

Nahum's War

Chapter 13



מִשְׁנָה נִינְוֵה סֵפֶר חֲזוֹן נַחֻם הַאֵלְקֹשִׁי: (Nahum 1:1)
 The oracle-of Nineveh book the of vision the Nahum the Elkoshite†

This ancient book begins with this simple introduction. What follows is straight forward. The all-consuming concern of Nahum's entire book, but three short chapters, centers in the preparation for a conflict, the conflict itself, and the titles of the two powers involved. But while envisioning the might of these two belligerent powers, Nahum at the same time forecasts the liberation of God's people from domination of the 'Assyrian' power, one of the two powers depicted, and also the vengeance of God as recorded in Chapter 1, verses 1-9. In an eloquent manner, Nahum affirms the existence of God and attests to God's power, justice, and character.

Today the writings of the book of Nahum, like other Biblical materials, pose relevancy questions. The question is significant since Biblical materials have been among the root documents and sources underlying the formation of much of western culture. But to the modern mind the question remains: Is the Bible still relevant to issues of contemporary civilization? Particularly, does the book of Nahum relate in any way to the circumstances of political society today?

Traditional Biblical interpretative systems and theology have generally relegated the entirety of Nahum's prophecy to a description of the destruction of Nineveh, capital city of ancient Assyria,¹ in August 612 B.C. at the hands of the Medes and Neo-Babylonians (Babylonians, Scythians and Medes) fourteen years after the death of King Ashurbanipal (685-626 BC) of Assyria.

There are problems with this interpretation, however. Babylonian cuneiform records reveal that the Babylonians reduced Judah to vassal status in 597-6 B.C., only fifteen to sixteen years after the defeat of ancient Nineveh. These pronouncements contradict several assertions of Nahum's book. These assertions are: (1) The wicked (enemy) was no longer to pass through Judah (Nahum 1:15),

† AalQoun, father of Nahum, was the son of a Hebrew family. They were among captives whom the Assyrian king Shalmanassar V resettled in Alqosh (A settlement in northern Iraq--about 31+ miles north of Mosul). These Hebrews had lived in peace with the Alqoshniye--the apparent precursor of the term Elkoshite. (Shalmanassar V reigned between 727-722 B.C.)

and (2) The Lord was to make "an utter end of it; affliction will not rise up a second time." (Nahum 1:9, NKJV) 'Affliction'; however, is still with us into the 21st century, some 2,500+ years after the book was written. And Judah--and Judah's descendents--have, over the years, been repeatedly subject to assault and ignominious treatment.

As noted, at the time of this war the conditions of peace were to be published by 'He that publisheth peace' (Nahum 1:15 KJV). It was he 'who brings good tidings, that proclaims peace!' that declared that 'never again shall the wicked come against you (Judah), he is utterly cut off (Nahum 1:15 RSV). As cited, at the time of the defeat of ancient Nineveh, these predictions did not come to pass. These contradictions and forecasted actions are thus problematic and may indicate a prophetic component to the prophecy as the aftermath of the defeat of ancient Nineveh failed to fulfill the forecast of Nahum--for these reasons the war of Nahum's prophecy may be predictive and a forecast of a future event and time. (This possibility assumes the inspired transcendent veracity of Nahum's writings and is fundamental to developing the predictive/forecast view.)

While predicting this conflict, the question is raised concerning the nature of ultimate reality. In this, reference is made to the materialistic assumptions of the ancient Egyptian city Thebes² (called 'populous' in some translations) and her fall in 664 BC (Nahum 3:8), just 52 years prior to the defeat of Nineveh. (Thebes was defeated by the Assyrian king Assurbanipal.) The question posed concerns the nature of a nation's ultimate destiny; that is, is a nation's destiny only materially controlled and oriented? The answer in Nahum is that a nation's destiny lies in the Providence of God, and ultimate reality involves moral considerations. In this instance the city under attack--the city titled "Nineveh"--was the capital of a marketing oriented society, a society that had "multiplied ...merchants above the stars of heaven." (Nahum 3:16 RSV) The implication is that a moral concern for economic justice did not follow. Her lack of conscience and economic exploitation are the primary reasons for the war and the ultimate defeat of this marketing oriented society. The message implication is that in spite of abundant wealth, substantial defense provisions, and advanced armaments, a nation's destiny lies in the Providence of God and is not just materially oriented and controlled. To some this is a radical unscientific view.

It is recognized that the Bible addresses fundamental moral conditions of human experience that extend throughout all time. The recognized universality and transcendent nature of Nahum's prophecy is one

reason Nahum's book has been included and retained in the body of sacred writings--the body of literature known as the Bible. If the application of Nahum's book is considered transcendent, with its contents universal, then application fulfillment extends beyond the local conditions and the time of its writing. Specifically, because of the universality of this prophetic book and because of the contradictions in its traditional application, the destruction of ancient Nineveh may not be singularly designated. The defeat of Nineveh thus may be a transcendent example, applying universally to conditions of moral neglect and desuetude whenever and wherever they occur, eliciting similar results as to what befell ancient Nineveh.

One power identified in the conflict recorded in Nahum's prophecy is entitled "Assyria," which is a hereditary title, revealing that it is the counterpart, an anti-type, of the once widespread empire of ancient Assyria, even as modern Babylon of Revelation 17, verse 5, is to be the counterpart of ancient Babylon, and "Egypt" of Revelation 11, verse 8, is the spiritual counterpart of ancient Egypt--the embodiment, the counterpart of a broad spiritual condition, a pervasive cultural attitude. (If this were not so, it could not be said that the Lord was crucified in 'Egypt' as is said in Revelation 11, verse 8, as the Lord was physically crucified in Jerusalem.)³ The other sinister protagonist, he that "shatters," (Nahum 2:1 RSV)--"He that dasheth in pieces" (KJV)--is identified by an acquired title earned by virtue of his potential to be exceedingly destructive. Manifestly it designates a nation headed by a ruler of no royal line, but rather by a person of anomalous character--this person has military daring and genius and potentially the weaponry to shatter and to destroy all who oppose him.

Additional textual references in Nahum suggest a modern application of this ancient prophecy. The predicted war occurs in the day when chariots 'jostle' (KJV) one against another in the broad ways and visually appear as torches, running like the lightning (Nahum 2:4).⁴ Do these prophetic writings anticipate the space age when such vehicles, with volatile propulsion systems, exist and perform in the visual manner Nahum described? If the space age is the time foreseen, then the prediction is that the two powers involved plunge into war in the days of advanced rocketry, when high orbital entry speeds have been achieved. If this is the time of the predicted war, then advanced technology is evident and available. If Nahum's writings predict a war in modern times, when advanced technology exists, it is hard to imagine that weapons of mass destruction would not be involved in the conflict. However destructive weapons of

mass destruction may be, the underlying transcendent rationale of the projected war is the restoration of the 'majesty of Jacob' (Nahum 2:2 RSV). As the Biblical purpose of the projected war is to bring the restoration of the 'the majesty of Jacob', it is textually clear that the raging war does not bring the end of the earth, but rather the restoration of the Davidic government and kingdom. This is yet another evidence that this prophecy is predictive of a time extending beyond the defeat of ancient Nineveh, as 'Jacob' was not restored at the time of the ancient conflict involving Nineveh, in 612 B.C.--in fact, as has been noted, historical records reveal that Judah was reduced to vassal status only a few years after the defeat of Nineveh. The restoration of 'Jacob' --Judah and Israel⁵--has not yet occurred--it is an event yet future.

The New Testament alludes to the development of adverse circumstances such as would follow from a war if weapons of mass destruction were to be employed in a wide-spread conflict--just such adverse circumstances are projected in Nahum's prophecy, particularly in Nahum chapter three. The similar New Testament prediction of the world's forecasted dire dilemma reads:

"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened." (Matthew 24:21-22 RSV)

Textual Analysis of Nahum's Book

Nahum Chapter One

יְהוָה	וְנָקַם	קְנֹא	אֱלֹהִים	הָאֵלֶּקְשִׁי:	נַחֻם	חִזּוֹן	סֵפֶר	נִינְוֵה	מִשָּׁא	(1:1)
Yahweh	is an	jealous,	God ^(1:2)	the	Nahum	the	book the	Nineveh	The	
	avenging		(is)	Elkoshite		of vision	of		oracle-of	
לְאֵיבָיו:	הוּא	וְנוֹטֵר	לְצַרְיָו	יְהוָה	נָקַם	חַמָּה	וּבַעַל	יְהוָה	נָקַם	
against ones	He	and	against	Yahweh	takes	wrath	and one	Yahweh	taking-	
being enemies		maintaining	His foes,		vengeance		filled of		vengeance	
of Him		wrath								

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