

**THE BOOK OF NAHUM**  
**Lesson 3, Chapter 1 Continued**

To sum up where we have been so far in Nahum, is that chapter 1:1 – 3a is about God’s vengeance on Assyria, and chapter 1:3b – 6 is about God’s power. As a quick reminder, when I add a letter to a verse number, it is essentially breaking a verse down into more than one part. Thus, verse 3a means the first half of verse 3, and verse 3b means the second half of that same verse. This is a common designation used by most Bible scholars and teachers to better pinpoint which part of a verse we might be talking about.

One of the things that is important to me, and that I try to highlight wherever appropriate, is that the Church... and especially the modern-day Church... insists on maintaining a child-like mental picture of Christ as gentile Jesus, so very meek and mild, who is just too nice, too small, too loving to ever confront sin, violence, and evil. But the Bible reveals something else entirely. In a mature, intellectually honest reading of His character as described in the New Testament, the world as it is... so full of malignant behavior, oppression, and evil that is embraced as a new “good” ... invites nothing but divine rebuke and catastrophic wrath. Believers... especially pointing a finger at typical institutional Christian leadership... this is the classic biblical example of idolatry. Idolatry is remaking God into an image we prefer and refusing to acknowledge the God that is. It is this rebellious nature of Israel that caused them 3 exiles, and untold heartache and oppression. And, the Church has adopted it down to the last detail and, just like for ancient Israel, blindly denies it and stubbornly refuses to repent and change.

I’m quite sure that what I said is a generalization, and it doesn’t describe every last Church organization. But if this describes yours, then I plead with you to step back from your doctrines and then compare them to what the Bible says, and not to your congregation’s apologetics that seeks to find a way to overturn what God says in His written Word. Your present and then eternal life is at stake. So, let’s all take Nahum to heart... just as with all the Minor Prophets... and not convince ourselves that this is for another people, who have a different and older god. It is for all us who consider ourselves God Worshipers, no matter what label we identify to.

Before we move on to the next section of Nahum chapter 1 that begins with verse 7, I want to embed in you the thought that God's vengeance is not impulsive. It also is not rigid. His anger doesn't boil over, out of control, at every sin or upon every crisis. As verse 3a says in such a truthful and comforting way:

**CJB Nahum 1:3a** ***Yehoveh is slow to anger, but great in power; and he does not leave the guilty unpunished...***

When the Bible uses the phrase "great in power" as it references God, it is an expression that is speaking of His mercy and grace. Yehoveh wants to give everyone more than the benefit of the doubt, and plenty of time to come to their senses to repent of their sins. But there is a point of no return, when His patience and grace ends. Where that is, no man on earth can know for sure.

When we arrive at verse 6, ending the section about the power of God, it comes with a warning that makes sure we all understand that God is in full control, and when He determines to enact His wrath, nothing can detour it or successfully battle against it.

**CJB Nahum 1:6** ***Who can withstand his fury? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, the rocks broken to pieces before him.***

Judgement is coming to Nineveh (all of Assyria in practice), and they have no hope. The Father's power to affect what He has determined is immeasurable. Let's move on to verse 7. First, we'll reread from verse 7 to the end of chapter 1.

### **RE-READ NAHUM CHAPTER 1:7 to end**

Nahum's poetic prophecy now shifts gears to pronounce God's goodness that is even greater than His vengeance. As I have demonstrated in the past, in what I call the Cycle of Sin, even though God will warn His people, then punish His people, He will also always offer restoration. It's no different here in

Nahum. However, this is NOT being offered to Assyria. Rather, this is but a statement of God's nature, and of His response to those that are His. The reality is that the repentance that He had offered Nineveh through the Prophet Jonah was a call for Assyria to become His people. What happened was that at first Nineveh accepted that offer, in a limited way became God's people, but rather rapidly that faded and they returned to their natural state of being God's enemies. This historical reality was told to the people of Judah by Yeshua, in the form of a Parable, 6 centuries later. It's familiar to us all.

**CJB Matthew 13:1-9** *That same day, Yeshua went out of the house and sat down by the lake; <sup>2</sup> but such a large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there while the crowd stood on the shore. <sup>3</sup> He told them many things in parables: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he sowed, some seed fell alongside the path; and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Other seed fell on rocky patches where there was not much soil. It sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow; <sup>6</sup> but when the sun had risen, the young plants were scorched; and since their roots were not deep, they dried up. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup> But others fell into rich soil and produced grain, a hundred or sixty or thirty times as much as had been sown. <sup>9</sup> Those who have ears, let them hear!"*

The ancient story of Nineveh is, of course, the story of seed scattered on rocky patches with little soil. So, when they heard Jonah, there was a sudden positive reaction and there was repentance. But that soil was shallow and there were no deep roots, and they just as quickly dried up. The result? The divine declaration of vengeance upon Nineveh (Assyria) with no opportunity to repent, as delivered by Nahum.

For Yeshua in this parable, and for the Old Testament in general, it is just another proof that the fanciful Evangelical Christian doctrine of once-saved-always-saved is revealed to be without basis in fact. The seed of salvation or deliverance can be sown, and there will be one of four things that will happen. It will be outright rejected and die upon impact. It will at first be accepted but not long later it will be renounced. It will be accepted, and all is well for a time

until other cares and concerns override it. So, because the roots were only surface deep, slow death happens until that plant dies. And finally, it can be that those seeds do as intended. Their root system steadily grows deeper, which makes the plant grow stronger and bigger, with eventually fruit of great quality and quantity being produced and then these plants produce more seeds that can be planted. The lesson of Christ's Parable of the Sower and the story of Nineveh are virtually identical.

**CJB Nahum 1:7** ***Yehoveh is good, a stronghold in time of trouble; he takes care of those who take refuge in him.***

A subtly different, but much better, interpretation of this verse is in the YLT.

**YLT Nahum 1:7** ***Good is Jehovah for a strong place in a day of distress. And He knoweth those trusting in Him.***

The difference is that the CJB speaks of God taking care of those who seek refuge in Him. But the more accurate meaning is about God knowing those who trust in Him. In the first case, it speaks of those who (on their own volition) decide to take refuge in God. In the second case, the issue is that while is a strong refuge in days of trouble, it is HE that makes the determination if YOU are someone who trusts in Him sufficiently and sincerely enough that He "knows" you to be one of His. Because we are dealing with poetry and precise meaning of the words can be secondary to the message, then I think it is fair to combine the idea of "God knowing" and "God caring for". That is, IF God knows one of His own, THEN it is foregone conclusion that He will be a refuge for a person. That is, IF He determines that He knows you, then you too may be admitted to His place of refuge. Listen to what Yeshua says that is exactly the thing, only using different words.

**CJB Matthew 7:21-23** ***<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. <sup>22</sup> On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will***

***tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'***

It is not our determination that because we go to Church or Synagogue, we pray, we say all the right things, that on the Day of Judgement God will rescue us and be a refuge for us. Rather, just as we find in Nahum, God must KNOW you. Yeshua will make the determination if your words and actions mean that He knows you, no matter how many times nor how strong you make claims that you are saved in His name.

Let me ask you a question. If you bow down to the Golden Calf, call Him Yeshua, and insist that He has saved you; if you pray to Him, and mention His name in everything you do, will that make you known to Him? The answer isn't hard to come to: it is "no". Why? Because all the while you were thinking you were doing good, you were committing idolatry. The entire time you thought you were praying to the Father and His Son, you were actually praying to an image of your creation, and you were depending upon that image of them that you preferred and were probably taught, rather than to who they really are. There is no salvation in that; only darkness. And we learn throughout God's Word that this is what the majority of people will do, certain that they are right and immune. Only a remnant will come out of that Babylon religious system, return to God's Word, and live a life of obedience towards God, joined to the covenant He made with Israel. And the only means to do that is full faith and trust in Yeshua, God's Son... not the one most of us have been told about by our traditional faith leaders... but rather the true Messiah, Yeshua, whose attributes and character is found only in the Bible.

The first few words of this verse are ***Tov Yehoveh*** (good is Yehoveh). Because this word ***tov*** is central to the Creation narrative of Genesis, then it transforms into playing an important role in legal terminology, especially in God's legal covenants with Israel. So, when "good" is used in reference to God, then it is a unique, special and highest form of good that is personified in Yehoveh. Let's again see that thought carried over to the New Testament and Yeshua.

**CJB Mark 10:17-18** ***17 As he was starting on his way, a man ran up, kneeled down in front of him and asked, "Good rabbi, what should I do to obtain eternal life?" 18 Yeshua said to him, "Why are you calling me good? No one is good except God!***

If a Believer knows neither the Torah nor the Prophets, it is near hopeless to try to understand why Yeshua would say such an odd thing as "no one is good except God". But, with this knowledge it now makes much more sense.

**CJB Nahum 1:8** ***But with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of [Ninveh's] place, and darkness will pursue his enemies.***

This is an interesting verse at least partially because of something that happened historically. The term "overwhelming flood" is, on the one hand, a metaphor for the unstoppable power of God's anger and wrath. And, knowing the way these Prophets tend to work, knowing one another's prophecies (if not, at times, actually knowing one another on a personal level), it is very likely meant to correspond to something Isaiah said about Assyria.

**CJB Isaiah 8:8** ***It will sweep through Y'hudah, flooding everything and passing on. It will reach even up to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the whole expanse of the land." God is with us!***

So, Isaiah speaks of Assyria as a flood overwhelming Judah, and now Nahum speaks of God as a flood overwhelming Assyria. This is not a coincidence. Yet, there is another side to this. The Hebrew word being translated as flood or torrent is **setep**. Taken as is, it is indeed a literal term that means a torrent or a moving and destructive flood of water. Further, Nineveh is labeled as a specific place where the flood occurs. Let me give this verse to you in a dynamic way that probably says it better in the way we speak in modern times in the West. "With a flood sweeping over, He (God) will make a complete devastation of Nineveh."

I see Nahum 1:8 as a prelude to what we will read early on in chapter 2 about what happens to Nineveh, the capital or at least principal city of Assyria.

**CJB Nahum 2:6-9** ***<sup>6</sup> [The king of Ninveh] assigns his officers; they stumble as they march; they hurry to its wall and set up shields to protect the battering ram. <sup>7</sup> The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace melts away. <sup>8</sup> Its mistress is stripped and carried away; her handmaids moan, they sound like doves, as they beat their breasts. <sup>9</sup> Ninveh is like a pool whose water ebbs away. "Stop! Stop!" But none of it goes back.***

This adds more credence to this prophecy that the flood is both a metaphor and it is real. That it is an actual flood of water that will destroy Nineveh, and at the same time, this is also a torrent of God's anger. Diodorus Siculus, a famed Greek Historian, writes in his Bibliotheca Historica that indeed the walls of Nineveh were destroyed by floodwaters due to the diverting of the Tigris River (he actually said it was the Euphrates, but in reality, Nineveh was built next to the Tigris).

Nineveh was a huge city of at least 150,000 people. 15 enormous entry gates were built into its tall walls. It had almost 8 continuous miles of city walls. A bit less than 2 miles of it was built along the riverbank of the Tigris. The Tigris did flood from time to time, and so diverters were built to help protect the city. It seems that about at the same time Babylon had joined with the Medes to attack Assyria, an unusual amount of rainfall happened. The river flooded, but the diverters were opened too late. The floodwaters undermined the entire length of the walls along the riverside, and down they went. This allowed a way in for Babylon and their ally, the Medes. In a most dramatic way, Nahuma's prophecy about Nineveh involving a flood was fulfilled.

Back to chapter 1 verse 8. The flood that will hit Nineveh will result in the end of it (meaning the end of Assyria). The word the CJB translates to "end", nearly all other translations make "complete" or "full end". The word is ***kalah***. It means a complete destruction; it will no longer and never again exist. In verses 8, 9, and 10 we'll also find the similar Hebrew word ***male*** (meaning completely) used repetitively. So, the message is that Yehoveh is going to obliterate Nineveh, as He did with Sodom. It expresses permanence...the finality of God's wrath. This message works in complementary fashion to the hidden acrostic we find in verses 1 – 3, which is "I am Yehoveh". So, first God

explains who He is: "I am Yehoveh". Then goes on to tell Nineveh what the completeness of their destruction shall be at His command. This is Yehoveh against Asshur (the god of Assyria); and Yehoveh is not only the victor, but Asshur cannot even put up a good fight. Further, Ashur's nation shall disappear from the face of the earth. For the ancient Middle East mind, this means that the god Ashur has either been destroyed or has no further purpose or influence on earth. Yehoveh has proved His superiority over Ashur. It is actually a latent response to a taunt from Assyria that has long oppressed Israel, found in Micah, the Prophet that preceded Nahum.

**CJB Micah 7:10** ***10 My enemies will see it too, and shame will cover those who said to me, "Where is Yehoveh your God?" I will gloat over them, as they are trampled underfoot like mud in the streets.***

Well, Yehoveh, Israel's God, has just answered their question. But even more notice the last few words of Micah 7:10. It is "trampled underfoot like mud in the streets". And how is Nineveh to be destroyed? By a flood of water, which of course turns the streets of Nineveh into mud. One final thing about verse 8. Notice it speaks of darkness pursuing God's enemies (here identified as Assyria). This darkness is, in Hebrew ***choshek***. It is a spiritual kind of darkness, as when we look around and speak of the darkness of this world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is the same kind of darkness that overflowed Egypt when God was throwing blow upon blow against Egypt to force Pharaoh to let His people go.

That is, it was not ***layil***, which essentially means the type of darkness that happens every night as a natural phenomenon caused by the setting of the sun. This is evil; the kind of darkness that causes the hair on your neck to stand on end. An evil darkness you feel. It is the lack of God's divine enlightenment and goodness. This is Assyria's fate.

**CJB Nahum 1:9** ***What are you planning against Yehoveh? He is making an end [of it]; trouble will not arise a second time.***

This verse continues the theme of the completeness of Assyria's demise and destruction. The JPS Bible does a superior job of translating this into modern English.

**JPS Nahum 1:9** *What do ye devise against Yehoveh? He will make a full end; trouble shall not rise up the second time.*

The opening word is **mah**, and the best way to translate it in this case is "whatever". There is some disagreement among scholars whether this is indeed a continuation of God's message to Assyria, or it has changed and now He is talking to Judah. The issue is the grammar in which, technically, the subject of this message is unclear. But, as we discussed in our Introduction to Nahum, this is only because Western academics do not take into consideration the realities of Hebrew poetry and so are looking for full and precise syntactic conformity the way Westerners approach literature. Bottom line: there is no issue here. Clearly Yehoveh is still talking to Assyria.

The message is that it doesn't matter whatever the plan is that someone might devise to defeat Yehoveh, thus defeating His people, Israel. There is no strategy, no other power (earthly or among the gods) to stop Him. Assyria, having for centuries been a Middle East superpower, doesn't believe that their defeat is possible. In Isaiah, the arrogant King of Assyria sent a message to Judah with Ravshakeh, the commander of Assyria's military, and boasted:

**CJB Isaiah 36:18-20** ***<sup>18</sup> Beware of Hizkiyahu; he is only deluding you when he says, "Yehoveh will save us." Has any god of any nation ever saved his land from the power of the king of Ashur? <sup>19</sup> Where are the gods of Hamat and Arpad? Where are the gods of S'farvayim? Did they save Shomron from my power? <sup>20</sup> Where is the god of any of these countries that has saved its country from my power, so that Yehoveh might be able to save Yerushalayim from my power?"***

These words, bearing this thought, will happen again, perhaps sooner than the believing world is ready for. It will come from the lips of the Anti-Christ as he assumes his throne. And the response of Yehoveh will also be the same as it was for that other false god, Asshur.

To continue in verse 9, the final words that “the trouble (that Assyria causes) shall not rise up a second time”, just further stresses the theme of finality. In so many ways, what Nahum is prophesying, and what the Lord is explaining, is the way the entire End Times will work itself out. Everything that God has said and planned and done for millennia after millennia will finally come about for the whole world to see. The End Times is all about finality. The evil things Satan has been doing, and the wicked ways of humanity that God has dealt with over and over again, come to a complete end. To quote Nahum in verse 9: “**...trouble shall not rise up the second time.**” What a hope, and promise, that we can live by and for every day. This is why God’s Believers can awaken every morning to a dysfunctional world and still harbor joy.

Because Nahum is such an unusual document, and a particularly challenging document that opens up so many avenues of thought and exploration, I want to detour for only a moment to use this part of verse 9 as a teaching point to demonstrate how gentile Christian doctrine sprang up and how radically it can change what is otherwise clear biblical truth in order to separate itself from the faith of the Hebrews.

Origen, a gentile Believer from Alexandria, Egypt, was alive and influential in determining the canon of the New Testament, which was established shortly after the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century... almost 2 centuries after Yeshua lived and died. He was regarded then as a great theologian, and later as an early Church Father; although the Jewish Believers at that time didn’t tend to hold that same mindset about him. His view of the ending of verse 9 was significantly different from anything the Hebrews had ever interpreted or taught. He decided that “trouble shall not rise up the second time” had to do with God’s grace and forgiveness through Christ, and little to do with God’s vengeance upon Assyria. That is, he determined that it meant that sinners would only be punished once for any sins they committed; and those sinners even included Satan. Once that punishment happened, the sinner including the Devil Himself, would be restored to his/her previously purified state. Here we see one of the rationales or justifications for what would, many centuries later, become a Church doctrine among some large denominations of once-saved-always-saved.

Origen is considered by many Christian scholars to be a huge contributor to, or perhaps the prime originator of, what is called Christian apologetics. He was a prolific writer who defended the growing body of gentile Believers' doctrines in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and forward, which eventually led to the creation of the Constantinian Church in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and a basis for their doctrines that solidified a full split from Jewish Believers not only by belief and doctrine, but also by law. I point this out to demonstrate just how early in history these sorts of erroneous beliefs began, and what tremendous influence they had, and continue to have, on the Church.

**CJB Nahum 1:10** *For like men drunk with liquor, they will be burned up like tangled thorns, like straw completely dry.*

It is time to learn another technical word that matters. Before we discuss that, we find that in Hebrew this verse begins with the tiny word **ki** that is nearly always translated as "for". In Hebrew poetry, however, this word is used for an extended purpose. It is placed at important points within the narrative and typically indicates the beginning or the ending of a canto. A canto is but a section or a significant structural division in the poem similar to (but not exactly the same as) a paragraph in Western literature. We can think of a canto as a complete unit of thought.

I stress: this applies to Hebrew poetry using Hebrew poetry rules. The same word (**ki**) used in regular prose doesn't operate the same way as it does in poetry. In our case, Nahum 1:1 – 10 is a canto. It is essentially a psalm, which some might also call a hymn. And, since verse 10 begins the final remark before the psalm ends, then it is indicated by using the Hebrew word **ki**. Even though **ki** can be used to mean a few different things, whether it is used in Hebrew prose or poetry, what it means here is "on account of". That is, it is causal. What came before it has been spoken, and now as a result of all that has been said, the following will happen. Of course, one must determine exactly where the beginning point of what came before it is. And here, what came before it begins with verse 1.

This is so very important to our understanding. J.M.P. Smith back in 1911 said about this section of Nahum: “No translation affording any connected sense is possible within limits of ordinary grammar interpretation”. That is, until a much better understanding of Hebrew poetry was acquired (something that was only in its formative stage in 1911), the grammar as it was currently understood could not allow any scholar to make any sense of what was written. That understanding is much advanced in 2026 to that time, and now we can pay less attention to the grammatical eye-candy that can throw us off track, and more to the importance of the structure and rhythms of Hebrew poetry so we can attain the intended meaning. If I may, this is why I pulled you through the knothole in our Introduction to Nahum so as to explain why that complex knowledge of structure is the key to deciphering what Nahum had to say.

The CJB, as have a couple of others, re-ordered the words of this verse. There was no real harm in meaning, but it further obscures that structural purpose that Nahum originally created. So, here is what we get when we use that original word order.

<sup>JPS</sup> **Nahum 1:10** ***For though they be like tangled thorns, and be drunken according to their drink, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.***

The first question, then, is who is the “they” that is like tangled thorns? If we use strict grammar rules, there is (as Smith said) no solution. But, because we’re dealing with ancient Hebrew poetry, and because we can know for certain that we’re reading the last line of a prophetic Psalm about the destruction of Nineveh (representing all Assyria), then it is easily discernable that the “they” is either Nineveh or Assyria or likely both.

In the early 2000’s, Julia Myers O’Brien made an observation about this passage that I think is actually right on the mark. She said: “The verse, like the images it employs, twists and staggers” in a drunken manner. Yes! Exactly! The structure was made with a certain amount of intentional staggering around (instead of being straightforward) to give one the *emotion* or sense of drunkenness when reading or hearing it.

Moving away for a bit from the technical aspects of Nahum, the overall sense of this verse is meant to paint Nineveh as easily combustible as a stack of super-dried thorns, and as helpless and irrational as a drunk could be moments before he finally passed out. God promises confusion to His enemies when He deals with them in His righteous wrath. People and nations that wind up in this state have jumped into a Doom Loop. They cannot think logically; their spiritual path to knowledge is blocked; they live in a condition of delusion, and there is no longer a way out. Thus, they are weak and can be easily defeated because they are in process of destroying themselves. However, all of this is because of what God has decided to do to them. What we might think of as being self-induced is actually God-induced. It was induced because they refused to obey, or to acknowledge, Yehoveh. So, God gave them up... permanently... and this is the result.

The completeness, the finality, of Assyria's demise and destruction is emphasized once again in the structure of this verse. The final word of this verse (in the Hebrew word order) is **male**, which means "completely". We've seen a few verses earlier how the terms **male** and **kalah** (which means a full end) are interspersed throughout this psalm. So, the structure pretty well demands that the final word be **male**, in order to end this canto. Verse 11 begins a new canto.

**CJB Nahum 1:11** *Out of you, [Ninveh,] he came, one who plots evil against Yehoveh, who counsels wickedness.*

Before we incorporate verse 11 into the teaching, I want to sum up what we have encountered in the opening 10 verses of the Book of Nahum. I can do no better than how Elizabeth Achtemeier put it back in 1986. She says this about that psalm: "We have here only a little less than a complete presentation of the biblical witness to God's person: the testimony to His covenant love and to His patient mercy; His intimate knowledge of his own and His protection of them; His just Lordship over His world and His might in maintaining His rule; His specific but also eschatological defeat of all who would challenge His sovereignty."

What we see in that opening 10 verses sets the tone for all of Nahum. It seems to surprise or, more truthfully, simply fly right over the heads of its Christian readers who believe that all of these characteristics of Yehoveh never existed prior to Christ. Thus, making Yeshua the start of a new era of God, or even an entirely new God. Yet, from Genesis forward, these *are* the attributes of the Father repeated hundreds of times. Already, long before Nahum, God's character as we find it in Nahum was established in a Psalm of David. We shall end our time together today with that Psalm, which so greatly parallels this hymn to open the Book of Nahum.

**CJB Psalm 99:1-9** ***YEHOVEH is king; let the peoples tremble. He sits enthroned on the k'ruvim; let the earth shake! <sup>2</sup> YEHOVEH is great in Tziyon; he is high above all the peoples. <sup>3</sup> Let them praise your great and fearsome name (he is holy): <sup>4</sup> "Mighty king who loves justice, you established fairness, justice and righteousness in Ya'akov." <sup>5</sup> Exalt YEHOVEH our God! Prostrate yourselves at his footstool (he is holy). <sup>6</sup> Moshe and Aharon among his cohanim and Sh'mu'el among those who call on his name called on YEHOVEH, and he answered them. <sup>7</sup> He spoke to them in the column of cloud; they kept his instructions and the law that he gave them. <sup>8</sup> YEHOVEH our God, you answered them. To them you were a forgiving God, although you took vengeance on their wrongdoings. <sup>9</sup> Exalt YEHOVEH our God, bow down toward his holy mountain, for YEHOVEH our God is holy!***

Next time we'll open with Nahum chapter 1 verse 11.