

Nahum 1:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

Analysis

Nahum opens with a fierce description of God's character: "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." The Hebrew El qanno unoqem YHWH noqem YHWH uva'al chemah noqem YHWH letzarav venoter hu le'oyevav אל קנוֹן וְנוֹקֵם יְהוָה נָקֵם יְהוָה וּבָעֵל חֶמֶת נָקֵם יְהוָה לְאַבִּיו וּנוֹטֵר) (הָוָא לְאַבִּיו uses repetition to emphasize God's holy wrath.

"God is jealous" (El qanno) uses qanna (קָנָא), meaning zealous or jealous—God's passionate commitment to His glory and His people. This isn't petty envy but righteous zeal defending what belongs to Him. Exodus 34:14 declares: "The LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." God won't tolerate rivals or share glory with idols.

"The LORD revengeth" (noqem YHWH) appears three times, using naqam (נָקֵם), meaning to avenge, take vengeance, or execute justice. Repetition emphasizes certainty and intensity. "Is furious" (uva'al chemah) uses ba'al chemah (master/possessor of wrath)—God is characterized by righteous fury against wickedness. "Reserveth wrath" (venoter... le'oyevav) uses natar (נָטַר), meaning to keep, guard, or maintain—God remembers every offense and will settle accounts.

This verse combats sentimentalized views of God that emphasize love while ignoring holiness and justice. The same God who is "slow to anger" (verse 3) is

also jealous, vengeful, and furious. These aren't contradictions but complementary truths. God's love for His people demands wrath against their oppressors. His holiness requires judgment on sin. Nineveh had brutalized nations for centuries; now God announces retribution. This demonstrates that God governs morally—evil doesn't go unpunished forever.

Historical Context

Nahum prophesied between 663 BC (after Assyria's conquest of Thebes, mentioned in 3:8) and 612 BC (before Nineveh's fall). For over a century, Assyria had terrorized the ancient Near East with brutal military campaigns. They destroyed Israel's northern kingdom (722 BC) and nearly conquered Judah during Hezekiah's reign (701 BC). Assyrian inscriptions boast of horrific atrocities—impaling victims, burning cities, deporting entire populations. Nahum announces God's judgment against Nineveh for their violence and cruelty. Unlike Jonah's earlier message that brought Nineveh to temporary repentance (c. 760 BC), Nahum declares judgment is now irreversible. The prophecy was precisely fulfilled in 612 BC when Babylon and Media destroyed Nineveh so completely that its location was lost for over 2,000 years.

Nahum demonstrates God's sovereign justice over nations—He judged Israel for covenant unfaithfulness through Assyria, then judged Assyria for exceeding their mandate with excessive cruelty. The book assures God's people that He sees oppression and will vindicate them. While fierce in judgment against the wicked, God remains 'a stronghold in the day of trouble' for those who trust Him (1:7).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Nahum 1:2 deepen your understanding of God's character, particularly His holiness, justice, and mercy?
2. What specific attitudes, thought patterns, or behaviors does this verse call you to examine and change in light of the gospel?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and His redemptive work, and how should that shape your worship and obedience?

Interlinear Text

אֵל	אֵא	אֵא	קָרְבָּן	נָקְרָבָן	נָקְרָבָן	יְהֹוָה	יְהֹוָה
God	is jealous	revengeth	and the LORD	revengeth	and the LORD		
H410	H7072	H5358	H3068	H5358	H3068		
וְאֵלָי	וְאֵלָי	וְאֵלָי	וְאֵלָי	וְאֵלָי	וְאֵלָי	וְאֵלָי	וְאֵלָי
and is furious		H2534	revengeth	and the LORD	on his adversaries		
	H1167		H5358	H3068	H6862		
רָאֵבָן	רָאֵבָן	רָאֵבָן	רָאֵבָן	רָאֵבָן	רָאֵבָן	רָאֵבָן	רָאֵבָן
and he reserveth		H1931	wrath for his enemies				
	H5201		H341				

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 20:5 (References God): Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Zechariah 8:2 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.

Psalms 94:1 (References God): O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

Exodus 34:14 (References God): For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

Joshua 24:19 (References God): And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

Hebrews 10:30 (Judgment): For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

Isaiah 42:13 (References Lord): The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.

Deuteronomy 4:24 (References God): For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

Isaiah 51:20 (References God): Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God.

Isaiah 51:17 (References Lord): Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.