

**THE BOOK OF NAHUM**  
**Lesson 6, Chapter 2 Conclusion**

We ended with Nahum chapter 2 verse 8 in our previous lesson. We'll review for a moment and continue. Verse 8 (in the CJB) says this:

**CJB Nahum 2:8** *Its mistress is stripped and carried away; her handmaids moan, they sound like doves, as they beat their breasts.*

Another and different version does a better job (and please note that it is a different verse number than the CJB but that is only because of where the different Bible versions end chapter 1 and begin chapter 2).

**YLT Nahum 2:7** *And it is established -- she hath removed, She hath been brought up, And her handmaids are leading as the voice of doves, Tabering on their hearts.*

As we discussed last time, this is a terribly difficult verse to translate, and especially to make any sense of it from a modern Western English language viewpoint. In fact, one particular scholar listed 12 different translations, but only as examples... because that only illustrates how many and varied translations exist out there even beyond those 12. Frankly, we need to view the opening of the CJB translation critically, because it starts immediately with leaving out the important Hebrew word that begins this verse: **hussab**. And, generally, that word means to decree something. The YLT version (and most others) will use some word close to the meaning of "decree", such as "establish". But the emphatic point of that opening word is that it is God that has decreed, ordained, established what is happening to Assyria. He has determined that it is Assyria's turn to be conquered and its many people exiled; so, regardless of what nation or group of nations is accomplishing this invasion and exile (in this case a coalition of the Medes and Babylon), they are doing so because Yehoveh has caused it to happen. The remainder of the verse is essentially how the emotions of the various people of Assyria, from the common to the elite, would erupt when this prophecy is fulfilled. And... history shows us that this is what occurred.

One more point and we'll move on. That difficult word ***hussab*** has a nuance to it that is equally difficult to simply set aside. It is given to us in the feminine gender form, and thus the pronouns that follow are also feminine, such that we see "***she*** hath removed" and "***she*** hath been brought up, and ***her*** handmaids". I don't want to get too technical, here, but I'll say this: there is good evidence that base-60 matrix arithmetic and musical metaphor that is found in this section of Nahum (things we talked about at our Introduction to Nahum) are likely at play here. And, indeed, that definitely is how the Hebrew poetry of Nahum is structured. Some very good academics find that within the word ***hussab*** is the number 15. As we have previously discussed, Assyria's gods were numbered and named according to their hierarchy in their pantheon of gods and goddess, beginning with the number 10 and then ending at 60... with 10 being the least and 60 the highest ranked. In the Assyrian system, the number 15 represents the goddess Ishtar, and so this verse may well be meant to be in relation to Ishtar, and thus the remainder of the words of this verse are now, appropriately, "she" and "her". I cannot vouch for this as being certain, but it is credible and it wouldn't at all be a surprise since Ishtar was always a pagan goddess that Israel especially gravitated towards. This issue might seem insignificant and obscure to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but it would have had meaningful impact to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Israelites because it once again brings into the play the interweaving of the cosmic/spiritual realm with the earthly/tangible. Let's move on.

### **RE-READ NAHUM CHAPTER 2:9 to end**

Verse 9 says this:

**CJB Nahum 2:9 *Ninveh is like a pool whose water ebbs away. "Stop! Stop!" But none of it goes back.***

A better and more complete translation is:

**YLT Nahum 2:8 *And Nineveh is as a pool of waters, From of old it is -- and they are fleeing! 'Stand ye, stand;' and none is turning!***

The beginning translated-into-English words of both of these Bible versions are good. Notice in the CJB it says, "is like", whereas in the YLT it says, "is as". For us, these are synonymous terms that indicate that what we are reading is meant as a metaphor. Nineveh is not literally a pool of water, but rather it can be compared to a pool of water that is draining away. Nineveh's existence, its incredible infrastructure, and its people are collapsing and dissolving. The greater lesson for all Bible students is that whether Old Testament or New, whether coming from the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek, we see the terms "is like" or "is as" telling us that what comes next is meant metaphorically and not literally. Thus, in the New Testament when Yeshua uses a series of parables and illustrations to explain the coming Kingdom of God, they all invariably begin with "is as" or "is like". Thus, we are to view the larger picture about what is said, and we should never try to make it any more than that. Too often pastors (especially) will go on and make entire sermons based upon the characteristics of the object used as the metaphor, to try and make some nuanced points. And, just about as invariably, the verse doesn't mean that nuanced view at all. So, here in Nahum, using water that is draining away to illustrate what is happening to the city of Nineveh is only meant to create an impactful mental picture, and is not some type of precise historical record with extra meaning that we get from thinking about all the attributes of water.

This verse continues with the idea of finality, which is perhaps the overriding point. This ancient and magnificent city that its people had such faith and a feeling of security in, shockingly has come to its end. The city walls are breached, even collapsing along the riverfront, and the people who have yet to be captured are fleeing. Not even the Assyrian soldiers will stand their ground. None have turned back, and none will. This is not an exile in which the people will eventually return, unlike what Israel has experienced over the centuries.

Verse 10 continues the image of the destruction of Nineveh.

**CJB Nahum 2:10 *Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! There is no end to the treasure, weighed down with precious things.***

While the CJB does a credible job with this verse, the NAS version adds some depth.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Nahum 2:9** *Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! For there is no limit to the treasure-- Wealth from every kind of desirable object.*

In our modern way of thinking, “payback” time has arrived for the Assyrian Empire. The wealth that Assyria stole, extorted, and plundered from the many nations they forced to be part of their empire, is massive. The wealthiest city in the world became like a drained container of water: empty. While the Hebrew words aren’t here, the thought is. All these poetic lines describing the complete vanquishing of Assyria are meant to conjure up the image of the primordial time before the Creation when the earth was *tohu wabohu*... formless and void.

To this point, as we back away to get a panoramic view of all that Nahum is prophesying, what we see is that a representative of Israel’s army (a sentinel, or a messenger) has run from the battle scene to tell everyone in Jerusalem of the good news that Israel has won the battle and their enemy has been destroyed. Now, peace, security, and restoration can happen. The enemy is no more; so much so that Judah can even resume their prescribed pilgrimage biblical feasts that had been either discontinued or greatly hampered for so very long. This is represented by Nahum telling the people to come and confirm their vows.

The generalized term “*belial*” is used as a means to convey that an evil nation has been rendered neutered; they have no means to bother Israel, ever again. In a vivid contrast to what God is promising to Israel, nothing but mayhem, panic, and total destruction is destined for the evil nation that has so harmed God’s people. So, in Nahum’s prophecy where that evil nation is Assyria, with its capital city Nineveh, they are doomed without hope and ought to be making preparations for what is coming. That preparation must begin by believing what God’s Prophet Nahum is telling them. The irony is that Jonah, many years earlier, brought good tidings to Nineveh that they might hear God and repent, so that God will not destroy them. Nineveh at first accepted and then later recanted. So, now God sends Nahum to Assyria with the opposite message: your actions have caused Yehoveh to determine to show no mercy

at all to Assyria. There is no second chance to repent. Their fate is catastrophically disintegrated as a nation, never to rise again.

This destruction of Nineveh can best be pegged to 612 B.C. Judah, of course, rejoiced at this. The reform king of Judah at that time was Josiah and he instituted some large changes in the Hebrew society and Temple Priesthood in that era, but it didn't last for long. Only a few years later, the Israelites backslid, and so God sent Babylon to invade Judah and send the Jewish people packing to Babylon in exile.

I have mentioned a few times that I have a goal of teaching all 12 of the Minor Prophets in a row, without pause, rather than teaching some other Bible book. This is because of the consistency of message of the combined 12 prophets, and when taken as a whole, the incredible things that are revealed both historically and what is in our current (and probably rather immediate) future. I realize that the bulk of the Church long ago abandoned the Old Testament Prophets and rely mainly on the Book of Revelation (sometimes adding a bit of Daniel to it). However, by doing this, the entire context for the Book of Revelation is lost, and so some strange ideas can emerge that leads God's people in the wrong direction. Do you want to know what is in store for us... we 21<sup>st</sup> century Believers and God worshippers? Then, study the 12 Minor Prophets and do it in the book order as we find them in our Bibles. Folks, we are to live our lives in expectation of what is revealed about the End Times, and so what we *can* do to prepare for it. It begins by searching out God for authentic truth and ends with our sincere faith in Yehoveh and His Son Yeshua. But in doing so, the Prophets make it clear that after we have entered into a true relationship with God, that we believe Him enough to take action to prepare for what is coming, because it will be sudden and devastating, worldwide. The reversal of fortunes we read about for Israel and their enemies, will become in the End Times the reversal of fortunes for God's trusting Believers versus everyone else who is not. Yet, never think Believers will somehow avoid it all as the Church often teaches... falsely. We will be caught up in it and suffer collateral damage.

As we move into chapter 2 verse 11 and the remainder of this chapter, it is interesting that Nineveh (Assyria) is described (in yet another metaphor) as the Lion's Den. Beginning with verse 11, we read:

**CJB Nahum 2:11** *She is void, vacant; she is made bare. Hearts are melting, knees are knocking; every stomach is churning, every face is drained of color.*

First, notice the continuation of the feminine pronouns. At the least, it means we are still speaking about Nineveh and on the other hand, it is probably inclusive of the goddess Ishtar. At the most, it may be giving this passage the dual and cosmic dimension of including their god system, as represented by Ishtar. After all, nations, kings, and their gods were organically connected in ancient times, pretty much universally. So, while we are forced to add this element to our understanding in a rather frontal lobe kind of way (because modern people consider this idea so primitive), for the ancients who heard what we are reading, they already thought in those terms subconsciously. What this means is that the "she" and "her" of that last couple of verses are probably meant to address both Ishtar and the City of Nineveh. And the term Nineveh is meant to refer to both the walls and buildings of Nineveh as well as to all the people in Assyria in their various classes and roles.

It again helps to see this verse in its fully expanded, literal form.

**YLT Nahum 2:10** *She is empty, yea, emptiness and waste, And the heart hath melted, And the knees have smitten together, And great pain is in all loins, And the faces of all of them have gathered paleness.*

In this expanded form we more vividly see (in the Hebrew) words that mean emptiness, waste, void, vacant that are in line with what we read in Genesis about pre-Creation. So, it is much akin to using phrases like "as though it had never existed" or "before it ever existed as concerns the future fate for Nineveh.

I won't get into the "why" of it, but I'll only say that the way the Hebrew words are used in this verse are quite important to the poetic structure of this part of Nahum. So, keep in the forefront of your mind that the words chosen and the way they are ordered has more to do with word count and word weight and rhythm than in attaining exactness of meaning. So, the idea underlying this verse is that Nineveh's decimation is imminent, and it will be total.

It is no coincidence that in the Hebrew, we find 7 terms used here to symbolically describe this catastrophe; 7 being the ideal number of completeness. Three of these terms are essentially synonymous (destruction, desolation, and disintegration), and four of them represent parts of the body (hearts, knees, loins, and faces). Four has a representative meaning of all parts of something, as in the 4 compass directions, or in the statement "the 4 corners of the world".

So, while those 3 synonyms are used to describe the result of what will happen, those 4 body parts have actions and conditions associated with each of them. Thus, we have melting, smitten, great pain, and paleness. Melting of the heart is utter despondency. Smitten knees mean they are so terrorized that the shaking of their knees won't support their weight. Since the loins are thought to be where strength and courage come from, then pain in them means that such strength and courage are not forthcoming. And finally, the paleness of their faces is just what it sounds like. We're all aware of how the color can drain from a human face when overwhelmed by sickness, fear and danger.

**CJB Nahum 2:12** ***What has become of the lion's den, the cave where the young lions fed, where lion and lioness walked with their cubs, and no one made them afraid?***

It is always important for us to recognize how one prophet plays off of another. And how one divine oracle provides a basis for another. I want us to briefly look at Isaiah where the people that are in danger of punishment is Israel, and the nations God is using to punish Israel are therefore strong.

**CJB Isaiah 5:24-30** ***<sup>24</sup> Therefore, as fire licks up the stubble, and the chaff is consumed in the flame; so their root will rot, and their flowers scatter like dust; because they have rejected the Torah of Yehoveh-Tzva'ot, they have despised the word of the Holy One of Isra'el. <sup>25</sup> This is why Yehoveh's anger blazed up against his people, why he stretched out his hand against them and struck them [so hard that] the hills shook, and corpses lay like trash in the streets. Even after all this, his anger remains, his upraised hand still threatens. <sup>26</sup> He will give a signal to faraway nations, he will whistle for them to come from the ends of the earth; and here they come, so fast!- <sup>27</sup> none of them tired or stumbling, none of them sleeping or drowsy, none with a loose belt, none with a broken sandal-strap. <sup>28</sup> Their arrows are sharp, all their bows are strung, their horses' hoofs are like flint, and their [chariot] wheels like a whirlwind. <sup>29</sup> They will roar like lions- yes, roaring like young lions, they growl and seize the prey and carry it off, with no one to rescue. <sup>30</sup> On that day they will growl at them, like the sea when it growls- and when one looks toward land, one sees darkness closing in; the light is dissipated in the obscuring overcast.***

Everything in Isaiah about Israel and their relationship with their enemies is turned on its head in Nahum. Just as this Isaiah prophecy depicts God's terrible anger, and the devastation He is going to cause, and how a lion's den is involved as a metaphor, so we find in Nahum but for an opposite effect. This is not a divine change of mind; it is for two different periods in history, and for two different purposes.

The use of a lion as a metaphor is kind of interesting. Assyria's national symbol was the lion. And Judah's national symbol is the lion. The goddess Ishtar was depicted in images and idols a few different ways, and one was as a lioness. The lion always had spiritual overtones for Israel and for Judah (just as it still does), and it was the same for Assyria's image as a lion. In the New Testament, Satan is depicted as a "roaring lion" who prowls around looking for someone to devour.

It is also interesting that as many as 9 different epithets are used in this passage for the lion, and most of them to indicate an entire family of lions,

from a helpless lion cub up to a ferocious male. The idea being an ideal of completeness of the referenced nation having every possible attribute of a lion, at every stage of its life. It is a lion through and through and always has been.

The rhetorical question of “what has become of the lion’s den”, is meant to evoke an image of a person arriving at the sight of Nineveh, expecting to see one of the wonders of the world, and instead finding nothing. The former predators suddenly had become prey, and so as lions do, they kill and gobble up everything they killed. Now, the situation was reversed. God was the lion of Judah, and Nineveh the prey. Really, this is all said in a taunting tone. Once again throwing it in the face of those who had asked of Judah back in the Book of Micah:

**CJB Micah 7:10** *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.*

Prophecy fulfilled.

The final words of Nahum 2:12 referred to Assyria’s lion nature by saying: “... and no one made them afraid”. In other words, as the world’s only Superpower of that time, they feared no one. They felt that they could overcome anyone and anything. They had only pride and no humility.

Pride can affect more than individuals. We usually take the famous Proverb as speaking only to persons.

**CJB Proverbs 16:18** *Pride goes before destruction, and arrogance before failure.*

This proverb is about as universal of a truism that there is. Whether as a person, a family, a business, a nation, or a ministry, once we move to pride, destruction is sure to follow. Thinking that we are the pinnacle of humanity about anything is the opposite of humility. Thinking we cannot fail; or believing that God is telling us we cannot fail, can happen especially if we are

blessed with success in any these forms I mentioned. I've seen so many great businesses collapse nearly overnight because their owner saw their amazing success as being on account of their equally amazing business prowess. I've seen thriving ministries fall apart because they are so certain that their faith will answer every challenge they face, even when they have been the creators of their own problems. They didn't account for when things didn't go right; something which is inevitable in the life of any person, or family, or congregation and all the way up the ladder to the existence of any nation. In other words, the lack of humility is ALWAYS ultimately deadly... it not a matter of **if**, it is of **when**. This attitude well describes Assyria, and the results are still there for all to see, as Nineveh remains to this day but a very visible, ancient ruin. And what is so revealing about all this, is that this nation did not lack resources of any kind. They had it all. But, because of Assyria's collective pride and cruelty, God strengthened Babylon and provided the unlikely conditions for what seemed impossible, to happen. What an enduring lesson. And, for any of us who have learned it, it is nearly always by the hard way. Let me assure you; a God-principle is that if you don't learn from your mistake, God will continue to try to teach you the lesson.

The metaphor of the lion and his den continue in verse 13.

**CJB Nahum 2:13** ***The lion would tear up food for his cubs and strangle prey for his lionesses; he used to fill his caves with prey, his lairs with torn flesh.***

All these continuing references to lions and to a lion family are meant to complete the metaphorical picture. Everything is in the sense of this being in the past. Each piece of the metaphor was meant to be transferred to a characteristic of Assyria. And, by the way: did the lion think he was ever doing anything wrong? While non-human earthly creatures are not subject to the vagaries of good and evil, people and nations are. The lions had no conscience about killing prey (they usually went after the weakest when they were on the hunt). And, while we ought to never take a metaphor too far, clearly Assyria had no conscience about their homicidal brutality, and their thinking they had the right to rule over as much of the known world that they could capture. Assyria had a God-given moral imperative to follow; but lions don't. Thus, we

are never to paint lions in an evil light, or as that being part of the metaphorical sense of a comparison. Only humans are to be moral creatures. Only humans *can* choose right from wrong. But, when our religious or national doctrines and laws mask what God says is right and wrong, then we can do wrong every day, every year, and think we are doing right. Israel suffered from that, numerous times in their history. The wise person remains on guard against this such that the Lord doesn't have to take us to the woodshed to remind us.

The concluding verse of chapter 2 is this:

**CJB Nahum 2:14** *"I am against you," says Yehoveh-Tzva'ot. "Her chariots I will send up in smoke, the sword will consume your lion cubs, I will destroy your prey from the earth, and your envoys' voices will be heard no more."*

I much prefer the way that the Young's Literal Translation puts it.

**YLT Nahum 2:13** *Lo, I am against thee, An affirmation of Jehovah of Hosts, And I have burned in smoke its chariot, And thy young lions consume doth a sword, And I have cut off from the land thy prey, And not heard any more is the voice of thy messengers!*

Since the Hebrew word to begin this verse is *hineni* (from the root *hinei*), then because this is in the format of poetry, this is the indicator that a new section of this poem's structure has begun. This new section is the climax to what has been said thus far.

I've often claimed that the most fearsome words in the entire Bible are in Matthew 7, beginning with verse 23.

**NAS Matthew 7:23** *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*

This is essentially the same as we read here in Nahum when God says, "I am against you". That is not a position any human ought to ever want to find

themselves. We have read book after book in the Bible that explains, with explicit details, what happens to those whom God is against. It is terrible and it is not survivable. Paul, in the Book of Romans, puts this in a more positive way.

**CJB Romans 8:31** *What, then, are we to say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

All these verses address the same thing: our condition and position before the Lord, based upon His terms and not our own. Based upon His Word, and not on the doctrines of men. When God is against us, then the notion is that He is having direct involvement in whatever is bad happening to us, as it appears in verse 13 when God uses His name to make that clear. Therefore, when it comes to the burning of the chariots, that is also Him. Here, the chariots stand for the entire military. In fact, it was common in covenantal treaties between nations to literally speak of burning a nation's chariots as a curse for the violator of that covenant. Since chariots stand for the entire military, then it is not surprising that the next threat is that the young lions (which stand for a nation's warriors), will die in combat. The inference, here concerning Assyria is, of course, their soldiers losing battles that in the past they had won.

Although it is worded most peculiarly the next threat concerning Assyria and their prey is not as the CJB has it (that the prey are being destroyed); but rather that Assyria will be cut-off from their prey. That is, the people and nations that the Assyrians go after and subjugate (the prey) will no longer have to fear Assyria. This is worded strangely in order for this to work within the poetic structure. The final threat is that Assyria's envoys, their ambassadors and representatives, will no longer carry their instructions to other nations. This is speaking of the end of their government's influence on other nations.

Before we move on chapter 3, I want to make a couple of comments. God is completely aware of those nations and persons who attempt to rule over others by means of violence and brutality. This is doubly so when that nation worships another god. When nations pervert God's justice system and instead of operating based on God's principle of *mishpat*... justice... they will inevitably

face God's wrath. Most nations and people will feel that wrath during their earthly time of habitation; some people and especially national leaders, might not experience God's judgment until after their death. Either way, it is a certainty.

But, when Assyria decided to take on Israel, to mock the God of Israel, and to harass Israel endlessly, their fate on earth was decided. Today, Israel faces a number of enemies, many from the Arab speaking nations that surround it. It seems that even though it is somewhat disguised, the reality is that this animosity against Israel and against Israel's God, has spread to many parts of the Western world including several nations in Europe and a goodly part of American society. But, for the last 25 years or so, the biggest enemy of Israel that constantly violently attacks it has been Iran. The nation of Iran uses a few different proxies to act on their behalf: Hamas, Fatah, Hezbollah, and the Houthis to name a few. Lately, Iran has been attacking Israel directly from the Iranian homeland. What is the result? As of the time I speak, the USA has joined Israel in attacking the homeland of Iran. Virtually all their leadership has been killed, and even their replacement leaders were killed off in a matter of a few days. Their economy is decimated, their military is but a fraction of what it was only a couple of weeks ago, and if this continues, much of their civilian infrastructure will be destroyed. But little known to most people, Iran is also suffering their worst drought on record. Their water supply has dried up in most parts of the country, and there are actual plans to move their capital city of Tehran to an entire new location in Iran, to one of the few places remaining that has a better supply of water.

Anyone that thinks that geopolitics is the great driver of this war with Iran is mistaken. This is Yehoveh pouring out His wrath on Israel's oppressors. Yes, He is of course using human armies and nature to inflict that wrath. And, no doubt, it was the Lord creating the circumstances for the USA to rise up and involve themselves in this war with a nation that is far away from us; it was His doing all the way (even though it certainly seems otherwise to most earthlings). This is why it is critical that all of God's Worshipers read, learn, know, and believe God's Prophets, because it is there that explains all the turmoil, chaos, wars, and injustice that we see happening from one end of our planet to the other. Within those Holy Scriptures is the truth, and the

revelation to explain why what is happening, is happening, and where it is all leading.

It is quite unique among the histories of nations that Israel could be taken, captured, its people scattered and yet the nation is reconstituted on the same soil, by the same people, whom God gave it to, over 3000 years ago. And, while all other nations on earth, along with its most prominent cities, will come and go in relatively short cycles, the nation of Israel and especially the earthly and symbolic city of Jerusalem, is always to be understood in eschatological terms. A new and perfect Jerusalem is on its way to emerging, just as will a new and perfect Temple arise. And it, and the whole world, will be ruled over by a perfect person: the Messiah. All that we see happening today, and for a very long time in our past, and as it continues into a certain future, has a divinely ordained reason, purpose, and goal. That goal is not from a human source, even though Emperors and tyrants of all kinds believe their plans can bring them untold wealth and power. Rather, the purpose and goal that history is racing towards fulfills the redemptive will of the One God of Israel. And it will not be impeded or defeated. This *is* the message of all the Prophets, and it is most vivid in Nahum.

As we are about to begin Nahum chapter 3, I'll preface it with this: God is going to make it clear that Nineveh (as representative of Assyria) has brought its terrible fate upon its own head. So severely have they gone against God's justice and ordinances that, like Sodom of the distant past, all that will remain of them will be a memory of lost glory, pagan idolatry, and moral degradation on an immense scale.

So, in chapter 3 God will reiterate why Nineveh was destroyed at His command. And, that this action was inevitable for them, as it has been throughout history for nations as wicked as Assyria is, and doubly-so for nations that insist on attacking and harming God's people, Israel.

We will stop here and begin chapter 3 next time.