When Hannah Spoke with God

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after an image in the Paris Psalter, ca. tenth century

Years later, what Hannah remembered most wasn't that morning she took young Samuel

to the temple, nor the many trips she made to visit him, carrying, always, those little robes

she sewed. Instead, another day—watching herself

as if from far away: a childless woman, then, at Shiloh, walking alone amid the offerings

and the arch. Hannah's lips moved, her stark prayer held within. And the priest Eli asked,

Are you drunk, woman? No, I am a woman hard of heart, she said.

Jagged hills stretched beyond, strewn, perhaps, with other mournful songs—
but God was faithful in her exile.
And Hannah saw what others failed to see.

Air around her wavered. A hand reached out, let fall a blessing. A weeping azure wash—

now flaming, fading. Walls nearby gone gold.
Old colors condensed to meaning. All distances

dissolved, as if she were inside an old story, now entirely new. Blue light fell around her like a fragment of the sky, like the sun that streamed through a high church window

one Sunday when my daughter held to the glass a sign she'd made: *I love you God.* Then she, too,

lived within a story all her own. Then that same new light touched her face, her hand. Touched her lovely hair.