

Rachel to her midwife

by [Jill Bergkamp](#) in the [May 5, 2009](#) issue

On the barren road you speak my name,
offer me a drink. That morning
at the well Jacob rolled the stone away as
if it were straw. What a man

would do for me then. He told me
“I saw God face to face, yet my life
was spared.” And now you say
“Your son comes,” but your hands

struggle inside me as the owl cries,
and I know this earth will take everything
from me, even the name I give him. Sister,
there is not enough salt in the Dead

Sea for all out tears. Our bodies, destroyed
temples. We are exiles, all of us. I give you
my name for your daughters and their girls
to come, but remember this: a man’s favor

is a heavy offering, it crafts one day into
seven, then multiplies the years. Slams a veil
between sisters. In the end, when you hear
your name called, all you long for is home.