

Dr. Zvia Ginor

By Dr. Nili Gold, Associate Professor of Hebrew

Zvia and I met at JTS. I had nearly completed my course work, she was contemplating whether to start the PhD program in Jewish literature. "Are you Nili Gold? Professor Roskies sent me to you, I have a few questions about your experience here." It was in front of the Unterberg elevator. Her voice was very low, almost a whisper. I looked up (she was much taller than I). Her open face, the laughing eyes. Before I knew what had just happened we were having the first of our many four to five hour lunches. (No, they were not multi-course gourmet meals). What were we doing here (in America, at JTS)? Two devout Israelis, in love with their language, addicted to its literature. Were we trying to explain our paths to each other or to sort things out for ourselves?—Her affluent Tel Aviv childhood, Hebrew University at 17, marrying Amos at 19 and then, Seattle— Mesmerized, I watched her speak. Her expressive hands and the throaty voice, the rolling laughter and the devilish twinkle were mere instruments in this grand performance—Zvia talking.

I leave the keyboard for a moment, pull her books off the shelf, my "Israeli Women's Poetry" shelf. There she is, smiling, in a cut out article from Yediot Aharonot which I had saved in one of her books with an 11-year-old letter. Now it all falls into place. "It is lucky that I am going to teach at the Seminary," she writes to me from a sabbatical in Israel. "It is a little escape (miflat me'at) from America" she continues. In other words: JTS for Zvia was a little Israel away from Israel, Mikdash Me'at, is the intertext (and what would Zvia do without intertexts...?) Later, she gave a hand to strengthening the Israeli wall of her Mikdash Me'at...

She was a published poet, I learned on that first afternoon together. One very thin volume (the others were to appear later). Zipor Hageshem, The Rain Bird. And I wondered: this tall, flowing, word-wealthy woman with these tiny, lean, hermetic poems. Between the pages of Zipor Hageshem hides a fragile woman-bird, a woman-butterfly, Zvia's other face. As if she knew—the titles she chose for the subsequent collections foreshadow the inevitable: Keshet Dam, Blood Tie, no longer a bird, but a woman in wanderer's garb, torn between countries pulled between blood ties. "They shoot birds in the forest" she warns, "precursors of autumn," And then Isha Bor, Womanswell, a cistern, course of life but a grave as well.

Last Tuesday we sat, facing her casket, facing her loving sons, facing two huge bouquets of Bird of Paradise, her favorite flower. Zvia, the Rain Bird, flew to paradise. Yehi zikhra barukh.



by Dr. Zvia Ginor

סלה

ובענין כל אשר היה לי לומר,
סלה.

זו היתה המלה האחרונה ואחריה
שכל שאני מנסה לסלק
ולסלק לאחור כמו תורה שרבים
חלליה, כמו הינומה שיש להסיר
עוד היום.

ממחר, ענין חדש בלשון צחה
ומאפקת, ואולי אף באלם מסים
שביא את ברכת השקט
העקר.

The JTS family records with profound sorrow the passing of Zvia Ginor, eminent scholar of Israeli literature and accomplished Israeli poet, whose dynamic career and magnetic personality influenced so many. An extraordinary gift from Dr. Ginor and her children in 1997 in memory of beloved husband and father Amos made possible the creation of the Ginor Chair in Israeli Society and Culture at JTS, launching the academic study of contemporary Israel in America. A prominent member of the JTS faculty since 1988, Dr. Ginor is the author of a celebrated study of the poetry of Abba Kovner, several volumes of Hebrew poetry and a recently completed novel. She is survived by her three sons, Eyal Mordecai, Ron and Netan and their families. May her memory be for a blessing. —*Ismar Scharsch, Gershon Kekst*