

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

# Jonah, Nahum, Micah

**Jonah and Nahum** - 32nd and 34th Old Testament books, in the middle of the minor prophets. In Jonah is one of the Bible's most familiar stories; in Nahum is some of its most vivid and forceful verbiage.

The ancient city of Nineveh links these two prophets, one well-known and the other little known. Nineveh, capital of Assyria, was Israel's archenemy and cruel master of the eastern Mediterranean world for nearly three centuries.

**Micah** - 33rd Old Testament book, between Jonah and Nahum

Micah prophesied to Israel about 750 years before Christ. Contemporary with Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, Micah lived in the classical period of Hebrew prophecy. In this eighth century B.C., Assyria, superpower of the north, over-ran and carried away the northern tribes of Israel; but King Sennacherib's further invasion into Judah was miraculously defeated at Jerusalem.

Jonah was given a mission for Nineveh's benefit; Nahum received an oracle announcing her destruction. The two books go together, like offered grace and threatened judgment. Jonah preached repentance to the great city (800-750 B.C.), and Nahum declared its impending fall not long before it occurred (612 B.C.).

Jonah is the book of the second chance (1:1-3; 3:1-3); of God's hand over nature (1:4, 15, 17; 2:10; 4:6-8); and of His compassion for all peoples (3:10; 4:11). Nahum also reports God's control over nature (1:3-5) and encourages preaching of the gospel (1:15). He has often been credited with foreseeing the automobile age (2:4), but this probably stretches the text too far.

In the New Testament, Jonah finds an important place in the teaching of Jesus Christ, who presented the prophet's story as fact (Matt. 12:38-41; Luke 11:32). The truth of Nahum is summarized by Paul: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

**Jonah in a sentence:** After a great fish intercepts Jonah as he flees the Lord's call to Nineveh, the prophet fulfills his preaching assignment only to become disillusioned by his success.

**Nahum in a sentence:** God's prophet denounces Nineveh for her cruel despoiling of Israel, and he announces that the bloody and wicked city will soon find herself exposed and ashamed.

**Micah's book** is God's plea for His covenant people (1:2; 6:1-5) to turn from their idolatry and wickedness (2:1, 2; 3:1-11; 5:13; 6:10-12; 7:1-6). Punishment will surely come (1:3-16; 2:3-5; 3:12; 5:10-15; 6:13-16), but clear notes of return and restoration are heard throughout (2:12, 13; 4:6-13; 5:1-9; 7:7-20).

Micah was a master of metaphor and word play, but this does not always come through in the translations. A contemporary version like *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson makes the prophet's language vivid and easily understood.

**Classic passages** highlight Micah's prophecies:

- Zion, the mountain of the Lord's house, will be established as the seat of God's peaceful kingdom throughout the earth (4:1-5; also Isa. 2:1-5).
- The promised Messiah, the one who knows no beginning, shall come from the small village of Bethlehem in Judah (5:2).
- Old covenant faith provides many rituals and symbols for Israel's learning, but the essence of true religion is summed up as walking in mercy, justice, and humility before God (6:6-8).
- The merciful, pardoning God will have compassion on the remnant of His heritage and will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (7:18, 19).

**Micah in a sentence:** Through the prophet, the Lord God presents His case against Samaria and Jerusalem, announces the certainty of their chastening, and looks beyond to His ultimate blessing upon the remnant of Jacob and Abraham.