

Nahum

Introduction

1:1 The oracle against Nineveh;¹
the book of the vision of Nahum the
Elkoshite.²

God Takes Vengeance against His Enemies

1:2 The LORD is a zealous³ and avenging⁴
God;
the LORD is avenging and very angry.⁵
The LORD takes vengeance⁶ against his
foes;
he sustains his rage⁷ against his enemies.

1:3 The LORD is slow to anger⁸ but great in
power;⁹
the LORD will certainly not¹⁰ allow the
wicked¹¹ to go unpunished.

The Divine Warrior Destroys His Enemies but Protects His People

He marches out¹² in the whirlwind and the
raging storm;
dark storm clouds billow like dust¹³ under
his feet.¹⁴

¹ tn Heb “of Nineveh.”

² tn Or “Nahum of Elkosh” (NAB, NRSV).

³ tn Heb “jealous.” The Hebrew term קָנָא (*qanno*), “jealous, zealous” refers to God’s zealous protection of his people and his furious judgment against his enemies. The root קָנָא (*qana*) can denote jealous envy (Gen 26:14; 30:1; 37:11; Pss 37:1; 73:3; 106:16; Prov 3:31; 23:17; 24:1, 19; Ezek 31:9), jealous rivalry (Eccl 4:4; 9:6; Isa 11:13), marital jealousy (Num 5:14, 15, 18, 25, 30; Prov 6:34; 27:4), zealous loyalty (Num 11:29; 25:11, 13; 2 Sam 21:2; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; 2 Kgs 10:16; Ps 69:10; Song 8:6; Isa 9:6; 37:32; 42:13; 59:17; 63:15; Zech 1:14; 8:2), jealous anger (Deut 32:16, 21; Ps 78:58), and zealous fury (Exod 34:14; Deut 5:9; 29:19; 1 Kgs 14:22; Job 5:2; Pss 79:5; 119:139; Prov 14:30; Isa 26:11; Ezek 5:13; 8:3; 16:38, 42; 23:25; 35:11; 36:5, 6; 38:19; Zeph 1:18). See BDB 888 s.v. קָנָא; E. Reuter, *TDOT* 13:47-58.

⁴ tn The syntax of this line has been understood in two ways: (1) as a single clause with the LORD as the subject: “A jealous and avenging God is the LORD” (NRSV; NASB) or “The LORD is a jealous and avenging God” (NIV); and (2) as two parallel clauses: “God is jealous, and the LORD avenges” (KJV). The LXX reflects the latter. Masoretic accentuation and Hebrew syntax support the former. Accentuation links קָנָא וְנִקְמָה (*qano*’ *v*’*naqqem*), “jealous and avenging” together rather than dividing them into separate clauses. Normal word order suggests that קָנָא וְנִקְמָה (“jealous and avenging”) are attributive adjectives modifying אֱלֹהִים (“God”). In verbless clauses such as this, the predicate normally precedes the subject; thus, “a jealous and avenging God” (אֱלֹהִים קָנָא וְנִקְמָה) is the predicate and “the LORD” (יהוה, *y*’*hvhah*) is the subject.

⁵ tn Or “exceedingly wrathful”; Heb “a lord of wrath.” The idiom “lord of wrath” (וְיֵבֶלֶת הַחַיָּה, *uva’al khemah*) means “wrathful” or “full of wrath” (Prov 22:24; 29:22). The noun “lord” (בַּיֵּלֶת) is used in construct as an idiom to describe a person’s outstanding characteristic or attribute (e.g., Gen 37:19; 1 Sam 28:7; 2 Kgs 1:8; Prov 1:17; 18:9; 22:24; 23:2; 24:8; Eccl 7:12; 8:8; 10:11, 20; Isa 41:15; 50:8; Dan 8:6, 20); see *IBHS* 149-51 §9.5.3.

⁶ tn The term נִקְמָה (*naqqam*), “avenge, vengeance” is used three times in 1:2 for emphasis. The LORD will exact just retribution against his enemies (the Assyrians) to avenge their wickedness against his people (Judah).

⁷ tn The verb “rage” (נָטַר, *natar*) is used elsewhere of keeping a vineyard (Song 1:6; 8:11-12) and guarding a secret (Dan 7:28). When used of anger, it does not so much mean “to control anger” or “to be slow to anger” (*HALOT* 695 s.v.) but “to stay angry” (*TWOT* 2:576). It describes a person bearing a grudge, seeking revenge, and refusing to forgive (Lev 19:18). It is often used as a synonym of שָׂמַר (*shamar*, “to maintain wrath, stay angry”) in collocation with

לְעוֹלָם (*l’^olam*, “forever, always”) and לְנֶגֶד (*la’ad*, “continually”) to picture God harboring rage against his enemies forever (Jer 3:5, 12; Amos 1:11; Ps 103:9). The long-term rage depicted by נָטַר (“maintain rage”) serves as an appropriate bridge to the following statement in Nahum that the LORD is slow to anger but furious in judgment. God seeks vengeance against his enemies; he continually rages and maintains his anger; he is slow to anger, but will eventually burst out with the full fury of his wrath.

⁸ tn Heb “long of anger,” i.e., “slow to anger” (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Prov 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; Neh 9:17) or restraining anger (Jer 15:15; Prov 25:15). Cf. NCV “The Lord does not become angry quickly.”

⁹ tc The BHS editors suggest emending MT “power” (כֹּחַ, *koakh*) to “mercy” (חֶסֶד, *kheshed*) as in Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Ps 103:8; Neh 9:17. However, this is unnecessary, it has no textual support, and it misses the rhetorical point intended by Nahum’s modification of the traditional expression.

¹⁰ sn This is an allusion to the well-known statement, “The LORD is slow to anger but great in mercy” (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Ps 103:8; Neh 9:17). Nahum subtly modifies this by substituting “great in mercy” with “great in power.” God’s patience at the time of Jonah (Jonah 4:2) one century earlier (ca. 750 B.C.), had run out. Nineveh had exhausted the “great mercy” of God and now would experience the “great power” of God.

¹¹ tn Or “he will certainly not acquit [the wicked]”; KJV “and will not at all acquit the wicked.” The root נָקַח (*naqah*, “to acquit”) is repeated for emphasis. The phrase “he will certainly not allow the wicked to go unpunished” (וְנִקְחָה לֹא) is an emphatic construction (see *GKC* 215 §75.4h; *IBHS* 584-88 §35.3.1).

¹² tn The words “the wicked” are not in the Hebrew text but are supplied in the translation; they are implied when this idiom is used (Exod 34:7; Num 14:18). In legal contexts the nuance “the guilty” is most appropriate; in nonlegal contexts the nuance “the wicked” is used.

¹³ tn Heb “His way is in the whirlwind” (so NIV). 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 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).

¹⁴ tn Heb “clouds are dust.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “of his feet.”