests.
5. In 722BC Assyria sieged and invaded Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. They starved, raped, pillaged, murdered, and took into captivity the ten northern tribes (2 Kings 17:3-23). This means it is possible that Jonah or his children (if he had any) would have seen the wickedness that he so detested come upon Israel firsthand.
6. In 701BC Assyria's king Sennacherib (705-681BC) attacked Judah, capturing 46 cities. With Jerusalem facing a siege the Lord miraculously slayed 185,000 soldiers and sent Sennacherib back to Nineveh (2 Kgs. 18:17–18; 19:32–36; Isa. 37:36).
7. In 669BC Ashurbanipal succeeded his father Esarhaddon as king and released Manasseh king of Judah (2 Chron. 33:10–13). He defeated Thebes in 663BC and created a storehouse of pillaged treasures and an extensive library in Nineveh.
8. In August of 612BC Nineveh was overtaken by the Medes, Babylonians, and Scythians.

# AN OUTLINE OF NAHUM: REFUGE AND RETRIBUTION

## (1:1-15) GOD THE JUDGE IS DECLARED

(1:1-11) God is Good and Jealous

(1:12-15) God has Good News for Judah

## (2:1-13) NINEVEH'S JUDGMENT IS DESCRIBED

(2:1-10) The Wave of Judgment Falls Upon Nineveh

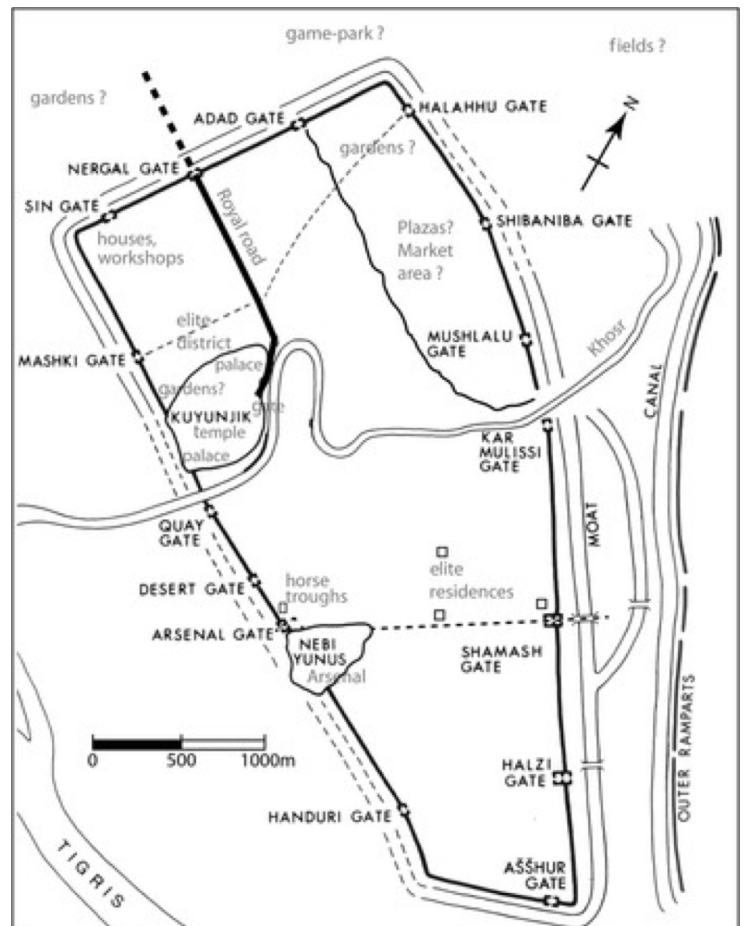
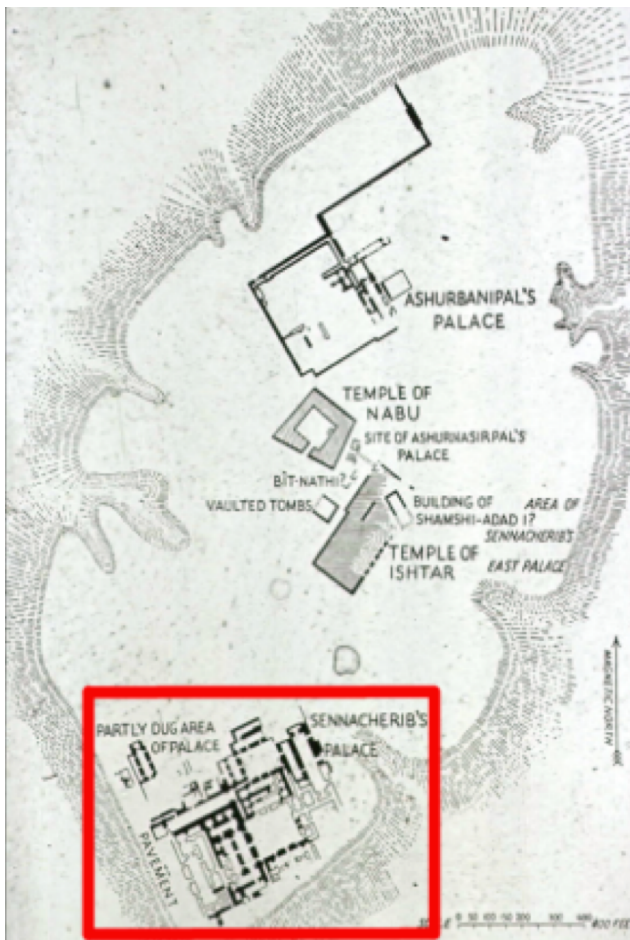
(2:11-13) The Word of Judgment Spoken Over Nineveh

## (3:1-19) GOD'S LAMENTATION IS DELIVERED

(3:1-7) Woe Falls Upon the Violent Whore

(3:8-12) Captivity Comes Upon Thebes

(3:13-19) Consuming Judgment Finds No Comfort



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