

For Esther  
(and women like her)

*Sheila Freeman*

because she buried  
too many children,

and still worked hard, five  
days a week in the store, every  
day and night at home, standing

on bloated legs, blueprints of  
pain unmistakable, sometimes a  
tingling before the numbness

set in, she was forced to grieve  
alone, in the still times, when others  
indulged in sleep, or some other  
form of rest, she was

forced to relive the frames  
of her life, those merciless  
time travelers, never letting

on that the peril that kept her  
mute, that swallowed her whole,  
just for the hell of it, that  
laughingly welcomed her to the

new world, where scholars,  
having never heard  
her whisper the names  
of those silenced babies,

would, one day, speak of  
the Immigrant Experience,  
that all this

would cause her to sit by  
the bedroom window, the one  
that faced the street, her

elbow grounded on the sill,  
her chin and cheek molded to  
her palm, sit by

that window, and try to  
remember how to cry.



*Sheila Freeman began writing three years ago after raising two children and working as an assistant teacher with special education classes. Her poem, "Yom Kippur," was published in Kerem, vol. 6.*