

Introduction to Nahum

Author	Nahum, a prophet associated with Elkosh (1:1), a town for which various locations have been proposed; otherwise unattested in the Scriptures
Date	640-630 BC <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geisler posits a date between 650 and 620 BC (231), a conclusion that seems to be a matter of near-consensus among conservative scholars.• Nahum 3:8 alludes to the fall of Thebes (663 BC) as a past event. According to Smith, the date of Nahum certainly falls between this date and the defeat of Nineveh in 612 BC (478). Other authors articulate the same parameters (Austel 659; Longman 549).• Merrill judges that “a setting in the last third of Ashurbanipal’s reign [over Assyria] (640-627) would not be at all unreasonable” (454). Similarly, Smith favors “a date around the death of Ashurbanipal” in 628 BC (478).
Kings Mentioned	
<i>Judah</i>	None
<i>Israel</i>	None
Nation(s) Targeted	
<i>Primary</i>	Assyria, as evidenced by direct and indirect references to Nineveh (1:1; 2:8; 3:1; 3:7) and a direct address to the king of Assyria (3:18)
<i>Secondary</i>	Judah, as evidenced by an overt reference (1:15) and implied by mention of “those who take refuge in him [i.e., Yahweh]” (1:7, ESV); references to Jacob and Israel (2:2) may envision an ultimate restoration of the whole nation (Austel 662)
Representative Texts	1:1-3; 1:6-8; 1:12-13; 1:15; 2:8-3:4; 3:8-10; 3:18-19
Core Message	Yahweh is a God of wrath, mercy, and power. He will surely execute judgment on his enemies and protect the faithful of Israel, in each case acting with finality. Nineveh’s doom is imminent because of its violent and treacherous dealings with other nations. The Lord opposes the bloody city and will humiliate it through a devastating military defeat. The attacking armies will administer Yahweh’s wrath. Other nations will take notice and Judah will be restored to security.
New Testament References¹	1:6 (Rev. 6:17) 3:5 (Rev. 17:16)
Features	Nahum’s prophecy of Nineveh’s demise was fulfilled in 612 BC, when the city was destroyed at the hands of the Babylonians and Medes (Longman 549). The evident outpouring of God’s wrath on Nineveh at this time contrasts with the mercy that he had extended about 125 years earlier under the ministry of Jonah (Jonah 4:2, 11). Nahum 1:3 contains allusions to the manifestation of Yahweh’s character in Exodus 34. The prophet wisely affirmed that God is at once merciful (“slow to

anger,” quoted from Exod. 34:6) and holy (“will by no means clear the guilty,” quoted from Exod. 34:7).

Sources

Austel, Hermann J. “Nahum.” *Baker Commentary on the Bible*, edited by Walter A. Elwell, Baker Books, 2000, pp. 659-65.

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Geisler, Norman L. *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*. Baker Book House, 1977.

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Merrill, Eugene H. *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. Baker Books, 1996.

Smith, Gary V. “Nahum.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, fully revised, vol. 3, Eerdmans, 1986, pp. 477-79.

¹ New Testament citations of texts from Nahum were identified in part by consulting Beale and Carson’s *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.