

can happen, the land must go through the experience of desolation. This is to be charged up against *them that dwell therein* (the people of Israel) because of *the fruit of their doings*. The exile or captivity of both kingdoms of the Jews was to be a chastisement upon them for their unfaithfulness to God regarding the law that had been enjoined upon them at Mt. Sinai.

Verse 14. *Feed* (or rule or guide) *thy people* is Micah's way of predicting that God would again care for His people after they have gone through their desolation period.

Verse 15. The reference to the day of Egypt is for comparison. Israel was brought out of bondage in that country, and she will also be released from Babylonian captivity.

Verse 16. In view of the comparatively small number in Israel at the time of the release, it will be a surprise to see their accomplishments. *Lay their hand upon their mouth* indicates that the circumstance will be so marvelous in the eyes of the heathen that they will not be able to say anything.

Verse 17. *Lick the dust* is a figurative prediction of the humiliation of the heathen nations when they see the triumph of Israel. *Be afraid of the Lord our God* means they will be stunned with awe and forced to respect the might of the God of Israel.

Verse 18. The most wonderful feature of God's treatment of his unfaithful people is his willingness to forgive them. Their many abominations would seem to justify their utter extinction, yet His great love preserved them and restored them again to their home land after the necessary punishment had been administered.

Verse 19. *Subdue our iniquities* has special reference to the complete cure of idolatry that the captivity effected upon Israel. See the historical note on this subject with the comments on Isaiah 1: 25 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 20. *Perform the truth* means that God will prove the truth of all His promises to Jacob or Israel, which had first been made to Abraham the founder of the race.

NAHUM I

Verse 1. Nahum was one of the minor prophets who wrote about 6 or 7 centuries before Christ. *Burden* is

from an original that means "an utterance," and is used here to mean that the prophet has something to say about Nineveh. That was the capital of the Assyrian Empire that was still in power as Nahum wrote. But the Lord gave him a vision of the fate of that nation and he wrote about it in his book. Assyria was the empire that had carried the people of the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel off into exile. It was God's decree that such an event should take place, yet He was incensed at the personal satisfaction that heathen nation got out of Israel's downfall, and of the unnecessary cruelty that was imposed in connection with the case. As a consequence, it was decreed that Assyria in turn should be made to suffer some reverses. The nation finally fell before the Babylonian power.

Verse 2. Jealousy is what causes a person to cling to that which he possesses and to resent any attempt of another to take it from him. Assyria had taken possession of a portion of God's people. He was determined to take vengeance because of it. *Reserveth* is defined "to cherish" in the lexicon, and the clause means that God holds a store of wrath for his enemies.

Verse 3. *Slow to anger*. This phrase is in keeping with the last sentence of the preceding verse. If God reserves wrath for certain characters, then He can take as much time as his wisdom suggests in executing it upon His wayward people. But he will not entirely overlook even their wrongdoing, which is the meaning of the words *not at all acquit the wicked*. That is why He suffered the Assyrians to take the people of Israel into exile. *Hath his way* means that God does as he wills with all the elements of the universe. If He wishes to use these agencies to carry out some of the decrees of chastisement upon a nation it will be done.

Verse 4. This is further specification of the power of God over the parts of the universe, and it denotes that if He wills to control them as agencies against men and nations it will be accomplished. *Bashan* was in a heathen territory and *Carmel* with *Lebanon* was in the possession of Israel. However, wherever the place might be that incurs the divine wrath, it will have to suffer whatever form of chastisement that He deems proper.

Verse 5. All of these statements are made as a description of the power of

God. This verse is quite inclusive, for it begins with the inanimate things in creation, and ends with the living in the words *world, and all that dwell therein*. God is able not only to control the material things that have no intelligent power of resistance, but He can rule all living creatures in the world which includes men and nations.

Verse 6. It is logical to ask the question with which this verse begins, for if God has such universal power it is folly for anyone to think of resisting Him. His fury is compared to fire because of its effect upon corruption to which it is applied. Paul makes the same figurative comparison of God in Hebrews 12: 29 which is also a quotation from Deuteronomy 4: 24.

Verse 7. *The Lord is good* denotes that God's wrath is not to be regarded in the light of a destructive fire that ruins everything before it whether good or bad. It should rather be thought of as a purifying flame that affects only such combustible matter as refuse, leaving unhurt and purified all elements that are useful.

Verse 8. The same might is now compared to a flood that sweeps everything before it that is not firmly attached. *Darkness* is used figuratively, and among the words of the lexicon definition of the original are "misery, destruction, death, ignorance, sorrow." These conditions come upon those who are enemies of the God of Israel.

Verse 9. *What do ye imagine against the Lord?* This is a challenge especially intended for Assyria. *Affliction . . . not . . . second time*. When God moves to accomplish a certain result He makes a success of it and does not have to "try, try again."

Verse 10. *Folden* is from *CABAK* and is defined in the lexicon by "to entwine." *Drunken and drunkards* are from *CORE*, which means "carousal." The thought in both clauses is that of being in a conspiracy. But though the Assyrians form such an opposition against the people of Israel, they will be *devoured as stubble fully dry*, which means that the resistance will be no more effective than dry stubble would be against a fire.

Verse 11. The pronoun *thee* stands for Assyria as a nation that was hostile toward the kingdom of Israel. But a whole empire would not march against a foe; instead it would go in

the person of a chief representative. This is the significance of *one come out of thee* who is described as *a wicked counsellor*. The wicked counsellor could be understood to be the man representing the Assyrian Empire in its rage against God's people, whether we consider the 10-tribe kingdom (2 Kings 17), or the vicious but unsuccessful tirade against the 2-tribe kingdom (2 Kings 18 and 19).

Verse 12. *Quiet* means to be calm and having a feeling of security. The verse means that though the enemy have that feeling, encouraged perhaps by the fact that they were *many*, yet they (the enemy) shall be cut down. The passage now is addressed to Israel for consolation or encouragement. God afflicted his people by suffering the heathen nations to subdue them, but He promises that it will not be repeated.

Verse 13. This is a prophecy of the release from captivity. *His* means the Assyrians and/or Babylonians, depending on whether the reader applies it to the 10-tribe or the 2-tribe kingdom, for either could be considered properly.

Verse 14. The language is still addressed to God's people. Idolatry was the national evil for which it was to be sent into captivity. Idols were to be *cut off* or abolished by the effects of the period of exile in a foreign and heathen land. *I will make thy grave* is figurative. The land of Babylon was to be the grave and the nation of Israel was the corpse, for it underwent national death when Jerusalem was destroyed. (See another statement of this in Isaiah 22: 14, 18.)

Verse 15. Once more the prophet leaps from some experience of fleshly Israel to predict a great favor as spiritual Israel. The terms used are those of the rituals used by fleshly Israel but are figuratively used in this case, and refer to the spiritual practices under Christ. The prediction is cited by Paul in Romans 10: 15.

NAHUM 2

Verse 1. The prophet is still making predictions against Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. *He that dasheth in pieces* means the military force that was to come against the city and country. *Before thy face* denotes that the hostile army was to come into the immediate presence of the city. *Keep the munition* (military equipment) and the other phrases of the verse are said by way

of warning that the city would need all of its reserves in the conflict coming upon it.

Verse 2. A natural question would be, why did the Lord have such a severe lot in store for the city? The answer is that it was to be in return for her cruelty against His people. It is true that God decreed the downfall of the nation of Israel, which is meant by the statement *the Lord hath turned away the excellency of Jacob*, and it was to be done through the agency of Assyria. But He never did approve of the motives of these heathen servants nor of the unnecessary cruelties which they used. The last clause is still a statement of the harsh treatment the Assyrians imposed upon Israel. This verse is inserted by the prophet to explain why the Lord is predicting such a complete overthrow of the capital city of Nineveh.

Verse 3. *His mighty men* refers to the great men in the Babylonian army that will be invading Assyria. The *red and scarlet* has reference to the appearance of the equipment, caused either by the artificial coloring or by the reflection of the sun. It would make it imposing in the sight of the intended victims and thus would tend to weaken their morale. *Chariots with flaming torches* has about the same meaning as the coloring appearance of the *red* above. The rapidity with which the wheels would revolve would cause them to reflect a glittering appearance as they sparkled in the sun. *Fir trees* comes from *HEROWSH* and Strong defines it, "A cypress (?) tree; hence a lance or a musical instrument (as made of that wood)." *Terribly shaken* are both from the one word *RAAL* and defined, "To reel, i.e. (figuratively) to brandish." The whole clause means that in the operation against Nineveh the lances of the Babylonians will be brandished in a threatening manner.

Verse 4. The *chariots* in ancient times were used either for purposes of transportation or as a war implement, more generally the latter. This verse is a prediction of the great numbers of the vehicles to be used in the attack upon Nineveh's streets and the *broad ways* or open country. They were to be so numerous they would *jostle* (jostle) *one against another*. *Seem like torches and run like the lightnings* is to be understood in about the same sense as the conditions for the

sake of appearance in the preceding verse. Most of the war chariots had swords or large scythes attached to them in order to mow down the men of the enemy. These were made of bright metal and would give off the appearance of torches as they revolved on the wheels in the sunlight.

Verse 5. When the watchmen of Nineveh see the enemy approaching they will announce it to the king (or queen as the case may be), then he shall make preparations to defend the city. *Recount his worthies*. The king of Nineveh will investigate the conditions of his forces and will count up to learn the military strength he has in the way of good soldiers. But they will *stumble* (or falter) in the excitement of the hour as they prepare to defend the wall of the city. *Defence* is rendered "covering" or "coverer" in the margin, and the definition in the lexicon agrees with it. The context also justifies the rendering, for the inside attempts at defence are already dealt with in the beginning of the verse and the defenders have had their failure. After this is when they find that the *defence shall be prepared*. It means that after the citizens of Nineveh have made their excited attempt to protect the city and march out to the wall, they will find that the invading forces maintaining the siege will have provided themselves with this protecting "covering."

Verse 6. As a result of the conditions described in the preceding paragraph, the gates of the city were forced open by the besiegers and the soldiers entered the place. With a reversal of the expectations of the citizens, we are not surprised that *the palace was dissolved*.

Verse 7. *Huzzab* is capitalized as if it were a proper name, but Strong says it is not. His definition of the original is, "A primitive root; to station, in various applications (literal or figurative)." It means that the station or spot where the palace stood will be taken and the chief inhabitant of it will be led away captive. Also, the attendants of the palace will accompany said person in a procession of mourning, *tubering* or drumming, beating upon their breasts in their despair.

Verse 8. The lexicon definition for *pool* uses a stronger word and calls it a reservoir which denotes a larger body. It represents Nineveh as a place containing many people which

the history and geography of the city will bear out. *Yet they*, etc., means they of this reservoir of people will flee when they see the invading army coming. *Stand, stand*, is the cry of the more resolute inhabitants, trying to stop the fleeing citizens, but they will not be able to stop the fleeing which will have become what is virtually a panic of fear and desperation.

Verse 9. *Take ye the spoil* is a form of prediction that the invader will take the valuables of the city as a spoil of war. *None end of the store* denotes that there was much wealth in the city of Nineveh. *Pleasant furniture* means the vessels in which these precious metals were kept, including the gold or silver contained therein.

Verse 10. *Empty and void and waste* is a prediction of the utter ruin that was to come upon the city. The rest of the verse is a description of the agitated state of mind that the citizens in the city will experience at the destruction of their city. *Faces gather blackness* is a somewhat unusual rendering with regard to the last word. Moffatt renders it "black fear," while the American Standard Version gives us "waxed pale." Strong defines the original, "illuminated, i.e. a glow; as noun, a flush (of anxiety)." Whatever particular translation we adopt, it is clear that the terrible disturbance within the city was to have its effect upon the facial expression of the citizens. It will be helpful to quote a paragraph from history that shows the fulfillment of this eventful revolution as follows: "Saracus, who came to the throne towards the end of the 7th century B.C., was the last of the long line of Assyrian kings. For nearly or quite six centuries the Ninevite kings had now lorded it over the East. There was scarcely a state in all Western Asia that during this time had not, in the language of the royal inscriptions, 'borne the heavy yoke of their lordship,' scarcely a people that had not suffered their cruel punishments, or tasted the bitterness of enforced exile. But now swift misfortunes were bearing down upon the oppressor from every quarter. Egypt revolted and tore Syria away from the empire; from the mountain defiles on the east issued the armies of the recent-grown empire of the Aryan Medes, led by the renowned Cyaxares; from the southern lowlands, anxious to aid in the overthrow of the hated oppressor, the Babylonians joined the

Medes as allies, and together they laid close siege to Nineveh. The city was finally taken and sacked [plundered], and dominion passed away forever from the proud capital. Two hundred years later, when Xenophon with his Ten Thousand Greeks, in his memorable retreat passed the spot, the once great city was a crumbling mass of ruins of which he could not even learn the name."—Myers, *Ancient History*, page 66.

Verses 11-13. These verses are grouped into one paragraph because they all are on the same subject. The terms are generally all used figuratively, especially the lions and their breed. The heroes and leaders of the Assyrian nation are likened to the lions because of their savage treatment of men and women who fell into their hands. They showed no mercy toward others and now the Lord will bring a nation against them that will burn their chariots and slay their strong men. (See historical quotation.)

NAHUM 3

Verse 1. The leading men in Nineveh would not hesitate at bloodshed if it would help their plots to overcome the other citizens. *Prey departeth not* denotes that the practice of preying upon the helpless citizens never ceased. Thirst for power was merciless.

Verse 2. This verse begins describing the details of the "woe" with which the chapter begins. *Noise of a whip*. Military operations were carried on largely with chariots drawn by horses, and this phase predicts the lashing of the animals in urging them on through the city. Streets had rough and rocky surfaces and the chariot wheels were equipped with hard tires, hence the rattling noise they would make. *Jumping* is from RAQAD which Strong defines, "A primitive root; properly to stamp, i.e. to spring about (wildly or for joy)." The word has been rendered by dance, jump, leap and skip. The prancing horses would naturally produce such movements in the chariots.

Verse 3. *The horseman* means the man driving the horses drawing the chariots of the preceding verse, for the charioteers did not restrict their activities to their driving. They would leap from the rear of the vehicle (which was open at that end) and make close attack upon any person of the enemy nearby. Or they would cast the spear from the chariot at those farther away. The great number of

the slain is indicated by the words *stumble upon their corpses*.

Verse 4. This verse sets forth the evils for which the Lord decreed this awful fate for Nineveh and the nation. Literal whoredom was doubtless practiced there, but the term is also used to mean the abominable evils of idolatry. This would include various kinds of traffic such as witchcraft, by which outside people were defrauded out of their belongings and other rights.

Verse 5. Idolatry is compared with adultery in the Bible, and a harlot is likened unto a city or nation that practices the false religion, hence the accusations were made against Nineveh recorded in this passage. *Discover thy skirts upon thy face*. The harlot's skirt was lifted up as far as her face to make sure that her nakedness was exposed. A harlot would not have any sense of shame as far as modesty is concerned, but to have her body exposed by someone who did not intend to patronize her would be humiliating. This is a prediction that Nineveh was literally to be exposed to the gaze of the world.

Verse 6. The *filth* is figurative and refers to the insults and shame that would be cast upon Nineveh by the nations. *Make thee vile* means to expose the city so that her true condition could be seen and she would be known to be vile.

Verse 7. This verse means the same as verse 10 of the preceding chapter.

Verse 8. *No* is another name for Thebes, an important city in Egypt. In connection with the description of the city given here, I shall quote from Smith's Bible Dictionary which will verify it: "The description of No as 'situate among the rivers, the waters round about it' (Nahum 3: 8), remarkably characterizes Thebes. It lay on both sides of the Nile, and was celebrated for its hundred gates, for its temples, obelisks, statues, etc. It was emphatically the city of temples, in the ruins of which many monuments of ancient Egypt are preserved. The plan of the city was a parallelogram, two miles from north to south and four from east to west, but none suppose that in its glory it really extended 33 miles along both sides of the Nile. Thebes was destroyed by Ptolemy, B. C. 81, and since then its population has dwelt in villages only." The argument of the prophet in this verse is that if such a stronghold as Thebes could be overthrown, then

Nineveh should not feel so confident of resisting the invader.

Verse 9. The fall of No (Thebes) cannot be explained on the ground that the city had insufficient support. She had the backing of two countries, Egypt and Ethiopia, and of the groups known as Put and Lubim.

Verse 10. In spite of the greatness of this Egyptian city, her inhabitants were *carried away*, the *captivity* meaning the humiliation that they suffered at the hands of other forces among the nations. *Cast lots for the honorable men* means the various nations that came against No divided these important men among themselves by casting lots.

Verse 11. *Thou* means *Nineveh* and she is hereby warned that as surely as the city of No was overthrown so she will be ruined also. *Shalt be drunken* means she will be dealt such a blow that she will be stunned and caused to stagger. *Shalt be hid* denotes that the city would become obscure and *seek strength* or help (but in vain).

Verse 12. The firstripe fruit of the fig tree would be very desirable, and the *strong holds* or fortified places in the city would be the spots most to be desired by an enemy. If the mere shaking of a tree would place the fruit into the mouth of the eater, it would illustrate the ease and surety with which the invading army will obtain these coveted spots in Nineveh.

Verse 13. *People* is from AM and a part of Strong's definition is, "Collectively troops or attendants." The thought of the prediction is that the military forces in the city will be no stronger than if they were women, and they are not considered qualified for military service. As a consequence, the gates will be early thrown open as was illustrated by the mere shaking of the tree in the preceding verse. *Bars* is defined "a bolt" in the lexicon and it denotes that the fasteners on the gates will be easily destroyed by the fire of the enemy.

Verse 14. The actions detailed are those of a city preparing to resist a siege, and the verse is a prediction that Nineveh will need all the preparation she can make.

Verse 15. Notwithstanding all the preparations suggested in the preceding verse, the fire of the besiegers will devour the fortifications. The *canker-worm* and *locust* were destructive insects and consumed that which they

attacked. Though the people of Nineveh should make themselves as numerous as these insects were, yet they were to be attacked and destroyed by the invading forces which will be still more numerous.

Verse 16. Nineveh had grown in her business and political interests until it was compared with the stars of the heaven. But in spite of all this apparent strength, the *cankervorm* (invading enemy) will present great numbers to attack the city and *flee away* or make a success in the operation.

Verses 17-19. There is nothing new in these verses that has not been set forth in other verses of the book. The subject is the utter defeat of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, with not a possibility of a "come-back." (See the historical quotation at chapter 2: 10.)

HABAKKUK 1

Verse 1. See Nahum 1: 1 for comments on the word *burden*. Habakkuk was given something to say and it was to be written in this book.

Verse 2. The prophet laments the corruption and violence that were being practiced by the people of Judah. Habakkuk was not responsible for the wickedness of his people but he felt a personal interest in their fate. *Thou wilt not save* means that Judah had gone too far in her abominable course to be spared the judgment of God.

Verse 3. *Why dost thou show me iniquity* is a continuation of the prophet's lament at the low ebb of spirituality among his people. He specifies some of the evils that the nation was committing; violence and strife and contention.

Verse 4. *The law is slackened* means that the people had become careless or even positively disobedient regarding its requirements. *The wicked doth compass about the righteous* was true in more than one sense. The wicked leaders hindered those who would have been righteously carrying out the law. Also the leaders' wicked conduct in general was so bad that it covered up or counteracted what things they did that would have otherwise been acceptable. (See the long note in connection with Isaiah 1: 10, volume 3 of this Commentary.)

Verse 5. Some prophecies in the Bible had a twofold bearing, or were destined to be fulfilled twice, and the present verse is one of them. It first

refers to the marvelous work of the Lord in which the heathen were to behold the judgment of God against his nation. *Not believe, though told*. They would rush heedlessly on in their evil course although they had been plainly and authoritatively told about it. The same kind of experience was threatening in Paul's day as he cites it in Acts 13: 41.

Verse 6. The Chaldeans were a special race of people who got in the lead in the land of Babylon, hence the terms Chaldeans and Babylonians are used in the same sense. From this verse through 11 is a prediction of the great captivity that God was going to bring upon Judah. *Hasty* is from a word that is defined "prompt" in the lexicon. The Chaldeans were prompt in their movements, especially when they were induced thereto by *bitterness* as they were against Judah. They were to come through the land of God's people and take possession of the whole country.

Verse 7. *Dreadful* is from the same original word as "reverend" in Psalms 111: 9 where it is applied to the name of God. It shows us therefore that many words in the Bible are to be interpreted according to the connection in which they are used. *Shall proceed of themselves* means the Chaldeans were independent in disposition and followed their own inclination regardless of all others.

Verse 8. The horse was a prominent means of warfare in ancient times, both for the drawing of chariots and carrying of cavalymen. The Chaldeans possessed some of the finest specimens of that noble creature. *Evening wolves* is a figure denoting the viciousness with which they would lunge into battle. A wolf that had been fasting through the day would be hungry and ravenous by evening. The fact is used to illustrate the activities of the Chaldeans when their cavalry operated in the battle. *Fly as the eagle* is another figure of speech that means the same as the above comments.

Verse 9. The pronouns "they" and "their" stand for the Chaldeans (or Babylonians) who will be using the horses in the action. *Shall come for violence* means that when these forces come against Judah it will be with the intention of getting what they want even if they have to use violence in getting it. *Sup up* is from one word and it is explained in the lexicon to mean "to accumulate by impulse."