

# Beyond Postpartum Depression After Miscarriage and Child Loss: The Healing



Last year I publicly went through the most common yet least reported type of postpartum depression ([Part 1](#) and [2](#) here) – the type based on true tragedy, unrelated to a chemical imbalance, the kind of depression that has, as its source, actual loss, and grief.

Having gone through many miscarriages, and faced with the almost absolute lack of compassion in the believing community, I and many others were forced to stomp down and swallow that pain, to face it alone, to endure shaming because of the unresolved and therefore unending grief. The end result was catastrophic – unresolved grief, anger, bitterness, shame, jealousy – you name it. I lived it day by day for over sixteen years until the day came when God said, “No more, this is going to get dealt with now.” Just like that, He stripped away all of my protective mechanisms and the full onslaught of the pain was raw and inescapable. It was horrific and outside of my control – I was literally insane with grief and anger at times. It got worse before it got better – but now it is finally better. I saw the first hard evidence of healing two weeks ago when a friend asked me if I minded if she named her baby after me. My response was, “You’re pregnant?”

What shocked me was that my surprise was only a surprise, that there was no resentment or anger or jealousy involved – I didn’t hurt inside, at all. I didn’t even feel numb about it. I didn’t have to fake a congratulation. As I sat there, I found myself able to feel pleased for her – even though she

already has a house full of youngsters. But, I thought – she is naming the baby after me – maybe it's just my ego. (My ego is sizable, so it was a legitimate consideration)

This morning another friend with children announced her pregnancy to me as well (see her beautiful ultrasound above). No, they aren't naming the baby after me. LOL. And much to my surprise, I had the same exact response – I actually am happy for them. Her pregnancy did not arouse even the slightest pain within me, no twinge of jealousy. That's huge. I actually even got a little weepy for them, which is even more than I felt for my first friend.

I can't even begin to tell you how terrible it is to hate other people's good news, their blessings, and to have no power over those feelings. It is terrible to want to be happy for them, to know you should be and to feel ashamed that you don't, yet to have the pain flood in and destroy all feelings of warmth and compassion.

Since May of 2000, I have not been happy for anyone who was pregnant – unless they were like me and knew nothing but infertility and loss – and now, all of a sudden, because God forced me to deal with the pain I really can rejoice with those who rejoice and not simply weep with those who weep. It was a strange dichotomy – certainly not wishing infertility, miscarriage or child loss onto anyone and yet being full of pain and rage if people were not so afflicted! Such is the nature of unresolved pain, of not being given permission to mourn by those around me.

You need to know that I didn't choose to have this happen – I had so many protective barriers built up to shield myself from the constant pain that I was no longer able to choose how to deal with it. I was in crisis mode – I always tried not to think about it, and I always tried not to allow it to control my actions. All I was ever able to accomplish was not allowing it to hurt other people – and that took a lot of self-control.

There is truly no “snapping out of” grief – it has a mind of its own and takes as long as it takes. There is no shame in it. In Bible times, grieving was very scripted – people were expected to weep and wail and be externally nonsensical with grief. It would be very strange indeed not to mourn deeply. Because it was expected, and accepted, people were usually able to move through their grief and anger and get on with their lives, with the notable exception of Jacob at the loss of Joseph. Death happened in the ancient world, it was expected and acknowledged as a society – it wasn’t expected to be pushed aside or experienced alone.

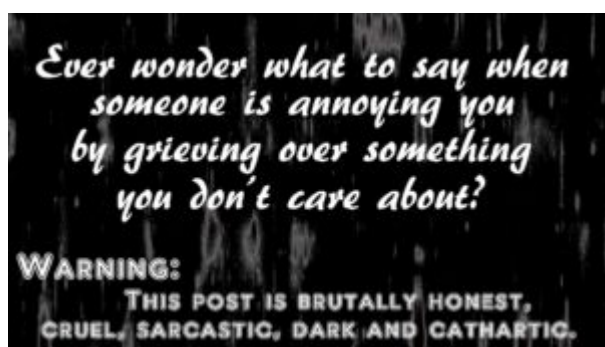
It is strange that today we feel differently, though we credit ourselves with greater compassion and pride ourselves with being more in touch with our feelings. Perhaps the trouble is that we are in touch with our own feelings but have lost sight of everyone else’s feelings. We don’t want to be bothered with them; we don’t want to sit shiva with mourners for a week and cry with them. We are moving too fast; we want them to get beyond their grief so that we won’t be burdened by the obligation to mourn alongside them. We want to be entertained, not bored with someone else’s personal tragedy. If we don’t feel the same feelings, we really don’t much want to pretend like we do.

What I went through was a big wake-up call for me about the importance of grieving as a community, of having it be okay to treat grief like the insane thing that it truly is. Acknowledging death and loss as decidedly unnatural – well, maybe that is part of our mourning over what we lost in the garden. Humans weren’t originally equipped for death, and we probably still aren’t. That it still happens, that we are not yet what we were created to be, I guess it should cause a greater disconnect than it does.

Maybe every death really is supposed to be greeted with the cry, “This was never supposed to happen!” And in that case, anger and mourning both seem both natural and healthy.

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# Has Someone You Know Had a Miscarriage? Are they Barren? Quick Ways to Shut Down Their Grief So They Won't Bother You With it Again.



\*\*\*\*\*Okay, guys, I think this is my last blog in this [series](#) (and [part 2](#) here) and I am warning you, I wrote it on a very dark day emotionally and it represents the combined experiences and the secret “I

wish I would/could have said's but didn't” of seventeen years of humiliation. I am not really proud of this. It is full of something I generally keep under tight wraps – ugly, vicious sarcasm and dark humor. I won't lie – it is a cruel post, but it also is an honest reflection of how certain comments make grieving people feel when we are handed platitudes. It was cathartic and I have the feeling that it will be a cathartic experience for anyone who has endured this type of abuse – I would not recommend ever actually saying these things to people and I don't think that the reality of the situation is funny at all. We are called to patience, love, peace, kindness, gentleness and self-control even when we are wronged – so I would not lash out at a person who says these things in this way, probably. However, when these illogical things are said, it truly does cause a person who is already hurting and vulnerable to become confused and to feel inappropriate guilt and condemnation – it is devastating to a person's already

fragile state of mind. For the record, I don't think that the people who say such things are cruel on purpose – I think they mean well, and i think they are simply allowing their discomfort to control their tongue and override our call to be compassionate, but the impact of their words are decidedly cruel. \*\*\*\*\*

Well, I always suspected that literature like this existed, based on the universal nature of the obscenely boorish and outright nasty comments women and even men are subjected to after a miscarriage, stillbirth, or when they are barren or infertile – and I finally obtained a copy! \*\*

Greetings!

Is someone in your life making you *uncomfortable*?

You have undoubtedly sent away for this pamphlet because someone in your life is being decidedly inconvenient and their grieving is getting in the way of your enjoyment of life. You have our condolences. Nothing is worse than having our easy and blessed lives interrupted by someone who is boohooing over something that doesn't even remotely matter in the scheme of our own lives. Grief is best kept to oneself and set aside quickly, right? You won't find a single publication on earth commanding people to weep with those who weep – no, life is meant to be enjoyed, every moment of it! Everyone needs to be grateful for their lot in life, and things will get better! No one who is truly righteous ever suffers!

So, without further ado, we have compiled a list of tried and true platitudes that are 100% guaranteed to make sure that people stop boring you with their tragedies. Why on earth should you suffer just because they are suffering – am I right? Of course, I am!

### **When Someone has a Miscarriage**

1. Remind them that it isn't a real baby – they will be

relieved to hear that they are grieving for nothing. It probably hasn't occurred to them – I mean, after all, if it were a real baby, we wouldn't be allowed to kill them, right?

2. Tell them to be grateful for what they have – they probably haven't realized how good they have it and you will be doing them a favor. Remind them of the selfishness of mourning when they should be grateful for everything else they have. It will be just the wake-up slap across the face they need to get happy again – and stop pestering you with their sadness.
3. Point out how lucky they are that they never actually held that child, or saw the child. I am sure they will agree with you that it is better to nip such things in the bud – you know, before they fell in love and started making plans.
4. Bring up the very real possibility that their baby was probably deformed or would have been retarded. Imagine their relief at being spared parenting a special needs child – they will probably get down on their knees and kiss your feet in gratitude. Far from being hurt that you would be saying such a thing, they will start seeing the reality of the situation. They might even throw a party.
5. Whatever you do, be very sure to trample out any good feelings they had about their baby, I mean, their fetus. Do whatever it takes to dehumanize it, devalue it – you're doing them a favor. I know that it may seem cruel, but allowing them the so-called dignity of cherishing their memories is only going to prolong everyone's suffering – so don't be afraid to trample those pearls. It costs you nothing, and rest assured they will never throw them in your direction ever again. It's a win-win situation.
6. IF THEY ARE STUBBORN and persist in being sad, it is advisable to say the following. Sometimes shame is the only way to snap people out of it: "What are you sad

about? It's only a miscarriage." Cut them off completely – no quarter given! Be sure that your face registers a hint of incredulity and disgust, but don't overplay the ridicule in your tone or they may suspect that you are simply heartless.

**IF THEY KEEP HAVING MISCARRIAGES**, well, then we have a spiritual problem, obviously. The female reproductive system is very uncomplicated, so almost nothing can go wrong if a woman is indeed righteous. We never see any of the righteous women in Scripture having fertility problems. This calls for stronger measures and an actual intervention:

1. "Hmmm... have you tried praying about this?" People rarely pray when they go through tough times; it's an established fact that is obvious to everyone. People pray when times are good, but as soon as something terribly upsetting happens, they immediately stop praying. That's where you come in – you have to get them praying again – otherwise, bad things will keep happening to them. Bad things never happen to people who pray.
2. "You need to relax – your stress is obviously causing this problem." Although it is true that you never noticed that they were stressed out before the first unfortunate occurrence, you need to face facts – you just weren't paying attention. Stressed out women can't have babies – which is why unwed women, rape victims, battered wives, sex slaves, and especially teenagers, never carry babies to term, ever. They are simply too stressed out.
3. "You must be cursed." Sometimes it is best to be blunt. After all, you have all the children you want, and so you have proof that God is blessing you. Don't allow the fact that they have plenty of money in the bank distract you, or their success in other areas of life – children

are the only true measure of blessing in this life and the more kids you have, the more blessed you are. Just ask Sarah and Abraham! When was the last time you saw someone really nasty breeding like there is no tomorrow?

4. "Remember that God is good." To the untrained eye, this might seem like a cop-out, but their constant sadness is a sign that they have lost their faith. Refusing to be comforted is not behavior we would see by any Biblical parent! Nope, they got on with their lives happily. This remark will remind them that God wouldn't have allowed anything truly bad to happen to them – He is good, and so the fact that their baby is dead is, by extension, a good thing and totally His will. Everything that happens is good. Being sad is an attack on God's character and they need you to rebuke them. They will thank you later.
5. "I am just speaking the truth in love: You are miscarrying because of unrepentant sin in your life." It is best to say this while showing them pictures of your children, thereby proving your case – as they will recognize your righteousness and see the truth of what you are saying. They will think to themselves that it is indeed true that unrepentant people never carry babies to term – prostitutes, crack addicts, unmarried teenagers, white supremacists, etc. They will, in fact, experience a revival in their own life as they go and root out the sin that has slaughtered the innocent life in their womb.

**THESE ALSO WORK IN CASE OF STILLBIRTH,** although some alterations might be necessary. But be strong, don't give in to misplaced compassion or they might keep on coming to you for support. No, give no room for them to express their grief. Sometimes brutality is the most potent form of compassion.

**MANY OF THESE ALSO WORK IF SOMEONE IS INFERTILE OR BARREN,** but remember, we don't see people in the Scriptures who are righteous and important to God going for decades without



having babies. It just doesn't happen. Babies are a proof of God's love and favor – more babies = more love from God. Babies are like a character reference direct from the Almighty! Don't allow myths about birth defects fool you; every womb is perfect from the get-go and nothing can go wrong – unless sin is involved. Also, keep in mind that the woman is always to blame – sperm counts are never low, and sperm is never faulty in any way. Remember that blame is important – things don't "just happen" – there has to be someone at fault. After all, when something goes wrong for you, it is Satan, right?

However, you should still try and cheer them up by reminding them that they are actually blessed – after all, they get to sleep in on the weekends which is much better than the bother of hugs and kisses and watching a child grow to adulthood. If they persist in lamenting and crying over not having any children, then facetiously offer them yours – show them how petty and silly their desire to parent truly is. Everyone loves a good joke, and by demeaning their desire to have children by scoffing at their expense – you will show them how funny it really all is.

Remember this simple formula:

"Mary has a fertile womb because she has no sin,

But Molly's wicked cervix won't let any sperm come in."

You will find this to be true 100% of the time. Barrenness and infertility are always due to sin, just as righteousness always means lots of kids, a lasting happy marriage, and a surefire ticket through the pearly gates – it's just obvious!

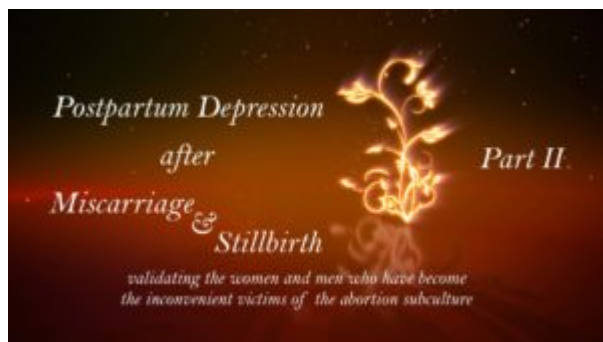
We hope this helps you in your quest for a trouble-free life and the bliss that comes from being unencumbered by the need for empathy and compassion.

(\*\*Okay, maybe this isn't really real – maybe it was written

by a barren, miscarrying woman who is now blessed to parent a set of twins, one special needs, through adoption; and maybe she's tired of the insulting, illogical and idiotic things that people say when they should say nothing at all. It's time for them to be ashamed of themselves, not us. Note: none of these comments were made up, I have personally heard them all, although I did embellish the commentary myself, and I also made up the poem at the end\*\*)

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## Postpartum Depression after Miscarriage and Stillbirth Part 2: A World Destroyed



That moment when you find out you are pregnant – a new world is created. That child has altered the universe – their existence creates an entire world that will never be the same again. Each person they

interact with will be changed, every person who loves them is changed. They have created an unending ripple in the cosmic reality simply by existing.

Judaism teaches a beautiful concept about murder – I know that sounded strange, let me explain. The great minds of the Jewish people teach us that to murder a person is to destroy an entire world and to save a life is to save an entire world. When Abel was killed, so were all his descendants and all of the good things he would have done. A world, the world that was meant to have him in it, was destroyed and a new world

took its place – a world that wasn't nearly as wonderful. His impact was still felt because he had indeed lived a while, but the world of his future, and his future descendants – was obliterated in a moment of anger.

I know – the very concrete teacher of Ancient Near Eastern context is going all mystical on you – please indulge me just this once.

With my first pregnancy, a world was created – a new phase of reality where I was a mother to this specific child. I was instantly in love, dreaming dreams and so incredibly and blissfully happy. Only now am I beginning to dare remember that sense of peace and happiness once more. What would it feel like to touch the skin of my newborn, what does it feel like when the baby kicks or sits on your bladder? What will my baby smell like when I hold him or her close and what name will we call them by? What quirks of their personality will melt my heart? Will they look like me, or Mark or like both of us? I was so sick – nausea woke me up in the morning and kept at me all day until I fell asleep from exhaustion, but that nausea meant that life was there and would soon be in my arms. At least, that's what I thought.

If you read [part I](#) then you know what happened next, and over and over again so I won't rehearse it. One by one, the worlds created by the conception of my children were destroyed – and no one noticed except for me. Entire worlds were obliterated, but the world just went on as though I shouldn't even pause and in fact irritated by my inconvenient grief. Seventeen years ago I lay on the floor of the nursery wanting to die. I think I would have died without the miracle that postponed my grieving.

I no longer remember the exact desperate, and broken words I prayed that day, but it went something like this:

“God, I want to be a mother more than anything else in the

world, but if it is not Your will then I need to know – because I am dying.”

My body suddenly felt like a cool wind swept through me and I knew that we would have two children, neither of them biological. My sadness was still there but I guess you could say that the best way to describe my new state of mind was that it was now focused in a new direction. I pushed the pain into a dark corner, left it there and started researching adoption. A little over a year later, we were the parents of a set of fraternal twin boys – Matthew and Andrew. Andrew was born with serious disabilities and between the surgeries and the fact that the jailed birth-father was contesting the adoption, I was able to keep the memory of the miscarriages somewhat at bay because there was no longer time to think too much about it. (For those of you who are horrified that we were taking children away from their father, let's just say that the sexual encounter was not consensual, but forced.)

Although I adore my sons and would not give them up for the world, I have always been sad. Part of me died the day my first baby died, and by the third miscarriage, I had sunk deep into depression. Knowing we would adopt was a distraction – a distraction that possibly saved my life – but it was a band-aid. The pursuit of our sons was not a cure for the depression, it simply made it easier for me to ignore it. I was far too busy to be depressed – caring for a disabled child prevented me from having too much time to focus on the root cause of my constant sadness. I loved being a mom, but I have spent all these years under a horrible cloud.

Fast forward fifteen and a half years from the birth of our beloved children, and here I am suddenly in mourning. The first four days were spent screaming, crying, almost insanely grieving – then came the anger followed by absolute exhaustion. My limbs felt weak for some strange reason. I sleep all day because I have insomnia all night, and when I do sleep, I am having terrible dreams. And then there are the

days, like today, where I mostly feel dead inside. I pick up my Bible but my eyes bounce everywhere. I try to study archaeology, but my heart just isn't in it. I did manage to binge watch The Crown. I feel like I haven't slept in years – my mind is exhausted. Sometimes I get enough of a burst of energy to write.

And this is normal. This is what would have happened seventeen years ago if people had encouraged me to mourn, and had validated my losses instead of reducing me to shame. This is what would have happened if the Believing community was genuinely pro-life and not simply anti-abortion.

Losing a child – under any circumstances – there is nothing sane about it. We grieve how we grieve, for as long as we grieve. We grieve because we are moms and dads and grandparents and brothers and sisters and human beings who were meant to share that world with this new and precious person, but that world was destroyed and taken forcibly from us, it was stolen. We mourn because we are human beings who know what it is to love deeply. We mourn because we have lost someone who can never be replaced. We mourn because it is the right and healthy thing to do.

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## **Postpartum Depression after Miscarriage and Stillbirth Pt 1: The Dream**



For my regular subscribers, you will have to bear with me for a little while as this is something I am learning about and going through and I feel it is something that needs to be shared for the emotional well-

being of a multitude of women as well as men who are the unfortunate, silent victims of this terrible and politically inconvenient form of suffering.

One week ago, I knew that postpartum depression was something that happened to the women who had given birth to living babies. I thought I knew it, anyway. I am about to share something that may shock you as much as it shocked me. For the record, I don't take kindly to people trying to interpret my dreams and have never had anyone ever give me something that I didn't already know or was just flat out wrong. So please just don't. I am not giving all the details or all the interpretation – just what is necessary.

I had one of my house dreams, but this dream was unlike any I had ever had before. The house, from my view of the inside, was white and beautiful. It had three stories, with beautiful balconies. Now, every other “house” dream I have had showed a lot of damage, much work to be done – done by me. As in real life, God shows us things about ourselves that we need to work on, and then we need to get to work. Every one of these dreams has preceded some sort of blow to my ego as He shows me that I am really not all that and a bag of chips. This dream was completely different – I couldn't see the problems, but a professional contractor was making major renovations. I didn't have to do a thing.

As I went through the house, a house that I was moving into, I found a file drawer, and in it were the files of the woman who had lived there previously. I went looking for her, not wanting her to forget her private things only to find her

outside with her husband and kids, but rather set apart from them. Her kids were reading from a scientific journal with their father and they gave the article to me. I was joking that these should be my kids because I am a scientist and I would love to read science articles with kids who enjoy that sort of thing. I started reading the article and it was about postpartum depression, which I wasn't really interested in until I noticed it was the story of two women who had it – the mother of the two boys I was with and myself. The story said that I had postpartum depression.

I woke up confused. It was a house dream, but this was a ridiculous dream. I had a bunch of miscarriages between 1999 and 2003, but never a live birth – I could not possibly have postpartum depression. I dismissed it, even though I have never ended up having a house dream that wasn't a huge harbinger for change.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning that the overwhelming grief hit me like a freight train out of nowhere. It was as though I had gone back in time seventeen years to the loss of our third baby in an instant. It was like all those years in between had vanished and the pain was back, raw and ferocious as ever.

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We lost our first baby a few days before Mother's Day 1999. I was almost 30 years old and getting pregnant hadn't been difficult. As it turned out – it was staying pregnant that was difficult, or rather, impossible. I didn't know it then, but a spinal cord problem, coupled with a back-flipped and deformed uterus, and a body that only makes two days worth of progesterone a month – well, my ovaries worked, but my womb itself was not capable of supporting life and never had been.

The first miscarriage was grueling, I was in labor off and on for about two months – a constant and cruel reminder that my

baby was dead (as if having to sit through a Mother's Day service in Church the very week that I lost the baby wasn't bad enough). But once that passed we were quickly pregnant again, lost that baby as well and by my original due date in January – we had conceived and lost yet another child.

I cannot express to you the depths of my grief. My grief was deep and intense and the attitudes of the people around me were almost always ambivalent, and often cruel. People who railed against the inhumanity of abortion based upon it "stopping a beating heart" gave no thought to saying, "Well, at least it wasn't a real baby."

"It's probably a blessing, the baby was probably retarded or deformed."

"You are obviously cursed, God gives a quiver-full to the righteous."

"Why are you so upset? It was just a miscarriage!"

"You need to relax, your stress is killing those babies!"

"You need to be grateful that you never got to hold them, it would be worse to lose them after birth."

"Hmmm... have you considered praying about this?"

"You need to remember that God is good and be grateful for what you have."

"You want kids? How about you take mine off my hands for a day?"

"I am just speaking the truth in love: You are miscarrying because of unrepentant sin in your life."

The pain that I felt from the death of my precious little ones was horrible enough, breaking my heart to pieces, but these horrible comments from believing women were destroying me



psychologically as well. I felt as though my life was being quickly and systematically dismantled.

For some reason, and I actually know some of the reasons – people don't want us to mourn and so they try and shame us. One of the reasons is the abortion culture – this reason explains why pro-abortion individuals cannot afford to have compassion for people who have miscarried or given birth to stillborn children. They can neither politically nor emotionally acknowledge the humanity of the situation and the actual loss of a real life. We have to have lost a fetus, a sub-human, a potential life – not an actual child. This has resulted in a callous disregard for a huge segment of the population which has been forced to suffer in silence – we are the unreported casualties of the abortion culture. We dare not be named or acknowledged – it would be political suicide to do so. We are expendable, cannon fodder in the drive to make all abortion as available and as guilt free as possible.

But what of the pro-life people who can be are are often even crueler – because their comments often throw God into the mix, undermining what is often our only refuge in the time of our greatest distress? They say they care for life but the truth of the matter is that most of them are simply offended by sin and cannot bear to really seriously contemplate the real lives lost to abortion. I think that living in an abortion culture has simply destroyed our empathy – we cannot care about the miscarried babies because then we would really have to think about what is being done every single day. So we turned all our feelings of outrage towards the sin of murder; we cannot bear to think of all those real little lives. Again, the silent victims of this are those women who have miscarried and given birth to stillborn children. Being self-righteously offended at sin is easier than doing the hard work of being compassionate and loving. I do not see this changing.

Like I said, I was already dealing with all of the cruelty and loss when my original due date hit in January of 2000 and all

of those websites I had registered on – the due date websites, and the parenting websites – all of the congratulation announcements started flooding into my email. I laid on the floor of the nursery and tried to die, but I couldn't. I laid there for about a week, completely alone – even my husband couldn't understand. I didn't even understand.

I had postpartum depression. Like any woman who had given birth to a living child, I had gone through the hormonal changes, I had gone through labor – but unlike a woman who has given birth to a living child and is depressed, I had no happy ending to look forward to. I had, beyond just depression, real death and grief to be dealt with. From the responses I have had on social media over the last day or so – I know that I am not alone. There are legions of us who have been given no name for what ails us, because it is not politically expedient to recognize us at all. No one wants us to exist. We represent an inconvenient truth – our pain is proof of the life and worth of the unborn.

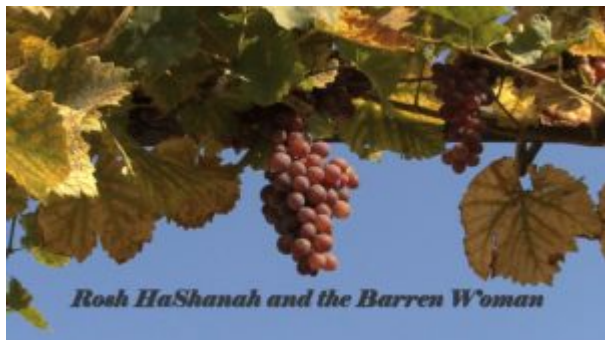
But we do exist. Our babies were precious and wanted, and real. They weren't "just miscarriages."

I will continue this in a few days. I need to have you understand why, seventeen years later, I am still suffering with postpartum depression – why a lot of us are and why we will get through it if we do acknowledge our right, as mothers and fathers, to mourn. If you are suffering, I want you to know why, and that you aren't alone, or overly emotional, or unreasonable. Truly, your grief is a measure of sanity in a world gone mad.

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# Rosh HaShanah and the Barren Woman

The period from Tishri 1 to Tishri 10, Rosh HaShanah (or Yom Teruah) to Yom haKippurim, is identified with the Coronation/Enthronement of God as King as well as with righteous judgment and enactments of vindication and restoration. We see this nowhere



*Rosh HaShanah and the Barren Woman*

so beautifully as in the Scriptural readings of Rosh HaShanah; the stories of the birth and life of Sarah's only child in Gen 21 and 22, and in the Haftarah reading of barren Hannah's cries to the Lord and subsequent deliverance. Both of these rich histories contain God's vindication of their honor, of Sarah's before Hagar and Hannah's in sight of the perennially fertile concubine Penninah in I Sam chapters 1 and 2.

These women and these particular children tell us the grand story of our King and how He works, not through those to whom the world would like to ascribe honor, but often in direct opposition to the world's ideas about who is and is not blessed and worthy.

(Being barren myself, life in religious spheres was rather like one of Dante's fictional levels of hell. People say insanely cruel things in ignorance – and sometimes even on purpose. I smile to myself now, however – all those years ago and even after the wonderful adoption of our sons, while enduring those comments – I had a dream that my husband and I would have 100 children, none of them biological. I wondered how it could happen even up until about a year ago, and now I minister to children from all over the world through books and videos. The world does not see as God sees.)

Women who have children often take it for granted that it is some automatic badge of God's favor; yet what percentage of fertile women were mentioned in the Bible (associated with their children) by name, and how many barren women are called to our attention? Do we hear about the righteousness of David's mother, do we even know her name? No. We do, however, all know the name of the woman who would be vindicated through the birth of the prophet who anointed him as king. Was it not barren Rachel's son Joseph, and not Reuben, who saved his people?

Sarah, Rebekkah, Rachel, Samson's mother (pretty sure her name was withheld to protect her virtue because dang, that boy..), Hannah, and Elizabeth – all were barren. These were women who are remembered and who gave birth after all hope was lost, and not to normal kids, but instead to amazing men of God. Only David's wife Michael, out of all the women in Scripture, was cursed with barrenness after mocking her husband – whereas we see that Jezebel never had need of a fertility doctor, or Athaliah for that matter and she killed all of her children!

To drive the point home that more is not always desirable and that worldly standards of honor are relative and sometimes deceptive, take a look at the end of the Scripture reading in the portions about the birth of Isaac. In Genesis 22, we see the fecundity of Abraham's brother Nahor in league with his wife and concubine. Together these three had twelve sons, only one being notable, but not for the usual reasons that a son is counted as notable. One of the sons became the father of the Matriarch Rebekkah. From Abraham sprang many great nations from relatively few, and from his brother Nahor sprang a granddaughter who would become Israel's mother. I am confident that, given a choice, he and his wife would rather have given birth to a son who would be noted for more than siring a girl – times being what they were.

Is this to say that barren women are somehow superior to the fertile – certainly not, that would be silly – but I am saying

that the actions of our King tell us that we cannot judge the value of a woman by whether or not she bears children young – or at all. The picture painted through these carefully chosen Scripture readings is larger than simply childbearing – this is about the fruit that a woman bears and the vindication that comes as a result of it. We will all be judged and will be rewarded according to what we produce, by the King who has written all of our actions in His Book of Remembrance. That of fruit can be generated in youth, for certain, but age is no barrier – sometimes the best first fruits come from a presumably barren and shameful tree.

A fertile woman might bear ten wretched children (just ask Haman), and a noble woman may produce only one, or none – as in the case of the prophetess Anna who was day by day at the Temple (Luke 2:36-38).

It is the desire of our flesh to look at whatever we have, whether it be a lot of kids, money, worldly success, popularity, etc., as a sign of God's favor. The truest sign of God's favor, however, is to be found in the good fruit He allows us and inspires and alters us to produce – starting on the inside. Without Him, there is no acceptable fruit. Sarah was probably barren for over 70 years, Rebekkah for 40 years, and so on and so on. I am sure they tried, but unlike the other women around them, they could not just place their faith in their flesh to produce that fruit. Make no mistake – finding out that we cannot place our faith in the flesh is a positive thing that few people in this life truly realize. We have been called to the same kind of life – we can't just go through the motions in our flesh and call it good, no matter how amazing the result looks from the outside. To produce something excellent, we must see ourselves as barren trees in need of that divine intervention.

These women had to live by faith, and not by flesh – and they showed us the way. They had to wait on God's timing and pruning to produce, not just ordinary fruit, but exceptional

fruit. It is a model for every one of us, male and female; to produce something that is mature and good takes time and, generally, a lot of anguish. It won't happen just because we want it to, or when we want it – impatient flesh is how you get an Ishmael or the forgotten children of Penninah, not an Isaac or a Samuel.