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# נְחֻם • NAHUM

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## INTRODUCTION

As is typical of Hebrew prophecy, Nahum's words were prompted by the dramatic events of international history. The proud Assyrian empire, whose power had for centuries been felt and feared from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean, crumbled quickly after the death of Ashurbanipal (*circa* 630 BCE). Under the combined assaults of the vigorous Medes from north of Persia and the Chaldeans from southern Babylonia, the ancient capital city of Asshur fell in 614 BCE. When the renowned Nineveh was destroyed in 612 BCE, Assyrian domination of the Middle East was ended. The fervent reaction to the overthrow of Assyria, expressed by the peoples long subjected to its yoke, is nowhere more clearly seen than in the *Book of Nahum*. The core of the book is a superb, vivid poem extolling Nineveh's destruction, which Nahum felt to be inevitable. The prophet spells out the reason for the Assyrian downfall in unequivocal terms: it is Yahweh's judgement upon an unscrupulous, defiant nation.

Fragments of the *Book of Nahum* were found among the *Qumran MSS*, including *4Q<sup>p</sup>Nah* (known as the "Nahum Commentary") and *4Q82* (*4QXIIg*). The complete text of the book is contained in all important codices of the *Masoretic Text*, as also in the major manuscripts of the Greek *Septuagint*.

## AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

The date of Nahum's triumphal ode lies close to the events it foretells, probably between 626 and 612 BCE. Its author is identified only by his name; even the location of Elkosh (1:1) is uncertain. Although the text may have been edited in the post-Exilic period, there is little doubt that the work is essentially that of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century BCE prophet.

## נחום פרק א

מִשָּׂא נִינְוָה סֵפֶר חֲזוֹן נַחֻם הָאֶלְקוֹשִׁי: א

אֵל קַנּוּא וְנִקְם יְהוָה ב

נִקְם יְהוָה וּבַעַל חַמָּה

נִקְם יְהוָה לְצַרּוֹ

וְנוֹטֵר הוּא לְאִיְבָיו:

יְהוָה אַרְךְ אַפַּיִם וְגָדוֹל וְגִדְל־כַּחַ

וְנִקְה לֹא יִנְקֶה יְהוָה ג

בְּסוּפָה וּבְשֻׁעָרָה דְרָכּוֹ

וְעָנַן אֶבֶק רִגְלָיו:

גּוֹעַר בַּיָּם וַיִּבְשֶׂהוּ ד

וְכָל־הַנְּהָרוֹת הַחַרִּיב

## NAHUM 1

1 A prophecy of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

ALEF

2 Yahweh is a jealous and vengeful God,  
Yahweh takes vengeance, he is rich in wrath;  
Yahweh takes vengeance on his foes,  
he stores up fury for his enemies.

3 Yahweh is slow to anger but great in power;  
Yahweh never lets evil go unpunished.

BET

In storm and whirlwind, he takes his way;  
the clouds are the dust stirred up by his feet.

GIMEL

4 He rebukes the sea, dries it up,  
and makes all the rivers run dry.

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### NAHUM 1

- <sup>1</sup> The literal translation of 'prophecy' (the NRSV has 'oracle') is 'burden' – a technical term describing the prophetic word (Is 13:1, Jr 23:33–40, Hab 1:1, Zc 9:1, Mi 1:1). 'Elkosh' may be a village in Galilee, known to Jerome as 'Elkesi', but more probably was located in southwest Judah.
- <sup>2</sup> The sequence of this is acrostic psalm is incomplete. The term קַנּוּא ('jealous') refers to God's zealous protection of his people and his furious judgment against his enemies. The syntax of the 1<sup>st</sup> line has been understood in two ways: **1** as a single clause with Yahweh as the subject (as here, and with the MT, NJB, NRSV, NIV & NASB); and **2** as two parallel clauses: "God is jealous, and Yahweh avenges," following the LXX (Θεὸς ζηλωτῆς καὶ ἐκδικῶν κύριος) and KJV.
- <sup>3</sup> The last 4 lines of this 1<sup>st</sup> section (vv. 2<sup>b</sup>–3), which are not part of the alphabetical sequence, are apparently a later commentary on v. 2<sup>a</sup>, intended to forestall misunderstanding of the nature of God's anger. The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation. Note that the Samek (ס) in בְּסוּפָה is in a smaller font than normal – this reflects its appearance in almost all *Hebrew MSS*.
- <sup>4</sup> The 'sea' is personified as an antagonistic enemy, representing the wicked forces of chaos (Ps 66:6, 72:8, 80:12, 89:26, 93:3–4, Is 50:2, Mi 7:12, Hab 3:8, Zc 9:10). The beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> line is missing. 'Bashan', 'Carmel', and 'Lebanon' were regions famous for their fertility.

אִמְלֵל בְּשָׁן וְכַרְמֶל  
וַיִּפְרַח לְבָנוֹן אִמְלֵל:

ה הַרִים רָעְשׁוּ מִמֶּנּוּ  
וְהַגְּבָעוֹת הִתְמַגְּגוּ

וְתִשָּׂא הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנָיו  
וְתִבֵּל וְכָל־יֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ:

ו הַפְּנֵי זַעַמּוֹ מִי יַעֲמֹד  
וּמִי יִקּוּם בְּחֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ

חַמָּתוֹ נִתְּכָה כְּאֵשׁ  
וְהַצֵּרִים נִתְּצוּ מִמֶּנּוּ:

ז טוֹב יְהוָה  
לְמַעַז בַּיּוֹם צָרָה

ח וַיִּדַּע חֲסִי בּוֹ:  
וּבִשְׁטָף עֲבָר

DALET

... Bashan and Carmel wither;  
the greenery of the Lebanon withers too.

HE

5 The mountains tremble before him,  
the hills reel.

VAV

The earth heaves before him,  
the world and all who live in it.

ZAYIN

6 His fury – who can withstand it?  
Who can endure his burning wrath?

HET

His anger pours out like fire  
and the rocks break apart before him.

TET

7 Yahweh is good,  
a fortress in time of distress.

YOD

He recognises those who trust in him,  
8 even when the flood rushes on.

5 For 'reel' (as NJB), the NRSV has 'melt' and NETB has 'convulse'; the LXX renders this word 'are shaken' (ἐσαλεύθησαν).

6 The verb יָקוּם ('endure') is here a figurative expression connoting resistance.

7 The NRSV line/clause division reflects Masoretic disjunctive accent marker here but the NJB does not, reading "Yahweh is better than a fortress".

8 'Those who defy him' follows the LXX (τοὺς ἐπειρωτομένους), Tg & Vg; the MT has 'her place' (מְקוֹמָהּ), which is also reflected 4Q<sup>p</sup>Nah (מְקוֹמָהּ). In place of 'drive', here following the MT (יִרְדֵּף) & NETB, the NJB & NRSV have the conjectural translation 'pursue' (יִהְדֵּף).

כָּלֵה יַעֲשֶׂה מְקוֹמָהּ  
 וְאֵיבָיו יִרְדְּף־חֹשֶׁךְ׃  
 ט מִה־תַּחֲשָׁבוֹן אֶל־יְהוָה  
 כָּלֵה הוּא עֹשֶׂה  
 לֹא־תִקּוֹם פַּעַמִּים צָרָה׃  
 י כִּי עַד־סִירִים סְבָכִים  
 וְכִסְבָּאִם סְבוּאִים  
 אֶכְלָוּ כְּקֶשׁ יֵבֶשׁ מִלֵּא׃

יא מִמֶּךָ יֵצֵא  
 חֹשֵׁב עַל־יְהוָה  
 רָעָה יַעֲזֹב בְּלִיעֵל׃ {ס}

יב פֹּה | אָמַר יְהוָה  
 אִם־שְׁלָמִים וְכֵן רַבִּים  
 וְכֵן נִגְזְזוּ וְעָבְרוּ  
 וְעָנִיתִי  
 לֹא אֶעֱנֶךָ עוֹד׃

KAF

He will make an end finally of those who defy him,  
 and drive his foes into darkness.

9 What are your thoughts about Yahweh?

He it is who makes an end:  
 distress will not rise up a second time.

10 Like entangled thorn bushes,  
 like drunkards, they are drunk,  
 like dry straw, they will be burnt up completely.

TO ASSYRIA

11 From you has emerged  
 someone plotting evil against Yahweh,  
 one of Belial's counsellors.

TO JUDAH

12 Yahweh says this:  
 Unopposed and many though they be,  
 they will be cut down and pass away.  
 Though I have made you suffer,  
 I shall make you suffer no more;

<sup>9</sup> Alternative translations for the 1<sup>st</sup> line (here following the NJB) are, "Why do you plot against the LORD," (as in the NRSV), "What picture have you of Yahweh," and "How should you count on Yahweh?" In place of 'distress', here following the MT (צָרָה), LXX (ἀλίψει), NETB, NKJV & NASB, the NJB, NJPS & NRSV have the conjectural translation 'his adversaries' (צָרִינִי).

<sup>10</sup> The NJB opens this verse with the conjectural, 'Like a thicket of brambles' and omits the 2<sup>nd</sup> line; here, we follow the MT, NRSV & NETB.

<sup>11</sup> The sacrilegious personage of 'Belial's counsellor', emerging from Nineveh, could be Sennacherib (see 2K 18-19).

<sup>12</sup> This verse begins with a typical prophetic introduction ('Yahweh says this') in language similar to the typical Middle Eastern messenger formula.

וְעַתָּה אֶשְׁבֵּר מִטְהוֹ מֵעַלְיָךְ ג'  
וּמוֹסֵרְתִיךָ אֲנַתֶּקָּ:

וְצִוָּה עָלֶיךָ יְהוָה ד'  
לֹא-יִזְרַע מִשְׁמֶךָ עוֹד  
מִבַּיִת אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲכַרִּית פָּסֶל וּמִסַּכָּה  
אֲשִׁים קִבְרְךָ כִּי קָלוֹתָ:  
{פ}

<sup>13</sup> for, now I shall break his yoke that presses hard on you  
and snap your chains.

TO THE KING OF NINEVEH

<sup>14</sup> As for you, this is Yahweh's decree:  
You will have no heirs to your name;  
from the temple of your gods, I shall remove  
carved image and cast image,  
and I shall desecrate your tomb, for you are accursed!

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<sup>13</sup> The terms 'yoke' and 'chains' are figures of speech for Assyrian subjugation of Judah; the imagery of the yoke draws an implied comparison between the yoking of a beast of burden to the subjugation of a nation under a foreign power (Lv 26:13, Jr 27:2, 28:14, Ezk 30:18, 34:27). This imagery also alludes to the Assyrian use of 'yoke' imagery to describe their subjugation of foreign nations to the status of vassal. When describing their subjugation of nations, Assyrian rulers frequently spoke of causing them to 'pull my yoke' (e.g. Sennacherib in 701 BCE).

<sup>14</sup> The MT reading of the last line ('I will make your grave') is usually understood as a figure of speech (metonymy of effect) meaning that Yahweh will destroy/execute the Assyrian king. On the other hand, the Tg and Peshitta treat this as a double-accusative construction – the implied second object being 'the house of your gods': "I will make it your grave." The NJB assumes a re-pointing of the אֲשִׁים ('I will make') to a Hiphil imperfect (אֲשִׁים) ('I will devastate').

## נחום פרק ב

הִנֵּה עַל־הַהָרִים רַגְלֵי מַבְשֵׁר \*  
מִשְׁמִיעַ שְׁלוֹם  
חֲגֵי יְהוּדָה חֲגֵיךְ  
שְׁלָמֵי נְדָרֶיךָ  
כִּי לֹא יוֹסִיף עוֹד לַעְבוֹר לַעֲבֹר־בְּךָ בְּלִיעַל  
כִּלְהַ נִּכְרַת:  
עֲלָה מִפִּיץ עַל־פְּנֵיךָ \*  
נִצּוֹר מְצוּרָה  
צַפֵּה־דֶרֶךְ חִזֵּק מְתַנִּים  
אַמֵּץ כַּח מְאֹד:  
כִּי שֵׁב יִהְיֶה אֶת־גְּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב \*  
כְּגְאוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל  
כִּי בִקְקוּם בְּקָקִים  
וּזְמַרְיָהֶם שַׁחֲתוּ:

## NAHUM 2

TO JUDAH

- 1 See on the mountains the feet of the herald!  
"Peace," he proclaims.  
Judah, celebrate your feasts,  
carry out your vows,  
for the wicked will never pass through you again;  
he has been utterly destroyed.
- 2 The destroyer has advanced on you,  
guard the siege-works,  
watch the road, brace yourselves,  
muster all your strength!
- 3 For, Yahweh will restore the strength of Jacob,  
yes, the vine of Israel,  
although the plunderers had plundered them,  
although they had snapped off their vine shoots!

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### NAHUM 2

- <sup>1</sup> This verse is 1:15 in the *NRSV*; therein, subsequent verse numbers in this chapter are decremented. The *Kethib/Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation. In place of 'the wicked', here following the *NRSV* & *MT* (which has the singular form, יוֹסִיף, which is also reflected in 4Q<sup>n</sup>Nah), the *NJB* has 'Belial' and *NETB* has 'the wicked Assyrians', reflecting the *LXX* plural form (πρὸς τὴν ἑσῶσιν - 'they shall never').
- <sup>2</sup> For 'destroyer', following the *NJB*, the *MT* reads 'disperser' (מִפִּיץ): reflected in the *Vg*: qui dispergat) and the *LXX* has 'one who blows hard' (ἐμφυσῶν). The literal translation of the last line is 'make [your] strength exceedingly firm'.
- <sup>3</sup> This verse (parenthesised in both the *NJB* & *NRSV*), seemingly interrupting the ideas in vv. 2 and 4, is sometimes repositioned by critics after v. 1, on which it is an apt commentary. It alludes to the poem of Is 5:1-7. 'Vine' (in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line) is a conjectural translation (גְּבוּן) following the *NJB*; the *MT* (& *NRSV*) has 'majesty' (גְּאוֹן).

<p>מִגֵּן גִּבְרֵיהוּ מְאֹדִים  אֲנָשֵׁי־חֵיל מְתַלְעִים  בְּאֵשׁ־פְּלֹדֶת הָרֶכֶב  בְּיוֹם הַכִּינּוּ  וְהַבְּרָשִׁים הָרַעְלוּ:  בַּחוּצוֹת יִתְהוֹלְלוּ הָרֶכֶב  יִשְׁתַּקְשְׁקוּן בְּרַחְבוֹת  מִרְאֵיהֶן כַּלְפִּידִים  כַּבְּרָקִים יִרְצְצוּ:  יִזְכֹּר אֲדִירָיו  יִכְשְׁלוּ בַהֲלֹכוֹתָם בְּהִלְכָתָם  יִמְהָרוּ חוֹמָתָהּ  וְהַכֵּן הַסִּבְדָּה:  שְׁעָרֵי הַנְּהָרוֹת נִפְתָּחוּ  וְהַהִיכָל נִמּוֹג:  וְהַצֵּב גָּלְתָה הָעֵלְתָה</p>	<p>ד     ה    ו   ז  ח</p>	<p>4 The shields of his warriors show red,  his warriors are dressed in scarlet;  the metal of the chariots sparkles  as he prepares for battle;  the horsemen are impatient for battle.</p> <p>5 The chariots storm through the streets,  jostling one another in the squares;  they look like blazing flames,  like lightning, they dash back and forth.</p> <p>6 His captains are called out;  stumbling as they go,  they speed towards the wall,  and the mantelet is put in position.</p> <p>7 The sluices of the River are opened,  and the palace melts in terror.</p> <p>8 Beauty is taken captive, carried away,</p>
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<sup>4</sup> 'Horsemen' follows the LXX (οἱ ἵππεις) & Peshitta, reflecting הַפְּרָשִׁים (as preserved in some Hebrew MSS); the MT has 'cypresses' (הַבְּרָשִׁים).

<sup>5</sup> When used in military contexts, the Hitpolel יִתְהוֹלְלוּ ('storm') describes the furious action of war-chariots charging forward to attack the enemy.

<sup>6</sup> In place of 'called out', following the MT (יִזְכֹּר), the LXX has 'will remember' (μνησθήσονται). The meaning of the word סִבְדָּה, here translated as 'mantelet' (a shelter to protect the besiegers attacking the wall), is uncertain. The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>7</sup> Nineveh employed a system of dams and 'sluices' to control the waters of the Tebiltu and Khoser Rivers, which flowed through the city; however, the Tebiltu often flooded its banks inside the city, undermining palace foundations and weakening other structures.

<sup>8</sup> 'Beauty' is conjectural, following the NJB; the MT has 'is placed'. This may refer to the statue of Ishtar, patroness of Nineveh or perhaps the ornamental pedestal. In place of 'beating their breasts', here following the MT (מְתַפְּפֵת עַל־לִבָּהֶן) – literally, 'beating on their hearts'), the LXX (φθρεγγόμεναι ἐν καρδίαις αὐτῶν) has 'moaning in their hearts', which is also reflected in the Tg and Vg.

וְאִמְהָתֶיהָ מְנַהֲגוֹת כְּקוֹל יוֹנִים  
מִתְפַּפֹּת עַל-לִבְבֵהֶן:  
וְנִינְוָה כְּבָרְכַת-מַיִם ט  
מִימֵי הַיָּא  
וְהִמָּה נֹסִים  
עֲמָדוֹ עֲמָדוֹ וְאִין מִפְּנֵה:  
בְּזוֹ כֶּסֶף בְּזוֹ זָהָב י  
וְאִין קֶצֶה לְתַכּוּנָה  
כָּבֵד מְכַל כְּלֵי חֲמֻדָּה:  
בּוֹקָה וּמְבּוֹקָה וּמְבַלְקָה יא  
וְלֵב נִמָּס וּפֶק בְּרַפִּים  
וְחִלְחָלָה בְּכָל-מִתְנַיִם  
וּפְנֵי כָלִם קִבְצוּ פְּאֲרוֹר:  
אֵיֶה מְעוֹן אַרְיֹת יב  
וּמְרַעָה הוּא לְכַפְרִים  
אֲשֶׁר הֵלְךְ  
אַרְיָה לְבִיא שֵׁם גִּיּוֹר אַרְיָה וְאִין מַחְרִיד:

her slave-girls moaning like doves  
and beating their breasts.  
9 Nineveh is like a lake  
whose waters are draining away.  
"Stop! Stop!"  
But no one turns back.  
10 "Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold!"  
There is no end to the treasure,  
a mass of everything you could desire!  
11 Ravaged, wrecked, ruined!  
Heart fails and knees give way,  
anguish is in the loins of all,  
and every face grows pale!  
12 Where is the lions' den now,  
the cave of the lion's whelps,  
where the lion and lioness walked with their cubs,  
and no one molested them?

<sup>9</sup> 'Whose waters' follows the LXX (ὑδάτα αὐτῆς), NJB & NRSV; the MT has 'since her day, and they'.

<sup>10</sup> For the last line, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "An abundance of every precious thing!"

<sup>11</sup> There is assonance between the 3 Hebrew words of the 1<sup>st</sup> line, the translation of which here follows the NJB; the NRSV reproduces the alliteration differently: 'devastation, desolation and destruction'. The term פְּאֲרוֹר ('pale') occurs only here and in Jl 2:6; its meaning is debated. The LXX: τὸ πρόσωπον πάντων ὡς πρόσασαυμα χύτρας & Vg: et facies omnium eorum sicut nigredo ollæ ('all their faces are like a black pot') agree generally with the Tg ('covered with black like a pot') and this translation is adopted by the KJV and AV: 'the faces of them all gather blackness'.

<sup>12</sup> 'The cave' is a conjectural translation (ומַרְעָה) following the NJB & NRSV; the MT has 'the feeding ground' (וּמְרַעָה), which is also supported by the LXX (ἡ νομή - 'the pasture') and 4Q<sup>p</sup>Nah. The 'lion' often symbolises the destroyer (Is 5:29, Jr 4:7, Ho 5:14, Mi 5:8).

אַרְיֵה טֶרֶף בְּדֵי גְרוּתָיו יג  
 וּמְחַנֵּק לְלִבָּאָתָיו  
 וַיִּמְלֵא טֶרֶף חֲרָיו  
 וּמְעַנְתָּיו טֶרֶף־הָ:  
 הִנְנִי אֵלֶיךָ נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יד  
 וְהִבְעַרְתִּי בְעֵשֶׁן רֶכֶבָה וּכְפִירִיךָ  
 תֹאכַל חֶרֶב וְהִכְרַתִּי מֵאֶרֶץ טֶרְפֶּיךָ  
 וְלֹא־יִשְׁמַע עוֹד קוֹל מְלֹאכְכָה:  
 {פ}

13 The lion would tear up enough for his whelps  
 and strangle the kill for his mates;  
 he would fill his caverns with prey  
 and his lairs with spoil.  
 14 Look, I am against you, says Yahweh Sabaoth!  
 I shall send your chariots up in smoke  
 and the sword will devour your whelps;  
 I shall cut short your depredations on earth,  
 and the voices of your envoys will be heard no more.

13 The term בְּדֵי (*'enough'*) is composed of the preposition בְּ and the noun דֵּי; this idiom means 'to satisfy the hunger of [something]' (cf. Jr 51:58, Hab 2:13).

14 'You' (FS) refers to Nineveh. A new picture of Nineveh's ruin unfolds, with the judgement on the sins that have provoked it. Nahum is less concerned with Nineveh's idolatry (Nineveh, unlike Israel, is not Yahweh's wife) than with the greed and cunning with which she has established her power over all peoples to despoil them.

## נחום פרק ג

א הוֹי עִיר דָּמִים כָּלָה  
בְּחֵשׁ פֶּרֶק מְלֵאָה  
לֹא יִמֵּשׁ טָרֶף:  
ב קוֹל שׁוֹט  
וְקוֹל רַעַשׁ אֹפֶן  
וְסוֹס דֹּהַר וּמִרְכָּבָה מְרַקְדָּה:  
ג פֶּרֶשׁ מַעֲלָה  
וְלֵהָב חָרֵב וּבְרֶק חֲנִית  
וְרֵב חָלָל וְכַבֵּד פֶּגֶר  
וְאִין קִצָּה לַגּוֹיָה יִכְשְׁלוּ וְכִשְׁלוּ בְּגוֹיֹתָם:  
ד מִרְבַּז זְנוּנֵי זוֹנָה  
טוֹבַת חֵן בְּעֵלֹת כְּשָׁפִים  
הַמְכַרְת גּוֹיִם בְּזוּנוּיָהּ  
וּמְשַׁחֲחוֹת בְּכִשְׁפֵיהָ:

## NAHUM 3

- 1 Woe to the city of bloodshed,  
packed throughout with lies,  
stuffed with booty, where plundering has no end!
- 2 The crack of the whip,  
the rumble of wheels,  
galloping horse and jolting chariot!
- 3 Charging cavalry,  
flashing swords, gleaming spears,  
a mass of wounded, hosts of dead,  
countless corpses; they stumble over corpses!
- 4 Because of the countless debaucheries of the harlot,  
the graceful beauty, the cunning witch,  
who enslaved nations by her harlotries  
and tribes by her spells,

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### NAHUM 3

- <sup>1</sup> In place of 'bloodshed', here following the *NRSV*, the *NJB* has 'blood'; the plural noun דָּמִים ('bloods') connotes bloodshed (Gn 4:10, 1K 2:5, Job 16:18, *et cetera*) or blood guilt (Ex 22:1, Lev 20:9, Nb 35:27, Dt 19:10). Human blood in its natural state in the body is generally designated by the singular form; after it has been spilled, the plural is used to denote the abundance of blood in quantity. The phrase, 'city of bloodshed', is used elsewhere to describe a city held guilty before God of blood guilt and about to be judged by God (Ezk 22:2, 24:6).
- <sup>2</sup> Some scholars used to argue that the term דֹּהַר ('galloping') should be translated as 'chariot driver' but more recent research indicates that this term denotes 'to dash', 'to gallop', or 'to neigh'.
- <sup>3</sup> In place of 'corpses' (לַגּוֹיָה), the *LXX* has 'nations' (ἔθνεσιν), reflecting a confusion between the consonant ם and the vowel ם in an un-pointed text. The *Kethib/Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.
- <sup>4</sup> The literal translation of 'enslaved' is 'sold', the antithesis of 'buying back', meaning redemption or liberation.

ה הַנְּגִי אֵלַיךָ נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּגְלִיתִי שׁוּלְיֶיךָ עַל-פְּנֵיךָ וְהִרְאִיתִי גוֹיִם מֵעֶרְךָ וּמִמְלָכוֹת קְלוֹנֶיךָ: וְהִשְׁלַכְתִּי עָלֶיךָ שְׁקָצִים וְנִבְלָתֶיךָ וְשִׁמְתֶיךָ כְּרָאִי: וְהָיָה כָּל-רֹאֲיֶיךָ יִדּוֹד מִמֶּךָ וְאָמַר שְׂדֵדָה נִינְוָה מִי יִנּוּד לָהּ מֵאַיִן אֲבַקֵּשׁ מִנְחָמִים לָךְ: הֲתִיטְבִּי מִנְּאֻ אַמּוֹן הַיֹּשְׁבָה בִּיְאֲרִים מִיִּם סְבִיב לָהּ אֲשֶׁר-חִיל יָם מִיִּם חוֹמָתָה: כּוֹשׁ עֲצָמָהּ וּמִצְרַיִם וְאַיִן קֶצֶה פּוֹט וְלוֹבִיִּם הָיוּ בְּעִזְרָתֶךָ: 	ו ז ח ט 	5 I am against you – declares Yahweh Sabaoth – I shall lift your skirts as high as your face and show your nakedness to the nations, your shame to the kingdoms. 6 I shall pelt you with filth; I shall shame you and put you in the pillory. 7 Then, all who look at you will shrink from you and say, “Nineveh has been ruined!” Who will mourn for her? Where should I seek comfort for you? 8 Are you better off than No-Amon situated among rivers, her defences the seas, her ramparts the waters? 9 In Ethiopia and Egypt lay her strength, and it was boundless; Put and the Libyans became her allies.
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5 Because Nineveh had acted like a prostitute, Yahweh would punish her as a prostitute (Ezk 16:36–43, 23:25–30, Ho 2:5).

6 The literal translation of *‘filth’* is *‘detestable things’*.

7 In place of *‘for you’*, following the MT (לְךָ – 2FS), the LXX has *‘for her’* (αὐτῆς); 4Q<sup>p</sup>Nah supports the former.

8 For *‘No-Amon’*, the NRSV has *‘Thebes’*; the city was sacked by Ashurbanipal in 663 BCE. *‘Her defences’*, missing from the MT, follows 4Q<sup>p</sup>Nah. *‘The waters’* follows 4Q<sup>p</sup>Nah; the MT has *‘the sea’*. This description of a city and moat beside the Nile has been glossed *‘surrounded by water’*.

9 *‘Her allies’* follows the LXX (βοηθοὶ αὐτῆς); the MT has *‘your city’* (בְּעִזְרָתֶךָ).

<p>גַּם־הִיא לַגְּלָה הַלְּכָה בְּשָׁבִי י  גַּם עַל־לִיָּה יִרְטָשׁוּ  בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חֻצּוֹת  וְעַל־נִכְבְּדֵיהֶּ יָדוּ גֹרָל  וְכָל־גְּדוֹלֵיהֶּ רָתְקוּ בַּזְּקִים:  גַּם־אַתָּה תִּשְׁכָּרִי תְּהִי נֶעְלָמָה יא  גַּם־אַתָּה תִּבְקָשִׁי מִעֹז מְאוֹיֵב:  כָּל־מִבְצָרֶיךָ יב  תֵּאֱנִים עִם־בְּכוֹרִים  אִם־יִנָּעוּ  וְנִפְלוּ עַל־פִּי אוֹכֵל:  הֲנֵה עַמֶּךָ נָשִׁים יג  בְּקִרְבֶּךָ לְאִיבֵיךָ  פְּתוּחַ נִפְתְּחוּ שַׁעְרֵי אֶרֶץךָ  אֶכְלָה אֵשׁ בְּרִיחֶיךָ:  מִי מִצֹּר שְׁאֵבֵי־לְךָ יד  חֲזֲקִי מִבְצָרֶיךָ</p>	<p>10 Yet, she too went into exile, into captivity;  her little ones too were dashed to pieces  at every crossroad;  lots were drawn for her nobles,  all her great men were put in chains.</p> <p>11 You too will become drunk, you will go into hiding;  you too will have to search for a refuge from the enemy.</p> <p>12 Your fortifications are all fig trees,  with early ripening figs:  as soon as they are shaken,  they fall into the mouth of the eater.</p> <p>13 Look at your people:  you are a nation of women!  The gates of your country gape open to your enemies;  fire has devoured their bars!</p> <p>14 Draw yourselves water for the siege  and strengthen your fortifications!</p>
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<sup>10</sup> In place of 'for her nobles', here following the MT (וְעַל־נִכְבְּדֵיהֶּ) & 4Q<sup>p</sup>Nah, the LXX reads 'for all her nobles' (πάντα τὰ ἔνδοξα αὐτῆς); the addition was probably caused by the influence of the repetition of the word כָּל ('every/all') in both the preceding and following lines.

<sup>11</sup> The imagery of drunkenness is frequently used to describe defeat in battle (Is 49:26, Jr 25:27, 51:21).

<sup>12</sup> This prophecy appears to allude to reverses already suffered by the Assyrian armies, possibly the capture of Tarbis and Asshur in 614 BCE. Ironically, Sennacherib had recently planted fig trees along all the major avenues in Nineveh to help beautify the city and had encouraged the citizens of Nineveh to eat from these fruit trees.

<sup>13</sup> The literal translation of 'their bars' is 'your bars'; the NRSV has 'the bars of your gates'.

<sup>14</sup> The literal translation of 'water for a siege' is 'waters of siege'.

<p>בְּאֵי בִטִיט וּרְמָסִי בַחֲמֹר  הַחֲזִיקִי מִלְבָּן:  שָׁם תֵּאֲכַלְךָ אֵשׁ טו  תִּכְרִיתְךָ  חֶרֶב תֵּאֲכַלְךָ  כִּילֶק הַתִּפְבֵּד  כִּילֶק הַתִּפְבֵּדִי כְּאַרְבֶּה:  הַרְבִּית רַכְלִיךָ טז  מְבוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם  יֶלֶק פֶּשֶׁט וַיַּעַף:  מִנְזַרְיָךְ כְּאַרְבֶּה זז  וְטַפְסֵרְיָךְ כְּגֹב גְּבֵי הַחוּגִים בַּגְּדֵרוֹת  בַּיּוֹם קָרָה שֶׁמֶשׁ  זָרְחָה וְנוֹדַד וְלֹא־נֹדַע  מִקוֹמוֹ אֵימִם:  נִמְּו רַעֲיָךְ מִלֶּךְ אֲשׁוּר יח  יִשְׁכְּנוּ אַדְיָרְיָךְ  נִפְּשׁוּ עַמֶּךָ עַל־הַהָרִים</p>	<p>Into the mud with you, puddle the clay  and repair the brick kiln!  15 There, the fire will burn you up  and the sword will cut you down,  and it will devour you like the locust.  Make yourselves as numerous as locusts,  make yourselves as numerous as the hoppers.  16 Let your commercial agents  outnumber the stars of heaven,  17 your garrisons like locusts  and your marshals like swarms of hoppers!  They settle on the walls when the day is cold.  The sun appears,  16a the locusts spread their wings and fly away,  17a away they fly, no one knows where.  18 Alas: your shepherds are asleep, king of Assyria,  your bravest men slumber;  your people are scattered on the mountains</p>
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15 The *NJB* omits the 3<sup>rd</sup> line, a gloss inspired by what follows.

16 This verse is numbered 16<sup>a</sup> in the *NJB*. 'Let ... outnumber' is a conjectural translation; the *MT* has 'you ... outnumber'.

17 This verse is numbered 17<sup>a</sup> in the *NJB*.

16a This verse, transposed from its position in the *MT*, is numbered 16<sup>b</sup> in the *NJB*.

17a This verse is numbered 17<sup>b</sup> in the *NJB*.

18 'Alas' is conjectural, following the *LXX* (ὀύαι); the *MT* has 'where are they'. 'Slumber' follows the *LXX* (ἐνύσταξαν) & *Peshitta*; the *MT* has 'remain'.

וְאִין מְקַבְּצִין:  
אִין-כִּהָה לְשִׁבְרֶךָ נִחְלָה מִכְתָּךְ ט  
כָּל | שִׁמְעֵי שִׁמְעֶךָ  
תִּקְעוּ כַף עֲלֶיךָ  
כִּי עַל-מִי לֹא-עֲבָרָה רַעְתָּךְ תָּמִיד:  
{ש}

with no one to gather them.

<sup>19</sup> There is no remedy for your wound, your injury is grievous.

All who hear the news of you  
clap their hands at your downfall.

For, who has not felt your unrelenting cruelty?

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<sup>19</sup> Clapping of hands was a sign of derision (Lm 2:15, Job 27:23).