



Nahum

Nahum is written to the southern kingdom of Judah after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, prophesying the demise of the Assyrian empire. This promise of hope was designed to give Judah encouragement to persevere in the face of the tyranny and oppression that they were currently experiencing from the Assyrian empire. The prophecies appear to be addressed to the King of Assyria but the real audience is Judah.



How long will it take?

Reading time: 8 mins
Short of time? Just read 1.1-15; 3.13-19



Genre

Prophecy



Inspiring quotes

The Lord is slow to anger but great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

(Nahum 1.3)

⁷The Lord is good, a stronghold in a day of trouble; he protects those who take refuge in him, ⁸even in a rushing flood.

(Nahum 1.7-8a)



Anything tricky?

As with many of the prophetic books, Nahum represents God as angry and pouring out this anger on humanity, this time on Judah's enemies. Most uncomfortably of all,

God's anger is described in 3.5 as revealing the nakedness of a woman by way of punishment. Many people find this language very difficult indeed.



About the Author

Nahum the Elkoshite

What do we know about him?

Nothing – neither Nahum nor Elkosh are mentioned in elsewhere in the Bible.



About the times

The content of Nahum indicates that the book was written at the end of the seventh century bc. The Babylonians began to challenge the Assyrian empire in around 626 bc and had successfully conquered it and destroyed Nineveh by 612 bc. It is most likely that Nahum was written sometime in this period.

What were people feeling?

Nahum suggests that the people of Judah were feeling vulnerable and anxious about the future. God's anger in this prophecy, which was aimed at the Assyrians for all the evil they had done, could well have provided reassurance to God's people that they were not alone.

Other books set around this time

Zephaniah and Habakkuk



Look out for...

The language that is used for God's anger in this prophecy; it is, at times, very graphic so it is important to be alert to it and to notice how it makes you feel.

Think about the book of Jonah, which also prophesies to Nineveh, but which allows for the possibility that the Assyrians will repent (which they did). Reflect on the difference between these two books as you read.



What kind of Book is it?

Prophecy. Nahum takes the form of a series of prophecies depicting God's anger which, as the book unfolds, is clearly directed towards the Assyrians.



How is it structured?

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1.1 | Introduction |
| 1.2-8 | An acrostic poem laying out God's anger |
| 1.9-15 | A prophecy of the destruction of God's enemies and the restoration of God's people |
| 2.1–3.19 | The future destruction of Assyria. |



What could this mean for me?

This book looks for the destruction of a city which was, for the prophet Nahum, an embodiment of evil. Who would embody evil in this way for you today? Reflect on this as you read and whether you might express how you feel in similar or different terms.



Discussion group questions

- Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or which inspired you?
- Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or which troubled you?
- What did *you* think the book was about?
- The Assyrians embodied evil to Nahum; discuss what you think embodies evil today. Would you use the same – or different – language to describe this?
- The brutal prophecy about Nineveh's future arises out of Nahum's belief about the evil its people represents. Do you ever think it is appropriate to talk about other people in the way that Nahum does here?
- Woven into this prophecy is a vision of hope for the future for Judah. Imagine being someone who lived in Judah in the seventh century – would this vision have given you hope and why?
- Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?



Tweet us photos, stories or questions from your book club using the hashtag [#biblebookclub](https://twitter.com/hashtag/biblebookclub) and tag [@biblesociety](https://twitter.com/biblesociety).

Bringing *the Bible to* **Life**

