

# Nahum 3:8–13—Logoprosodic Analysis

## Translation and Textual Notes

### VI. Second Taunt—“Are You Better Than Thebes?”

Nah 3:8–13

#### A. Strophe 1: “Are You Better Than Thebes in Egypt?” (3:8) [4.5]

3:8	Are you better / than Thebes /	13	2	3	3	0
	the one who dwells / on the Nile? /	<u>12</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
		3:6–8b		<b>26</b>	20	6
	Water / is round about her //	8	2	3	3	0
	whose rampart is the sea /	6	1	3	0	3
	having from the sea / her wall //	<u>10</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
		3:6–8		<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>	11

#### B. Strophe 2: Though Cush Was Strong You Divided Her Allies (3:9) [3.3]

3:9	Cush (Ethiopia) was mighty <sup>a</sup> /	7	1	2	2	0
	and Egypt / indeed was without limit //	11	2	3	3	0
	Put, that is the Libyans / were / among your allies //	<u>17</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
		3:2–9		93	59	<b>34</b>

#### C. Strophe 3: Cush (Ethiopia) Went into Exile (3:10a–d) [3.3]

3:10	So also it was with her /	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
		3:7–10a		39	<b>26</b>	13
	To exile / she went in captivity /	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
		3:2–10b		<b>98</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>34</b>
	So also it was with her infants /	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
		1:1–3:10c		284	<b>156</b>	<b>128</b>
	They were dashed to pieces / at the head of all the streets //	<u>13</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>
		3:2–10d		<b>104</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>34</b>
		1:1–3:10d		<b>288</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>128</b>

#### D. Strophe 4: Her Nobles and Dignitaries were Bound in Fetters (3:10e–f) [2.2]

	And for <all> <sup>a</sup> her nobles / <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">lots</span> were cast /	15	2	5	0	5
	and all her grandees / were bound in fetters //	<u>16</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
		3:4–10		89	55	<b>34</b>

*E. Strophe 5: May You Share the Fate of Thebes (3:11)* [3.3]

3:11	May you also become drunk /	6	1	3	3	0
	may you / pass out (in a drunken stupor) //	9	2	2	2	0
	may you also / seek refuge / from your enemy //	16	3	5	0	5
		<hr/>				
		3:8-11		<b>52</b>	29	<b>23</b>

*F. Strophe 6: May You Share the Fate of Thebes (3:12)* [3.3]

3:12	All your fortresses / are like fig trees / with early figs //	17	3	5	5	0
	when they are shaken / they fall / into the mouth of the eater //	19	3	6	0	6
		<hr/>				
		3:8-12		63	<b>34</b>	29

*G. Strophe 7: Your People and Gates are Wide Open to be Devoured (3:13)* [5.4]

3:13	Behold your people / <sup>a</sup> are women / in the midst /	14	3	4	4	0
	of your enemies /	6	1	1	1	0
		<hr/>				
		3:11-13b		<b>26</b>	15	11
	They are wide open /	9	1	2	2	0
		<hr/>				
		3:11-13c		28	<b>17</b>	11
	(Namely) the gates / <sup>b</sup> of your land //	7	2	2	2	0
	fire has devoured / your gate-bars //	13	2	3	0	3
		<hr/>				
		3:12-13		<b>23</b>	14	9
		3:8-13		<b>75</b>	43	<b>32</b>
		3:1-13		<b>156</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>64</b>

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (4.5).(3.3).(3.3) . (2.2) . (3.3) (3.3).(5.4)  
 = (9 + 6 + 6) + 4 + (6 + 6 + 9) = 21 + 4 + 21 = **46**  
 or: 25 // 25

Concentric Compositional Formula: 74 = 37 + 0 + 37 [word count]

**Notes:**

- 3:8<sup>a</sup> Many critics add a *mappiq* to the word *ʿosmāh* to read “her strength” with the LXX. It is better to read the verbal form *ʿāṣəmāh* (“[Cush] was mighty”).
- 3:10<sup>a</sup> Adding the word *kol* with the LXX (see Observation 2 below).
- 3:13<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of *ʿazlā* plus *məhuppak* here in *BHS* as disjunctive.
- 3:13<sup>b</sup> Reading *mūnaḥ* here in *BHS* as disjunctive.

## Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Nahum 3:8–13 has 5 strophes: 3:8, 9–10a, 10b, 11–12 and 13.

A	3:8	2 balanced dyads:	$(13 + 12) + (8 + [6 + 10])$	= 25 + 24	morae
B	3:9	balanced dyad: {v. 9 constitutes a strophe, which is joined to the following strophe by enjambment}	$([7 + 11] + 17) +$	= 18 + 17	morae
C	3:10a-d	(2 balanced triads + pivot:)	$(3 + [14 + 9 + 13])$	= 35 + 3 + 35	morae

X	3:10ef	balanced dyad:	$(15 + 16)$	= 15 + 16	morae
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C	3:11	balanced dyad:	$([6 + 9] + 16)$	= 15 + 16	morae
B	3:12	balanced dyad:	$(17 + 19)$	= 17 + 19	morae
A	3:13	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(10 + 10) + 9 + (7 + 13)$	= 20 + 9 + 20	morae

2. The first strophe (3:8) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:8ab and 8:c-e.

- 3:6–8b **26** words
- 3:6–8 **34** (= 2x17) words and **23** words before *atnach*
- 3:5–8 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words before *atnach*
- 3:3–8 **49** (= 7x7 = 17+32 = 26+23) words before and **26** words after *atnach*

3. The second strophe (3:9) is a single part.

- 3:2–9 **34** (= 17 x 2) words after *atnach*

4. The third strophe (3:10a–d) is the second half of a larger structure (3:9-10d), which is arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:10a, 10b, 10c and 10d.

- 3:7–10a **26** words before *atnach*
- 3:2–10b **98** = **64** + **34** [compositional formula]
- 3:2–10c **156** (= 26 x 6) words before and **128** (= 32 x 4) words after *atnach*
- 3:2–10d **104** = **70** + **34** [compositional formula]

5. The fourth strophe (3:10ef) is a single part.

- 3:4–10 **34** (= 17 x 2) words after *atnach*

6. The fifth strophe (3:11) is a single part.

- 3:8–11 **52** (= 26 x 2) words and **23** words after *atnach*

7. The sixth strophe (3:12) is a single part.

- 3:8–12 **34** (= 2x17) words before *atnach*

8. The seventh strophe (3:13) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 13ab, 13c and 13de.

- 3:1–13b **26** words
- 3:11–13c **17** words before *atnach*
- 3:12–13 **23** words

- 3:8–13      **32** words after *atnach*
- 3:1–13      **156 = 92 + 64**                      [compositional formula]

## Observations

1. The seven strophes of Nahum 3:8–13 may be outlined in a menorah pattern:

<b>Second Taunt: “Are You Any Better Than Thebes?”</b>	<b>Nahum 3:8–13</b>
A Question: “Are you better than Thebes?”	3:8
B You divided her allies	3:9
C She also went into exile and her infants were dashed to pieces	3:10a–d
X <b>Her nobles and dignitaries were bound in fetters</b>	3:10ef
C’ May you also become drunk and seek refuge from your enemy	3:11
B’ Your fortresses are like ripe figs that fall into the mouth of the eater	3:12
A’ Your people and your gates are wide open—to be consumed	3:13

Once again, the concentric structure found at the level of prosodic structure shapes the content of these verses without much in the way of specific repetition of words and phrases in the parallel sections, other than the four occurrences of the particle *gam* (“also”) in strophes 3 and 5 (in two balanced pairs). The particle *gam* appears nowhere else in Nahum.

2. According to the “Word-Count in the Book of the Twelve—Progress Report” [written April 16, 2002], one word has dropped out of the text in the book of Nahum in Codex L (and *BHS*). Since the word is located in a position after *atnach*, I have found only three possible locations for this error in transmission [i.e., an error made by an ancient copyist, before the fixing of the text within the Masoretic tradition], namely:

1:14b adding the word *qōl* (“frivolity”) to read: <*qōl*> *qallôṭa* (“with frivolity you are trifling”)

2:1b adding the word *kî* (“for”) to read: <*kî*> *kullōh nīkrāt* (“for he is utterly cut off”)

3:10b adding the word *kol* (“all”) to read: <*kol*> *nīkbaddêha* (“all her nobles”), with LXX

The correct change appears to be in 3:10b (see the file on Nahum 3:8–13).

3. In terms of the 74 words in Nahum 3:8–13, the **arithmological center** falls between the words **גורל וכל** (“lots / and all”) in 3:10b, with 37 words on either side. In this instance the **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$74 = 37 + 0 + 37 \quad \text{[word count—for Nahum 3:8–13]}$$

$$\text{or: } 38 // 38 \quad \text{[word count—with “pivot” included in each half]}$$

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

<b>ועל נכבדיה ידו גורל</b>	Lots were cast;
<b>וכל גדוליה רתקו רתקים</b>	And all her grandees were bound (with fetters).

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

$$74 = 33 + 8 + 33 \quad [\text{word count— for Nahum 3:8–13}]$$

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

4. Another **meaningful center** is found counting from the beginning of the third chapter of Nahum. In this instance the **arithmological center** falls on the word מֵאֵי (‘‘from whence’’) in 3:7b, with 77 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$155 = 77 + 1 + 77 \quad [\text{word count— for Nahum 3:1–13}]$$

$$\{78 = 2 \times 3 \times 13 = 26 \times 3\}$$

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

מי ינוד לה    Who will mourn for her;  
 מאין    Whence shall I seek comforters for you?  
 אבקש מנחמים לך

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

$$155 = 74 + 7 + 74 \quad [\text{word count— for Nahum 3:1–13}]$$

$$\text{or: } 81 // 81 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

$$\{81 = 3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 3\}$$

5. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae for Nahum 3:1–7

$$74 = 33 + 8 + 33 \quad \text{or: } 41 // 41$$

$$74 = 30 + 14 + 30 \quad \text{or: } 44 // 44$$

{with others in between}

$$74 = 18 + 38 + 18 \quad \text{or: } 56 // 56 \quad \{v \ 8\text{--}9a \ || \ v \ 12b\text{--}13\}$$

$$74 = 5 + 64 + 5 \quad \text{or: } 69 // 69 \quad \{69 = 23 \times 3 \ \text{and} \ 64 = 32 \times 2\}$$

$$46 = 15 + 16 + 15 \quad \text{or: } 31 // 31 \quad \text{syntactic accentual-stress units}$$

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

$$26 = 9 + 8 + 9 \quad \text{or: } 17 // 17 \quad \text{briques (primary accentual-stress units)}$$

6. In the prosodic structure of Nah 3:8–13, 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 3:8–13 has 26 **briques** (primary SAS units), 21 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (6 times, at the end of each verse); *atnach* (6 times, in each verse); and *zaqeph qaton* (10 times, in vv. 8 [3 times], 9, 10 [twice], 11, 12 and 13 [twice]). The boundaries of the five remaining **briques** are marked by *zāqēp̄ gādōl* (v. 12), *təbîr* (twice, in vv. 9 and 10), and *tīp̄hâ* (v. 13).

7. The prosodic structure of Nahum 3:8–13, 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 8 *hăṭēṭəḥî minnōʔ ʔāmôn † hayyōšəbāh bayʔōrîm † mayim sâbîḇ lāh^*  
*ʔăšer-ḥêl yām † miyyām ḥômātāh :*
- B 9 *kûš ʕāšəməh † ûmišrayim wəʔên qēšeh ^*  
*pûṭ wəlûḇîm † hâyû bəʕezrātēk :*
- C 10 *gam-hîʔ laggōlāh hāləkāh ḥaššəḇî † yəruttəšû bəroʔš kol-hûšôṭ ^*  
*gam ʕōlālêha †*
- X *wəʕal-<kol->niḵbaddêha yaddû gōrāl † wəkol-gəḏōlêha ruttəqû ḥaziqqîm :*
- C' 11 *gam-ʔat tiškəri † təhî naʕālāmāh ^*  
*gam-ʔat təḥaqšî māʕoz mēʔōyēḇ :*
- B' 12 *kol-miḇšārayik † təʔênîm ʕim-bikkûrîm ^*  
*ʔim-yinnôʕû † wənāpəlû ʕal pî ʔōkēl :*
- A' 13 *ninnēh ʕammək nāšîm bəqirbək † ʔōyəḇayik †*  
*pātōaḥ niṭtəḥû † šaʕrê ʔaršek ^ ʔəkələh ʔēš bəriḥāyik :*

The **arithmological center** of Nahum 3:8–13 falls on the word **wəkol** (“and all”) in the second half of verse 10, with a total of 37 words on either side. Nah 3:8–13 has 46 SAS units, 26 **briques** (primary SAS units), 7 **versets**, and 7 **strophes**. The **arithmological**

**center** is in the middle **strophe**, the middle **verset**, the middle two **briques** and the middle two syntactic accentual-stress units.

According to the analysis presented here, the 26 **briques** are distributed within 7 **strophes** in Nah 3:8–13 as follows: **26** = (5 + 4) + (3 + 2 + 3) + (4 + 5) = 9 + 8 + 9; or **17 // 17** with the central pivot included in each half.

8. The preliminary report of the **Word-Count in the Book of the Twelve** (dated April 16, 2002) suggests that one word has dropped out of the text in Codex L. That word appears to be in 3:10, where the word כִּי (“for”) was lost by haplography. The letter-count (corrected with the *ketiv-qere*’ readings in 1:3; 2:1, 6; and 3:3 and the addition of a 2-letter word in 3:10) is:

	<b>Codex L</b>	<b>Corrected</b>	
Nahum 1	597	596	= 2x2x149
Nahum 2	733	732	= 2x2x3x61
Nahum 3	922	924	= 2x2x3x7x11
<hr/>			
Total letter-count	2252	2252	= 2x2x563
+ correction in 3:10	<u>    2</u>		
Nahum 1–3	2254		= 23 x 2x7x7
Nahum 2–3		1656	= 23 x 2x2x2x3x3

There are 47 verses in the book of Nahum. The middle verse is 2:10, with 23 verses on either side. There are 559 words in the book of Nahum. The middle word, which is found in the second half of 2:11, is the word וּפְנֵי (“and the faces [of all of them]”), with 279 words on either side of it. The middle two letters in the book of Nahum are the middle two letters in this same middle word וּפְנֵי, with 1126 letters on either side of the absolute center, which falls between the letters *pe* and *nun* in this word. {check these numbers}

9. The problem in the matter of determining the letter-count in the book of Nahum is illustrated here with *ketiv-qere*’ readings in 2:1 [לְעִבּוֹר vs. לְעֵבֶר] and 2:6 [בְּהַלְיֹכְתֶם vs. בְּהַלְכוֹתֶם]. In the first instance one letter is removed if we follow the marginal correction. The second instance removes one letter and adds another in the marginal reading. In both instances the marginal reading appears to be the correct one. It is curious to note the fact that the proposed addition of the word כִּל (“for”) in 3:10 adds two letters such that the net total in regards the letter-count remains the same as that in Codex L as written.

10. Once again, the logoprosodic analysis presented here is very close to what Klaas Spronk found in his published works (1995, 1997) on other grounds.

- Spronk finds 24 cola and Christensen 26 *briques* in Nahum 3:8-13.
- We differ on the boundary of the first colon/brique in 3:9 where Christensen places the boundary after the disjunctive accent *təbîr* on the word עֲצֻמָּה (“her strength”), whereas Spronk places it after the accent *tîphâ* on the word וּמִצְרַיִם (“and Egypt”). Spronk emends the text by adding *mappiq* on the word *‘oṣmāh*, reading “her strength” with the LXX (cf. BDB, 782). It is better to read the verbal form *‘āṣəməh* (“[Cush] was mighty”) and to follow the colometry as suggested in *BHS*.

- We also differ in 3:10 where Spronk reads an excessively long colon, which Christensen divides into two *briques*. Once again it is the disjunctive accent *təḥîr* on the word עֲלֵי־הָ (‘‘her children’’) that causes the problem for Spronk who apparently does not recognize the strength of its disjunctive force.
- More serious differences are found in 3:13, where Spronk reads four *briques* as though they were three cola. The problem here appears to stem from the fact that the strong disjunctive accent *zāqēp̄ qāṭōn* appears on two successive words. Spronk’s commitment to his prior understanding of the overall prosodic structure of chapter 3 forces him to place 3:13 with verses 14-19. It is only when verse 13 is seen as a pivot pattern (with the words ‘‘they are wide open’’ in the pivot) that the structure of five *briques* here becomes evident, rather than the three observed by Spronk.
- Spronk finds six strophes in 3:8-13, whereas Christensen finds seven strophes here, in which the second and third strophes (vv. 9-10a [ending with the *atnach*]) are closely connected in a form of enjambment. The third strophe (v. 10a [words before *atnach*]) is shaped by word-count concerns, so as to reach the cumulative totals at this point in the book of Nahum of: **288 = 160 + 128**. The unusually short central strophe (v. 10b [words after *atnach*]) functions as a pivot in the concentric structural pattern of 3:8-13 as a whole.

11. 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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 Dr. D.L. Christensen Professor of Old Testament  
 845 Bodega Way Languages and Literature (retired),  
 Rodeo, California 94572 Graduate Theological Union (retired)  
 +1 510 799 0858 Berkeley, California  
 dlc@bibal.net