

Nahum 3:1–7—Logoprosodic Analysis

Translation and Textual Notes

V. First Taunt—“Alas, City of Bloodshed!”

Nahum 3:1–7

A. Strophe 1: The Sound of Battle has Come to the City of Bloodshed (3:1–2) [7.6]

3:1	Alas / city of bloodshed //	8	2	3	3	0
	all of it / with lying (and) pillage / filled /	12	3	4	0	4
	(and) never without / prey //	<u>9</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
		2:12–3:1		55	26	29

3:2	The sound of a whip /	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
		2:5–3:2a		120	52	68

	And the sound / of a rattling wheel //	9	2	3	3	0
	and a horse galloping /	7	1	2	0	2
	and a chariot / jolting //	<u>13</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
		2:11–3:2		78	34	44

B. Strophe 2: There is Carnage in the Streets of the City (3:3) [4.5]

3:3	Horsemen charging / and flash of sword /	12	2	4	4	0
	and glint of spear / and hosts of (the) slain /	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>
		3:2–3b		17	13	4

	And heaps of cadavers //	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
		2:10–3:3c		99	48	51

	And there is no end / to the corpses /	12	2	3	0	3
	they stumble / over their corpses //	<u>13</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
		3:1–3		34	18	16

C. Strophe 3: Nineveh is Punished for Her Harlotries (3:4) [4.4]

3:4	Because of the numerous / harlotries of the harlot /	13	2	3	3	0
	the pleasing charm / of the mistress of sorceries //	<u>13</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>
		3:3–4a		22	17	5

	The one who sells nations / by her harlotry /	14	2	3	0	3
	and clans / by her witchcraft //	<u>13</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
		3:1–4		46	25	21

D. Strophe 4: YHWH is Revealing Nineveh's Shame to the Nations (3:5) [5.4]

3:5	Behold I am against you / utterance / of YHWH of hosts / and I will lift your skirt / over your face //	18 3 <u>16 2</u>	5 5 0 <u>4 4 0</u>
		3:3-5a	36 26 10
	And I will show nations / your nakedness / and kingdoms / your shame //	12 2 <u>12 2</u>	3 0 3 <u>2 0 2</u>
		3:1-5	60 34 26

E. Strophe 5: As YHWH's Spectacle of Contempt "Nineveh Is in Ruins" (3:6-7) [6.7]

3:6	I will pelt you / with filth / and I will make you contemptible // and I will make of you ^a a spectacle //	14 2 5 1 <u>9 1</u>	3 3 0 1 1 0 <u>2 0 2</u>
		3:3-6b	47 30 17
3:7	And anyone who sees you /	<u>10 1</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		3:5-7a	23 16 7
	He will flee from you /	<u>6 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		3:3-7b	52 35 17
	And he will say / "Nineveh is devastated / who / will grieve for her?" // where / can I find comforters / for you?" //	14 2 8 2 <u>15 3</u>	3 3 0 3 3 0 <u>4 0 4</u>
		3:1-7	81 49 32
		1:1-3:7	408 223 185

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (7.6).(4.5) . (~~4.4~~) . (5.4).(6.7)
 = (13 + 9) + 8 + (9 + 13) = 22 + 8 + 22 = **52**
 or: 30 // 30

Concentric Compositional Formula: 81 = 40 + 1 + 40 [word count]
 or: 41 // 41

Notes:

3:6^a Reading *tīp̄hâ* here in *BHS* as conjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Nahum 3:1–7 has five strophes: 3:1–2, 3, 4, 5 and 6–7.

A	3:1–2	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(8 + [12 + 9]) + 4 + (9 + 20)$	=	$29 + 4 + 29$	morae
B	3:3	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(12 + 14) + 7 + (12 + 13)$	=	$26 + 7 + 25$	morae
X	3:4	2 balanced dyads:	$(13 + 13) + (14 + 13)$	=	$26 + 27$	morae
B	3:5ab	balanced dyad:	$(18 + 16)$	=	$18 + 16$	morae
	3:5cd	balanced dyad	$(12 + 12)$	=	$12 + 12$	morae
A	3:6–7	2 balanced triads + pivot:	$(19 + 9 + 10) + 6 + (14 + 8 + 15)$	=	$38 + 6 + 37$	morae

2. The first strophe (3:1–2) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:1 and 2.
- 2:12–3:1 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 2:5–3:2:a **120 = 52 + 68** [compositional formula]
 - 2:11–3:2 **78** (= **26** x 3) words and **34** (= **17** x 2) words before *atnach*
3. The second strophe (3:3) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:3ab, 3c, and 3de.
- 3:2–3b **17** words
 - 2:10–3:3c **51** (= **17** x 3) words after *atnach*
 - 3:1–3 **34** (= 2x17) words
4. The third strophe (3:4) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:4ab and 3cd.
- 3:3–4a **17** words before *atnach*
 - 3:1–4 **46** (= **23** x 2) words
5. The fourth strophe (3:5) is has two parts: 3:5ab and 5:cd.
- 3:3–5a **26** words before *atnach*
 - 3:1–5 **34** (= 2x17) words before and **26** words after *atnach*
6. The fifth strophe (3:6–7) is a single part arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:6, 7a, 7b and 7c–e.
- 3:3–6b **17** words after *atnach*
 - 3:5–7a **23** words
 - 3:3–7b **52** (= **26** +x 2) words and **17** words after *atnach*
 - 3:1–7 **32** words after *atnach*
 - 1:1–3:7 **408** (= **17** x **12** x 2) words

Observations

1. The 5-part concentric structural design of the five strophes revealed in the logoprosodic analysis provides a useful framework on which to see the content of these seven verses, though the repetition of words and themes is less clear here than elsewhere in Nahum. The content of Nah 3:1–7 may be outlined in a menorah pattern:

<i>First Taunt: Nineveh's Shame Will be Seen by the Nations</i>	<i>Nahum 3:1–7</i>
A YHWH speaks: "Woe, city of bloodshed ... never without prey!	3:1
B The sounds of battle have come to Nineveh	3:2
C The city is filled with gore: "there is no end to the corpses!"	3:3
X All this has come because of the harlotries of the harlot	3:4
C' YHWH speaks: "I will show nations your shame!"	3:5
B' YHWH says that he will make Nineveh a spectacle of contempt	3:6
A' A fugitive speaks: "Nineveh is devastated, who will grieve for her?"	3:7

2. In terms of the 81 words in Nah 3:1–7, the **arithmological center** falls on the word **כַּשְׁפִּים** ("sorceries") at the end of the first half of verse 4, with 40 words on either side. In this instance the **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$81 = 40 + 1 + 40 \quad [\text{word count—for Nah 3:1–7}]$$

$$\text{or: } 41 // 41 \quad [\text{word count—with "pivot" included in each half}]$$

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

זונוני זונה	(Because of) the harlotries of the harlot,
כַּשְׁפִּים טובת הן בעלת	The pleasing charm of the mistress of sorceries;
המכרת גוים בזנוניה	The enslaver of nations by her harlotry.
ומשפחות בצשפיה	And families by her witchcraft.

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

$$81 = 35 + 11 + 35 \quad [\text{word count— for Nah 3:1–7}]$$

$$\text{or: } 46 // 46 \quad [\text{word count—with "pivot" included in each half}]$$

$$\{46 = 23 \times 2\}$$

3. Another **meaningful center** is found when Nah 3:1–7 is combined with the first two chapters of Nahum. Counting from the beginning of the book of Nahum, the **arithmological center** falls on the word **מֵאֲדָם** ("reddened") in 2:4 [Eng. 2:3], with 204 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is as follows:

$$409 = 204 + 1 + 204 \quad [\text{word count— for Nah 3:1–7}]$$

$$\text{or: } 205 // 205 \quad [\text{word count—with "pivot" included in each half}]$$

$$\{204 = 17 \times 12\}$$

One candidate for the **meaningful center** in Nahum 1:1–3:7 is found by adding three words on either side of this new **arithmological center**, as follows:

שחתו They are destroyed—
מאדם מגן גבריהו The shield of his mighty men is reddened;
 אנשי חיל מתלעים His warriors are clad in scarlet.

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

$$409 = 201 + 7 + 201 \quad [\text{word count— for Nah 3:1–7}]$$

or: **208 // 208** [word count—with “pivot” included in each half]
 {208 = 26 x 8 = 2x2x2x2x13}

A more interesting **meaningful center**, however, is found by adding four words on either side of this **arithmological center**, as follows:

וזמריהם שחתו And their songs they have wiped out;
מאדם מגן גבריהו The shield of his mighty men is reddened;
 אנשי חיל מתלעים באש His warriors are consumed by worms—in fire!

Note that the word תולע [and תולעה] means “worm” as well as “scarlet stuff.” When read as a hiphil denominative verbal form, the meaning is to “breed worms” (see BDB, p. 1069). Hence the graphic image of horrific judgment when these words are interpreted independent from their literary context—as a **riddle in the middle**. In this instance, the **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$409 = 200 + 9 + 200 \quad [\text{word count— for Nah 3:1–7}]$$

or: **209 // 209** [word count—with “pivot” included in each half]

If this is an intended interpretation of the **riddle in the middle** of Nahum 1:1–3:7, the image of impending judgment is striking. One is reminded of Luke’s description of the death of Herod Agrippa—“an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died” (Acts 12:23).

4. The logoprosodic analysis suggests that the meaning of Nah 3:2 shifts as one moves to the second strophe. At first the description of the “bloody city” focuses on Nineveh’s military might as the perpetrator of pillage who is “never without prey” (3:1). But the “jolting chariots” quickly become an image of impending destruction within that “bloody city”—as the “heaps of dead bodies” (3:3) become the Assyrians, who are punished for the “harlotries of the harlot” (3:4a). That shocking picture is then quickly confirmed with an explicit oracle from YHWH addressed directly to Nineveh: “I will lift up your skirt over your face; and I will show nations your nakedness” (3:5). The language then turns vile in the concluding strophe, as YHWH declares: “I will pelt you with filth and I will make you contemptible; and I will make of you a spectacle” (3:6). Here we see the dark side of YHWH’s character in his blazing wrath against his enemy.
5. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae for Nah 3:1–7

$$81 = 40 + 1 + 40 \quad \text{or: } 41 // 41$$

$$81 = 35 + 11 + 35 \quad \text{or: } 46 // 46$$

{with others in between}

81 = 15 + 51 + 15 or: 66 // 66 {v 1–2a || v 7}
 81 = 7 + 67 + 7 or: 74 // 74

52 = 22 + 8 + 22 or: 30 // 30 syntactic accentual-stress units
 {52 = 26 x 2}

30 = 13 + 4 + 13 or: 17 // 17 **briques** (primary accentual-stress units)

6. In the prosodic structure of Nah 3:1–7 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 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 (//). Nah 3:1–7 has 30 **briques** (primary stress units), 25 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (7 times, at the end of each verse); *atnach* (7 times, in each verse); and *zaqeph qaton* (11 times—in vv. 1, 2 [twice], 3 [twice], 4 [twice], 5 [twice], and 7 [twice]). The boundaries of the remaining five **briques** are marked by *rəḥîaʿ* (vv. 3 and 5), *tiḫā* (vv. 3 and 5), and *təḥîr* (v. 6).

7. The prosodic structure of Nah 3:1–7, 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	¹ hōy ʿîr dāmîm ^ ² qôl šôṭ † wəsûs dôhēr †	<i>kullāh kaḥaš pereq məlēʾāh †</i>	<i>lōʾ yāmîš ʿtārep :</i>
		<i>wəqôl raʿaš ʾôḫān ^</i> <i>ûmerkāḫāh məraqqēdāh :</i>	
B	³ pāraš maʿāleh † wəroḫ ḥālāl † wəʾên qeṣeh laggəwîyāh †	<i>wəlahab ḥereḫ ûḫəraq ḥānîṭ †</i> <i>wəḳōḫed pāḡer ^</i> <i>yəḳāšəlû biḡwîyātām :</i>	
X	⁴ mēroḫ zənûnê zônāh † hammōkeret gôyim biznûnêḥa †	<i>tôḫat ḥen baʿālat</i> <i>kəšāpîm</i> ^ <i>ûmišpāḫôt biḳšāpêḥa :</i>	

- B ⁵ *hin(ə)nî ʔēlayik[†]* *nəʔum yhw̄h šəḥāʔôṭ[‡]*
wəḡillêṭî šûlayik[†] *ʕal pānāyik[^]*
wəharʔêṭî ḡôyim maʕrēk[‡] *ûmamlākôṭ qəlônēk[‡]* :
- A ⁶ *wəhišlakṭî ʕalayik[†]* *šiqqūšîm wənibbaltîk[^]* *wəśamtîk kərōʔî :*
⁷ *wəhāyāh kol rōʔayik yiddôḏ mimmeḱ[‡]*
wəʔamar šaddəḏāh nînəwēh[‡] *mî yānûḏ lāh[^]* *mēʔayin ʔəḥaqēš mənəḥāmîm lāk :*

The **arithmological center** of Nah 3:1–7 falls on the word *kəšāpîm* (“sorceries”) in the middle of v. 4, with a total of 40 words on either side. Nah 3:1–7 has 52 **SAS units**, 30 **briques** (primary SAS units), 7 **versets**, and 5 **strophes**. The **arithmological center** is in the middle **strophe**, the middle **verset**, the middle two **briques** and the middle two **SAS units**.

According to the analysis presented here, the 30 **briques** are distributed within 5 **strophes** in Nah 3:1–7 as follows: 30 = (7 + 6) + 4 + (6 + 7) = 13 + 4 + 13; or **17 // 17** with the central pivot included in each half.

8. The logoprosodic analysis presented here is very close to what Klaas Spronk has found on other grounds.
 - Spronk finds 29 cola and Christensen finds 20 **briques** in Nah 3:1-7.
 - We differ in our understanding of vv. 3 (where two of Spronk’s cola become one **brique**), 5 and 6 (in each of these latter two cases, Spronk’s colon become two **briques** in the analysis presented here).
 - The most significant difference, once again, is in our respective understanding of the prosodic structure of the larger whole in Nahum 3, especially in v. 3 (which Spronk divides between two strophes) and vv. 6-7 (where Christensen’s strophe is divided into two strophes in Spronk’s analysis). Spronk finds seven strophes in the seven verses of Nah 3:1-7; whereas Christensen finds only five strophes (in the normal bifid pattern, with pivot), but which may be outlined in a menorah pattern (see Observation 1 above).
9. 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 *teʕamim* of this particular text.

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