

Nahum 3:14–19—Logoprosodic Analysis

Translation and Textual Notes

VII. Concluding Lament—The Locust Dirge

Nahum 3:14–19

A. Strophe 1: Prepare for the Siege—Strengthen Your Defenses (3:14) [4.4]

3:14	Water for the siege / draw for yourselves [f sg] / strengthen / your [f sg] defenses //	12 2 _10 2_	4 4 0 <u>2 2 0</u>
		3:10–14b	59 36 23
	Go [f sg] into the mud / and tread the clay / make strong / ^a your [f sg] brick-mold //	7 1 8 1 <u>9 2</u>	2 0 2 2 0 2 <u>2 0 2</u>
		3:7–14	102 60 42

B. Strophe 2: Fire and Sword will Devour You like a Plague of Locusts (3:15) [4.3]

3:15	There ^a the fire will devour you [f sg] / the sword will cut you [f sg] off /	9 1 _7 1_	3 3 0 <u>2 2 0</u>
		3:14–15b	17 11 6
	It will devour you [f sg] / like the locust //	_9 2_	<u>2 2 0</u>
		3:11–15c	52 32 20
	(You are) numerous like the locusts / numerous / like the grasshoppers //	7 1 <u>9 2</u>	2 0 2 <u>2 0 2</u>
		3:14–15	23 13 10

C. Strophe 3: Your Leaders are like Locusts that Fly Away in the Heat (3:16–17) [8.8]

3:16	You [f sg] have increased / your merchants / more than the stars / of the heavens //	8 2 _12 2_	2 2 0 <u>2 2 0</u>
		3:14–16a	27 17 10
	A locust sheds (its outer skin) / and flies away //	_10 2_	<u>3 0 3</u>
		3:9–16b	92 52 40
3:17	Your [f sg] palace officials / are like grasshoppers /	<u>10 2</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		3:14–17a	32 19 13
	Your [f sg] astrologers / are like locusts upon locusts // that settle in the walls /	12 2 _11 1_	3 3 0 <u>2 0 2</u>

3:10-17c 90 52 38

On a cold day /

7 1 2 0 2
3:14-17d 39 22 17

The sun shines forth / and they fly away /
and their place is not known / where are they? //

11 2 3 0 3
14 2 4 0 4
3:16-17 23 9 14

D. Strophe 4: Your Shepherds are Asleep and the People Scattered (4:18) [4.3]

3:18 𐤎 Your [m sg] shepherds are asleep / O king of Assyria /

13 2 4 4 0
3:14-18a 50 26 24

𐤍 they slumber / your [m sg] nobles //

10 2 2 2 0
3:14-18b 52 28 24

𐤎 Your [m sg] people are scattered / upon the mountains /

16 2 4 0 4
3:17-18c 26 11 15

𐤍 and there is none to gather (them) //

7 1 2 0 2
3:17-18 28 11 17

E. Strophe 5: Your Incurable Wound Is a Source of Joy to Others (4:18-19d) [4.4]

3:19 There is no healing /^a for your^b [m sg] injury /
it is incurable / your^b [m sg] wound //

11 2 3 3 0
9 2 2 2 0
3:18-19a 17 11 6

All / who hear the news of you [m sg] /
they clap their hands / over you [m sg] //

10 2 3 0 3
11 2 3 0 3
1:1-3:19d 552 299 253

Concluding Question: On Whom Has Not Come Your Evil Unceasingly? (3:19ef) [4.4]

For / upon whom /
has not come your [m sg] evil / unceasingly? //

5 2 3 0 3
15 2 4 0 4
1:1-3:19 559 299 260

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (4.4).(4.3) . (8.8) . (3.4).(4.4) + 2 = 46 + 2 (addendum)
= (8 + 7) + 16 + (7 + 8) = (15 + 16 + 15) = 46
{or: 31 // 31}

Concentric Compositional Formula: 76 = 38 + 0 + 38 [word count]

Notes:

- 3:14^a Reading *mērāka* preceded immediately by *gaʿya* (= *meteg*) in Letteris as disjunctive; BHS omits *gaʿya* (= *meteg*).
- 3:15^a Reading *yətib* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 3:19^a Reading *mūnaḥ* here in BHS as disjunctive.
- 3:19^b Reading לְשִׁבְרֵיךָ (5 morae) and מִכְתִּיךָ (6 morae) in place of לְשִׁבְרֵךָ (4 morae) and מִכְתִּיךָ (5 morae) in BHS.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Nah 3:14–19 has five strophes: 3:14, 15, 16–17, 18, and 19 (including addendum).

A	3:14	2 balanced dyads:	(12 + 10) + (15 + 9)	= 22 + 24	morae
B	3:15	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(9 + 7) + 9 + (7 + 9)	= 16 + 9 + 16	morae
X	3:16–17a	2 balanced dyads:	(8 + 12) + (10 + 10)	= 20 + 20	morae
	3:17bc	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(12 + 11) + 7 + (11 + 14)	= 23 + 7 + 25	morae
B'	3:18	dyad & triad + pivot:	(13 + 10) + 16 + (7 + 10 + 8)	= 23 + 16 + 25	morae
A'	3:19a–d	balanced dyad:	(10 + 11) + (5 + 15)	= 21 + 20	morae
+	3:19ef				

2. The first strophe (3:14) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:14ab and 14cd.
- 3:10–14b **23** words after *atnach*
 - 3:7–14 **102** (= **17** x 6) words
3. The second strophe (3:15) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:15ab, 15c and 14de.
- 3:14–15b **17** words
 - 3:11–15c **52** (= **26** x 2) words and **32** words before *atnach*
4. The third strophe (3:16–17) has two parts arranged in six subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:16ab, 16c, 17a, 17bc, 17d and 17ef.
- 3:14–16a **17** words before *atnach*
 - 3:14–16b **92** = **52** + **40** [compositional formula]
 - 3:14–17a **32** words
 - 3:10–17c **52** (= **26** x 2) words before *atnach*
 - 3:14–17d **17** words after *atnach*
 - 3:16–17 **23** words

5. The fourth strophe (3:18–19b) is a single part arranged in five subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:18a, 18b, 18c, 18d and 19ab.
 - 3:14–18a **26** words before *atnach*
 - 3:14–18b **52** (= **26** x 2) words
 - 3:17–18c **26** words
 - 3:17–18 **17** words after *atnach*
 - 3:18–19a **17** words
6. The fifth strophe (3:19c–f) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:19cd and 19ef.
 - 3:18–19d **23** words
 - 1:1–3:19 **260** (= **26** x 10) words after *atnach*

Observations

1. In terms of their content, the five strophes in Nahum 3:14–19 may be outlined in a menorah pattern:

<i>The Locust Dirge—An Image of Imminent Ruin</i>	Nahum 3:14–19
A Prepare yourselves for the siege—strengthen your defenses	3:14
B Fire and sword will devour you—like a plague of locusts	3:15a–c
C You are as numerous as locusts and grasshoppers	3:15de
X Your leaders are like locusts; when heat comes they fly away	3:16–17
C' Your shepherds are asleep and your people are scattered	3:18
B' All who hear the news clap their hands over you	3:19ab
A' Concluding question: “On whom has not come your evil unceasingly?”	3:19c–f

The concentric structure found at the level of prosodic structure shapes the content of these verses without specific repetition of words and phrases in the parallel sections.

2. In terms of the 69 words in Nahum 3:14–19ab, the **arithmological center** falls on the word **גְּבִי** (“locusts”) in 17a, with 34 words on either side. In this instance the initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$69 = 34 + 1 + 34 \quad [\text{word count—for Nahum 3:14–19}]$$

$$\text{or: } 35 // 35 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

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

מְנַזְרֵיךְ כְּאַרְבֵּה	Your palace officials are like grasshoppers
וּמַפְסְרֵיךְ כְּגֹבַב	Your astrologers are like swarms of locusts
הַחֹנִימִים בַּגְּדֵרוֹת בַּיּוֹם קָרָה	That settle in the walls on a cold day.

If these nine words are taken as a **meaningful center**, the **concentric compositional formula** becomes:

$$69 = 30 + 9 + 30 \quad [\text{word count— for Nahum 3:14–19}]$$

$$\text{or: } 39 // 39 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

$$\{39 = 3 \times 13\}$$

3. Another **meaningful center** is found counting from the beginning of the third chapter of Nahum. In this instance the **arithmological center** falls between the words נכבדיה ידו (“and for her nobles [lots] were cast”) in the second half of 3:10, with 116 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$232 = 116 + 0 + 116 \quad [\text{word count— for Nahum 3:1–13}]$$

$$\{116 = 2 \times 2 \times 29 = 58 \times 2; 58 = 26 + 32\}$$

One candidate for the **meaningful center** is found by adding two words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

גורל נכבדיה ידו ועל And for her nobles lots were cast;

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

$$232 = 114 + 4 + 114 \quad [\text{word count— for Nahum 3:1–13}]$$

$$\text{or: } 118 // 118 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

This **meaningful center** may be enlarged by adding six words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

ירטשו בראש כל חוצות They were dashed to pieces at the head of all the streets;
 גורל נכבדיה ידו ועל And for her nobles lots were cast;
 וכל גדוליה רתקו בזקים And all her grandees were bound with fetters.

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

$$232 = 110 + 12 + 110 \quad [\text{word count— for Nahum 3:1–13}]$$

$$\text{or: } 122 // 122 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

4. An entirely different **meaningful center** may be found when 3:14–19 is examined in relation to the book of Nahum as a whole. As we have already shown [see file on Nahum 2:11–14 (Observation 5)], the **arithmological center** of the entire book falls on the word ופני (“and [their] faces”), with 279 words on either side. The **concentric compositional formula** for the book of Nahum as a whole is:

$$559 = 279 + 1 + 279 \quad \text{or: } 280 // 280 \quad \text{with pivot counted in both halves}$$

$$\{559 = (17 + 26) \times 13 \quad \text{and} \quad 280 = 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 5 \times 7\}$$

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

וחלחלה בכל מתנים And anguish is in all loins
 כלם ופני And on all their faces;

קבצו פארור They are gathered as boughs for burning.

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

$$\begin{aligned} 559 &= 276 + 7 + 276 && \text{[word count— for Nahum 2:11–14]} \\ \text{or: } 283 & // 283 && \text{[word count—with “pivot” included in each half]} \\ & && \{276 = 23 \times 12\} \end{aligned}$$

Like the larger numerical composition of the entire **Book of the Twelve**, which is **14,352 = (23 x 12) x 26 x 2**, the numbers **23** and **12** are also woven into the fabric of the Hebrew text of the book of Nahum. This book was composed to be an integral part of the **Book of the Twelve**; and this was done to the “glory of YHWH.”

5. Klaas Spronk [*Nahum* (1997), pp. 141–43] calls attention to the acrostic pattern in which the name of the city of Nineveh is spelled out in the first letters of four successive half-lines in 3:18, which corresponds to the acrostic on the word “Assyria” in 1:12a (in the first letter of four successive words). In the logoprosodic analysis presented here these four lines constitute the 4th strophe.
6. The logoprosodic analysis indicates that the concluding 7-word question (“For upon whom has not come your evil unceasingly?”) stands outside the seven canto structure of Nahum, as a sort of second ending. It is interesting to note the fact the cumulative word-count immediately before this 7-word question appears to be carefully contrived:

$$552 = 299 + 253 \quad \{552 = 23 \times 12 \times 2; 299 = 23 \times 13; \text{ and } 253 = 23 \times 11\}$$

The 7-word concluding question is carefully contrived to bring the cumulative word-count to another important total within the structure of the **Book of the Twelve Prophets** (see “Word-Count in the Book of the Twelve—Progress Report” [written April 16, 2002], which is posted on our website www.bibal.net).

$$559 = 229 + 260 \quad \{559 = (17 + 26) \times 13; 299 = 23 \times 13; \text{ and } 260 = 26 \times 10\}$$

7. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae for Nah 3:14–19d (without addendum):

$$\begin{aligned} 69 &= 32 + 5 + 32 && \text{or: } 37 // 37 \\ 69 &= 30 + 9 + 30 && \text{or: } 39 // 39 \end{aligned}$$

{with others in between}

$$\begin{aligned} 69 &= 8 + 53 + 8 && \text{or: } 61 // 61 \\ 69 &= 6 + 57 + 6 && \text{or: } 63 // 63 \end{aligned}$$

$$46 = 15 + 16 + 15 \quad \text{or: } 31 // 31 \quad \text{SAS units}$$

{46 = 23 x 2}

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

8. In the prosodic structure of Nah 3:14–19, 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* are indicated with a double slash (/). Nah 3:14–19d (without the addendum) has **26 briques** (primary SAS units), 22 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (5 times, at the end of each verse [except v. 19]), *atnach* (6 times, in each verse) and *zaqeph qaton* (11 times, in vv. 14, 15 [3 times], 16, 17 [3 times], 18 and 19 [2 times]). The boundaries of the other four **briques** are marked by *revia* (in v. 19), *təbîr* (2 times, in vv 14 and 18), and *tiḫhâ* (v. 18).

9. The prosodic structure of Nahum 3:14–19, 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 ¹⁴ *mî māšôr ša'ăbî lāk* † *ḥazzəqî miḇšārāyik* ^
bō'î baṭṭîṭ † *wərimśî baḥōmer haḥăzîqî malbēn* :
- B ¹⁵ *šām tō'kələk* † *takrîṭēk ḥereḇ* † *tō'kələk kayyāleq* ^
hiṭkabbēr kayeleq † *hiṭkabbəḏî kā'arbeh* :
- X ¹⁶ *hirbêt rōkəlayik* † *mikkôkəbê haššāmāyim* ^ *yeleq pāšaṭ wayyā'ōp* :
¹⁷ *minnəzārayik kā'arbeh* † *wəṭəpəsərayik kəgōḇ* gōbāy ^
haḥônîm baggəḏērôt bəyôm qārāh † *šemeš zārəḥāh wənôḏad* †
wəlō' nôḏa' məqômô 'ayyām :
- B ¹⁸ *nāmû rō'əka melek* † *yīškənû 'addîrēka* ^
nāpšû 'amməka *'al hehārîm* *wə'ēn məkabbēs* :
- A ¹⁹ *'ēn kēhāh ləšibreka* † *naḥlāh makkāteka* ^
kōl šōmə'ē šim'aka † *tāqə'û kāp 'ālēka* †
- + *kî 'al mî* † *lō' 'əḇərāh rā'ātəka tāmîd* :

The **arithmological center** of Nahum 3:14–19b (without addendum) falls on the word gōbāy (“locusts”) in the middle of 3:17, with **34** words on either side. Nahum 3:14–19d has **69** words, **46** SAS units, **26 briques** (primary SAS units), **7 versets**, and **5 strophes**. The **arithmological center** is in the middle **strophe**, the middle **verset**, the two middle **briques**, and the two middle SAS units.

According to the analysis presented here, the 26 **briques** are distributed within 5 **strophes** in Nahum 3:14–19d as follows: **26** = (4 + 5) + (4 + 4) + (4 + 5) = 9 + 8 + 9; or **17 // 17** with the central pivot (verses 16–17) included in each half.

10. The letter-count in the book of Nahum differs depending on whether or not the text is corrected with the four marginal notes in the *Massorah*:

	<i>Kethiv</i>	<i>Qere'</i>	Result when following the <i>qere'</i> reading
1:3	וגרול	וגרל	subtract one letter
2:1	לעבור	לעבר	subtract one letter
2:6	בהלכותם	בהליכתם	no change—addition & subtraction of one letter
3:3	יכשלו	ובשלו	no change in letter count

The proposed correction in 3:10, with the addition of the word כו, adds two letters such that the corrected text presents the net result of no change in the letter-count from that of the Masoretic text as it stands. The letter-count (corrected with the *kethiv-qere'* readings in 1:3; 2:1, 6; and 3:3 and the addition of a 2-letter word in 2:1) is:

	<i>Codex L</i>	<i>Corrected</i>	
Nahum 1	597	596	= 2x2x149
Nahum 2	733	732	= 2x2x3x61
Nahum 3	922	924	= 2x2x3x7x11
Total letter-count	2252	2252	= 2x2x563

If the *qere'* marginal readings are ignored and the correction in 2:1 is accepted, we have the following curious situation:

Nahum 1–3	2254	= 23 x 98 = 2x7x7x23
Nahum 1 + 3	1519	= 7x7x31
Nahum 2	735	= 3x5x7x7

11. 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 ופני (“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 two middle letters in this same middle word ופני, with 1125 letters on either side of the absolute center, which falls between the letters *pe* and *nun* in the middle of this word.

12. 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*> *qallôta* (“with frivolity you are trifling”)
- 2:1b adding the word *kî* (“for”) to read: <*kî*> *kullôh nikrât* (“for he is utterly cut off”)
- 3:10b adding the word *kol* (“all”) to read: <*kol*> *nikbaddêha* (“all her nobles”), with LXX

13. Once again, the logoprosodic analysis presented here is very close to what K. Spronk found in his published works (1995, 1997):

- Spronk finds a total of 26 cola in Nah 3:14–19, but he regards six of these as “a later addition which disturbs the regular structure of the poem” (3:15b) or as a “later explanatory addition mixing two different metaphors” (3:16b).
- Christensen finds a total of 26 *briques* in Nah 3:13–19d plus the concluding question, which lies outside the prosodic structure of this canto [consisting of two additional *briques* in 3:19ef]. Christensen finds no reason to remove anything as a secondary addition; for even the addendum is carefully contrived in terms of both the total word-count for the book of Nahum as a whole (see Observation 4 above) and the positioning of the **meaningful center** in 2:11 (see Observation 10 above).
- The differences between the two analyses appear in 3:14, where Spronk once again fails to observe the strength of the disjunctive accent *təbîr* on the word *battîr* (“mud”) and combines two *briques* in to a single colon. The same thing happens again in 3:18, with the *təbîr* on the word *‘amməkā* (“your people”).
- The major difference, however, remains that of the presuppositions Spronk has in regards the overall structure of both this canto and the book of Nahum as a whole, which shapes the number and position of the cola he finds in each canto
- Spronk finds a total of 43 strophes in Nahum arranged in 7 sub-cantos
- Christensen finds a total of 39 strophes, which are arranged in 7 cantos of varying length and complexity plus the concluding question:

1:1–10	7	
1:11–14	3	
2:1–11	7	
2:11–14	3 (2)	{2:11 appears in both the 3 rd and 4 th cantos}
3:1–7	7	
3:8–13	7	
3:14–19d	5	
3:19ef	1	{the concluding question / cf. Jonah 4:11}

14. Here is a list of my publications on the book of Nahum for purposes of reference (in chronological order):

“Nahum,” in *Transformations of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy*. Harvard Dissertations in Religion 3 (Scholars Press, 1975) 166–175.

“The Acrostic of Nahum Reconsidered,” *ZAW* 87 (1975) 17–30.

“Nahum, the Book of” in *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985) 681; reprinted in *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (1996) 731–732.

“The Acrostic of Nahum Once Again: A Prosodic Analysis of Nahum 1,1–10,” *ZAW* 99 (1987) 409–415.

“The Book of Nahum: The Question of Authorship within the Canonical Process,” *JETS* 31 (1988) 51–58.

“Nahum,” in *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, ed. James L. Mayes (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) 736–738.

“The Book of Nahum as a Liturgical Composition: A Prosodic Analysis,” *JETS* 32 (1989) 159–169.

“The Book of Nahum: A History of Interpretation,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*. JSOT Sup 235 (Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 187–194.

“Nahum, Book of,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John H. Hayes, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999) 199–201.

“Nahum,” in *Minor Prophets II*, New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series (Hendrickson Publishers, forthcoming).

Nahum: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. The Anchor Bible, vol. 25 (Doubleday, forthcoming).

15. 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,
Rodeo, California 94572 Graduate Theological Union (retired)
Berkeley, California
+1 510 799 0858
dlc@bibal.net