

# Nahum 1:11–14—Logoprosodic Analysis

## Translation and Textual Notes

### II. YHWH Announces Defeat of Belial (the Wicked One) Nah 1:11–14

#### A. YHWH's Enemy is a "Counselor of Belial"—with Many Allies (1:11–12b) [4.4]

1:11 From you [f sg] he has departed / 7 1 2 2 0  
 the one plotting evil<sup>a</sup> against YHWH // 13 1 4 4 0  
 1:2–11b **110 64 46**

(He is) a counselor of / *Belial* // **ו** 10 2 2 0 2  
 1:1–11 118 66 **52**

1:12 Thus / says YHWH / 9 2 3 3 0  
 "Are they not strong / and ever so numerous? / **א ש ו ר** 12 2 4 4 0  
 1:9–12a 36 **26 10**

#### B. YHWH Addresses Israel: "I Will Remove Assyria's Yoke" (1:12c–13) [5.5]

But even so they are cut off / and <they><sup>a</sup> pass on // 17 2 3 3 0  
 And I have afflicted you [f sg] / 6 1 1 0 1  
 I will not afflict you [f sg] / any more // 8 2 3 0 3  
 1:8–12 **51 34 17**

1:13 And now / I will break his yoke / from upon you [f sg] // 20 3 4 4 0  
 and your [f sg] bonds / I will burst asunder" // 13 2 2 0 2  
 1:10–13 36 **26 10**

#### C. YHWH Addresses Assyria: "Your Name Will Not Survive" (1:14) [4.4]

1:14 YHWH / has commanded concerning you [m sg] / 13 2 3 3 0  
 "Your [m sg] name will not survive / any more // 11 2 4 4 0  
 1:4–14b 110 **69 41**

From the house of your [m sg] gods / 9 1 2 0 2  
 1:4–14c 112 **69 43**

I will cut off the graven image and the cast idol / 12 1 3 0 3  
 1:4–14d **115 69 46**

I prepare your [m sg] grave / for you [m sg] are worthless" // **נ** 13 2 4 0 4  
 1:11–14 **44 27 17**

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (4.4) . (5.5) . (4.4)  
 = 8 + 10 + 8 = **26**  
 or: 18 // 18

Concentric Compositional Formula: 45 = 22 + 1 + 22 [word count]  
 {or: **23 // 23**}

## Notes:

- 1:11<sup>a</sup> Reading the accent *tīp̄hâ* here as conjunctive.  
 1:12<sup>a</sup> The singular verb *‘ābār* (“he passes on”) is emended to read the plural form *‘ābār<û>* (“they passed on”). This is probably an instance of a shared consonant, or perhaps the early loss of the *waw* by haplography (cf. *BHS* note). It is also possible to read an indefinite personal subject for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular *‘ābār* (“one passes on” or “they pass on”); see GKC §144d. On the perfect with *waw*-consecutive, see GKC §112gg.

## Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Nahum 1:11–14 has 3 strophes: 1:11–12a, 12b–13 and 14.

1:11–12a	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(7+13) + 10 + (15+6)	= 20 + 10 + 21	morae
1:12b–13	2 balanced dyads:	(17+14) + (20+13)	= 31 + 33	morae
1:14	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(13+11) + 9 + (12+13)	= 24 + 9 + 25	morae

2. The first strophe (1:11–12a) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 1:11ab, 11c and 12ab.
- 1:2–11b **110** = **64 + 46** [compositional formula—*kabod* numbers]
  - 1:1–11 **52** (= **26** x 2) words after *atnach*
  - 1:9–12b **26** words before *atnach*
3. The second strophe (1:12b–13) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 1:12cd, 13a and 13bc.
- 1:8–12 **51** = **34 + 17** [compositional formula—all divisible by 17]
  - 1:8–13a **52** (= **26** x 2) words and **17** words after *atnach*
  - 1:10–13 **26** words before *atnach*
4. The third strophe (1:14) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 1:14ab, 14c and 14de.
- 1:8–14b **64** (= **32** x 2 = 2<sup>6</sup>) words
  - 1:12–14c **69** (= **23** x 3) words before *atnach*
  - 1:11–14 **17** words after *atnach*

## Observations

1. The three strophes in Nah 1:11–14 are part of another concentric structure that extends one more verse (1:11–2:1 [Eng. 1:15]), which may be outlined in a menorah pattern as follows:

### ***YHWH Announces the Defeat of Belial (the Wicked one) (Nah 1:11–2:1 [1:15])***

A	From you (Judah), the counselor of <i>Belial</i> has departed	1:11
B	Prophetic announcement: the enemy (Assyria) is strong & numerous	1:12ab
C	YHWH speaks: “though I afflicted you, I will afflict you no more”	1:12c–e
X	<b>YHWH speaks: “I will break his yoke from upon you”</b>	1:13a
C’	YHWH speaks: “your bonds I will burst asunder”	1:13b
B’	Prophetic announcement: the enemies name & seed will be destroyed	1:14
A’	Good news announced: <i>Belial</i> will be utterly cut off	2:1 [1:15]

The two references to *Belial* function as an *inclusio* in the outermost frame. The prophet reports the words of YHWH in the second frame; and in the center YHWH addresses words of comfort to Judah, promising to remove the Assyrian yoke. Nah 2:1 [1:15] functions as a structural “bridge,” which completes this concentric structure and begins the third canto (2:1–11 [1:15–2:10]), and belongs to both. This may help to explain why the LXX tradition places the chapter division a verse later than the MT.

2. In terms of the 44 words in Nahum 1:11–14, the **arithmological center** falls between verses 12 and 13, with 22 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$44 = 22 + 0 + 22 \quad [\text{word count—for Nahum 1:11–14}]$$

The **meaningful center** is found by adding four words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

$$\frac{\text{וענתך לא אענך עוד} \quad \text{And I afflicted you; I will not afflict you any more;}}{\text{ועתה אשבר מטהו מעליך} \quad \text{And now I will break his yoke from upon you.}}$$

In this instance, the **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$44 = 18 + 8 + 18 \quad [\text{word count— for Nahum 1:11–14}]$$

$$\text{or: } \mathbf{26 // 26} \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

3. Klaas Spronk calls attention to the fact that the word אַשּׁוּר (“Assyria”) is spelled out as an initial letter acrostic in four consecutive words in 1:12 immediately following the phrase, “Thus says YHWH” (1997:69). Moreover, he notes the fact that the word Nineveh appears as an initial letter acrostic in four successive half-lines in 3:18, where the king of Assyria is addressed directly in the question posed at the end of the book.
4. The *setuma*’ layout marker at the end of 1:11 and the *petucha*’ marker at the end of 1:14 signal significant breaks within the prosodic structure. The *setuma*’ marker ties 1:11 closely to 1:10, as many translators and commentators assume. The logotechnical prosodic analysis, however, indicates that 1:11 is an integral part of what follows in this transitional literary unit (1:11–14), which connects the opening hymn of theophany (1:1–10) with the

taunt songs against Nineveh in Nahum 2–3. Since the *setuma*’ marker falls within a prosodic sub-unit in the first strophe of this canto, it may also signal the beginning of YHWH’s address in 1:12, which is also marked by the acrostic pattern of YHWH’s first four words, which spell out the word “Assyria.” The *petucha*’ marker at the end of 1:14 marks a major prosodic boundary that separates the second “canto” (1:11–14) from the third (2:1–11 [1:15–2:10]).

5. The term *Belial* in 1:11, and again in 2:1 [1:15], refers to the personified leader of the enemy forces. Taken literally, the name means something like “no value,” “worthlessness,” “confusion,” or “chaos.” The word takes on a life of its own in subsequent Jewish literature—particularly in the pseudepigraphic and Qumran material. It is also found in the Greek New Testament as a term for the devil (2 Cor 6:15).

6. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae for Nahum 1:11–14

44 = 18 + 8 + 18 or: **26 // 26**

44 = **17** + 10 + **17** or: 27 // 27

{with others in between}

44 = 6 + **32** + 6 or: 38 // 38

44 = 2 + 40 + 2 or: 42 // 42

**26** = 8 + 10 + 8 or: 18 // 18 syntactic accentual-stress (SAS) units

13 = 5 + 4 + 5 or: 9 // 9 **briques** (primary SAS units)

7. In the prosodic structure of Nahum 1:11–14 as a whole, the basic building blocks (**briques**) in each poetic **verset** are the **primary SAS (syntactic accentual stress) units**. These sub-units are delineated by the Masoretes, who marked most of the boundaries with one of the following:

- **Soph Pasuq** A large colon following a word signifies the end of a verse, which does not always coincide with the end of a sentence.
- **Atnach** A small caret-like mark (like ^) beneath the consonantal text, pointing upward, is used to divide most verses. Its primary importance for our purposes concerns its use in the matter of numerical composition—i.e., the total word-count in each line is divided into the number of words before and after *atnach*.
- **Zaqeph Qaton** A small colon above a word, which is a major disjunctive accent that often marks the end of a musical phrase within a verse.

In the prosodic analysis presented with the translation (above), the presence of *soph pasuq* and *atnach* is indicated with a double slash (//). Nahum 1:11–14 has 15 **briques** (primary SAS units), 12 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (4 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (4 times, in each verse) and *zāqēp qātōn* (4 times, in vv. 11, 12 [twice], and 14). The boundaries of the three remaining **briques** are marked by *rəḥîa*’ (in v. 12), *gereš* (in v. 14), and *təḥîr* (in v. 14).

8. The prosodic structure of Nahum 1:11–14, in terms of its **primary SAS units (briques)**, may be displayed as follows [^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *zaqeph qaton*, and † is any other of the *te'amim* as a boundary marker].

A <sup>11</sup> *mimmēk yāšā*† *ḥōšēb ʿak yhw h rāʿāh* ^ *yōʿēš bəlīyāʿal* : 𐤁

B <sup>12</sup> *kōh ʾāmar yhw* † *ʾim šālēmīm wəkēn rabbīm* †

X *wəkēn nāgōzū wəʿābār* ^ *wəʿinnīṭīk* † *lōʾ ʾāʿannēk ʿôd* :

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<sup>13</sup> *wəʿattāh ʾešbōr mōṭēhū mēʿālāyīk* ^ *ûmôsarōtayīk ʾānattēq* :

B' <sup>14</sup> *wəšiwwāh ʿālēka yhw* † *lōʾ yizzāraʿ miššimka ʿôd* ^

A' *mibbēt ʾēlohēka* † *ʾakrīt pesel ûmassēkāh* † *ʾāšīm qibreka kī qallōta* : 𐤁

The **arithmological center** of Nahum 1:11–14 falls between vv. 12 and 13, with a total of 22 words on either side. Nah 1:11–14 has 3 **strophes** (each of which has two distinct parts), 6 **versets**, 15 **briques**, and 26 SAS units. The **arithmological center** is in the middle **strophe**, between the two middle **versets**, at the end of the middle **brique**, and between the two middle SAS units. There are 173 morae in 1:11–14, with 82 morae before and 91 morae after the **arithmological center**.

According to the analysis presented here, the 15 **briques** are distributed within 3 **strophes** in Nah 1:11–14 as follows: 15 = 5 + 5 + 5; or 10 // 10 with the pivot included in each half.

9. Except for the difference in locating the initial boundary of this prosodic unit, the analysis presented here is similar to that of Spronk (1995:171).
- We both find the same 15 cola (or primary SAS units [*briques*]).
  - We both emend the singular form of the verb *ʿābār* (“he passes on”) to read the plural form *ʿābār<û>* (“they passed on”) in 1:12.
  - Spronk expresses uncertainty about the accent *təbīr* at the end of a colon in 1:14.
  - We differ primarily in our understanding of the concentric structure of this prosodic unit and its relation to its larger literary context.

The brevity of this transitional canto, together with the peculiar use of the *setuma*’ layout marker in 1:11, make it the most difficult of the seven cantos in Nahum to analyze with confidence.

10. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures in the book of Nahum calls for input on the part of others in the BIBAL Forum, as we consider the rhetorical features in greater depth and further information contained in the *te'amim* of this particular text.

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