

NAHUM

1¹An oracle about Nineveh: the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

The vengeance of the LORD on his enemies

2[*vv2-14 are an incomplete alphabetic acrostic poem; some parts have been re-arranged accordingly*]The LORD is a jealous god, a god of vengeance;

the LORD takes vengeance and is quick to anger.^[The rest of v2, The LORD takes ... wrath, transposed to v11]

³[*prob. rdg, Heb inserts two lines* The LORD is long-suffering and of great might,

but the LORD does not sweep clean away]

In whirlwind and storm he goes on his way,
and the clouds are the dust beneath his feet.

⁴He rebukes the sea and dries it up
and makes all the streams fail.

Bashan and Carmel languish,
and on Lebanon the young shoots wither.

⁵The mountains quake before him,
the hills heave and swell,
and the earth, the world and all that lives in it,
are in tumult at his presence.

⁶Who can stand before his wrath?
Who can resist his fury?

His anger pours out [*pours out: or fuses or melts*] like a stream of fire,
and the rocks melt [*prob. rdg, Heb are torn down*] before him.

⁷The LORD is a sure refuge
for those who look to him in time of distress;
he cares for all who seek his protection

⁸and brings them safely [*brings them safely: prob. rdg, Heb omitted*]
through the sweeping flood;

he makes a final end of all who oppose him
and pursues his enemies into darkness.

⁹⁻¹¹No adversaries dare oppose him twice;
all are burnt up [*all are burnt up: prob. rdg, Heb for until*] like tangled
briars.

Why do you make plots against the LORD?

He himself will make an end of you all.

From you has come forth a wicked counsellor,
plotting evil against the LORD.

The LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries,
against his enemies he directs his wrath;
with skin scorched black, they are consumed
like stubble that is parched and dry.

Israel and Judah rid of the invaders

These are the words of the LORD:

¹³Now I will break his yoke from your necks
and snap the cords that bind you.

¹⁴Image and idol will I hew down in the house of your God.
This is what the LORD has ordained for you:
never again shall your offspring be scattered;
and I will grant you burial, fickle though you have been.

¹²Has the punishment been so great?
Yes, but it has passed away and is gone.
I have afflicted you, but I will not afflict you again.

¹⁵See on the mountains the feet of the herald
who brings good news.
Make your pilgrimages, O Judah,
and pay your vows.
For wicked men shall never again overrun you;
they are totally destroyed.

²²^[v1 and v2 transposed]The LORD will restore the pride of Jacob and Israel
alike,
although plundering hordes have stripped them bare
and pillaged their vines.

Nineveh's enemies triumphant

¹The battering-ram is mounted against your bastions,
the siege is closing in.
Watch the road and brace yourselves;
put forth all your strength.

³The shields of their warriors are gleaming red,
their soldiers are all in scarlet;
their chariots, when the line is formed,
are like flickering [flickering: prob. rdg, Heb obscure] fire;
squadrons of horse advance on the city ⁴in mad frenzy [*prob. rdg, Heb adds
chariots*];
they jostle one another in the outskirts, like waving torches;

⁵the leaders display their prowess [*display their prowess: or shout their own
names*]
as they dash to and fro like lightning,
rushing [*prob. rdg, Heb stumbling*] in headlong career;
they hasten to the wall, and mantelets are set in position.

⁶The sluices of the rivers are opened, the palace topples down;

⁷the train of captives goes into exile,
their slave-girls are carried off,
moaning like doves and beating their breasts;

⁸and Nineveh has become like a pool of water,

like the waters round her, which are ebbing away.
'Stop! Stop!' they cry; but none turns back.

⁹Spoil is taken, spoil of silver and gold;
there is no end to the store,
treasure beyond the costliest that man can desire.

¹⁰Plundered, pillaged, stripped bare!
Courage melting and knees giving way,
writhing limbs, and faces drained of colour!

¹¹Where now is the lions' den,
the cave [*prob. rdg, Heb pasture*] where the lion cubs lurked,
where the lion and [*and: prob. rdg, Heb omitted*] lioness and young cubs
went unafraid,

¹²the lion which killed to satisfy its whelps
and for its mate broke the neck of the kill,
mauling its prey to fill its lair,
filling its den with the mauled prey?

¹³I am against you, says the LORD of Hosts,
I will smoke out your pride [*your pride: prob. rdg, Heb her chariot*],
and a sword shall devour your cubs.
I will leave you no more prey on the earth,
and the sound of your feeding [*your feeding: prob. rdg; Heb your
messenger*] shall no more be heard.

3¹Ah! blood-stained city, steeped in deceit,
full of pillage, never empty of prey!

²Hark to the crack of the whip,
the rattle of wheels and stamping of horses,
bounding chariots, ³chargers rearing
swords gleaming, flash of spears!
The dead are past counting, their bodies lie in heaps,
corpses innumerable, men stumbling over corpses –

⁴all for a wanton's monstrous wantonness,
fair-seeming, a mistress of sorcery,
who beguiled nations and tribes
by her wantonness and her sorceries.

⁵I am against you, says the LORD of Hosts,
I will uncover your breasts to your disgrace.
and expose your naked body to every nation,
to every kingdom your shame.

⁶I will cast loathsome filth over you,
I will count you obscene and treat you like excrement.

⁷Then all who see you will shrink from you and say,
'Nineveh is laid waste; who will console her?'
Where shall I look for anyone to comfort you?

⁸Will you fare better than No-amon? –
she that lay by the streams of the Nile,

surrounded by water,
whose rampart was the Nile, waters her wall;
⁹Cush and Egypt were her strength, and it was boundless,
Put and the Libyans brought her help.
¹⁰She too became an exile and went into captivity,
her infants too were dashed to the ground at every street-corner,
her nobles were shared out by lot,
all her great men were thrown into chains.
¹¹You too shall hire yourself out, flaunting your sex;
you too shall seek refuge from the enemy.
¹²Your fortifications are like figs when they ripen:
if they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater.
¹³The troops [*Or people*] in your midst are a pack of women,
the gates of your country stand open to the enemy,
and fire consumes their bars.
¹⁴Draw yourselves water for the siege,
strengthen your fortifications;
down into the clay, trample the mortar,
repair the brickwork.
¹⁵Even then the fire will consume you,
and the sword will cut you down [*prob. rdg, Heb adds and consume you like the locust (or hopper)*].
Make yourselves many as the locusts,
make yourselves many as the hoppers,
¹⁶a swarm which spreads out and then flies away.
You have spies as numerous as the stars in the sky;
¹⁷your secret agents are like locusts,
your commanders like the hoppers
which lie dormant in the walls on a cold day;
but when the sun rises, they scurry off,
and no one knows where they have gone.
¹⁸Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria,
your flock-masters lie down to rest;
your troops are scattered over the hills,
and no one rounds them up.
¹⁹Your wounds cannot be assuaged, your injury is mortal;
all who have heard of your fate clap their hands in joy.
Are there any whom your ceaseless cruelty has not borne down?