**Nahum Commentary**

**Nahum Chapter 1**

Nah 1:1

**“burden.”** The word of the Lord can be a burden to the prophet, and then, when it is spoken, can be a burden to the people. It might have been more clear in English to say “burdensome message” instead of “burden,” but the Hebrew word is “burden.”

[For more information on “burden,” see commentary on Mal. 1:1.]

Nah 1:2

**“he stores up wrath.”** The Hebrew translated “stores up” has a few different meanings, and it can also be understood as Yahweh “reserves” his wrath for his enemies (JPS, KJV), He “sustains” or “maintains” his wrath against His enemies (NET, NIV); and/or He “stores up” His wrath for His enemies (CJB, NJB, REV).

Nah 1:3

**“He marches out.”** The NET text note on Nahum 1:3 helps explain the REV translation. “The noun דַּרְכּוֹ (*darko*, “his way”) is nuanced here in a verbal sense. The noun ‏דֶּרֶךְ (*derekh*) often denotes a “journey” (Gen 28:20; 30:36; 45:23; Num 9:10; Josh 9:13; 1 Sam 21:6; 1 Kgs 18:27). The verb דָּרַךְ (*darakh*) often means “to tread a path” (Job 22:15) and “to march out” (Judg 5:21). The LORD [Yahweh] is portrayed as the Divine Warrior marching out to battle (Exod 15:1-12; Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4-5; Pss 18:7-15; 68:4-10, 32-35; 77:16-19; Mic 1:3-4; Hab 3:3-15).” The NAB reads, “In stormwind and tempest he comes.” The JPS reads, “He travels in whirlwind and storm.” The NLT reads, “He displays his power in the whirlwind and the storm.”

Nah 1:8

**“he will make a complete end of its site.”** God will make a complete end of Nineveh.

**Nahum Chapter 2**

Nah 2:7

**“she.”** This is the figure of speech personification. Nahum is a prophecy against Nineveh, who here is portrayed as a woman.

**“stripped *naked*.”** Although the meaning of the Hebrew is debated, “stripped” fits the context and the culture. It was common that when a city was captured, people would be led away as captives stripped naked (Isa. 20:4). Egypt’s Queen Cleopatra committed suicide so she would not be paraded naked through the streets of Rome.

**Nahum Chapter 3**

Nah 3:5

**“I will lift your skirts over your face.”** This is a reference to the city of Nineveh (Nahum 3:7). God made a similar statement about Jerusalem many years later (Jer. 13:27). Nineveh is being compared to a woman who is about to meet with disaster and shame. The comparison to a woman is clearly implied, which is the figure of speech hypocatastasis (see commentary on Rev. 20:2). It was common in the biblical culture to refer to cities and nations as women (see commentary on Isa. 1:8). Nineveh was destroyed in 612 BC by an alliance of countries led by Babylon, and then in 586 BC, Babylon destroyed Jerusalem.

**“shame.”** Used here for the genital organs. See commentary on Jeremiah 13:26.

Nah 3:12

**“with the first-ripe figs.”** A first-ripe fig was a fig that ripened earlier than the rest of the figs and was usually large and sweet. See commentary on Isaiah 28:4.

Nah 3:13

**“bars.”** The “bars” were strong wooden beams that were placed behind the doors of the gate so they could not be opened and could withstand pounding from the outside without giving way. Those bars were the origin of the shout “Bar the doors!” when an enemy would approach.

Nah 3:18

**“shepherds.”** Here as in many other places, “shepherds” refers to the leaders.