

xii. Brazen Jewell.

(Jonah 4:1-8)

*I knew it then, so long ago,
when I still lived in my own land.
It was the reason I took flight
from your command.*

*You are too slow in anger and too weak
in punishment. You let your mercy flow
with too much ease. Your foolish ways invite
contempt. When you respond
with calm forgiving
sweet humility, it is beyond
my weary heart. The world grows bleak.
I might as well be dead as go on living.*

*Did you not fill my veins with crimson blood
and have I not the right to nurse
my people's wounds and hate their enemies?*

*Receive my prayer, my solemn curse.
Am I not the creature of your heart?
In your justice may it please
the great Lord Adonai to take my part
and let your hand, with fire and raging flood,
strike Nineveh with fear and pain.*

*I leave the city by the eastern gate
to build a shelter from the sun.
Here I sit and watch and wait
till Nineveh, that loathsome stain
upon the earth, is gone.*

*In the lazy noonday light
a lonely stem is reaching timidly
above the dry and stony ground,
spreading playful leaves and blissful shade.*

*Above me, through the hours of night,
it stands. I curl contentedly.
The city's wild and mocking sound
is softened in the dark and made
into a distant lullaby.*

*These eyes, half open to the lonely sky
of dawn, see a shadow hovering
with unkind and patient skill.
With rising fury and distress
and dark bewilderment
I see my leafy shelter withering
and bowed to earth, as if for burial.*

*The torturing sun begins to climb
till it brands my head with punishment.
I curse your ways – unfathomable, cruel
unnatural and all-forgiving.*

*Why go on living
when Nineveh, that brazen jewel,
sits in her foul crime?*