
נְחֻם • NAHUM

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^pNah (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 7th Century BCE prophet.

נחום פרק א

א מִשָּׂא נִינְוָה סֵפֶר חֲזוֹן נַחֻם הָאֶלְקוֹשִׁי:

ב אֵל קַנּוּא וְנָקָם יְהוָה

נָקָם יְהוָה וּבָעַל חֶמֶה

נָקָם יְהוָה לְצָרָיו

וְנוֹטֵר הוּא לְאִיְבָיו:

ג יְהוָה אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְגָדוֹל וְגִדְל־כַּחַ

וְנָקָה לֹא יִנָּקָה יְהוָה

בְּסוּפָה וּבְשֹׁעֶרָה דִּרְכּוֹ

וְעָנָן אֶבֶק רִגְלָיו:

ד גּוֹעֵר בַּיָּם וַיַּבֶּשֶׁהוּ

וְכָל־הַנְּהָרוֹת הִיָּחֵרֵב

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.

NAHUM 1

¹ 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.

² 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 1st 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 ζηλωτὴς καὶ ἐκδικῶν κύριος) and KJV.

³ The last 4 lines of this 1st section (vv. 2^b–3), which are not part of the alphabetical sequence, are apparently a later commentary on v. 2^a, 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.

⁴ 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 3rd line is missing. 'Bashan', 'Carmel' and 'Lebanon' were regions famous for their futility.

אִמְלֵל בְּשָׁן וְכַרְמֶל
וּפְרַח לְבָנוֹן אִמְלֵל:

ה הַרִים רָעֲשׁוּ מִפְּנֵי
וְהַגְבָּעוֹת הִתְמַגְּגוּ

וְתִשָּׂא הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵי
וְתִבֵּל וְכָל־יוֹשְׁבֵי בָּהּ:

ו יִפְגֵּי זַעַמֹּו מִי יַעֲמֹוד
וּמִי יִקֹּום בַּחֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ

חַמָּתוֹ נִתְּכָה כְּאֵשׁ
וְהַצֵּרִים נִתְּצוּ מִמֶּנּוּ:

ז טוֹב יְהוָה
לְמַעַז בְּיוֹם צָרָה

ח וַיַּדַּע 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 ἐπεγχειρομένους), Tg & Vg; the MT has 'her place' (מְקוֹמָהּ), which is also reflected 4Q^pNah (מְקוֹמָהּ). In place of 'drive', here following the MT (יִרְדֵּף) & NETB, the NJB & NRSV have the conjectural translation 'pursue' (יִהְדֵּף).

כִּלֵּה יַעֲשֶׂה מְקוֹמָהּ
 וְאִיִּבּוֹ יִרְדֹּף־חֹשֶׁךְ׃
 ט מִה־תַּחֲשׁבוֹן אֶל־יְהוָה
 כִּלֵּה הוּא עֹשֶׂה
 לֹא־תִקּוֹם פַּעַמִּים צָרָה׃
 י כִּי עַד־סִירִים סִבְכִּים
 וְכִסְבָּאִם סְבוּאִים
 אֲכָלוּ כֶקֶשׁ יִבֶּשׁ מִלֵּא׃
 יא מִמֶּךָ יֵצֵא
 חֹשֶׁב עַל־יְהוָה
 רָעָה יַעַץ בְּלִיעֵל׃ {ס}
 יב כֹּה | אָמַר יְהוָה
 אֲס־שְׁלָמִים וְכֵן רַבִּים
 וְכֵן נִגְזְזוּ וְעָבְרוּ
 וְעָנְתִּיךָ
 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;

- ⁹ Alternative translations for the 1st 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 (ἀλγίη), NETB, NKJV & NASB, the NJB, NJPS & NRSV have the conjectural translation ‘his adversaries’ (צָרִי).
¹⁰ The NJB opens this verse with the conjectural, ‘Like a thicket of brambles’ and omits the 2nd line; here, we follow the MT, NRSV & NETB.
¹¹ The sacrilegious personage of ‘Belial’s counsellor’, emerging from Nineveh, could be Sennacherib (see 2K 18–19).
¹² 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 יג
וּמוֹסֵרְתִיךָ אֲנַתֶּק:
וּמוֹסֵרְתִיךָ אֲנַתֶּק:

וְצֹנָה עָלֶיךָ יְהוָה יד
לֹא־יִזְרַע מִשְׁמֶךָ עוֹד
מִבֵּית אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲכַרִּית פָּסֵל וּמִסֵּכָה
אֲשִׁים קִבְּרָךְ כִּי קִלּוֹת:
{פ}

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

TO THE KING OF NINEVEH

¹⁴ 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!

¹³ 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).

¹⁴ 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

א הִנֵּה עַל־הָהָרִים רַגְלֵי מַבְשֹׁר
מִשְׁמִיעַ שְׁלוֹם
חֲגֵי יְהוּדָה חֲגֵיךָ
שְׁלָמִי נִדְרֶיךָ
כִּי לֹא יוֹסִיף עוֹד לַעְבּוֹר לַעְבֶּר־בְּךָ בְּלִיעֵל
כִּלְה נִכְרַת:
ב עֲלֶה מִפִּיץ עַל־פָּנֶיךָ
נִצּוֹר מְצוּרָה
צַפֵּה־דֶרֶךְ חִזֶּק מִתְנִים
אֲמֹץ כַּח מְאֹד:
ג כִּי שֵׁב יִהְיֶה אֶת־גִּאֲוֹן יַעֲקֹב
כְּגִאֲוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל
כִּי בִקְקוֹם בִּקְקִים
וְזִמְרֵיהֶם שִׁחֲתוּ:

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!

NAHUM 2

- ¹ 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^{Pr}Nah), the NJB has 'Belial' and NETB has 'the wicked Assyrians', reflecting the LXX plural form (προσθήσωσιν – 'they shall never').
- ² 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'.
- ³ 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 2nd line) is a conjectural translation (גִּפֶּן) following the NJB; the MT (& NRSV) has 'majesty' (גִּאֲוֹן).

מִגֶּן גִּבְרֵיהוּ מְאֹדִים אֲנָשֵׁי־חֵיל מְתַלְעִים בְּאֵשׁ־פִלֶדֶת הָרֶכֶב בַּיּוֹם הַכִּינוּ וְהַבְּרָשִׁים הָרַעְלוּ: בַּחוּצוֹת יִתְהוֹלְלוּ הָרֶכֶב יִשְׁתַּקְשְׁקוּן בְּרַחְבוֹת מִרְאִיהֶן כְּלַפִּידִים כַּבָּרְקִים יִרְצְצוּ: יִזְכֹּר אֲדִירָיו יִכְשְׁלוּ בַּהֲלָכוֹתָם בְּהִלְכָתָם יִמְהָרוּ חוֹמָתָהּ וְהֵכֵן הַסִּבְךָ: שַׁעְרֵי הַנְּהָרוֹת נִפְתָּחוּ וְהַיִּכָּל נִמּוֹג: וְהָעַב גָּלְתָה הָעֵלְתָה	ד ה ו ז ח	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. 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. 6 His captains are called out; stumbling as they go, they speed towards the wall, and the mantelet is put in position. 7 The sluices of the River are opened, and the palace melts in terror. 8 Beauty is taken captive, carried away,
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- ⁴ 'Horsemen' follows the LXX (οἱ ἵππεῖς) & Peshitta, reflecting הַפְּרָשִׁים (as preserved in some Hebrew MSS); the MT has 'cypresses' (הַבְּרָשִׁים).
- ⁵ When used in military contexts, the Hitpoel יִתְהוֹלְלוּ ('storm') describes the furious action of war-chariots charging forward to attack the enemy.
- ⁶ In place of 'called out', following the MT (יִזְכֹּר), the LXX has 'will remember' (μνησθήσονται). The meaning of the word סִבְךָ, 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.
- ⁷ 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.
- ⁸ '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 (מִתְפַּפֵּת עַל־לִבָּהֶן – literally, 'beating on their hearts'), the LXX (φθγγόμεναι ἐν καρδίαις αὐτῶν) has 'moaning in their hearts', which is also reflected in the Tg and Vg.

ואִמְהָתֶיהָ מְנַהֲגוֹת בְּקוֹל יוֹנִים
 מִתְפַּפֹּת עַל-לִבְבֵהֶן:
 וְנִינְוָה כְּבִרְכַת-מַיִם ט
 מִימֵי הָיָא
 וְהִמָּה נָסִים
 עֹמְדוֹ עֹמְדוֹ וְאִין מִפְּנֶה:
 בָּזוּ כֶסֶף בָּזוּ זָהָב י
 וְאִין קֶצֶה לַתְּכוּנָה
 כָּבֵד מִכָּל כְּלֵי חֲמָדָה:
 בּוּקָה וּמְבוּקָה וּמְבֻלָּקָה יא
 וְלֵב נֶמֶס וּפֶקַח בְּרַפִּים
 וְחִלְחָלָה בְּכָל-מִתְנִים
 וּפָנֶי כָלִם קִבְּצוּ פְּאֵרוֹר:
 אֵיחָה מְעוֹן אֲרִיּוֹת יב
 וּמִרְעָה הוּא לַכִּפְרִים
 אֲשֶׁר הִלְךְ
 אֲרִיָּה לְבִיא שֵׁם גִּיר אֲרִיָּה 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?

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

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

11 There is assonance between the 3 Hebrew words of the 1st line, the translation of which here follows the NJB; the NRSV reproduces the alliteration differently: 'devastation, desolation and destruction'. The term פְּאֵרוֹר ('pale') occurs only here and in Jl 2:6; its meaning is debated. The LXX: τὸ πρόσωπον πάντων ὡς πρόσασμα 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'.

12 'The cave' is a conjectural translation (ומִרְעָה) following the NJB & NRSV; the MT has 'the feeding ground' (וּמִרְעָה), which is also supported by the LXX (ἡ νομή – 'the pasture') and 4Q^pNah. The 'lion' often symbolises the destroyer (Is 5:29, Jr 4:7, Ho 5:14, Mi 5:8).

אֲרִיָּה טָרֵף בְּדֵי גְרוּתָיו יג
 וּמַחְנֵק לְלִבָּאָתָיו
 וַיִּמְלֵא טָרֵף חֲרָיו
 וּמַעֲנֵתָיו טָרֶפָה:
 הִנְנִי אֵלַיִךְ נָאִם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יד
 וְהִבְעַרְתִּי בְעֶשֶׁן רֶכֶבָּהּ וּכְפִירֶיהָ
 תֹאכַל חֶרֶב וְהִכְרַתִּי מֵאֶרֶץ טָרֶפֶךָ
 וְלֹא־יִשְׁמַע עוֹד קוֹל מְלֹאכְכָּה:
 {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 הָוִי עִיר דָּמִים
כָּלָה בַּחֹשׁ פֶּרֶק מְלֹאָה
לֹא יָמִישׁ טָרֶף:
ב קוֹל שׁוֹט
וְקוֹל רַעַשׁ אוֹפֶן
וְסוֹס דֹּהֵר וּמִרְכָּבָה מְרַקְדָּה:
ג פֶּרֶשׁ מַעֲלָה
וְלֵהָב חָרֵב וּבֶרֶק חֲנִית
וְרֹב חָלָל וְכַבֵּד פֶּגֶר
וְאֵין קֶצֶה לַגּוֹיָה יִכְשְׁלוּ וְיִכְשְׁלוּ בְּגוֹיֵתָם:
ד מִרְבַּע זִנוּנֵי זוֹנָה
טוֹבַת חֵן בַּעֲלַת כְּשָׁפִים
הַמְכַרֶת גּוֹיִם בְּזִנוּנֶיהָ
וּמְשַׁפְּחוֹת בְּכַשְׁפֶּיהָ:

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,

NAHUM 3

- ¹ 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).
- ² Some scholars used to argue that the term דֹּהֵר ('galloping') should be translated as 'chariot driver' but more recent research indicates that this term denotes 'to dash', 'to gallop', or 'to neigh' (DCH 2:417).
- ³ In place of 'corpses' (לַגּוֹיָה), the LXX has 'nations' (ἔθνη), 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.
- ⁴ The literal translation of 'enslaved' is 'sold', the antithesis of 'buying back', meaning redemption or liberation.

ה	הִנְנִי אֵלֶיךָ נָאִם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְגִלִּיתִי שׁוּלְיֶיךָ עַל-פָּנֶיךָ וְהִרְאִיתִי גוֹיִם מֵעֶרְךָ וּמִמְלָכוֹת קְלוֹנֶיךָ: וְהִשְׁלַכְתִּי עֲלֶיךָ	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.
ו	שְׂקָצִים וְנִבְלָתֶיךָ וְשִׁמְתֶיךָ כְּרָאִי: וְהָיָה כָּל-רֹאֲיֶיךָ יִדּוֹד מִמֶּךָ וְאָמַר שָׂדֶדָה נִינְוָה מִי יִנּוּד לָהּ מֵאֵין אֲבָקֶשׁ מִנְחָמִים לָךְ: הַתִּיטְבִּי מִנָּא אָמוֹן הַיֹּשְׁבָה בִּיְאֲרִים מִיִּם סָבִיב לָהּ אֲשֶׁר-חִיל יָם מִיִּם חֹמְתָהּ: כּוֹשׁ עֲצֻמָּהּ וּמִצָּרֶיהָ וְאֵין קֶצֶה פּוֹט וְלוֹבִיִּים הָיוּ בְּעִזְרָתֶךָ:	6	I shall pelt you with filth; I shall shame you and put you in the pillory.
ז		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?
ח		8	Are you better off than No-Amon situated among rivers, her defences the seas, her ramparts the waters?
ט		9	In Ethiopia and Egypt lay her strength, and it was boundless; Put and the Libyans became her allies.

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 (לָךְ – 2FS), the LXX has 'for her' (αὐτῇ); 4Q^pNah 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^pNah. 'The waters' follows 4Q^pNah; 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).

גַּם־הִיא לָגְלָה הַלְכָה בְּשָׁבִי י
 גַּם עַלְלֶיהָ יִרְטָשׁוּ
 בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חֻצּוֹת
 וְעַל־נִכְבְּדֶיהָ יָדוּ גֹרָל
 וְכָל־גְּדוֹלֶיהָ רָתְקוּ בַּזָּקִים:
 גַּם־אַתָּה תִּשְׁכָּרִי תְּהִי נֶעְלָמָה יא
 גַּם־אַתָּה תִּבְקָשִׁי מְעוֹז מֵאוֹיֵב:
 כָּל־מִבְצָרֶיךָ יב
 תֵּאָנִים עַם־בְּכוֹרִים
 אִם־יִנָּעוּ
 וְנָפְלוּ עַל־פִּי אוֹכֵל:
 הִנֵּה עַמְּךָ נָשִׁים יג
 בְּקִרְבֶּךָ לְאִיִּבֶיךָ
 פֶּתוּחַ נִפְתָּחוּ שַׁעְרֵי אֶרֶץ
 אָכְלָה אֵשׁ בְּרִיחֶיךָ:
 מִי מִצֹּר שְׁאֲבִי־לָךְ יד
 חֲזִקִי מִבְצָרֶיךָ

- 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.
- 11 You too will become drunk, you will go into hiding;
you too will have to search for a refuge from the enemy.
- 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.
- 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!
- 14 Draw yourselves water for the siege
and strengthen your fortifications!

¹⁰ In place of 'for her nobles', here following the MT (וְעַל־נִכְבְּדֶיהָ) & 4Q^pNah, the LXX reads 'for all her nobles' (πάντα τὰ ἑνδοξὰ 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.

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

¹² 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.

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

¹⁴ The literal translation of 'water for a siege' is 'waters of siege'.

בָּאֵי בְטִיט וּרְמָסִי בַחֲמֶר
 הַחֲזִיקִי מִלִּבֶּן:
 שֵׁם תֹאכְלֶךָ אֵשׁ טו
 תִּכְרִיתֶךָ
 חֶרֶב תֹאכְלֶךָ
 כִּילֶק הַתִּפְבֹּד
 כִּילֶק הַתִּפְבֹּדִי כְּאַרְבֶּה:
 הִרְבִּית רַכְלִיךָ טז
 מִבּוֹכְבֵּי הַשָּׁמַיִם
 יֶלֶק פֶּשֶׁט וַיַּעַף:
 מִנְּזָרֶיךָ כְּאַרְבֶּה יז
 וַתִּפְסְרִיךָ כְּגֹב גְּבֵי הַחוֹנִים בְּגִדְרוֹת
 בַּיּוֹם קָרָה שֶׁמֶשׁ
 זָרְחָה וְנוֹדַד וְלֹא־נֹדַע
 מִקּוֹמוֹ אִים:
 נִמְּו רַעִיךָ מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר יח
 יִשְׁכְּנוּ אֲדִירֶיךָ
 נִפְּשׁוּ עַמֶּךָ עַל־הָהָרִים

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

15 The NJB omits the 3rd line, a gloss inspired by what follows.

16 This verse is numbered 16^a in the NJB. 'Let ... outnumber' is a conjectural translation; the MT has 'you ... outnumber'.

17 This verse is numbered 17^a in the NJB.

16a This verse, transposed from its position in the MT, is numbered 16^b in the NJB.

17a This verse is numbered 17^b in the NJB.

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

וְאֵין מְקַבְּץ׃
 אֵין־כֹּהֶה לְשִׁבְרֶךָ נַחֲלָה מִכָּתֶךָ יט
 כָּל־שֹׁמְעֵי שִׁמְעֶךָ
 תִּקְעוּ כַף עָלֶיךָ
 כִּי עַל־מִי לֹא־עֲבָרָה רָעַתְךָ תָּמִיד׃
 {ש}

with no one to gather them.

¹⁹ 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?

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