

# INTRODUCTION TO 34<sup>TH</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## NAHUM (660 B.C.)(7<sup>th</sup>)

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### **A. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF NAHUM.**

Nahum is the seventh of the twelve Minor Prophets. The name 'Nahum' means *compassionate* (cf. 1:3,7). Nahum probably came from Judah. He addresses Judah in chapter 1:12,15 and thus definitely worked in Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel had already been taken into exile in 721 B.C. and Nahum only refers to their past ruin in chapter 2:2. Chapter 3:8-10 mentions the fall of Thebes in Egypt as a historical fact. The city was captured by Ashurbanipal in 663 B.C. But chapter 3:5-7 prophesies the fall of Nineveh as a future event. Nineveh fell in 612 B.C. Nahum describes Assyria as still being a powerful empire, and Nineveh as being a city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims (3:1). He describes it as full of horses and war chariots, charging cavalry, flashing swords and glinting spears (3:2). There are many casualties, piles of dead, people stumbling over corpses (3:3). It is a city pictured as the alluring harlot and mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft (3:4). Nahum says that Nineveh still had its yoke on the neck of Judah and its shackles on its people (1:13). Thus, Nahum prophesied during the dark days of foreign domination for Judah, in which Judah was a vassal of Assyria and paid tribute to Assyria. The prophet Nahum must have prophesied during the early part of the reign of Manasseh, thus **around 660 B.C.** Nahum was a great poet and his book together with the book of Isaiah are the greatest prophesies written in poetic language!

### **B. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF NAHUM.**

The book of Nahum may be given the title, "**God's vengeance and goodness revealed in Nineveh's overthrow.**"

It has two parts:

#### **1. Nahum 1:1-8. Contrasting God's vengeance with his goodness.**

A hymn contrasting God's vengeance upon his enemies with his goodness towards his own people.

#### **2. Nahum 1:9 to 3:19. Nineveh's overthrow predicted.**

- Nineveh's overthrow means Judah's freedom (1:9-15).
- Nineveh's siege and fall (2:1-13).
- Nineveh's destruction (3:1-19).

### **C. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF NAHUM.**

#### **1. God is both the avenging God and the compassionate God.**

According to chapter 1:2-7, God will surely take vengeance on his foes and punish the guilty. He will certainly pour out his wrath on those who hate him and oppress his people. Chapter 1:6 asks, "Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger?" This is not in conflict with the New Testament teaching, because God's holiness and righteousness demands that he punishes the impenitent.

But at the same time God is slow to anger and good, because he is a sure refuge for people in trouble and cares for people who trust in him! No one who trusts in the living God need to be terrified of him! Thus, both the Old and New Testaments teach that God is both a holy and a loving God.

#### **2. God's vengeance is revealed in the overthrow of Nineveh.**

The prophet Nahum's glorious task was to predict the overthrow of the capital of the mighty Assyrian Empire. God has given a sovereign command concerning Nineveh and she will be destroyed and her citizens will be carried into exile (1:14; 2:7). Whoever has the Almighty God against him is doomed! And in chapter 2:13, God says, "I am against you (3:5)."

But Nahum's prophecy is at the same time a message against every other 'Nineveh', against every other mighty city that seeks to seduce God's people or seeks to destroy them. The description of the city of Nineveh is taken over by the apostle John in Revelation chapter 17 to describe 'Babylon, the great harlot'. The apostle John also prophesied the overthrow of that Babylon. *Nineveh, Babylon and Rome became symbols of every other godless city in the world*, which try to seduce Christians or destroy Christians. Therefore Nahum's prophecy is a warning concerning the terrible vengeance of the living and holy God against every godless city in the world.