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## THE BOOK OF NAHUM & LUKE

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Bible Jam Session 6 – Winter/Spring



**NOTE:**

**New Semester Schedule:**

March 15 – Reflection (No Class)

April 19 & 26 – Reflection Days (No Class)

Semester Ends May 17 or 24 (TBD) (TBD)

Semester Complete.

**NAHUM 1:1**

An oracle concerning Nineveh.  
The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh

**MARCH 8, 2022**

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## Greek/Hebrew Definitions from Bibletools.org

**Strong's #4853:** massa' (pronounced mas-saw') from 5375; a burden; specifically, tribute, or (abstractly) portorage; figuratively, an utterance, chiefly a doom, especially singing; mental, desire:--burden, carry away, prophecy, X they set, song, tribute.

## Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon:

maśśâ' Massa = "burden"

- 1) load, bearing, tribute, burden, lifting (noun masculine)
- 1a) load, burden
- 1b) lifting, uplifting, that to which the soul lifts itself up
- 1c) bearing, carrying
- 1d) tribute, that which is carried or brought or borne
- 2) utterance, oracle, burden (noun masculine)**
- 3) a son of Ishmael (noun proper masculine)

## Usage:

This word is used **65 times**:

**Nahum 1:1: " The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite."**

Nahum 1:1

“An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.”

The first verse, often called the “title” of the book, identifies its content and genre as well as its author as the poet-prophet stated them, or more likely a later editor assessed them.

The word *māśśā'* (mas-saw), translated “oracle,” identifies eighteen passages in the prophetic books whose contents appear to constitute instances of a specific genre of prophetic speech.

The genre has been characterized as a form that responds to a feeling of doubt, within the Israelite community, about what God intends in a particular historical situation. The *māśśā'*, then, clarifies those intentions, as the prophet addressed the community. The topic of the *māśśā'* is the specific nation, city, people, or historical circumstance that precipitates the question.

In the case of Nahum, the topic is the (perhaps imminent or impending) fall of Nineveh. The basis for the answer is the specific revelation that the prophet seeks and receives about the topic, perhaps what, in the case of Nahum, is referred to by the words “the book of the vision.” The vision provides the basis for the prophetic answer to the request for clarification about the deity's intention. That answer typically addresses both the community and the object of divine action, a circumstance that in Nahum at times produces ambiguity about who is being addressed.

Nothing is known about the prophet Nahum as an individual. His name means “comfort” or “consolation” and may be an abbreviated form of “Nehemiah,” which means “Yahweh is my consolation.” Nahum's hometown, Elkosh—whose exact location is unknown—appears to have been located in southwest Judah.

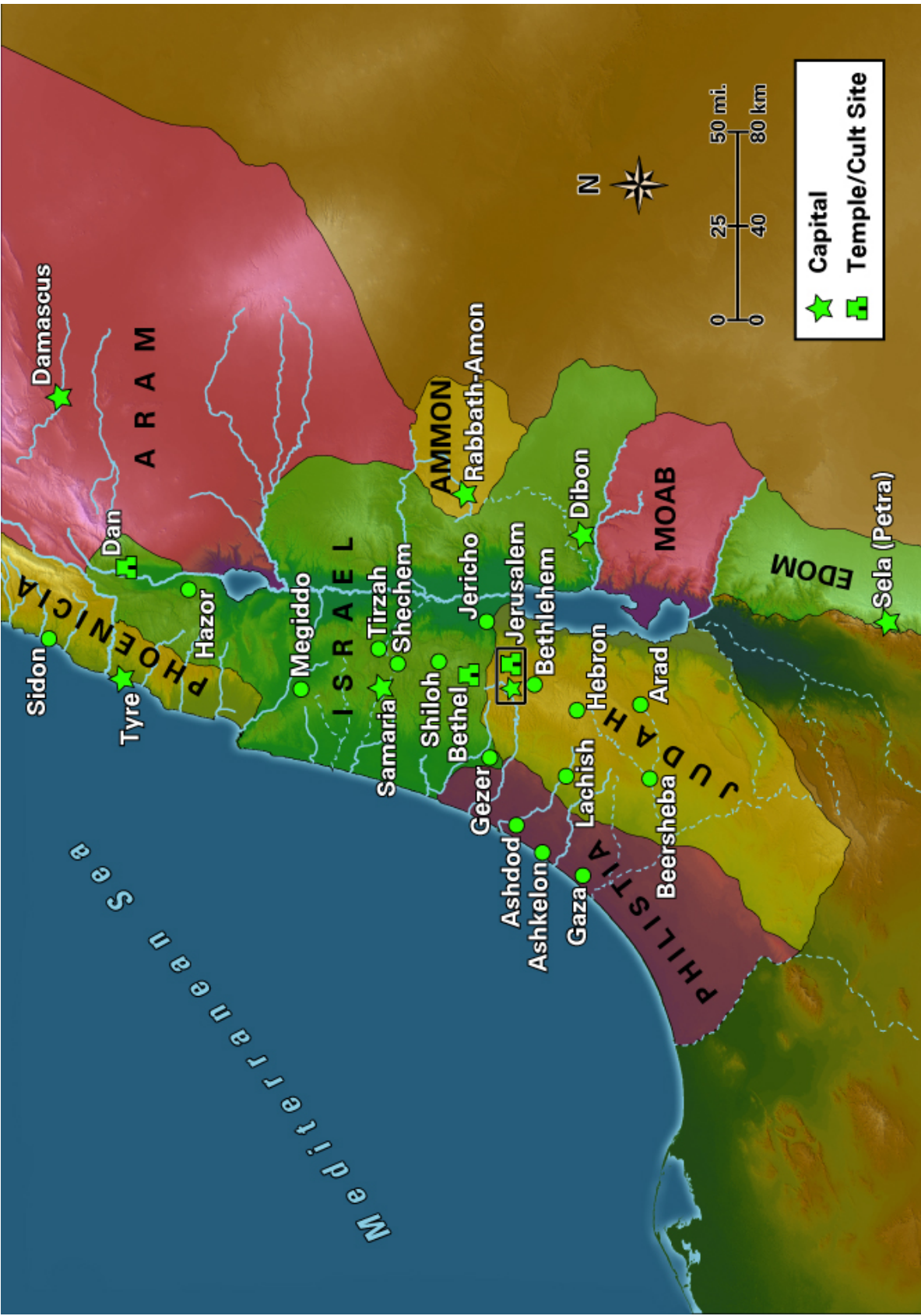


Figure 4: The Hebrew Alphabet

|   |               |   |              |    |             |
|---|---------------|---|--------------|----|-------------|
| א | <i>'āleph</i> | ט | <i>ṭêt</i>   | פ  | <i>pē'</i>  |
| ב | <i>bêt</i>    | י | <i>yôd</i>   | צ  | <i>ṣādê</i> |
| ג | <i>gîmel</i>  | כ | <i>kaph</i>  | ק  | <i>qôph</i> |
| ד | <i>dālet</i>  | ל | <i>lāmed</i> | ר  | <i>rêš</i>  |
| ה | <i>hē'</i>    | מ | <i>mēm</i>   | ש  | <i>śîn</i>  |
| ו | <i>wāw</i>    | נ | <i>nûn</i>   | שׁ | <i>šîn</i>  |
| ז | <i>zayin</i>  | ס | <i>sāmek</i> | ת  | <i>tāw</i>  |
| ח | <i>ḥêt</i>    | ע | <i>'ayin</i> |    |             |

(In alphabetic acrostics, the letters *śîn* and *šîn* are treated as a single letter.)

From The Inclusive Bible – 1:1-8

An oracle about Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum and Elkosh.

<sup>2</sup> YHWH is a jealous and vengeful God!

YHWH the avenger is full of wrath;

YHWH takes vengeance on foes

and stores up fury for God's enemies.

<sup>3</sup> YHWH is slow to anger—but immense in power!

Most surely YHWH will not leave the guilty unpunished!

God's way is in whirlwind and storm,

and the clouds are the dust of God's feet.

<sup>4</sup> God rebukes the sea and makes it evaporate,

and dries up all the rivers.

Bashan and Carmel wither,

and the bloom of Lebanon fades.

<sup>5</sup> The mountains quake before God, and the hills melt;

the earth heaves before God,

the world and all who live in it.

<sup>6</sup> Who can stand before God's indignation?

Who can stand the heat of God's anger?

God's wrath is poured out like fire,

and it breaks the rocks into pieces.

<sup>7</sup> YHWH is good,

a stronghold in a day of troubles,

protecting those who take refuge in God,

<sup>8</sup> even in rushing flood.

YHWH will make a full end of all enemies,

and pursue them into the darkness.

## Commentary

The first section of the poem focuses on the awesome figure of Yahweh the warrior, making an appearance to deliver Judah by smashing Judah's oppressors. An acrostic poem hymns of the theophany, followed by a proclamation of doom and salvation to the respective parties.

Both in form and in content comma the verses of Nahum evoke ancient liturgical traditions. Alphabetic acrostics—i.e., compositions in which the first word of each line or stanza begins with the successive of letter of the alphabet—are relatively frequent in biblical psalmody and wisdom literature. While most of the examples of the form now found in the Bible are of exilic and post-exilic origin—Nahum 1:2-8 (and others) attest to the use of the form in pre-exilic Judah.

Nahum appears, therefore, to begin by either quoting or parodying a form that does not belong to the standard repertory of prophecy, but to the realm of liturgy. This is not unusual, given the well-known prophetic device of poetic imitation of funeral dirges, lawsuits, love songs, and the like. Nahum's acrostic, like a number of others in the Bible, does not reach across the complete alphabet.

Poetic language and prophetic literature align statements that are addressed to a concrete historical situation with an archetypal horizon, a horizon whose outer limit is myth. The theophany of versus 2-8 is a case in point: the events relating to the impending fall of the Assyrian Empire are aligned against the “archetypal horizon” of the basic ancient Near Eastern myth of the divine warrior, emerging to do battle against his enemies. These enemies are identified, at times, with the forces of chaos to threaten the order of creation, with death-dealing drought, or with the human adversaries who threaten the nation. As in Canaan, Babylonia, and Assyria, variations of this basic myth were easily incorporated into the royal ideology of Judah.

## Reflections

As with a number of psalms the theophany presents us with a vision of God that is both sublime and problematic. The power of the ancient, awe inspiring images is still there, even when we experience them at a significant historical and cultural distance. There is something deeply appealing about a vision of a retributive God who finally comes to set things right, to defend the people against their enemies, to subdue the unruly powers, and to establish sovereign rule over nations. There is great comfort in the conviction that evil will be brought to a final reckoning

A problem remains, however, with the image of a “jealous” and “avenging” God; If left as the only divine representation on which to build a theology, such an image would result in a figure more demonic than God like.

Nahum's divine warrior is so deeply rooted in Judean nationalism, so intently focused on the utter destruction of the people's enemy, that it is hard to imagine that, even for Nahum's time, this was all that could be said about God.

A merciless God, more precisely, an image of God that does not take into account God's love for all humankind, becomes a demonic God.

Along with this problem, there remains the ever-present danger that persons who read these words will take into their heads to decide who is God's enemy, thereby demonizing their fellow human beings. It is very tempting to turn real grievances harbored against others in two occasions for thinking that God is on our side alone, thereby forgetting that God cares for all people. As general jubilation over the Persian Gulf war demonstrated, our society is more than ready to celebrate a victory and not count the cost in “enemy” lives, in this case tens of thousands of Iraqis, certainly many more than those who perished in the fall of Nineveh.