SYNCHRONIC OR DIACHRONIC?
A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis

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Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to the Book of Nahum

The unsuspecting reader of “the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite” will be surprised by its literary beauty, the exuberant wealth of word plays and nicely worked out metaphors. However, he or she is also bound to be shocked by the repeated assurance of YHWH being jealous, avenging and full of wrath. At the end of the previous book He was praised as an incomparable deity who takes away guilt and who lets his anger not rage for ever (Mic.7:18). One could also remember Jonah’s complaint that YHWH is “gracious and merciful, slow in anger, rich in kindness, and regretting evil” (Jon. 4:2) and therefore sparing the wicked but timely repenting city of Nineveh. In the book of Nahum, however, it is clear from the outset that this time YHWH will not refrain from destroying Nineveh. The same words “slow in anger” are now supplemented by the verdict that “He certainly not leaves unpunished” (Nah. 1:3). And the verb צו referring to YHWH’s change of heart (regret) in Jon. 4 now returns in the name of the prophet who announces that there will be no comforters צו for the devastated city of Nineveh (Nah. 3:7). It is also interesting to compare the final verses. Of all books in the Old Testament only the book of Jonah and the book of Nahum end with a question. Both deal with the same issue. Nahum asks the king of Nineve: “Upon whom has not come your evil continually?”, whereas YHWH says to Jonah: “And I, should I not pity Nineveh that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?” The focus has shifted from the innocent inhabitants of Nineveh to the many, probably equally innocent victims of the Assyrians.

Next to this theological problem regarding the place of the book of Nahum within its canonical context, the question has been raised whether the book is a unity in itself. In the history of research1 the unity of the book of Nahum was first questioned after the discovery of traces of an acrostic in chapter 1.2 Since then it is often taken for

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2 By Rev. G. Frohnmeyer, as reported by F. Delitzsch in 1867 in his commentary on the Psalms; cf. the biographical information provided by K. Seybold, Profane Prophetie. Studien zum Buch Nahum (SBS, 135), Stuttgart 1989, 74, n.1. Appar-
granted that at least part of chapter 1 was added to the prophecy of Nahum at a later date. This matter of literary criticism strongly influences the interpreter’s view of the theological message of the book, as is apparent, for instance, in the studies of Seybold. In his opinion the book of Nahum consists of soldier’s songs, which have been put into the framework of a traditional religious text. On the other hand one comes across the meaning of another expert in this field stating that there is “no reason whatsoever to doubt its literary unity.” Many scholars share this opinion, but the same can be said of the opposite view. Proponents of the one opinion usually simply ignore
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or put aside the other,\(^8\) but some of them appear to be more open-minded, leaving room for the possibility that the assumed editing and re-editing of the text resulted in a well structured final form.\(^9\)

It may have become clear that in the present state of research of the book of Nahum no method is without its problems and that the choice for one approach of the text is also often a choice against the other. The least one should ask from new researchers is to be aware of this and to account for the method used. Such a well-considered way of exegesis, however, does not guarantee that its results will be convincing, in the sense that it gives the impression of justice being done to the text. A well-known example for this is the study by Schulz,\(^10\) which is much quoted but hardly ever with consent.\(^11\) According to Schulz, the contemporary study of the prophetic books is concentrated too much on the person of the prophet and on the prophetic traditions, i.e. on attempting to reconstruct what lies behind the text. Schulz calls for more attention to the books themselves and to the institutions which can be held responsible for their composition. In his opinion we have to think here of the community of the period after the Babylonian exile.\(^12\) The common historical-critical analysis has failed to give this the attention it deserves, because it has let the diachronic analysis prevail over a thorough synchronic approach.\(^13\) Schulz’s sharp distinction between a synchronic and a di-

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\(^8\) In his survey of previous research Seybold does not fail to mention the views of Keller, Rudolph and Van der Woude about the unity of the book (Profane Prophetie, 13-6). This does not keep him, however, from starting his own research by simply taking for granted that the book of Nahum is a collection of originally separate units (Profane Prophetie, 19). Moreover, he dismisses Rudolph’s approach by calling it a “traditionelle – man muß fast sagen– vorkritische Sicht Nahums” (Profane Prophetie, 15). Seybold c.s. in turn, though not mentioned by name, get their share when Patterson judges that the denial of the unity of the book of Nahum “rests on the shakiest of premises.” According to him, such views are “arbitrary and without foundation” (R.D. Patterson, Habakkuk, Nahum, Zephaniah (The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary), Chicago 1991, 11-2).


\(^11\) Cf. the critical remarks by, amongst others, N.H. Ridderbos, GThT 75 (1975), 116-7; Becking, “Is het boek Nahum”, 108; Renaud, “La composition”, 199-200; Seybold, Profane Prophetie, 14-5.

\(^12\) Schulz speaks of “die grundlegende Einsicht (…) daß die alttestamentliche Prophetie Ausdruck gottesdienstlicher Auseinandersetzung mit den Problemen der nachexilischen Zeit ist” (Das Buch Nahum, 2).

\(^13\) Schulz speaks of “vorschnellen Rückschlägen von der ‘Unheitlichkeit’ des Textes auf (diachrone) Entstehungsprozesse”. Characteristic of his own approach
achronic approach should not be seen as a dismissal of the view that texts in the Old Testament can show signs of growth and of editing. It may be confusing when others use the term synchronic to indicate that they reject the historical-critical approach. \textsuperscript{14} Schulz on the contrary is very critical. The many irregularities and tensions he finds in the Hebrew text lead him to break it into many bits and pieces. He then rearranges them into new, regular, and in his opinion the original, units. Nevertheless, he concludes that the book in its present state is the work of one post-exilic author who composed out of these now reconstructed units a literary coherent piece of work. According to Schulz this consists of three circular compositions: 1:11-2:11 and 2:12-3:6, framed by a hymn at the beginning and a mocking song at the end.

It seems legitimate to ask where and when the reconstructed supposedly original parts originated. Schulz, however, does not take up this issue, as this would be part of a diachronic approach. He does not want to cross the border drawn by himself. His decision to keep strictly to this one method does not make his conclusions more convincing. As long as these reconstructed parts do not receive their place and time, the dating of the book as a whole in the period after the Babylonian exile remains doubtful. One could say that this synchronic approach has too many hidden diachronic aspects. This is most apparent in the sometimes over-critical attitude towards the text. Just as Schulz wanted to postpone the diachronic approach, he might have left more room for the possibility of the text being a unity all along.

Schulz’s study did not have much impact. \textsuperscript{15} We now come to two

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. Longman, “The Form and Message”, 769, stating that his approach “differs in two major ways from traditional form criticism: it is predominantly synchronous rather than diachronic; and it is descriptive rather than prescriptive.”

\textsuperscript{15} Cf. the Rudolph’s remark, \textit{Micha–Nahum–Habakkuk–Zephania}, 147: “Es muß sich zeigen, ob sich eine Darstellung bewährt, die dem Propheten Nahum systematisch das Lebenslicht ausbläst.”
studies representing more common views. The first (by Seybold) offers the diachronic analysis that Schulz avoided, the second (by Sweeney) shows the respect for the Masoretic text one misses in the work of Schulz. In line with the work of Jeremias and Renaud, though not sharing all their conclusions, Seybold attempts to reconstruct the formation of the book. Like Schulz he assumes the existence of originally separate units. Unlike Schulz he did not find them scattered through the present text. They more or less preserved their original form. The oldest are three poems found in 3:8-19a; 3:1, 4a; and 3:2 + 2:2, 4-13. Unlike Schulz he also proposes a date, namely the period shortly after the capture of Thebes (= No Amon; Nah.3:8) in 663 BCE for the first poem, and about 650 BCE for the other two. According to Seybold only these parts of the text can be attributed with certainty to the prophet Nahum. They were taken together with the divine words of threat in 2:14 and 3:5-7, written down c. 615 by an unknown author. From this edition also stem some smaller additions (in 3:1,4b; 2:12b; 3:10b,11b and 15). In this form it may have circulated as a pamphlet describing the fall of Nineveh in 612 interpreted as the fulfillment of Nahum’s prophecies. Its title probably was the first of the two headings in 1:1: “A pronouncement about Nineveh”. The second heading was added with a new edition close to the end of the Babylonian exile, c. 550, when old prophecies were taken up to formulate new hopes for the exiles. Seybold finds this indicated in the two added promises of salvation for Judah (1:12-3 and 2:1, 3). Finally, around 400, the book of Nahum was made more acceptable from an orthodox theological point of view by adding the hymn of 1:2-8. The remaining 1:9-14 are interpreted as fragments which were originally remarks written in the margin, or in the space below or above the columns of the text. Seybold also assumes that in the course of the transmission of the text two pages were exchanged. In this way he reconstructs a more logical order: originally 2:14-3:17 would have been followed by the first poem about Nineveh (2:2, 4-13). Only 3:8-19 would be in its original place.

Seybold admits that his suggestions about the order of the pages and the marginal notes remain hypothetical. The same can be said, however, of most of his other suggestions. In some respects his reconstruction of the formation of the text may be called brilliant and not impossible, but it is by no means inevitable.17 Hieke, who


17 Cf. the criticism by H.G.L. Peels, ‘Voed het oud vertrouwen weder’: De Gods-
also takes “Spannungen und Brüche” in the text “als Spuren einer Bearbeitung”,\textsuperscript{18} regards only 1:1, 11, 14 and 2:2, 4-14 as original words of Nahum. Nogalski\textsuperscript{19} agrees with Seybold on many points, but he assumes two formative layers. In his opinion an early corpus consisting of most material of chapters 2 and 3 with a clear literary unity was reshaped after the Babylonian exile, adding the theophonic hymn and allusions to Joel (in the locust metaphor in 3:15-17) and Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. 52:7 cited in 2:1).

The next example of recent research will show that a similar amount of scientific creativity as with Seybold, but with more trust in the literary quality of the complete Masoretic text\textsuperscript{20} can lead to completely different conclusions. Sweeney argues for a coherent structure in the book written by the prophet Nahum shortly before or shortly after the fall of Nineveh. He does not want to exclude the possibility that some elements, such as the hymn in 1:2-8 and the address to Nineveh in 2:2-3:17, were written separately before that date, but in his opinion any attempt to explain the difficulties of the text as the product of post-exilic redaction “must be abandoned”.\textsuperscript{21} Sweeney takes up Becking’s observation that it is possible to find some order in the difficult verses 1:9-14. The key to the solution of the problem is the right understanding of the change of the second person address forms.\textsuperscript{22} The masculine should be interpreted as referring to the oppressor judged by YHWH, the feminine to Judah that will be delivered. Unlike Becking, Sweeney also distinguishes here between the singular forms and the plural form in 1:9. He finds both Judah and Nineveh (or the Assyrian king) addressed here asking what they think

openbaring bij Nahum, Kampen 1993, 25, n. 12: “De zwakte van Seybolds werk ligt – afgezien van de soms zeer speculatieve redeneringen – vooral in het feit dat hier de diachronische uitleg de aandacht voor het synchronische tekstonderzoek, dat de prioriteit dient te hebben, geheel verdrongen heeft. Het gevaar dat de door de bijbelse auteur bewust aangebrachte overgangen en spanningen in de tekst worden wegverklaard als redactionele naden, is bij deze vorm van exegese niet denkbeeldig.”

\textsuperscript{18}“Der Anfang des Buches Nahum”, 68, 13.
\textsuperscript{19}Redactional Processes, 123-8.
\textsuperscript{20}Seybold’s conclusions are based on a rather low esteem of the Masoretic text, as can be deduced from a number of derogatory remarks, like “Textzerstörungen”, “destruktive Beziehung des Textmaterials”, “gewaltsamer Einbruch (...) in geradezu schmerzlicher Eindringlichkeit”, “Textunfall” (Profane Prophetie, 20, 23, 24).
\textsuperscript{21}“Concerning the Structure”, 376.
about YHWH. From the context it is clear that after 2:2 the second person feminine singular refers to Nineveh and the masculine form to the Assyrian king. The different addressees being clarified this way, it is now possible to subdivide the book: the first part (1:2-10) is an address to both Judah and Nineveh concerning their estimation of YHWH; the second part (1:11-2:1) addresses Judah speaking of its deliverance; the final part (2:2-3:19) addresses Nineveh and the Assyrian king announcing their downfall. According to Sweeney this tripartite book can be regarded as a "prophetic refutation speech", based on the fixed form of the disputation genre. The basic elements of this genre, quotation of the opinion to be disputed and its refutation, can be found in all main parts of the book.

These form-critical remarks are primarily based on the exegesis of 1:9 as questioning YHWH's efficacy. It would have been precisely this opinion that is refuted by the prophet's vision. Although the interpretation given of 1:9a is plausible, it must be doubted whether it takes such a central place. Already v. 9b seems to give the answer. One would also expect more direct associations to the view that YHWH is powerless, if the book as a whole was meant to deny this. In a footnote Sweeney offers a more convincing interpretation, based on a refinement of the disputation genre, which distinguishes three basic elements: thesis, counter-thesis, and dispute. According to this pattern Nah.1:2-10 would be the counter-thesis to an implied thesis of YHWH's impotence. Nah.1:11-2:1 and 2:2-3:19 then constitute the dispute directed to Judah and Assyria respectively. The proposed division of the text, however, is not in every respect convincing. Especially in the second part it remains unclear why in the address to Judah one suddenly reads words spoken to the oppressor (1:14). Apparently things are more complicated than Sweeney wants us to believe. It seems to be more to the point to regard, with Becking, as the governing principle of the unity the paradox that salvation and annihilation are two sides of one and the same judgement by YHWH.

The convincing power of the arguments in favour of the literary unity of the book of Nahum is weakened by the fact that there appears to be so little agreement about its structure. Every new study seems to result in a new division of the text. In this situation one is happy

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24 Becking, "Is het boek Nahum", 122; cf. Hieke, "Der Anfang des Buches Nahum", 16, who speaks of "das antithetische Prinzip".

25 Only with Keller, in: CAT XIIb, 101-2, we find a division close to the one
to hear that someone has found "coded information" in the Hebrew text providing the clue for a proper, indisputable understanding of the structure of the text. According to Christensen this information is provided by the author who must have had future readers in mind. This at first sight hidden information appears to have been preserved well in the Masoretic tradition. The author, probably the prophet Nahum himself, gave an artful summary of his message in an acrostic in 1:2-10. He reworked an originally alphabetic acrostic into a new acrostic. The initial letters and/or words now form two sentences: אֵלֵי הַיָּוָּה יִהְוָה וְאָדָם, "I am the exalted YHWH and (I am) in the presence of sin." / בָּשֶׂם מָעָר לְמָלֵא חוֹדָשׁ, "In a flood (I am) bringing a full end completely." The second clue is found by counting 'morae' (syllables, the ones with a long vowel counting double) and syntactic-accentual units (as a rule coinciding with the Masoretic distinctive accents). This leads to a division of the book into two halves: 1:2-2:10 and 2:12-3:19, which have the same length, both in accentual units (170) and according to mora-count (respectively 1036 and 1038). These equal halves frame 2:11. This verse mentioning the destruction of the city and the despair of its inhabitants is regarded by Christensen as "a summation of the book itself". Together with the coded verse of the acrostic it "contains the essential message of the book of Nahum

proposed by Sweeney, but it is not the same. Keller divides the third part of the text into eight strophes of comparable length and with different themes: 2:4-6, 7-11, 12-14; 3:1-3, 4-7, 8-11, 12-15, 16-18. Patterson and Travers, "Literary Analysis", 48-9 see the text arranged in a "basic bifid structure": the two parts 1:2-2:1 and 2:2-3:19 are built up in the same way. A theme formulated at the beginning (1:2; 2:2-3) is developed in distinct units (1:3-10; 1:11-2:1 and 2:4-14; 3:1-19). The distinct units in the second part are also interconnected, because they are both closed with a taunt song (2:12-14; 3:8-19) and the mentioning of the (in)activity of messengers (2:14b; 3:19).


"The Book of Nahum: The Question of Authorship", 55. Christensen is building here on a suggestion put forward by Van der Woude, "The Book of Nahum", 123, who found in the first letters of each line together with לָבָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי הַיָּוָּה in 1:6a the following sentence: יִהְוָה אֲדֹנָי הַיָּוָּה, "I am the Exalted One and confronting them who commit sin against you". Cf. also Bickel, "Das alphabetische Lied", 3, mentioning his earlier, but now dropped suggestion of reading a new acrostic אֲדוֹנָי הַיָּוָּה (Nineveh) in 1:1-2. This would have matched the acrostic אֲדוֹנָי in 1:12a, discovered by J. Reider, "The Name Ashur in the Initials of a Difficult Phrase in the Bible", JAOS 58 (1938), 153-5.
in summary fashion”. With the help of this counting he also finds a number of metrical patterns distinguishing the smaller units 1:1-10, 12-14; 2:1-10, 12-14a, 14b-3:7, 8-13, and 14-19.

One can understand why Sweeney, who knew the work of Christensen and who could have used some support on strictly formal grounds for his definition of the structure, did not take over or even mention any of the conclusions of Christensen’s analysis. First, Christensen seems to be the only one who sees in 2:11 in one way or another the centre of the book of Nahum. Second, the clarity with regard to the numbers of metrical patterns does not coincide with their contents. Third, the reference to the Masoretic accentual system is weakened by the fact that Christensen in a number of cases omits or adds accents. He also mentions the *setumah* and *petuhah* (after 1:10 and 1:14), but he gives no explanation for the fact that these important Masoretic markers seem to contradict his view of the structure of the text.

This survey and evaluation of recent research on the book of Nahum clearly shows the difficulties of both the diachronic and synchronic approach. Even worse, the two approaches seem to be totally incompatible. The following analysis attempts to bridge this gap by avoiding to choose too soon for one or the other approach. It starts with a synchronic analysis for the simple reason that it is easier to go from here to a diachronic analysis than vice versa. Moreover, it is the best way to understand the Hebrew text as it is transmitted to us. The Masoretic text should be seriously accepted as trustworthy until the contrary can be demonstrated. When it comes to the book of Nahum, this respect for the Masoretic text is corroborated by the

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29 According to Christensen, “The Book of Nahum as a Liturgical Composition”, 166, “numerous commentators” share his interpretation of this verse, but with the exception his own commentary (in Harper’s Bible Commentary, San Francisco 1988, 716-8, esp. 717) one will look in vain for them.
30 Thanks are due to Professors Becking, Clines and Van der Woude for their critical remarks during the congress, and especially to Professor De Moor for his support in preparing the final version of this article.
31 Cf. R. Oost, Omstreden bijbeluitleg: Aspecten en achtergronden van de hermeneutische discussie rondom de exegese van het Oude Testament in Nederland – Een bijdrage tot gesprek, Kampen 1986, 121: “From an exegetical-methodical point of view the emphasis ought to be on the structural analysis of the text produced by the final redaction, but this should be carried out within the framework of, and controlled by, historical criticism, which regulates the questions with regard to the text as tradition. Scholars ought to be constantly aware of the fact that the ‘given’ text is an ‘evolved’ text.”
fact that there appear to be hardly any major textual corruptions\textsuperscript{32} and by the consistent beauty of its language. A first close reading of the Hebrew text will suffice to understand why the prophet can be called "poet laureate of the minor prophets".\textsuperscript{33} His book begins with a chiasmic structure in 1:2. There is a wordplay with the letters $\aleph$ and $\beth$ in 1:2-3. Again there is a chiasmus in 1:4. One may note the alliteration with the letter $\aleph$ in 1:9-11a. And so on.\textsuperscript{34} It would be interesting to know whether similar literary devices are also used on a larger scale. One can think here of the use of keywords and distant or external parallelism. For this reason we want to offer here a structural analysis according to the rules of the ‘Kampen School.’\textsuperscript{35} It is the aim of this method to give a comprehensive survey of the literary devices used by the poet to design his/her text.\textsuperscript{36} Attention is paid to all more or less striking elements in the text, like repetition of words, use of parallel pairs at close range and more distantly, unusual word-order, abrupt transitions. Many of these elements have been used in the literary-critical analysis, for instance by Schulz, to divide the text into chronologically separate layers. In addition to this, the ‘Kampen School’ works with formal units and divides the antiquity of which has been established beyond all doubt, like the setumot and petuhot, dividing accents, etc.\textsuperscript{37} In this type of structural analysis it is first at-


\textsuperscript{33}R.D. Patterson, M.E. Travers, “Nahum: Poet Laureate of the Minor Prophets”, \textit{JETS} 33 (1990), 437-44.

\textsuperscript{34}See next to the article by Patterson and Travers, the survey by O.T. Allis, “Nahum, Nineveh, Elkosh”, \textit{EvQ} 27 (1955), 67-80, esp. 73ff., and the many references to the book of Nahum in W.G.E. Watson, \textit{Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques} (JSOTSup 26), Sheffield 1984.

\textsuperscript{35}For a convenient survey of the method and bibliography, see J. Kim, \textit{The Structure of the Samson Cycle}, Kampen 1993, 118-34; see also J.C. de Moor, W.G.E. Watson (eds.), \textit{Verse in Ancient Near Eastern Prose} (AOAT, 42), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1993.

\textsuperscript{36}In this regard it can be compared to the work of J.P. Fokkelman on the \textit{Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel}, Assen 1981ff. and of D. Pardee, \textit{Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetic Parallelism: A Trial Cut ('nt I and Proverbs 2)} (VT.S.39), Leiden 1988.

\textsuperscript{37}See De Moor, Watson (eds.), \textit{Verse in Ancient Near Eastern Prose}, xv. The ‘Kampen School’ usually follows the colometry of the Masoretes. On the basis of colometrically written Ugaritic tablets, Hebrew and Aramaic acrostics, colometrically written manuscripts of Qumran and colometrically written poems like Ex.15 and Deut.32 it has been established that the distinctive accents of the Masoretes can be trusted in about 90% of the cases. In the edition of the Hebrew text by Elliger in the BHS the division into verses usually (more so than in the previous BHK-edition) coincides with the Masoretic accentuation. In the transcribed text below the dividing accents are indicated by the numbers in square brackets. These
tempted to explain them as markers of the structure of the text, which have been deliberately used for this purpose by the poet. Within the limits of this contribution it is not possible to list all literary striking elements and markers. Only the conclusions can be presented here in the form of the text divided into verses, strophes, canticles, subcantos and cantos. As a rule this subdivision on purely formal grounds appears to coincide with the contents. In other words, it should be possible to summarize the units easily.

I.1
[2] מַסֵּמֶל נַהוּ A pronouncement about Nineveh. (1aA)
[1] The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. (1aB)

I.2
[5] כְּכַּפֶּה נַהוּ A jealous and avenging God is YHWH, (2aA)
[2] נַהוּ כָּפֶה גַּדְרִיא תֶּרֶם avenging is YHWH, a lord of wrath. (2aB)
[5] נַהוּ כָּפֶה נִלְתַּרֵי Avenging is YHWH against his adversaries, (2bA)
[1] וַתָּמֶר הָוָה לַאֲלָבָם and reserving (his wrath) is He for his enemies. (2bB)

I.3
[5] יְהוָה יָדֶם אָפְּס יָרָדְכָה YHWH, He is slow in anger and great in power,
[2] נַהוּ כָּפֶה נִלְתַּרֵי but He certainly does not leave unpunished. (3aB)
[5] יְהוָה בּוֹשָׁשׁ עִם רדָבָיו YHWH, in whirlwind and storm is his way, (3bA)
[1] עַנָּנֵי עַמֹּךְ נְשָׁרִי and clouds are the dust of his feet. (3bA)

I.ii.1
[5] נְשֵׁר בֵּית בֹּשָׁשׁ He is rebuking the sea and dries it up, (4aA)
[2] עַל לְדָרוֹת הָהָרְבָּם and all the rivers He makes dry, (4aB)

numbers refer to the accents as they are listed in the ‘Tabula accentuum’ of the BHS.

38 I hope to publish the full analysis in a commentary on Nahum scheduled to appear in 1996 in the series Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Kok, Kampen).

39 For instance, II.A.i.3 is the third strophe of the first canticle of the first subcanto of the second canto. In the Masoretic text this is 1:14. This strophe consists of two verse-lines: a bicolon and a tricolon.
They languish, Bashan and Carmel, (4bA)
and the bloom of Lebanon languishes. (4bB)

Mountains quake because of Him, (5aA)
and the hills are moving. (5aB)

His wrath is poured out like fire, (6aA)
and the rocks are scattered because of Him. (6aB)

Good is YHWH, (7aA)
indeed, a shelter in the day of distress, (7aB)
and knowing those who seek refuge in Him, (7bA)
and in the torrent He passes by. (7bB)

An end He makes to her place, (8aA)
and his enemies He pursues (into) darkness. (8bA)

What do you think up against YHWH? (9aA)

distress shall not stand up a second time. (9aB)

For like entangled thorns (10aA)
and like winding bindweed (10aB)

they shall be consumed, like thoroughly dried stubble. (10aC)

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40See for this emendation of the text, based on the LXX and the context, Rudolph, Micha—Nahum—Habakuk—Zephania, 153, and HAL, 697.
From you has come forth (11aA)

one planning evil against YHWH, (11aB)
counseling wickedness. (11aC)

Setumah

II.A.i.1

Thus says YHWH: (12aA)

"Though they are complete and so many, (12aB)
even so they shall be cut down and fly away. (12aC)

And I have afflicted you, (12bA)

(12bB)

And now, I will break his yoke from upon you (13aA)

and your chains I will burst." (13aB)

And YHWH commands concerning you: (14aA)

"There will be sown from your name no more. (14aB)

From the house of your gods (14bA)

I will cut off idol and cast image (14bB)

I will prepare your grave, because you are worthless." (14cB)

Petuhah

II.A.ii.1

Behold, on the mountains (1aA)

the feet of a messenger announcing peace! (1aB)

Celebrate, Judah, your feasts, (1bA)

fulfill your vows! (1bB)

For never again (1cA)

shall the wicked come over you. (1cB)

He is completely cut off. (1cC)

With BHS it is assumed that the use of הַעֲלֹי (12bA) should be taken with the preceding אָלַכְתָה. See for this translation Jer.13:24, where כָּפֺרָה is used with כָּפְּרָה (cf. Nah.1:10aC!).
II.A.ii.2

[8] Does a scatterer come up against you. (2a)

[2] Guard the fortification, (2bA)

[10] watch the road, (2bA)

[5] strengthen the loins, (2cA)

[1] fortify the power in the highest degree! (2cB)

II.A.ii.3

[5] For YHWH shall restore the pride of Jacob, (3aA)

[2] yeah, the pride of Israel. (3aB)

[5] For destroyers have destroyed them (3bA)

[1] and their branches they have ruined. (3bB)

II.B.i.1

[7] The shield of his heroes is made red, (4aA)

[5] (his) soldiers are clad in scarlet. (4aB)

[8] With the fire of the steel are the chariots (4bA)

[2] in the day of his preparation (4bB)

[1] and the lances are brandished. (4bC)

II.B.i.2

[5] In the streets the chariots run as mad. (5aA)

[2] They rush in the squares. (5aB)

[5] Their appearance is like torches. (5bA)

[1] Like lightning they dash to and fro. (5bB)

II.B.ii.1

[5] He remembers his noble ones. (6aA)

[2] They stumble in their going. (6aB)

[5] They hasten to her wall (6bA)

[1] and a mantelet is set up. (6bB)

II.B.ii.2

[2] The gates of the rivers are opened (7aA)

[1] and the palace collapses. (7aB)
Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches of Nahum

II.C.i.1

[8] [8] And Nineveh, it was as a pool of water (9aA)
[2] during her days (9aB)
[5] And they are fleeing. (9bA)
[8?] Stand, stand! (9bB)
[1] And there is no one who turns back. (9bC)

II.C.i.2

[8] Plunder silver, (10aA)
[2] plunder gold (10aB)
[5] and there is no end to the treasure, (10bA)
[1] wealth from all precious vessels. (10bB)

II.C.i.3

[8] Destruction and devastation (11aA)
[2] and ruin! (11aB)
[7] And the heart melts and the knees totter (11bA)
[5] and trembling in all the loins (11bB)
[1] and the faces of them all gather a glow. (11bC)

II.C.ii.1

[5] Where is the lair of the lions (12aA)
[2] and the feeding place of the young lions? (12aB)
[12] Where the lion went, the lioness was there, (12bA)
[1] the welp of the lion and there was no one who made (him) afraid. (12bB)

42 If one does not want to emend the Masoretic text, this seems to be the most likely interpretation: the king is put aside; he is now no more than a powerless spectator (cf. the use of the verb בִּזְנוּ in Ps. 39:6), who has to watch how the queen is raped by the victorious enemy.
II.C.ii.2
[5] The lion was tearing for his welps (13aA)

[2] and strangling for his lionesses. (13aB)

[5] And he filled his caves with torn flesh (13bA)

[1] and his lairs with torn animals. (13bB)

II.C.ii.3
Behold, I am against you!, pronouncement of

[7] Behold, I am against you!, pronouncement of YHWH of hosts. (14aA)

[5] And I will burn in smoke your abundance (14aB)

[2] and your young lions the sword will devour. (14aC)

[5] And I will cut off from the earth your prey (14bA)

[7] and the voice of your messengers will be heard no more. (14bB)

III.A.i.1
[5] Ah, city of bloodshed, (1a)

[7] all of her a lie, of pillage full, (1bA)

[1] prey never fails to be present. (1bB)

III.A.i.2
[5] Sound of whip(s) (2aA)

[2] and sound of rattling wheel(s). (2aB)

[5] And hors(es) galloping (2bA)

[1] and chariot(s) bounding. (2bB)

[7] Horsemen charging (3aA)

[10?] and the flame of a sword (3aB)

[5] and the lightning of a spear. (3aC)

III.A.i.3
[8] And a great number of slain (3bA)

[2] and a heavy mass of corpses. (3bB)

[5] And there is no end to the bodies. (3cA)

[1] They stumble over their bodies. (3cB)

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43 Read with the LXX רֵכְבָּה, “her chariots.”
III.A.ii.1

Because of the great number of harlotries of the harlot, (4aA)

good of grace, mistress of sorceries. (4aB)

Selling nations with her harlotry (4bA)

and families by her sorceries. (4bB)

III.A.ii.2

Behold, I am against you!; pronouncement of YHWH of hosts. (5aA)

And I will lift up your skirts over your face. (5aB)

And I will let nations stare at your nakedness (5bA)

and kingdoms at your shame. (5bB)

III.A.ii.3

And I will throw filth at you (6aA)

and I will mock you (6aB)

and make you a spectacle. (6aC)

III.B.i.1

And it shall be that everyone who sees you will flee from you (7aA)

and say: Nineveh is devastated. (7aB)

Who will grieve for her? (7bA)

Where can I find comforters for you? (7bB)

III.B.i.2

Are you better than No-Amon, (8aA)

dwelling at the rivers? (8aB)

Waters were surrounding her, (8aC)

whose rampart was the sea, (8bA)

of the sea her wall. (8bB)

III.B.i.3

Cush was her strength and Egypt (9aA)

and there was no end, (9aB)

Put and Lubim (9bA)

were your helpers. (9bB)
III.B.ii.1

[5] מדריא [7] תלחלחלותבשבר She too went into exile in captivity. (10aA)
[2] טיפוליה רוסרה רחא Her children too were dashed in pieces at the head
[5] עטטנבריה ויו ונדיל of all the streets. (10aB)
[1] וטלרותיהו רחת בוקט And for her nobles they cast the lot (10bA)
[7] ר'א-ול and all her great men were bound in chains. (10bB)

III.B.ii.2

[5] נמאיתשכרי You too will become drunk. (11aA)
[2] תוה נטלה You will be dazed. (11aB)
[1] נמאיתשקשMattamואב You too will seek shelter from the enemy. (11aC)

III.B.ii.3

[5] וכלמלכדה All your strongholds (12aA)
[2] האליםפעבכרה are fig trees, with first-ripe figs. (12aB)
[6] ארנסות When they are shaken, (12bA)
[1] אםעלפיאאל they fall into the mouth of the eater. (12bB)

III.C.i.1

[5] הנה שמן תמש בקרך Behold, your people are women in your midst. (13aA)
[5] לאיביך To your enemies the gates of your land are wide
[2] ארצך open. (13bA)
[1] אוכלֶל אסバリך Fire has consumed your bars. (13bB)

III.C.i.2

[5] רופניםאכריך Water for the siege draw for yourself. (14aA)
[2] חולםמבריך strengthen your strongholds! (14aB)
[8] כאמשר◾רמשבר Go into the clay and tread the mortar. (14bA)
[1] החוליקמלוב make strong the brick-mold. (14bB)

III.C.i.3

[2] משאתאלךאם There the fire will devour you, (15aA)
[5] מחלתקריך the sword will cut you down, (15aB)
[2] האלךכללח it will devour you like the locust, (15aC)
[5] הסובכרכול The locusts {numerous like the locust, (15aB)
[1] טמכביכראפתה numeros like the grasshopper. (15bC)}

44These lines have to be regarded as a later addition which disturbs the regular
III.C.ii.1

[5] רִבְּחוּתָם רַאְלָדָךְ You have increased your merchants (16aA)
[2] מַקְצֶהַתֵּם יִרְשָׁעֲךָ more than the stars of heaven. (16aB)
[1] A locust spreads its wings and flies away. (16b)
[5] נְסָפָרָם אֲרָבָה Your princes are like grasshoppers (17aA)
[2] וַסְפַּדִּירֵם כֹּסֶם נָפְלָאִים and your captains as the hords of locusts. (17aB)
[5] קָרָה Settling in the hedges on a cold day. (17aC))
[5] מַמְלַכֶה וּרְחֵמָתָם The sun rises and they disappear (17bA)
[1] לא יָדְעוּ מָמוֹן אִם and their place is not known. Where are they? (17bB)

III.C.ii.2

[5] נֶם תִּירֶךְ מַלְךָ אָשֵׂר Your shepherds are asleep, king of Assyria, (18aA)
[2] כִּפְלַק אָרֶץ your nobles lie down. (18aB)
[8] מַשְׂפֵּשׂ פֶּקֶר עָלָיוֹרֵיהוּ Your people are scattered on the mountains (18bA)
[1] אין מְכֹבָם and there is none to gather (them). (18bB)

III.C.ii.3

[5] הִיא רִבְּרוֹתָם לְשֵׁבֶרָךְ There is no lessening of your blow. (19aA)
[2] נְגָהוֹת מְסֶפֶר Your wound is grievous. (19aB)
[7] כִּלְכֵלָם סְפֶּר All who hear the news of you (19bA)
[5] חֲנוֹנָה כִּפָּר clap their hands over you. (19bB)
[1] מְכֹר For upon whom has not come your evil continually? (19bC)

In most cases it is not necessary to defend the delimitation of verses, as they are not only indicated by the Masoretic distinctive accents but also supported by the clear internal parallelism and other poetical devices like chiasmus and wordplay. In a number of places, however, there are reasons to question the colometry indicated by K. Elliger in the BHS. Most of the time the Masoretic division appears to be preferable. In an insignificant number of cases I had to express doubt with regard to the correctness of the dividing accents of the Tiberian Masoretes.

Nah.1:1 is usually regarded as a superscript which does not belong to or is a later addition to the following poem. It is, however, clearly a bicolon with two corresponding halves. Within the context of this

structure of the poem. See below.

45 A later explanatory addition mixing two different metaphors.
book the names of Nineveh and Nahum function as a parallel pair. The name of the capital of Assyria is used here and in 2:9 and 3:7, whereas the name of the prophet is only used at the beginning. It is certainly no coincidence that verb related to the name of the prophet (\textit{nhm}) also returns in 3:7. The superscript is also connected poetically to the verses immediately following it. The name of the apparent home town of the prophet parallels the first epithet of YHWH: אֶלְֹקָי אֱלֹהִים. The name of the town can be translated as “God is severe”, which forms a good parallel pair with “God is jealous”.\(^{46}\)

With BHS, BHK and against the Masoretic accents we take the first two words of 1:8 together with the second part of v. 7. This verse appears to be built up in the same way as the preceding one. It begins with a positive statement about YHWH (לֹֽא יִרְצֶה הָֽתַּן). The second cola both describe a dangerous situation (רָהַב צָרָה || מָכַסְיָה) in which YHWH brings relief (לֹֽא יִטְעֶר || לֵבָּתָה). Note also the chiastic structure of this verse, with participles describing activities of YHWH at the beginning and at the end. The Masoretes may have been misled by the uncommon use of the verb טֵעֶר. In line with the more negative meaning in 1:12; 2:1; and 3:19 they connected it with the description of the judgement in the next verse.

Contrary to the colometry in the BHS Nah.1:9-11 should be regarded as consisting of three tricola. Apparently Elliger denies, at least for the book of Nahum, the existence of such longer verses. There can be no doubt, however, that this important device of lengthening and thus demarcating larger poetic units\(^{48}\) was also used by this poet. This is indicated by the Masoretic accents and confirmed by the internal parallelism in v. 10 (לֹֽא יִרְצֶה || מָכַסְיָה and לֶךְ לָךְ) and v. 11 (לֹֽא יִרְצֶה || בְּלַיְלָתָּה). The coherence of this verse is also underlined by the wordplay: אֶלְֹקָי אֱלֹהִים || יְעָרִי.

The difficult 2:9 is probably better understood when we regard הרה as the beginning of the second verse which consists of three short cola, as is indicated by the Masoretes. Such short cola are not

\(^{46}\) Cf. Song of S. 8:6 יִרְצֶה אֱלֹהִים, “jealousy is as severe as Sheol”. This lends support to Allis’s suggestion that the name of this town was fictitious (“Nahum, Nineveh, Elkosh”, 76). The poet may have been inspired here by the pronouncement (‘גָּדְלָה) in Isa. 21 speaking of a “severe vision” (יִרְצֶה הרה) and a coming destruction (רָהַב, v. 2, cf. Nah.3:7f). Less likely is the suggestion of O. Happel, \textit{Das Buch des Propheten Nahum}, Würzburg 1902, 6, that it is a misread marginal note: “Vision of Nahum from לָךְ to שֶׁלֶם”, viz. from v. 2 until the word של in v. 10.

\(^{47}\) Cf. for this use of the verb טֵעֶר Am.7:8; 8:2; and especially Mic.7:18, where it is used opposed to the statement of God keeping to his anger (בְּשַׁדִּי).


\(^{49}\) Cf. the use of these words next to each other in Jud. 20:13 and Prov. 16:27.
exceptional and often they contain one or more imperativi. Again this division is supported by internal parallelism (יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה). According to the Masoretes, 2:11 is built up in the same way: a bicolon followed by a tricolon. This time, however, the cola are much longer. This may have to do with the difference in the situation described: v. 9b is about fleeing hastily, whereas v. 11b is about lasting fear. The unity of v. 11 is also supported by the clear internal paral·lism of “heart, knees, loins, face”. There is also a chiastic element, because the “melting” mentioned at the beginning presupposes the heat which can make “faces glow.”

The delimitation of strophes can be based on the many markers and cases of external parallelism. For instance, in the second strophe (I.ii.2 = Nah. 1:2) the binding element is the use of יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה. The following strophe is characterized by the name of יְהוָה as casus pendens in both verses. Another often returning phenomenon is the use of distant parallelism: next to the well-known parallelismus membriorum per verse, words forming parallel pairs can also be used to bind together larger units. For instance, in strophe I.ii.1 (Nah. 1:4) we find the verb יָרָא in the first verse and יָרָא in the second verse. From Joel 1:10 we learn that these verbs can be regarded as a parallel pair. Similar examples can be found throughout this text. To mention only a few of them: יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה and יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה (strophe II.A.i.2) can be regarded as connected roots because of Ps. 107:10; יָרָא יָרָא and יָרָא יָרָא (II.A.i.3) are part of a standard phrase in Isa. 48:19 and Ps. 37:28; יָרָא יָרָא and יָרָא יָרָא (III.C.i.2) form a parallel pair in Isa. 57:20 and Ps. 69:15; and יָרָא יָרָא (III.C.ii.2) in Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:13.

The same phenomenon can be observed on the level of canticles and (sub)cantos. The first canticle is bound together by the use of the name of יְהוָה, which is lacking in the next and then returns in the third canticle. In this third canticle (Nah.1:7-11) we come across the often used poetic device of inclusion. Not only the name of יְהוָה is found at the beginning and end, but also the parallel pair יָרָא יָרָא. The inclusion by the repetition of the name of יְהוָה, next to the repetition of יָרָא in v. 2 and 8, and of יָרָא in v. 2 and 9, strongly

52Cf. Jer. 46:21 with all three verbs.
53Cf. the use of יָרָא in Nah. 1:7-9.
54Also noticed by Armerding, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 452 and 464. See also Pardee, Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetic Parallelism, 84; Kim, The Structure of the Samson Cycle, 271.
supports the delimation of the first canto, which is also indicated by the Setumah only rarely heeded by modern commentators.\(^55\)

In the second canto we see this inclusion, for instance, in the first canticle (1:12-14) with the phrase “\(YHWH\) commands” in the last verse balancing “thus says \(YHWH\)” at the beginning, which on the level of the subcanto forms an inclusion with the name of the Lord in 2:3. The first subcanto is also characterized by the repetition of \(וַעֲלָהָו\) in 1:12 and 2:1 (two times), of \(וַיִּשָּׁרָו\) in 1:12 and 2:1, of \(וַיִּשָּׁרָו\) in 1:12, 14 and 2:1, and of the particle \(וְ\) in 1:14; 2:1 and 3 (two times). As a rule 1:12-14 is taken together with 1:1-11, but the connections with 2:1-3 appear to be much stronger.

In canto II the name of \(YHWH\) not only marks the first canticle and the first subcanto, it also marks the canto as a whole (cf. “pronouncement of \(YHWH\)” in 2:14). Again, this is not the only indication for 1:12-2:14 as a larger unit. One can also note an inclusion by \(וְ\) (1:12 and 2:14), \(וְיָרָו\) (1:12, 2:1 and 14), and \(וַיִּשָּׁרָו\) (1:12, 14 and 2:14).

The proposed division in strophes sheds new light on the problem of the different suffixed personal pronouns. At first sight there is a strange intermingling of plural and singular, feminine and masculine. On the level of strophes, however, their use appears to be far more consistent. The suffixes can now be easily determined. The second person masculine plural in 1:9 (strophe I.iii.2) are the enemies of \(YHWH\); the second person feminine singular in 1:11 (I.iii.3) is Nineveh (inclusion with 1:11); in 1:12-13 (II.A.i.2) the second person feminine singular is Judah; the second person masculine singular in 1:14 (II.A.i.3) is the king of Assyria (inclusion with 3:18!); the second person feminine singular in 2:1 (II.A.ii.1) is Judah, but in the next strophe (2:2) Nineveh again.

Canticle II.A.ii is characterized by the use of names (Judah, Jacob, Israel). The same can be observed in III.B.i (Nineveh, No-Amon, Cush, Egypt, etc.), which supports this delimation of the canticle. Another argument for this division is the inclusion by \(וְיָרָו\) (3:7) || \(וַיִּשָּׁרָו\) (3:9).\(^56\) The relation between these verbs also explains the at first sight illogical use of the suffixed second person pronoun\(^57\): “your helpers” corresponds to the question “where can I find comforters for you”, whereas Nineveh is referred to in the third person before.


\(^{56}\)It can be regarded as a break-up of a standard phrase; cf. Ps. 86:17.

\(^{57}\)Cf. the emendation proposed in the BHS.
Other examples of external parallelism binding together canticles can be found in 2:4-5 (II.B.i); 59 ליפדה וַֽעֲרָכִים; in 2:6-8 (II.B.ii); אַֽעֲרָכִים (inclusion by mentioning opposite classes of people) and המְרָכֵּס; 59 2:12-14 (II.C.ii): the metaphor of the lion’s family; and 3:1-3 (III.A.i): _TM. Especialy on the level of canticles and strophes the poem as a whole shows a well-balanced structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Sub)cantos</th>
<th>Canticles</th>
<th>Strophes</th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3+3+3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3+3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2+2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3+3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.A</td>
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<td>III.B</td>
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<td>3+3</td>
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<tr>
<td>III.C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3+3</td>
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Canto I is a hymn singing of YHWH as an avenger and a judge. It can be compared to poems like Pss. 94 and 97. This first canto disturbs the numerical balance. The poet must have had his reasons for this. He probably was forced – as will be demonstrated below – to admit this slight imbalance because he had to work with already existing material. He was able to adapt the length of the canticles, but he did not force it as a whole into his own structure.

The second canto describes the judgement of Nineveh by the avenging God of Israel. His pronouncement forms the inclusion of the canto. In between we find a vision of the judgement taking place. This beautifully agrees with the double heading in 1:1 announcing a pronouncement and a vision.

The third canto is a reaction to this judgement in the form of an ironic elegy, which is expressed at the beginning and end. It also takes up elements of the judgement and vision of the previous canto.

The cantos are clearly interrelated. The first canto is tied to the following cantos by the repetition of a number of words, some of which can be labelled as key-words; especially בַּֽעֲדָה (1:6; 2:4; 3:13, 15), בַּֽעֲדָה (1:7, 3:4); בַּֽעֲדָה (1:7; 3:11), בַּֽעֲדָה (1:8, 12; 2:1; 3:19). A number of words appears throughout the book as marking larger units: the particle ב is usually found at the end of canticles and subcantos (1:10, 14; 2:1, 3

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58 Cf. the use of these words within one verse in Ezek. 1:13 and Dan. 10:6.
59 Cf. Isa. 60:18; Jer. 1:15; 51:58; Ezek. 26:10.
60 Cf. Isa. 34:3.
61 It should also be noted that it is used here together with בַּֽעֲדָה. This can be related to YHWH being called בַּֽעֲדָה as well in 1:2.
(2x), 19); the verb יִשָּׂרֵא is always found at the end of the cantos (1:10; 2:14; 3:12, 13, 15); the same can be said of יָשָׂר (1:11 and 3:19).62

The cantos are connected as a chain. Its links are בָּלָשׁ (1:11; 2:1), קִנֵּי (2:14; 3:1), פֶּרֶשׁ (2:14; 3:2), and מִר (2:14; 3:3). In this connection one should also note the “pronouncement of YHWH of host” (2:14) being taken up in the first subcanto of canto III (3:5). This relation is underlined by the similar structure of the respective canticles (II.C.ii and III.A.ii).

Cantos II and III are interrelated in many ways.63 There is an inclusion indicated by the repetition of בָּר (1:12 and 3:16), בָּשֶׁת (2:1aA and 3:19bA), בָּר (2:1 and 3:18), בָּשֶׁחֶת (3:19), בָּר (2:1 and 3:19). Within this inclusion the cantos appear to be built up in the same way: the wickedness described with a metaphor (lion/harlot), followed by words of YHWH announcing the way in which He shall deal with this wickedness.

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All this leads to the conclusion that the book of Nahum is a well-structured literary unity. During the structural analysis, however, we also came across some indications of redactional activities. We noticed that in length and structure the first canto deviates from the second and third. This canto is also characterized by the traces of a partial alphabetic acrostic. Most of the letters forming the alphabet are still more or less in place: alef in 2aA, bet in 3bA, gimel in 4aA, he in 5aA, waw in 5bA, zain in 6aA, chet in 6bA, tet in 7aA, yod in 7bA, kaf in 8bA, lamed in 9aC), and mem in 11aA. This can be

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62 This was also noticed by Achtemeier, Nahum–Malachi, 6.
63 Cf. also A. Chouraqui, La bible traduite et présentée: Les douze prophètes, Paris 1976, 22; Armerding, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 470–1.; Achtemeier, Nahum–Malachi, 21 and 27–8; Patterson, Travers, “Literary Analysis”, 48–9; and Nogalski, Redactional Processes, 123.
64 In these places בָּר is opposed to the parallel pair denoting the “flying away” of the many: יִשָּׂר (1:12) || יָשָׂר (3:17bA); cf. Jer.9:9.
65 Cf. for the interpretation of this expression as an indication of celebration Ps. 47:2.
no coincidence, but it is neither a coincidence that it took so long before it was discovered again. Apparently the poet had no intention to preserve it. The analysis of the text thus far also gives no reason to assume that the Hebrew text of this book was ill-preserved. Therefore, it is most likely that the poet adapted an existing acrostic song and that traces of the original song are found until the letter mem.

The history of research shows that it is not fruitful to attempt to restore the original poem. Some conclusions can be drawn, however, from the way in which the poet of Nah. 1 revised this earlier text. He appears to have expanded the first strophe with variations on the themes of כָּז (v. 2b) and הָבֵית (3a). In this way he has emphasized the message about YHWH as an avenger. For the same reason his name was also repeated before the original beginning of the second strophe (בראש). In v. 4 the original word beginning with dalet was replaced by a word repeated at the end of the verse. This repeating of the same word within short range can be regarded as typical of the poet’s style, because it is also found in the expanded first part of the poem (1:2) and in the following verses as well (1:12; 2:9, 10, 13; 3:2, 10, 11, 14, 15). In v. 6 the original unusual order of words, with נָשָׁי at the beginning of the verse, was changed. In v. 7b the copulativum waw was added, apparently to underline the relation between the two verses forming one strophe. Coming to the end of the first canto the poet again expanded the original poem in the kaf- and the lamed-strophes. Just as he did before with his description of YHWH as an avenger, the poet now payed extra attention to YHWH “making an end” by repeating חָלַק in the second of the added cola 9aA and 9aB.

66 M.H. Floyd, “The Chimerical Acrostic of Nahum 1:2-10”, JBL 113 (1994), 421-37, rightly criticizes the fact that in modern research too often the hypothesis of an originally complete acrostic has been turned into a fact. He goes too far in his criticism, however, when he assumes that the acrostic is only in the mind of some of the readers and not at all in the text.


69 See on the phenomenon of expansion (and contraction) see Korpel, De Moor, “Fundamentals”, passim.

70 Comparison with Isa.19:4-8, which also speaks of rivers drying up, renders it likely that the original verb was בָּלֵע, “become small”, because here, in v. 6, it is used in the same context as the verb בָּלֵע.
The original text is found again in 9aC and in 10aC. The metaphor of the “dried stubble” is expanded in 10aA-B. Finally, the mem-strophe seems to be expanded by adding 11aB repeating and precising the already added 9aA.

This adaption of (part of) an already existing acrostic hymn should not be ascribed, as is done by many modern authors,71 to later editors of the book of Nahum, but to the prophet/poet himself. In stead of assuming that the book of Nahum was connected in this way to the books of Micah and Joel, it is more to the point to regard the related passages in Joel (cf. 2:13 and 4:21), just like Jonah, as a reaction to the message of Nahum. There are clear parallels with Mic. 7, but these are not clear enough to assume the deliberate adding of words and phrases to “stitch together” these two books. The more simple and likely solution is that Nahum was inspired by his predecessor, just as he in his turn was an inspiration to Habakuk: cf. Hab. 1:8f. and 2:12 with Nah. 2:4 and 3:1ff.; Hab. 3:6, 10 with Nah. 1:5; Hab. 3:8-10 with Nah. 1:4; Hab.3:16 with Nah.1:772; cf. also the hymn at the end of Habakuk with the opening hymn in the book of Nahum; and finally their related headings underlined by the command to Habakuk: “write down the vision” (2:2; cf. the use of וֹסָכ in Nah.1:1).

In this connection a remark should also be made about the well-known relationship between Nah. 2:1 and Isa. 52:7. Many scholars assume that Nahum borrowed from the Second Isaiah.73 This implies that at least this part of the book of Nahum would have been written in or after the Babylonian exile. A closer look, however, at these verses shows that it is the other way around. The first words of Nah. 2:1, “Behold on the mountains the feet of a messenger”, have been altered slightly in Isa. 52:7: “How lovely on the mountain are the feet ...”. And the phrase “announcing peace” is expanded in Isa. 52 to “announcing peace, bringing good news, announcing salvation”. The easiest way to explain these differences is that the poet of Isa. 52 rewrote the verse of Nah. 2, qualifying and clarifying it.74


74 Cf. A.S. van der Woude, “Hoe de Here naar Sion wederkeert ... Traditio-
Things appear to be different with Nah. 3:15-17, where many scholars assume a corruption of the original text because of the unexpected inconsistent use of metaphors.\textsuperscript{75} This is supported now by our structural analysis: precisely this part of the poem disturbs its regular structure. The additions (15bB-C and 16aB-17aC) may have been inspired by the metaphor of the grasshopper in the book of Joel and can be related, therefore, to the editing of the Book of the Twelve Prophets as a whole. The analysis of the poetic structure of the book of Nahum, however, shows that it is not likely that this editing was accompanied by so much reshaping of the books of the prophets as is assumed by Nogalski.\textsuperscript{76} This editing should be seen in the first place as a well-considered attempt to place the twelve books in the right order. Their present shape makes them look like one of the major prophets, not only in length but also with regard to the thematic order: starting with a collection of words of doom directed to their own community, followed by prophecies against foreign nations and concluded with words of hope for restoration.\textsuperscript{77} It was only logical to place the book of Jonah, which is in many aspects a reaction to the prophecy of Nahum, before Nahum. A story about the salvation of Nineveh would have made no sense after the description of its definitive destruction. In some places, however, the apparent chronological order must have been broken deliberately. On the basis of chronology the prophecy of Zephaniah should have been placed between Micah and Nahum. Apparently it was inserted after Habakuk because of the similarities between Micah and Nahum and between Nahum and Habakuk. In stead of attributing these similarities to later editorial

\textsuperscript{75}Cf. amongst others Jeremias, Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung, 43 and Nogalski, Redactional Processes, 124-6.

\textsuperscript{76}Cf. his Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve (BZAW, 217), Berlin & New York 1993 and Redactional Processes; cf. also Van Leeuwen, “Scribal Wisdom”.

activities, it is more likely to assume that the prophets themselves partly took their inspiration from predecessors.

It can be concluded that the diachronic analysis clearly benefits from an elaborate synchronic analysis which gives the text the chance to prove its coherence. Beginning the diachronic analysis too soon, because of little trust in the Masoretic text and/or the wish to find out the truth about the famous acrostic, does more damage than good to the interpretation of the well-structured book of Nahum. Methodologically, it is interesting to see how a sound synchronic approach paves the way for a responsible diachronic analysis.