

### *viii. Forty days.*

**(Jonah 3:1-4.)**

*Night and day has come and gone  
amid the gleaming towers and cool conceit  
of Nineveh. In threadbare alleyways  
long hidden from the sun,  
I walk with fervent feet  
among the painted masks and tangled roots.  
I call your name and speak your praise.*

*From kingdoms near and far  
they come to Nineveh, their shining star.  
Among the silent shoots  
rising from the ancient ground  
before the city gates,  
they make a prayer – a pining sound –  
that they might live contentedly  
and offer sacrifice within her walls.*

*The city's welcoming recalls  
how the monster of the deep awaits  
the shimmering multitude  
with lazy open mouth – invitingly.*

*Ninevite legions sweep and sway  
and scour the earth for victory and food  
with marching banners on display -  
a monster's head with monster's teeth.*

*Among the city sights I stand and gaze.  
I hear the streets and laneways seethe  
and I am silent, overjoyed  
at being made your messenger of light.  
Who will curb the heedless appetite  
of this brazen city and her crime?  
I raise my voice this one last time:*

*“Your folly shall end in forty days!  
“In forty days shall Nineveh be destroyed.”*