

Hearing in our Hearts

By Heather Paul

"Now Hannah was praying in her heart;
only her lips moved,
but her voice could not be heard."

Hannah's prayers could not be heard,
but we know them in our hearts.
Her voice catches in our throats every time
the test is negative
the drugs are injected
the eggs do not fertilize
the embryo does not attach

Her voice catches in our throats
when the pregnancy arrives, but is finally lost
in clots of blood, hopes, and dreams.

"In her wretchedness, she prayed to God, weeping all the while."

Every person's silent prayer
is based on Hannah's voiceless cry,
but only some of us know the words,
words injected by syringes
words of doctors and nurses
words made of acronyms, made of letters, and longing,
words of bargaining, please, this time,
please let it be different –

words that never fill our wombs.

"And she made this vow: 'O LORD of Hosts,
if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant
and will remember me and not forget Your maidservant,
and if You will grant Your maidservant a child,
I will dedicate him to the LORD for all the days of his life.'"

God, please remember us, as you remembered Hannah.
We cannot promise You our children,
but we can raise them with compassion
for all of Your creation.



Our children cannot serve in Your Temple,
but we can teach them to see
Your world as a Holy Place.

Shema Koleinu, hear our voices, God,
God of Hannah, Sarah, Rachel and Rebecca,

so that our children and our children's children
may hear our words one day:

words of compassion, words of praise,
words of love.