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**Nahum**  
**A Prophetic Cry Against Empire**

by  
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This book is a prophetic theological commentary grounded in liberation theology, queer theology, and Franciscan spirituality. It is not intended to replace academic commentaries but to accompany the journey of justice-seeking Christians, especially those marginalized by empire.

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## Introduction

### **Rage, Ruin, and the Radiance of God: Reading Nahum in the Age of Empire**

Nahum is not a comfortable book.

There are no miracles here. No parables. No tender mercy. Only blood, ruin, and a God whose voice sounds more like thunder than lullabies. Nahum rages against an empire—the terrifying, arrogant Assyria that crushed nations beneath its feet and claimed divine right to rule through violence. And yet... even in the fire and fury of this little book, something holy flickers. A sacred cry for justice. A wild hope that the oppressors will fall. A refusal to let empire write the final word.

This is a book for our time.

We live in the shadow of modern-day empires: the United States, fossil fuel corporations, white supremacy, Christian nationalism, global capitalism. They promise safety, power, and peace—but leave behind prisons, pipelines, and poverty. Trans youth are criminalized. The earth groans under extractive greed. Palestine bleeds. The poor die young while the rich sell prayers and stock portfolios. And God, we are told, remains silent.

But Nahum would argue otherwise.

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## A Prophetic Voice from the Margins

Nahum is a prophet, not a pundit. He is not neutral. He takes sides—with the crushed, the colonized, the traumatized. His words are not polite. They are poetry laced with fury, a sacred scream against domination. In an age where anger is pathologized, particularly queer and feminist anger, Nahum invites us to see holy rage as *righteous*, not sinful. The God Nahum speaks of is not detached. This is a God who gets angry—furiously, devastatingly angry—because the suffering of the innocent matters.

Nahum's divine imagery can be jarring. But what if, instead of reading this book as the wrath of a temperamental deity, we hear it as trauma-informed theology? A people brutalized for generations speaking of a God who finally shows up—not in gentle whispers, but in storm and whirlwind.

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## A Word for the Decolonizing Church

This commentary refuses to sanitize Nahum. It does not attempt to “balance” the text by drawing moral equivalencies or softening God's wrath. Instead, it listens to Nahum through the ears of the oppressed:

- **Liberation theologians**, who hear in these verses the downfall of every Pharaoh.
- **Queer and feminist voices**, who see in Nahum's outrage a mirror to the rage of violated bodies and colonized identities.
- **Franciscan mystics**, who love the earth fiercely enough to denounce what destroys it.
- **Postcolonial and anarchist readers**, who refuse theologies that justify empire.
- **Trauma-informed theologians**, who remind us that healing sometimes begins with naming the wound—and the one who inflicted it.

Nahum, then, is not about revenge. It is about *remembrance*. It remembers pain. It remembers survival. It remembers that empire is never eternal, and that the arc of divine presence bends toward liberation.

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## A Book for Those Who Have Been Silenced

Nahum doesn't flatter kings or comfort the powerful. He speaks to the brokenhearted who've been told their grief is too much. He cries out for those who have been told to sit down and “be

civil.” He writes for communities whose joy is criminalized, whose prayers are mocked, whose very existence is politicized.

To the trans girl weeping in a bathroom stall.

To the earth scorched by extractive greed.

To the Black boy praying for breath.

To the water protectors and drag queens and whistleblowers.

To the Palestinian mother burying her child.

To the unhoused man crushed by capitalist “progress.”

Nahum is yours.

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## How to Read This Commentary

This book is not a standard academic commentary—though it is informed by some of the finest scholarship from the Westar Institute, liberationist thinkers, and queer theologians. Instead, this is *a pastoral and prophetic journey*. Each section provides:

- **Verse-by-verse insights** grounded in theology, justice, and compassion.
- **Reflections for spiritual formation** and communal discernment.
- **Marginal notes** for activists, survivors, and mystics.
- **Sidebars** drawing connections between ancient empires and today’s systems of violence.
- **Ritual and artistic prompts** for personal or community response.

This is not just a book to be read. It is a *call to act*, to pray, to lament, to protest, and to hope.

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## Let the Whirlwind Speak

Nahum is a storm. But storms cleanse. They upend. They change the landscape. So let the whirlwind speak. Let it roar through the halls of unjust power. Let it shake loose the idols we’ve made of violence, dominance, and denial. Let it carry us toward a God who does not side with empire—but with those crushed beneath it.

Let us begin.

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## A Blessing Before the Storm

*For All Who Have Been Wounded by Empire*

May the God of Whirlwinds stir in your bones,  
the same God who shattered the gates of Nineveh  
and heard the cries beneath the rubble.

May you find comfort in divine fury—  
not the rage of vengeance,  
but the fierce, holy love  
that refuses to let injustice stand.

May your anger be sacred.  
May your lament be heard.  
May your tears water the ground  
where new liberation will bloom.

To the ones told they are “too much,”  
to the weary ones marching still,  
to the survivors, the dreamers,  
the rebels with trembling hands—

Blessed are you who see through the lies of empire.  
Blessed are you who do not mistake power for peace.  
Blessed are you who still hope  
in a God who topples thrones  
and tends to the bruises of the world.

May this commentary be wind in your lungs,  
fire in your heart,  
and courage in your step.

In the name of the Fierce and Tender One,  
who makes all things new  
and will not leave the oppressed unheard—

Amen.

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## Nahum 1:1–3

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

**2** The Lord is a jealous and avenging God;  
the Lord is avenging and wrathful;  
the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries  
and rages against his enemies.

**3** The Lord is slow to anger but great in power,

and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty.  
His way is in whirlwind and storm,  
and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

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### **Nahum 1:1 — “An oracle concerning Nineveh.”**

This book opens with a political target and theological defiance. Nineveh—capital of Assyria, ancient megacity of imperial propaganda and brutal domination—is not just a backdrop. It is the very **symbol of empire**: the center of violence, spectacle, and dehumanizing control.

To name Nineveh is to name:

- Babylon.
- Rome.
- Wall Street.
- The Pentagon.
- ICE detention centers.
- Colonial capitals.
- Any structure where bodies are sacrificed on the altar of empire.

Nahum is not vague. He calls out the empire by name. *This is holy specificity*—a prophetic refusal to speak in generalities. To confront injustice, we must name it. This is not an abstract spiritual problem. It is **Nineveh**, and it must fall.

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### **Nahum of Elkosh**

We know almost nothing of Nahum, except that his name means “**comfort**” or “**consolation**”. It is a subversive name for a prophet whose words feel anything but comforting. And yet, comfort for the oppressed often sounds like chaos to the oppressor. In that sense, Nahum’s violent visions *are* consolation—for the colonized, for the raped and pillaged, for the enslaved.

The prophet speaks not from the halls of power but from **the margins**. Whether Elkosh is a literal town or a symbolic place of exile, Nahum is grounded not in empire but in the cry *against* it.

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### **Nahum 1:2 — “The Lord is avenging and wrathful...”**

These are terrifying words—especially for those of us raised in traditions where divine wrath was used to justify abuse. But this verse is not about divine sadism. It is about divine **solidarity**.

🔥 *"The Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries..."*

Vengeance, here, is not about punishment for punishment's sake. It is the **liberating reversal** of power. The God Nahum speaks of is not wrathful toward the vulnerable—but toward those who crush them.

- **Queer theology** hears in this verse a divine rejection of systems that persecute LGBTQ+ people.
- **Black theology** understands divine wrath as God's alignment with the oppressed in a world of racial violence.
- **Feminist and postcolonial readers** see a God who refuses to be neutral in the face of rape, war, and genocide.

This is not a wrath we fear. It is a wrath we **hope for**—the kind that overturns white supremacy, ends apartheid, abolishes ICE, and tears down transphobic legislation.

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### **Nahum 1:3 — “His way is in whirlwind and storm...”**

Here, Nahum blends terror with awe. God is not gentle mist but **violent weather**. Whirlwind and storm. Chaos. Force. Movement.

But notice what precedes it:

*“The Lord is slow to anger but great in power.”*

This is not a God who lashes out impulsively. This is a patient God who acts **only after enduring deep injustice**—a reality many survivors understand intimately. Anger comes after waiting. After warning. After tears.

When it finally comes, it is not petty—it is **tectonic**.

“The clouds are the dust of His feet.”

God walks among the stormclouds. In this theology, God is not far from catastrophe. God is *in* it—with the bombed, the burned, the buried. The whirlwind is not destruction for its own sake—it is **liberation by upheaval**.

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### **Side Note: What Empire Doesn't Want You to Know About Divine Anger**

- ✗ Empire tells you that anger is bad.
- ✓ Prophets tell you that *unexpressed anger* is deadly.

Nahum shows us that God's anger is sacred not because it is violent, but because it is **protective**. It is what happens when God sees people harmed and refuses to be indifferent.

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### **Reflection**

- What injustices today make you cry out for God's whirlwind?
  - Where have you been taught to fear divine anger, and how might that fear be reframed through a lens of liberation?
  - What does it mean to trust in a God who is both "slow to anger" and "great in power"?
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## **Nahum 1:4–6**

**4** He rebukes the sea and makes it dry,  
and he dries up all the rivers;  
Bashan and Carmel wither,  
and the bloom of Lebanon fades.

**5** The mountains quake before him,  
and the hills melt;  
the earth heaves before him,  
the world and all who live in it.

**6** Who can stand before his indignation?  
Who can endure the heat of his anger?  
His wrath is poured out like fire,  
and by him the rocks are broken in pieces.

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### **Nahum 1:4 — “He rebukes the sea...”**

This verse evokes a God who unsettles even the most elemental forces of creation: water, land, growth. The poetic language suggests that **God's liberating judgment shakes the entire ecosystem of empire**.

In the ancient world, the sea symbolized chaos, fear, and uncontrollable danger. When God “rebukes” the sea, it recalls:

- **The Exodus**—YHWH parting the Red Sea, defeating Pharaoh's army.
- **Creation**—God separating waters to form life.
- **Jesus calming the storm**—a reassertion of divine sovereignty over chaos.



Here, however, the sea is dried up. The rivers are emptied. Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon—symbols of **fertility, beauty, and prosperity**—wither.

But notice: it's not *natural creation* that is being cursed. Rather, this is a metaphor for the **deconstruction of systems that flourished through violence**.



*Empires always look lush—until God withers their illusion.*

In a modern context:

- The stock market crashes.
- The megachurch closes its doors.
- The oil rigs run dry.
- The police budget gets defunded.

God is not destroying life. God is disrupting the lie that **oppression is prosperity**.

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### **Nahum 1:5 — “The mountains quake before him...”**

Mountains, in the ancient imagination, were places of **power, permanence, and divine encounter**. But here, even the mighty quiver. The hills melt. The earth heaves. Nothing is secure when God shows up on behalf of the oppressed.

This is what the Hebrew prophets repeatedly remind us: **justice is not polite**. It is earth-shaking.

- When trans kids are banned from schools, *the earth should shake*.
- When bombs fall on Gaza or Ukraine, *the hills should melt*.
- When the poor die for lack of healthcare, *creation itself groans*.

Nahum teaches us that **God does not come quietly**. God arrives as cosmic disruption—because the status quo cannot birth justice.



Paul writes in Romans 8 that “creation groans” for liberation. Nahum hears the groaning, and tells us: *God is groaning, too*.

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### **Nahum 1:6 — “Who can stand before his indignation?”**

This verse does not flatter us. It does not invite shallow reassurance. It asks a terrifying question: *Who can survive God's fury?*

For those aligned with empire, this is a genuine threat. But for the abused, the enslaved, the exiled—this is **hope**.

God's wrath is not arbitrary.

It is targeted.

It is directional.

It is *for the liberation of the wounded*.

His wrath is poured out like fire—not wildfire, but **refining fire**. It burns away the falsehood of security under empire. It exposes and disintegrates stone-faced injustice.

Rocks break in pieces. These are not just geological shifts—they're **ideological**.

- The rock of toxic theology: shattered.
- The rock of settler colonialism: broken.
- The rock of Christian nationalism: crumbled beneath the flame of divine justice.

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### **Side Note: Divine Wrath and the Myth of a Passive God**

Too often, modern Christianity imagines God as a passive observer—loving but detached, kind but impotent.

Nahum dismantles that fantasy.

This is a God whose love has **teeth**, whose patience has **limits**, whose justice is not theoretical but **seismic**. In a world where people are murdered for existing, where corporations destroy forests, where politicians steal children's futures—

**We need a God who can melt mountains.**

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### **Reflection**

- What “mountains” in your world seem too powerful to fall?
- What illusions of prosperity might God be challenging in your life, your church, or your nation?
- Do you believe God's justice is still active, even in chaotic times?

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## **Nahum 1:7–8**

7 The Lord is good,  
a stronghold in a day of trouble;  
he protects those who take refuge in him,  
8 but with an overwhelming flood  
he will make a full end of his adversaries  
and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

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## Nahum 1:7 — “The Lord is good...”

After the fire, the flood, the quake—this verse feels like a **breath of grace**.

Amid the whirlwind of divine disruption, Nahum reminds us that **God is not just rage—God is refuge**.

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in a day of trouble."

Here, we meet a *God of both protest and protection*.

- For the mother mourning a murdered child—God is good.
- For the refugee hiding from drones—God is a stronghold.
- For the queer youth curled up in fear—God is refuge.

This verse is a holy contradiction: the God who shatters empires is also the God who shelters the shattered. The hands that melt mountains are the same hands that **cradle the brokenhearted**.

Franciscan theology, with its embrace of both *suffering and sanctuary*, resonates deeply here. St. Clare called Christ her “mirror,” the one in whom her soul found refuge even as the world raged around her cloister. Nahum 1:7 is that mirror: reflecting the fierce goodness of God amid chaos.

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## Protection and Trust

The Hebrew root for "protects" in this verse carries the sense of **knowing**—God knows those who seek refuge. This isn't generic protection. It's intimate. Personal. Relational.

In contrast to imperial rulers who forget, exploit, and discard their people, *God remembers*. God recognizes trauma. God listens to the unheard. God *sees*.

This is a **trauma-informed theology**: God does not erase the wound but becomes a place of **refuge for the wounded**.

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## Nahum 1:8 — “But with an overwhelming flood...”

We return again to divine judgment—this time, as flood.

This is a deliberate reversal of empire’s narrative. Assyria used floods as a symbol of its power. In fact, the walls of Nineveh were breached by floodwaters during the actual Babylonian conquest. Nahum, writing poetically (and prophetically), envisions God **using the empire’s own tools against it**.

The flood is not natural disaster—it is poetic justice.

God “makes a full end of his adversaries.” The Hebrew here emphasizes *totality*—a complete dismantling, not partial reform.

This confronts one of the great theological lies of our age: that **injustice can be gently managed**. Nahum offers no such comfort. Systems of oppression are not to be preserved, adjusted, or co-opted—they are to be **ended**.

And then comes the most chilling line:

*“He will pursue his enemies into darkness.”*

This is not divine cruelty. It is divine **accountability**. There is no hiding place for those who harm God’s beloved. Not in palaces. Not behind pulpits. Not in gated communities. Not in Supreme Court robes.

- The architects of genocide—pursued.
- The traffickers of fear—pursued.
- The smug defenders of empire—pursued.

Into the shadows where they plotted violence, **God goes hunting**.

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## Reflection

- In your own life, what does it mean that God is “good” *and* brings overwhelming judgment?
  - Where have you experienced God as a refuge in the storm?
  - What systems, ideologies, or personal patterns might God be “pursuing into darkness” in your world today?
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## What Empire Wouldn't Want You to Hear (Sidebar)

**Empire says:** God helps those who help themselves.

**Nahum says:** God helps those who are hunted by the powerful.

**Empire says:** The flood will drown you.

**Nahum says:** The flood is coming *for the empire*, not for you.

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## Nahum 1:9–11

**9** Why do you plot against the Lord?

He will make an end;

no adversary will rise up twice.

**10** Like thorns they are entangled,

like drunkards they are drunk;

they are consumed like dry straw.

**11** From you one has gone out

who plots evil against the Lord,

one who counsels wickedness.

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## Nahum 1:9 — “Why do you plot against the Lord?”

This is the *divine clapback*.

Empires believe themselves invincible. They believe they can outmaneuver justice, outlast truth, outwit consequences. Nahum mocks their arrogance with a piercing question: *Why do you even try to scheme against God?*

"He will make an end; no adversary will rise up twice."

This is not about vengeance—it's about **futility**. Oppressors can run their simulations, draft their policies, build their bombs. But divine justice does not forget. And it does not fail.

This verse also critiques **institutional evil**—systems that plot in boardrooms, in secret strategy sessions, in legislative backrooms where the suffering of the many is sacrificed for the benefit of the few.

- Politicians who plot against trans lives.
- Corporations who profit off ecological collapse.
- Churches who weaponize theology to preserve patriarchy.

These are the ones Nahum confronts with holy sarcasm: *Do you really think you'll win?*

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## **Nahum 1:10 — “Like thorns... like drunkards... like dry straw...”**

Here, the prophet unleashes a trio of humiliating metaphors:

1. **Thorns entangled** – Self-destructive entrapment. Empire becomes ensnared in its own cruelty. The walls it builds to keep others out *trap itself*.
2. **Drunkards staggering** – Loss of clarity, delusional pride. Power intoxicates. Empire is portrayed as stumbling, incoherent, drunk on its own propaganda.
3. **Dry straw burning** – Fragility beneath the illusion of strength. What looks solid—military budgets, wealth, domination—is revealed to be **tinder**.

Nahum is stripping empire bare. It's not strong. It's pathetic. It's unstable. It's already kindling.

This verse feels especially resonant for our times. In the age of misinformation, authoritarianism, and ecological breakdown, the once-mighty systems now **stagger, choke, and ignite**.

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## **Nahum 1:11 — “One who plots evil...”**

This verse shifts from general systems to **individual embodiment of evil**. It singles out a figure who emerges from Nineveh—a kind of imperial architect, echoing figures like:

- Pharaoh
- Herod
- Nero
- Hitler
- Ronald Reagan
- Vladimir Putin
- Jair Bolsonaro
- Donald Trump

“One who counsels wickedness...”

This is not merely about personal sin. It's about **ideological leadership**—the people who shape policy, weaponize religion, seduce the masses, and whisper evil in the ear of nations.

From this verse, we learn: **empire is not just a system—it has faces. Names. Voices. Twitter accounts. News channels. Sermons.**

This is why liberation theology demands **naming the oppressor**. Like Nahum, we must identify the architects of cruelty, not in vengeance, but in prophetic accountability.

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## Side Note: Naming Names in Prophetic Tradition

The prophets don't protect the powerful. They expose them.

- Isaiah names Babylon.
- Jeremiah confronts kings.
- Jesus calls Herod "that fox."
- James denounces the rich.
- Martin Luther King Jr. named segregationists from the pulpit.
- Today's prophets name police brutality, transphobia, and settler colonialism.

Nahum walks in this line. He refuses spiritual abstraction. He points to power and calls it *wickedness*.

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## Reflection

- Where in your life or community are unjust "plots" being formed in secret?
  - Have you ever witnessed or resisted ideological evil masked as political or religious authority?
  - What "dry straw" needs the fire of God's justice to ignite and renew?
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## Nahum 1:12–15

**12** Thus says the Lord:

"Though they are at full strength and many,  
they will be cut off and pass away.

Though I have afflicted you,  
I will afflict you no more.

**13** And now I will break off his yoke from you  
and snap the bonds that bind you."

**14** The Lord has commanded concerning you:

"Your name shall be perpetuated no longer;  
from the house of your gods I will cut off  
the carved image and the cast image.  
I will make your grave, for you are worthless."

**15** Look! On the mountains the feet of one  
who brings good tidings,  
who proclaims peace!

Celebrate your festivals, O Judah,  
fulfill your vows,  
for never again shall the wicked invade you;  
they are utterly cut off.

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### **Nahum 1:12 — “Though they are at full strength... they will be cut off.”**

Empire flexes its muscles. It parades its tanks, its drones, its billionaires, its megachurches. But Nahum interrupts the spectacle with a promise: **strength is not salvation**. Power is not permanence.

“They will be cut off and pass away.”

This verse is balm for those who feel crushed by systems that seem untouchable. Nahum says: *it won't last*. Even the most well-funded injustice machine will collapse.

Then, a tender turn:

“Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.”

This verse dares to speak into the **theology of suffering**. God acknowledges the affliction—not with denial, but with a *promise of relief*. The pain is real. But it **will not be permanent**.

For survivors of abuse, state violence, medical neglect, or systemic oppression, this verse speaks with particular resonance:

*You are not destined for affliction. Liberation is coming.*

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### **Nahum 1:13 — “I will break off his yoke from you.”**

This is **liberation theology in a single sentence**.

- God breaks yokes.
- God snaps bonds.
- God does not spiritualize oppression—God **abolishes it**.

This verse echoes the Exodus, but it also resonates with every abolitionist movement in history:

- The end of chattel slavery.
- The dismantling of apartheid.
- The resistance to mass incarceration.
- The cries to abolish ICE, defund police, and liberate occupied lands.



God is not neutral. God takes sides—with the **yoke-bearers**, not the yoke-builders.

✊ *To be on God's side is to be on the side of every people struggling to throw off the chains of empire.*

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### 🗿 Nahum 1:14 — “I will make your grave, for you are worthless.”

This is one of the harshest lines in Nahum. It's not gentle, but it is **prophetic rage** directed at empire.

Let's be clear: this is not God declaring individuals worthless. This is God condemning **systems of oppression** as *morally bankrupt*.

The carved and cast images—symbols of imperial idolatry—are cut off. The house of false gods (power, conquest, money, nationalism) is torn down. And the empire receives its final sentence: *a grave*.

This is not vengeance—it is *closure* for the colonized.

You will no longer be haunted by your abuser's name.

The statues will fall.

The flags will burn.

The false gods will be buried.

*You will breathe again.*

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### 🏔️ Nahum 1:15 — “Look! On the mountains the feet of one who brings good tidings...”

This verse is a sudden flash of **gospel light** in a storm of judgment.

*Someone is running on the hills.*

*Their feet carry good news.*

*Peace is coming.*

This line was later echoed by Isaiah and repurposed by Paul in Romans. But in Nahum, it is not yet about personal salvation—it is about **collective liberation**.

"Celebrate your festivals, O Judah."

Rejoice. Dance. Reclaim your sacred traditions. The enemy is gone. You are no longer invaded. You are no longer colonized. You are **free**.

This verse is a **resurrection cry**—not of individuals, but of *culture, community, and ritual*. It tells the oppressed:

- Your festivals matter.
- Your bodies matter.
- Your joy matters.

This is **queer theology's delight**: after rage, there is rejoicing. After exile, there is homecoming. After rupture, there is *repair*.

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## Reflection

- Where have you experienced the “yoke” of empire in your life?
  - What images of modern idolatry (money, whiteness, nationalism, patriarchy) might God be calling you to tear down?
  - What “good news” is already running toward you from the mountains?
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## Liberation Is Liturgical (Sidebar)

When Nahum says “*celebrate your festivals*”, he reminds us:

**Resistance isn't just protest—it's celebration.**

To reclaim ritual is to reclaim humanity.

- A trans pride march is liturgy.
- A land-back ceremony is liturgy.
- A community meal in a tent camp is liturgy.
- A drag Eucharist is liturgy.

**Never again shall the wicked invade you.**

That is not just a promise. It is a *rebuke to despair*.

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## Nahum 2:1–2

1 A shatterer has come up against you.  
Guard the ramparts;  
watch the road;  
gird your loins;

collect all your strength.

**2** (For the Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob,  
as well as the majesty of Israel,  
though ravagers have ravaged them  
and ruined their branches.)

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### **Nahum 2:1 — “A shatterer has come up against you.”**

This opening verse is dripping with dramatic irony. Nahum imagines the empire—once invincible, now terrified—being told to **prepare for attack**. This is a reversal of roles: Assyria, once the shatterer, now faces **a divine shatterer**.

It's as if Nahum is saying:

“Get ready, Nineveh. Your turn has come. The oppressed are at the gates.”

The warnings—*guard the ramparts, watch the road*—mimic military commands. But they're not given to Judah. They're **taunts** directed at the empire itself.

- Empire built its security on violence.
- Now it cannot defend itself.
- Its “security” is a myth unraveling.

This verse is holy theater. Satire. Street protest poetry. It's what Audre Lorde meant when she said, “*The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.*” And yet—God is dismantling it anyway.

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### **Nahum 2:2 — “The Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob...”**

This is the theological *pivot point*. Amid judgment, we see **restoration**.

“Though ravagers have ravaged them and ruined their branches...”

This is deeply **Franciscan**. Francis and Clare both trusted in the God who **heals what empire destroys**. Nahum's poetic image of broken branches hints at:

- Ecological devastation,
- Generational trauma,
- A scorched family tree.

But now, God is regrowing what was destroyed.

The broken branches are not the end.  
There is still sap in the roots.

This is sacred ecology. God is not only a whirlwind—but a gardener. Restoration theology is not sentimental—it is *rooted*. It sees the ruins and dares to plant anyway.

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### Reflection

- In what ways do you hear God saying to empire today, “Guard your ramparts”?
  - What would it mean for God to “restore your branches”?
  - Where in your life, or in your community, do you sense divine regrowth after destruction?
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### Side Note: The Ridicule of Empire Is Holy Work

Nahum doesn’t respect empire.  
He mocks it.  
He destabilizes it with poetry.

This is not accidental—it’s prophetic **subversion**.

In our time, empire hates to be laughed at. But satire is one of the oldest tools of resistance. Nahum’s voice joins:

- The enslaved who sang songs of freedom on Southern plantations.
- Drag queens who turn political mockery into divine art.
- Activists who use memes to destabilize fascist propaganda.

Mockery of empire is not cynicism.  
It’s **theological clarity**.

---

## Nahum 2:3–7

**3** The shields of his warriors are red;  
his soldiers are clothed in crimson.  
The metal of the chariots flashes on the day he musters them;  
the chargers prance.

**4** The chariots race madly through the streets;  
they rush to and fro through the squares;  
their appearance is like torches,

they dart like lightning.

**5** He calls his officers;  
they stumble as they come forward;  
they hasten to the wall,  
and the mantelet is set up.

**6** The river gates are opened;  
the palace trembles.

**7** It is decreed that the city be exiled,  
its slave women led away,  
moaning like doves  
and beating their breasts.

---

### **Nahum 2:3 — “The shields of his warriors are red...”**

We are plunged into a vivid, chaotic battlefield scene. The imagery is intense: red shields, crimson uniforms, glinting chariots. It reads like a war movie—fast cuts, bright flashes, pounding hooves. But we must ask: *Whose perspective is this?*

This is not empire’s victory parade. This is **the beginning of its downfall**.

The color red may represent:

- Blood,
- Imperial pomp,
- Or divine fury clothed in poetic judgment.

These verses **invert the empire’s mythology**. Assyria once painted itself as unstoppable, polished, perfect. Now, in Nahum’s vision, all that glamor is crumbling. What once dazzled is now drenched in dread.

---

### **Nahum 2:4 — “The chariots race madly...”**

This verse is electric with motion—madness, speed, fire, lightning. Nahum sketches a portrait of **disorder**, a far cry from the organized power of Assyrian dominance.

The chaos is **deliberate**.

Where empire once moved with precision, now it staggers. Its chariots swerve. Its soldiers panic. Its structures fall.

This is a theology of **unmaking**.

⚠️ *God is not preserving Assyria's glory—God is dismantling it with poetic violence.*

And note: the squares and streets—usually public spaces of control and surveillance—have become places of confusion. This is resistance as disruption, as interruption, as sacred **destabilization**.

---

### 😓 **Nahum 2:5 — “He calls his officers; they stumble...”**

A brutal moment of irony.

The commander shouts—but his officers **stumble**. The ones in charge are no longer in control. This is a critique of imperial leadership. Their authority, built on oppression, collapses under the weight of its own illusion.

This verse is the undoing of every strongman myth.

Every “law and order” chant.

Every uniformed arrogance.

Every CEO who thinks he's God.

They stumble.

Nahum exposes the fragility beneath empire's polished armor.

---

### 🌊 **Nahum 2:6 — “The river gates are opened...”**

Here comes the flood again—both literally and symbolically.

The “river gates” likely refer to the actual walls of Nineveh, which were eventually breached by overflowing water, aiding its fall. But theologically, this verse speaks of **judgment as unstoppable force**. What empire thought it could control—nature, time, resistance—now overwhelms it.

And the palace?

It trembles.

Not just physically. But existentially. The palace—the seat of domination—is afraid. Its gods are silent. Its columns quake. The center cannot hold.

This is a sacred reversal: **the oppressed do not tremble—empire does**.

---

## Nahum 2:7 — “Slave women led away, moaning like doves...”

This is one of the most haunting and debated verses in Nahum.

Here, the city is personified as a woman—stripped, enslaved, and exiled. Her women—likely concubines or captives—are led away, weeping.

On one hand, this is a recognition of **the cost of empire’s collapse**. When empires fall, women and the vulnerable often suffer most. It is a reminder that even righteous judgment has **collateral grief**.

On the other hand, feminist readers rightly critique the **gendered violence** here. Nahum uses the imagery of violated women to symbolize a fallen city—common in prophetic literature, but painful nonetheless.

We must read this verse with:

- **Compassion for the women** it describes.
- **Critical awareness of how empire weaponizes gender**, even in its death.

The mourning of the enslaved women is not just poetic—it’s a theological protest against all systems that sacrifice women’s bodies to prove masculine power.

---

### Reflection

- What does it mean to watch empire *stumble, flood, and fall* in real time?
- In what ways can we mourn those caught in the collapse of unjust systems without glorifying their suffering?
- How can we center the voices of the vulnerable—not as symbols, but as **beloved bearers of God’s image**?

---

### Sidebar: When the Palace Trembles

Nahum reminds us: palaces are not permanent.

- White Houses tremble.
- Cathedrals built on conquest tremble.
- Supreme Courts built on injustice tremble.
- Every institution that confuses dominance for divinity **will shake**.

Let it fall.

---

## Nahum 2:8–13

**8** Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away.

“Halt! Halt!”—but no one turns back.

**9** “Plunder the silver,  
plunder the gold!

There is no end of treasure!

An abundance of every precious thing!”

**10** Devastation, desolation, and destruction!

Hearts faint and knees tremble,

all loins quake,

all faces grow pale!

**11** Where is the lion’s den,

the cave of the young lions,

where the lion goes and comes,

and the cubs, with none to disturb them?

**12** The lion has torn enough for his whelps

and strangled prey for his lionesses;

he has filled his caves with prey

and his dens with torn flesh.

**13** See, I am against you,

says the Lord of hosts,

and I will burn your chariots in smoke,

and the sword shall devour your young lions;

I will cut off your prey from the earth,

and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more.

---

### Nahum 2:8 — “Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away...”

Empire, once solid, is now slipping through its own fingers. The metaphor is devastating: **Nineveh is a draining pool**—its power evaporating, its people fleeing.

The cries of “Halt! Halt!” fall on deaf ears. No one turns back. Why?

Because the empire’s spell is broken.

The illusion of its permanence has shattered.

There comes a moment in every unjust system when even its most loyal subjects abandon it. They see the tide turning, and they run. This verse names the **evaporation of empire’s myth**.



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## Nahum 2:9 — “Plunder the silver, plunder the gold!”

What empire *hoards*, the people now take.

This is not God endorsing looting—it is **God exposing empire’s greed**.

“There is no end of treasure...”

Indeed. Empire always accumulates:

- Wealth stolen from colonized nations.
- Artifacts ripped from indigenous cultures.
- Resources stripped from sacred land.
- Labor extracted from exploited bodies.

Now the plunder is being plundered. What empire claimed as sacred wealth is now shown to be **stolen goods**, and God is not protecting it.

This is a **reparations moment**.

---

## Nahum 2:10 — “Devastation, desolation, and destruction!”

A triad of collapse.

This verse is not celebration—it’s *reality*. When empire collapses, there is chaos. And while its downfall is necessary, the trauma it has caused lingers.

- Hearts faint.
- Knees tremble.
- Loins quake.
- Faces go pale.

These are the **aftershocks of violence**, not just in the body politic but in human bodies.

Here, a trauma-informed reading is critical: even righteous liberation brings **visceral consequences**. Empire’s unraveling is messy, because empire itself was **built on mess, masked by myth**.

---

## Nahum 2:11–12 — “Where is the lion’s den...?”

Nahum turns to sarcasm, using Assyria's own propaganda against itself.

Assyria styled itself as a **lion**—a symbol of dominance, terror, and predation. But now the “den” is gone. The cubs are lost. The caves of prey are emptied. The food of conquest has spoiled.

This is theological *deconstruction* of empire's self-image. Nahum says:

You were never a noble lion.

You were a thief, a strangler, a beast fattened on the flesh of the poor.

**This is how empire tells its story:**

“We are strong protectors!”

**This is how Nahum tells it:**

“You devour and destroy. You are a predator, not a guardian.”

---

## **Nahum 2:13 — “See, I am against you,” says the Lord.**

This is the climax of Chapter 2. The ultimate prophetic mic drop.

*“I am against you.”*

God is not neutral. Not a bystander. Not both-sides-ing injustice. **God takes a stand.** And that stand is *against* empire.

“I will burn your chariots.”

“The sword shall devour your young lions.”

“I will cut off your prey.”

“Your messengers will be silenced.”

This is **systemic dismantling**:

- Military power? Burned.
- Propaganda? Silenced.
- Economic exploitation? Ended.
- Generational violence? Cut off.

This verse is God's direct **repudiation of imperialism** in all forms. Any theology that tries to cast God as an imperial supporter must reckon with this moment.

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## **Reflection**

- What “gold and silver” is empire still hoarding in your context?

- Who are the “young lions” today—those fed by systems of conquest?
  - Where might God be saying, even now: “*I am against you*”?
- 

## Sidebar: What Happens When God Opposes Empire

When God says “*I am against you*”, it’s not about punishment—it’s about **alignment**.

God aligns:

- With the enslaved, not the enslavers.
- With the trafficked, not the tycoons.
- With the gender-nonconforming teen, not the megachurch pastor.
- With Gaza, not the generals.
- With the earth, not the extractors.

If your theology makes God the chaplain of empire, **you need a new God**.

---

## Nahum 3:1–3

**1** Ah! City of bloodshed,  
utterly deceitful,  
full of plunder—  
no end to the prey!

**2** The crack of whip and rumble of wheel,  
galloping horse and bounding chariot!

**3** Horsemen charging,  
flashing sword and glittering spear,  
piles of dead,  
heaps of corpses,  
dead bodies without end—  
they stumble over the bodies!

---

### Nahum 3:1 — “Ah! City of bloodshed...”

This verse is a funeral dirge sung over empire, but it sounds more like **an indictment than a lament**. Nineveh is named not for its wealth, not for its beauty, not for its power—but for its **blood**.

*“City of bloodshed.”*

Assyria prided itself on domination. Nahum unmasks it as **a butcher's hall**—a place soaked in suffering, where the screams have long been silenced by spectacle and spin.

“Utterly deceitful, full of plunder...”

This isn't just about swords and spears—it's about lies, gaslighting, and propaganda. Nahum names empire's violence *and* its deceit. Like all imperial powers, Nineveh maintains power through **narrative control**.

- It tells the colonized: *“We're helping you.”*
- It tells the religious: *“We're doing God's will.”*
- It tells the people: *“We keep you safe.”*

But behind the veil: **blood**.

💖 *Queer theology reminds us: the stories we tell about power matter. God is not fooled by well-branded brutality.*

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### 🌀 Nahum 3:2 — “The crack of whip and rumble of wheel...”

Nahum plunges us into the chaos of a collapsing city.

- The whip cracks—enslaved bodies driven to exhaustion.
- Wheels rumble—chariots of conquest.
- Horses gallop—war thunders through the streets.

This verse echoes not just war, but **the machinery of empire**:

- Prisons.
- Police sirens.
- Border patrol vehicles.
- Tanks in Gaza.
- ICE raids at dawn.

The poetic soundscape is terrifying. It's **not glory—it's grief**. Nahum refuses to romanticize conquest. He *makes us hear it*. And once we hear it, we cannot pretend not to know.

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### 🔪 Nahum 3:3 — “Piles of dead... heaps of corpses...”

One of the most graphic verses in all of Scripture.

It's almost unbearable in its brutality:

- “Piles of dead.”
- “Heaps of corpses.”
- “Dead bodies without end.”

This is **mass death**. Not abstract casualties—*bodies*. Countless bodies. And the living *stumble over them*.

This is what empire leaves behind.

Let us not sanitize this. These are:

- Children bombed in hospitals.
- Families buried under rubble.
- Migrants dead in the desert.
- Black and brown bodies killed by police.
- Trans women murdered and unnamed.

Nahum is forcing us to look. Not to traumatize us, but to **awaken us**. The prophetic task is not to comfort the comfortable, but to disturb the indifferent.

---

## Reflection

- What cities today bear the name “City of Blood”?
  - Where is deceit used to cover up systemic violence in your community, your country, your church?
  - What stories of suffering have we stepped over—unwilling to face the full weight of the corpses?
- 

## Sidebar: Violence Is Not an Accident of Empire—It *Is* Empire

Nahum does not portray violence as a glitch in the system. It **is the system**.

Empire thrives on:

- Bloodshed,
- Lies,
- Theft,
- Control.

Whether it’s ancient Nineveh or modern imperial states, the same forces are at work.

If we want peace, we don’t need **better empires**—we need to **bury empire** altogether.

---

## Nahum 3:4–7

**4** Because of the countless debaucheries of the prostitute,  
gracefully alluring, mistress of sorcery,  
who enslaves nations through her debaucheries,  
and peoples through her sorcery,

**5** I am against you,  
says the Lord of hosts,  
and will lift up your skirts over your face;  
and I will let nations look on your nakedness  
and kingdoms on your shame.

**6** I will throw filth at you  
and treat you with contempt  
and make you a spectacle.

**7** Then all who see you will shrink from you and say,  
“Nineveh is devastated; who will bemoan her?”  
Where shall I seek comforters for you?

---

### Nahum 3:4 — “The prostitute... mistress of sorcery...”

This verse, deeply poetic and harsh, uses **feminized metaphors** to condemn empire. Nineveh is portrayed as a seductive prostitute and a sorceress—enticing, manipulative, and enslaving through her charms.

Let us be clear:

This is **not** a condemnation of women, sex workers, or sensuality. This is a prophetic critique of **imperial seduction**.

Empire presents itself as:

- Irresistible.
- Glamorous.
- Spiritual even—through rituals, pageantry, and propaganda.

But behind the perfume is poison.

 *Feminist and queer theology teach us to approach these verses with caution.*

Using women’s bodies as symbols for national sin has long been a tactic of patriarchal religion. So we must ask:

- What is being critiqued here?

- And who pays the price of that metaphor?

**Answer:** Empire is the target. But the language bears the scars of **misogyny**.

So we reclaim the metaphor:

- Not as anti-woman,
- But as **anti-illusion**.

Nineveh's sorcery is not literal magic—it is **ideological enchantment**:

- The spell of nationalism.
- The bewitchment of wealth.
- The seductive illusion of power.

---

### **Nahum 3:5 — “I am against you,” says the Lord...**

Once again, Yahweh declares holy opposition to empire. And this time, it comes with vivid imagery:

“I will lift up your skirts over your face...”

This is an act of **public unmasking**—empire is exposed, shamed, revealed. The Hebrew prophets often used clothing and exposure imagery to reveal hidden sin. It's shocking, intimate, and unsettling.

But this isn't about shame in the sexual sense—it's **political shame**.

The empire is stripped of its dignity.

Its secrets are made visible.

Its crimes are no longer hidden behind veils of rhetoric.

This is whistleblower theology. Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, and every survivor who tells their story is echoing this verse.

“Kingdoms will look on your shame.”

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### **Nahum 3:6 — “I will throw filth at you...”**

Nahum does not mince words. The Hebrew term here likely refers to **excrement**.

This is the most **humiliating prophetic image** in the book. God treats the empire with the contempt it showed others. It becomes a **spectacle of disgrace**, no longer worshiped but reviled.

This is divine satire.

Sacred protest art.

A takedown of imperial pride with the filth it deserves.

Imagine:

- The toppled statues of colonizers.
- The exposed corruption of billionaires.
- The “mighty men” found rotting in moral collapse.

That’s Nahum’s vision—**not sanitized justice, but searing judgment**.

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## 👁️ Nahum 3:7 — “Who will bemoan her?”

At last, the world shrugs at empire’s demise.

“Nineveh is devastated—who will mourn?”

This is devastating irony. The city that caused global grief now dies *unwept*. She who never comforted others now has **no comforters**.

This is **cosmic karma**, but not the petty kind. It’s the fulfillment of justice. A warning to all who wield power:

*If you build your greatness on the suffering of others, don’t expect their pity when it crumbles.*

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## 🕯️ Reflection

- Where do you see “sorcery”—glamorous deception—operating in politics, media, or religion today?
  - What illusions need unmasking in your community?
  - What power structures deserve public exposure, not for shaming victims, but for revealing the crimes of the powerful?
- 

## 🚫 Sidebar: Reclaiming the Metaphors, Resisting the Misogyny



We must always hold prophetic texts accountable. Nahum uses language of exposure, seduction, and shame rooted in **ancient patriarchal assumptions**. We do not dismiss the text, but we **read it critically and compassionately**.

Let's reclaim its power:

- Not to blame women,
  - But to dismantle the seduction of empire,
  - And expose the cruelty that hides beneath its glamor.
- 

## Nahum 3:8–11

**8** Are you better than Thebes  
that sat by the Nile,  
with water around her,  
her rampart a sea,  
water her wall?

**9** Ethiopia was her strength,  
Egypt too, and that without limit;  
Put and the Libyans were her helpers.

**10** Yet she became an exile,  
she went into captivity;  
even her infants were dashed in pieces  
at the head of every street;  
for her honored men lots were cast,  
and all her great men were bound in chains.

**11** You also will be drunken,  
you will go into hiding;  
you will seek a refuge from the enemy.

---

### Nahum 3:8 — “Are you better than Thebes...?”

Nahum now taunts Nineveh by recalling the fall of **Thebes** (also called *No-Amon*), the once-great Egyptian city. It was wealthy, powerful, protected by rivers, surrounded by allies—just like Assyria now imagines itself to be.

“Are you better than Thebes?”

It's a rhetorical question dripping with sarcasm. Of course not. Thebes fell. So will you.

This is prophetic **historical memory** at work. Nahum is teaching empire a lesson it refuses to learn: **no fortress lasts forever**.

Today, the modern equivalents might be:

- *Are you better than Rome?*
- *Better than the British Empire?*
- *Better than Wall Street before the crash?*
- *Better than every failed regime that said it would never fall?*

The fall of empire is not anomaly—it's *inevitable*.

---

### **Nahum 3:9 — “Ethiopia was her strength, Egypt too...”**

Thebes had allies. She had military power, economic reach, and seemingly endless resources. But even a vast coalition of power could not prevent collapse.

Nahum's point is sharp: **no empire is too big to fail**.

This verse is especially important in today's age of **global alliances, military-industrial complexes, and multinational corporations**. It reminds us:

- No army can save you from moral rot.
  - No economy can protect you from divine justice.
  - No number of tanks or treaties can secure you against *the arc of the moral universe*.
- 

### **Nahum 3:10 — “Her infants were dashed in pieces...”**

This verse is horrifying.

It does not glorify the violence—it **names it**. It recounts the brutal destruction of Thebes, including the slaughter of children and the captivity of its leaders. This isn't praise—it's *prophetic grief*.

Even the powerful fall—and their violence rebounds on them.

We must read this verse with **trauma-informed care**. This is not a blueprint for justice—it's a *witness to atrocity*. Nahum is not prescribing violence. He's forcing the empire to **look at what it has done**, and warning that the same fate awaits it.

Feminist, queer, and liberation theologians ask us here:

- Who are the “infants” of our time—those made most vulnerable by imperial violence?

- What systems today gamble with children's lives for the sake of power?
- 

## Nahum 3:11 — “You also will be drunken...”

Empire thought it was in control. Now, it staggers like a drunk, trying to hide, looking for shelter from a storm it created.

Drunkenness here is a metaphor for:

- Disorientation,
- Disempowerment,
- The collapse of imperial clarity.

The ones who once conquered are now confused. The ones who once mocked others' fear are now *afraid themselves*.

This is what the fall of empire looks like—not heroic, but humiliating.

Empire does not go down with nobility. It stumbles. It slurs. It hides.

And all the while, the people it once ignored *watch it fall*.

---

## Reflection

- What past empires—historical or spiritual—are cautionary tales in your own journey?
  - Where do we place false hope in modern-day “alliances” or protections?
  - Who are today's “infants dashed in the streets”—those most exposed to the cost of political failure?
- 

## Sidebar: No Empire Is Invincible

Nahum's comparison with Thebes is a *theological scalpel*:

- No wealth, no military, no alliance can make empire eternal.
- The fall of one empire is not the end of judgment—it's a *pattern*.

If Thebes fell, Nineveh will fall.

If Nineveh fell, every modern Nineveh will too.

Our job is not to ask “how to save the empire,” but:

How do we stand with the exiled, the enslaved, the shattered—and help rebuild the world God dreams of?

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## Nahum 3:12–15

**12** All your fortresses are like fig trees  
with first-ripe figs:  
if shaken they fall  
into the mouth of the eater.

**13** Look at your troops:  
they are women in your midst.  
The gates of your land  
are wide open to your foes;  
fire has devoured the bars of your gates.

**14** Draw water for the siege,  
strengthen your forts;  
trample the clay, tread the mortar,  
take hold of the brick mold!

**15** There the fire will devour you,  
the sword will cut you off.  
It will devour you like the locust.  
Multiply yourselves like the locust,  
multiply like the grasshopper!

---

### Nahum 3:12 — “Your fortresses are like fig trees...”

A fig tree in full bloom sounds like a sign of strength—but not here.

Nahum uses the image of **ripeness** to emphasize fragility. The fortified cities of Nineveh are so ready to fall that even a slight shake will cause their fruit—*their security*—to drop into the mouths of their enemies.

Empire looks solid.

But it is **overripe**—bloated, soft, ready to rot.

This is poetic precision. The very symbols of protection—walls, gates, military defenses—are revealed to be **illusory**.

Franciscan spirituality reminds us: **only what is rooted in humility and justice will endure**. Nahum agrees.

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### ⚠ Nahum 3:13 — “Your troops are women...”

This verse is often misinterpreted or weaponized by misogynistic readings. So let’s address it with clarity and care.

In ancient warfare metaphors, calling warriors “women” was a slur, implying weakness. But we reject that lens.

Here’s a **liberation reading**:

- Nahum isn’t mocking women.
- He’s mocking **empire’s view** of strength.

Empire trusts only in brute force, toxic masculinity, and domination. Nahum flips the script—not to insult women, but to **expose how empire defines power** in narrow, violent terms.

In truth, the “women” in empire are often the ones who survive, rebuild, and resist.  
The real weakness is in *trusting violence at all*.

This verse must be reclaimed, not repeated uncritically. We **disarm the metaphor** by affirming that *feminine resilience is not a flaw—but a threat to empire’s control*.

---

### 🔥 Nahum 3:13b — “The gates... are wide open... fire has devoured the bars...”

What was once sealed tight is now **exposed**. Gates open. Bars burned. Defenses breached.

Nahum’s theology is clear:

- Empire cannot defend itself from divine justice.
- Its illusions of protection melt under scrutiny.

This verse rings true in an age of:

- Border walls that fail.
- Surveillance systems that oppress but can’t bring peace.
- Police states that crumble from internal rot.

When the gates fall, the captives walk free.  
And the fire doesn’t destroy the oppressed—it *liberates them*.

---

## Nahum 3:14 — “Draw water... trample the clay...”

This is biting satire.

Nahum mocks Nineveh with the frantic gestures of empire trying to **save itself**:

- Reinforce the walls!
- Gather water!
- Work the clay!

But it's **too late**.

This is *futility theology*—the idea that when injustice has reached its tipping point, no amount of scrambling will hold the system together.

This is where empires today still find themselves:

- Patching up corrupt institutions.
- Rebranding violent policies.
- Trying to reform a structure that needs to be *repented of*, not repainted.

The brick mold can't save you.  
Only justice can.

---

## Nahum 3:15 — “Fire will devour you... like the locust.”

This is both **judgment and poetic irony**.

Empire has consumed everything around it—now *it will be consumed*. It will be devoured like it devoured others. Its hunger has become **its curse**.

Multiply yourselves like locusts!  
See how far that gets you.

This is divine sarcasm again. A critique of empire's obsession with **expansion, dominance, replication**. Nahum says: *Go ahead—build more, grow more, conquer more. It won't matter. The fire still comes.*

This is a word for:

- Capitalism's endless growth model.
  - Colonizers' reproduction of power through generations.
  - Institutions that expand but never repent.
-

## Reflection

- What false fortresses in your own life or community are “ripe figs” waiting to fall?
  - Where do you see empire scrambling to reinforce itself—while the fire is already at the gate?
  - What would it mean to stop multiplying like locusts, and start rooting like oaks?
- 

## Sidebar: Fire, Feminism, and Futility

Let’s reclaim this section:

- It is not anti-woman—it is **anti-empire’s definition of strength**.
- It is not about random fire—it is **about purging injustice**.
- It is not a call to panic—it is **a call to repent**.

The lesson?

**Build communities, not empires.**

**Nurture gardens, not fortresses.**

**Practice justice, not multiplication.**

---

## Nahum 3:16–19

**16** You increased your merchants  
more than the stars of the heavens.  
The locust sheds its skin and flies away.

**17** Your guards are like grasshoppers,  
your scribes like swarms of locusts  
settling on the fences on a cold day—  
when the sun rises, they fly away;  
no one knows where they have gone.

**18** Your shepherds are asleep,  
O king of Assyria;  
your nobles slumber.  
Your people are scattered on the mountains  
with no one to gather them.

**19** There is no assuaging your hurt;  
your wound is mortal.  
All who hear the news about you  
clap their hands over you.

For who has ever escaped  
your endless cruelty?

---

### **Nahum 3:16 — “You increased your merchants more than the stars...”**

Empire thrives on **commerce without conscience**. Assyria was flooded with merchants—traders, profiteers, and capitalists—chasing wealth without wisdom.

More merchants than stars.  
And yet... *they vanish like locusts*.

This is a critique not just of economic greed but of **imperial consumerism**:

- Buying and selling becomes the empire’s religion.
- The market is god.
- Everything, even people, has a price.

And yet Nahum says: *You hoarded wealth like stars... but it flies away*.

This is a prophetic word to:

- Corporations that gut the planet for quarterly profits.
- Churches that sell salvation like a product.
- Governments that treat citizens as consumers, not image-bearers.

When justice rises like the sun, the merchants disappear.

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### **Nahum 3:17 — “Your guards... your scribes... like swarms of locusts.”**

Nahum’s critique widens. It now includes:

- **Guards** – those who enforce imperial power.
- **Scribes** – those who justify it.

Together, they are like locusts: **numerous, voracious, temporary**. They show up in crisis, feed on the land, and then vanish.

Empire’s protectors and propagandists do not stay to rebuild.  
They are loyal to power, not people.

This speaks to our own times:

- Media that manufacture consent.



- Police who protect capital, not communities.
- Religious leaders who bless injustice, then disappear.

When the sun of truth rises, **the locusts scatter**.

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### **Nahum 3:18 — “Your shepherds are asleep...”**

This is not just about literal kings and rulers. It’s about **those entrusted with care**—leaders, pastors, governors, priests—**sleeping** while the people suffer.

“Your people are scattered on the mountains  
with no one to gather them.”

Francis and Clare would grieve this. The shepherds are meant to be servants. But here, empire’s shepherds sleep, and the flock is scattered.

Nahum mourns:

- A failure of leadership.
- A betrayal of responsibility.
- A people left to wander, with no one to bind their wounds.

 This is what happens when power replaces compassion.

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### **Nahum 3:19 — “There is no assuaging your hurt...”**

The empire is terminal. Its wound is *mortal*. No bandage will suffice. No prayer will redeem it. The violence was too vast. The cruelty too endless.

And then, in a final mic drop:

“All who hear the news about you  
clap their hands over you.  
For who has ever escaped your endless cruelty?”

This is **cosmic relief**.

The people who suffered under Assyria don’t weep for it—they **rejoice**.

Not because they are vengeful.  
But because at last, *the abuser has fallen*.

This is the deep, unsettling truth of Nahum:

- Sometimes, justice is not gentle.
- Sometimes, the fall of the mighty is *gospel*.
- Sometimes, holy people **clap** when the oppressor is gone.

And God is in that clap.

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### **Final Reflection**

- What wounds in our world have no balm—because the system that caused them refuses to repent?
  - Where do we see “merchants like stars,” “scribes like locusts,” and “shepherds asleep” today?
  - What does it mean to believe in a God who not only comforts the brokenhearted, but also **confronts and collapses empires**?
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### **Final Sidebar: When Empire Falls—Clap**

Nahum ends not in weeping, but **in applause**.

This is unsettling for those of us trained to mourn all loss. But Nahum teaches us that **not all grief is sacred**, and **not all collapse is tragedy**.

Some things need to fall:

- White supremacy.
- Colonizing religion.
- Extractive capitalism.
- Transphobia.
- Christian nationalism.
- Patriarchy.
- Empire itself.

And when they fall—it is **holy to clap**.

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**Thus ends the Book of Nahum.**

Not a lullaby. Not a love song. But a *war cry for justice*.

Amen and amen.

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## Epilogue: After the Fall—What Now?

Nahum ends with the empire in ruins. The smoke has risen. The gates have fallen. The merchants are gone. The captives have stopped fleeing because there is nowhere left to run. The palace is silent. And the people—those long silenced by the sound of chariot wheels and the lies of imperial scribes—*clap their hands*.

This is not triumphalism. This is **liberation**.

Nahum does not give us a vision of what comes next. That's not his role. He is a demolisher, a truth-teller, a prophet of holy fury. His voice is a whirlwind, not a blueprint. But in his wake, something becomes possible:

The clearing of empire makes room for **beloved community**.

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### The Work After the Fire

Now that empire has fallen in the story, we must ask: *What do we plant in the ashes?*

- We plant **justice**—not as punishment, but as restoration.
- We plant **memory**—so that the violence of empire is not repeated.
- We plant **ritual**—festivals of freedom, dance as resistance, Eucharists of the exiled.
- We plant **belonging**—where those the empire deemed unworthy are now the cornerstone of a new humanity.

Nahum reminds us that **rage and renewal are siblings**. They both come from love.

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### For the Survivors

If you are reading this as someone who has suffered under empire—whether that's religious trauma, state violence, gender oppression, racism, colonialism, or ableism—hear this:

God was never on the side of your abuser.  
God is not the architect of your pain.  
God does not bless empires—God breaks them open.

Your anger is holy. Your tears are prophetic. Your survival is a sermon.

And this book—Nahum's cry—is not a curse for you. It is a **blessing disguised as fire**.

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## For the Builders of the New

Let this commentary be a call:

- To build churches where trans joy is honored as sacred.
- To plant gardens where asphalt once reigned.
- To tell the truth even when it makes the powerful uncomfortable.
- To practice Sabbath in a world addicted to production.
- To clap when justice rolls down—and then get to work cleaning the rubble.

Because after empire falls, *we still have each other*. And we still have a God who whispers through the whirlwind and says:

*Behold, I am doing a new thing. Can you not perceive it?*

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## Benediction

Go now with the courage of Nahum,  
the fire of the prophets,  
the tenderness of the wounded,  
and the clarity of love that will not bow to empire.

May your voice disturb the comfortable.  
May your hands comfort the disturbed.  
May your theology topple thrones.  
And may your joy be loud enough  
to echo through the ruins of every unjust system  
that forgot God takes sides.

Let the people say: **Amen**.  
Let the earth say: **Enough**.  
Let the future say: **We rise**.

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## About the Author

**Sister Abigail Hester, OFC**, is a prophetic voice for justice, tenderness, and holy disruption. A transgender nun and the founder of the *Order of Franciscan Clareans*, she lives at the intersection of mysticism and activism, bringing together the fiery witness of the prophets with the gentle wisdom of saints Francis and Clare of Assisi.

Born into a world that tried to silence her, Sister Abigail chose instead to preach. Her work combines **queer theology**, **liberation theology**, **Franciscan spirituality**, and a bold critique of empire—both ancient and modern. She writes for the wounded, the wanderers, and the rebels of faith: those who have been cast out by religious systems but still dare to believe that God is love, and love is liberation.

With a background in pastoral ministry, natural health, trauma-informed care, and contemplative Christian practice, Sister Abigail's voice is both scholarly and streetwise, academic and accessible. Her writing flows from the margins: informed by disability justice, ecological reverence, and the lived experiences of oppressed communities.

She is the author of numerous works, including:

- *Little Girl, Arise: A Transgender Christian Manifesto*
- *Casting Out Empire: Exorcism and Resistance in the Way of Jesus*
- *The Table of Success: A Franciscan Clarean Guide to Health and Wellness*
- *The Daily Franciscan Clarean: A Year of Prayer, Practice, and Justice*
- And other commentaries, devotionals, and justice-centered theological works.

When she is not writing or organizing, Sister Abigail can be found tending to her garden, praying with the saints, or laughing at memes with the joy of someone who has survived the fire and still sings.

Follow her work and connect with the Franciscan Clarean movement at:

 [franciscanclareans.blogspot.com](http://franciscanclareans.blogspot.com)

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